

## Chapter-I

### Amalgamation of Tragic-Comic Dualisms

This research entitled "Dehierarchization of Duality in Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*" tries to explore the issue of dehierarchization of duality rather than simply delving in to the issue of the pessimism/optimism or tragic/comic dualisms. Critics of the different schools and times analyze Chekhov's vision in *Uncle Venya* from different perspectives. Some analyzed it as an optimistic play and other as a pessimistic play. In this way critics have created the hierarchy in Chekhov's *Uncle Venya*.

Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* has been generally interpreted as an absurd play with bleak view of life. This thesis, however, argues that the theme of the play is not just frustration but also courage and hope. For Chekhov future will be better if human can think honestly feel genuinely and work sincerely having learnt from their previous mistakes.

In *Uncle Vanya* heartbreakingly sad moments are undercut by incongruous details or moments of outright silliness. In some ways, Chekhov works like a magician, using the misdirection of humor to divert the audience from the sadness and hoping that the tragic-comic quality would manifest itself.

*Uncle Vanya* is set on a country estate. Serebryakov, an older retired professor, is the owner, but it was not originally his. The estate was left to him by his first wife, whose death also left him with three dependents: a daughter, Sonya; the deceased wife's mother, Maria; and the deceased wife's brother, Vanya. As the play opens in Act One, Astrov, the doctor, sits with the old nurse, Marina, in the garden relaying his guilt over the death of a patient of his. He is remorseful, because his work

is his hope for the future, and in this stance, he has failed. He turns to Marina and asks her:

Will those people who live after us, in the course of hundred or two.

Hundred years, those people we're clearing the way for now, will they remember and speak kindly of us? Why 'nyank', you know they won't remember. (146)

"People won't remember, but God will," she replies. Again, as is so many of Chekhov's plays, the distant future is a subject of much consideration and desire.

Vanya joins the two of them after a nap and begins his tirade against the professor that will last the length of the play. Vanya is not only disillusioned, but he is also envious of the professor's success with women. Specifically, Vanya desires Serebryakov's new, beautiful young wife, Yelena.

Yelena is the object of desire for Astrov also. She is an idle but high-minded young woman, who feels suffocated by her surroundings, both the people and the way of life. Her husband's daughter, Sonya, has been cool toward her because she perceived Yelena's marriage to her father to be about money. Yelena ably refutes this, however, when she and Sonya put past enmity behind them. But Yelena is faithful to her husband indeed anyway.

Yelena feels nothing for Vanya, but she is drawn to Strove. She and Strove suppress a potential affair, however. Yelena is fundamentally afraid. She is incapable of action, as are most of the characters in *Uncle Vanya*. Astrov accuses her of infecting everyone with her idleness. She and Serebryakhov go about their provincial married lives, and she chokes off what they consider a dishonorable situation. Astrov is the man of action in *Uncle Vanya*. He is a healer and a protector of the Russian nature. He has special interest in stopping the devastation of the forest and has even received prizes for his

environmental work. He has planted the whole forests of trees. Beside nature, Astrov's other obsession is beauty, thus his attraction to Yelena. Just as the two are intertwined in Astrov's character, the unfulfilled, meddling love that characterizes *Uncle Vanya* is inextricably bound with provincial life. It springs not from genuine feeling, but merely from proximity and boredom.

I can't bear the life we live, this provincial, boxed-in life in Russia, and I despise it with all my heart and soul [...] Fate never stops lashing me, there are times I suffer unbearably, and yet there is no light at all in the distance for me [...] (166)

Yelena does not concur with Vanya's criticism of her husband, though she herself is burdened by his pretensions. "Ivan Petrovich, you're educated and intelligent and you must realize, surely that the world is being destroyed not by plunder or by fires, but by hatreds, rancor, and these entire stiff and spats [...]." (161)

But Vanya continues his tirade, contending that he has devoted his life to the professor, and now the professor appears to have been a fraud. Vanya had taken on the burden of paying off the estate's debts and sending what was left over to the professor while he was away, doing scholarly work in the city. Vanya's sacrifice was not made without a certain amount of satisfaction, however, since at the time, he thought that the professor was a great man of inestimable value to the world and that his work was. Vanya feels he has been made a slave to another man. He blames his inconsequential life on the professor, who never asked him for his adoration.

The professor, while not an evil man, is not a hero, thus Vanya feels betrayed. The professor is a pompous old man, with feigned purpose and no original insights. Academia

seems to be equivalent to nothing for Chekhov, a sort of entombment, causing the professor to be cut off not only from those around him, but from reality.

The professor in *Uncle Vanya* exerts a control over his family, but this control is maintained by the controlled. The victims are willing victims, made complacent by the idleness of country life. Even Vanya confesses this when he says, "When there is no real life to live, you must get by with illusions. It's better than nothing after all."

Serebryakhov gathers every one together to announce that he has made preliminary plans to sell the estate and use the money to buy a dacha (*The traditional Russian summer villa, usually within reach of towns and built of wood*) in Finland. Vanya explodes with anger and venom. He runs off-stage, a shot heard as he tries to kill himself. Then he runs on-stage and takes aim at the professor. He misses. This hysteria is merely absurd, however.

Yelena decides that she and her husband must leave the estate quickly and permanently and begins hasty preparation for their departure. Vanya and Serebryakov agree to be civilized to one another and to carry on with the estate exactly as it has always been. The two of them leave, and subsequently Astral leaves. Vanya, young Sonya, and Marina are left alone. Chekhov creates an empty, melancholy atmosphere in the end, as Vanya and Sonya began working immediately, taking accounts of their wares and produce. They tap quietly on the abacus. Telegin plays guitar gently in the background. Vanya and Yelena commiserate. The final monologue is Sonya's as she gives a painful account of their lives, offering a ray of hope for their life after life:

We shall work for the sake of others, now and when we are old, never knowing peace or rest. And when our own hour has come, we shall die

without complaining [...] We shall see earthly veils, all our suffering,  
 drown in mercy that will fill the whole world, and our life will than grow  
 quiet and gentle and sweet as a [...] Uncle Vanya, wait a little while [...]  
 We shall rest. We shall rest! (200)

Sonya's and Vanya's enslavement to the estate is compounded by their unrequited love. Their seemingly petty self-entrapments gain resonance through the obvious breadth of their unhappiness. They are limited people, as limited as the servants who work for them, but they are much more painfully aware of it than the characters of Marina and Telegin. The country, with all of its magnificence and freedom, has enclosed them in a tomb without love.

In Chekhov's lifetime there was considerable critical disagreement amongst Russian critics concerning both the nature and value of his literary creations. Since that time the critical fluctuation, both in Russia and abroad, have become polarized into the 'gloomy' and 'positive' schools of Chekhov criticism. It is not surprising to find that Soviet critics have tended 'find and accentuate optimistic and positive values in Chekhovian drama and to emphasize that the author had a message for the masses; nor it is strange to find many western critics discovering the existential' even' absurdist' pessimistic Chekhov whose plays shows us 'that time can not be slowed or reversed, that human nature can not be reformed or revitalized'.

Both Soviet and western critics necessarily approach Chekhov from their own ideological standpoint and the patronizing attitude that is often expressed by western critics towards 'optimistic' Soviet reading of Chekhov often stems from failure to see that we have our own biases. As Tulloch perceptively notes, "For too long western critics have

pinpointed the value-laden assumptions of Soviet interpretation of Chekhov without equally questioning their own epistemologies." (17) Chekhov's complex attitude toward both life and art make any simple pigeonholing of his vision of reality under headings like 'optimistic' or 'pessimistic'

wholly unsatisfactory. As Joseph Wood Crouch has pointed out, if he had been simply unconcerned with the future and engaged in nothing but a defense of his dying aristocrats, he would merely have been a possible interesting conservative'. Such gloomy western interpretations of Chekhov's are no more, and no less, satisfactory than the 'uplifting' interpretations of the early Soviet critics who tried to make of Chekhov 'a sort of John the Baptist of the Revolution preparing the way for the appearance of Lenin.

Even amongst critics who share similar ideologies there is disagreement about the nature of Chekhov's works. Just as critics in the west argue about whether Chekhov's works should be classified as being optimistic or 'pessimistic', so Marxist critics squabble about the nature of the playwright's vision of reality.

A.V.Lunacharskii, people's commissar of Public Education and himself a playwright, was very positive about Chekhov, whom he believes to have been in love with life, while the Bolshevik ideologue P. I. Lebedev Polianskii found only hopeless pessimism in Chekhov. (17)

Depending upon whether directors have been convinced by the gloomy or positive' school of critics, Chekhov's plays have been produced in a manner that emphasizes either their tragic potentialities (as Stanislavski insisted) or their comic possibilities.

It was not simply the 'pessimism/optimism' and the consequent 'tragic/comic dualism that fascinated Chekhov but also such potentially antithetical pairings as

'science/art; ideal/real; mask/face' and 'outer life/inner life'. The new form of drama that he devised to express the complex relationship between these various dualities was itself dependent on the formal duality of text/subtext. The examination that follows will demonstrate the ways in which productions of Chekhov's plays that foregrounds either the tragic or comic elements to the exclusion of the other misinterpretations. One-sided productions falsify the playwright's visions of reality embodied in the overall action of the plays and affect the manner in which the action is expressed. The form and content of Chekhov's plays depend upon the inter-relationship and tension between the polarities of gloomy negativity and facile optimism. Indeed a central unifying thread that connects all of Chekhov's writings is his attempt to recognize, relate and reconcile a whole series of dualisms.

It is when critics and directors concentrate on one elements of these dualisms and ignore the other that one-sided and reductionist readings of Chekhov occur. Productions of Chekhov's plays that over-emphasize either the outer surface reality of the text or the inner hidden reality of the subtext will inevitably be thin. The plays are constructed in such a way that their full complexity and richness can only be realized in performance when emphasis is placed on the dynamic relationship between the outer and inner reality, between the text and subtext.

Any polarized reading inevitably posits an 'either/or' approach whereas 'both /and' interpretation of Chekhov more accurately describes both the vision and form of his works. An examination of just now Chekhov manage to write in such a way that the 'characters and situations' can be seen simultaneously as both tragic comic and the play as whole can be interpreted simultaneously as both pessimistic and optimistic needs to be explored. This

study will have achieved its aim if it persuades directors and critics to attempt to create rich, balance and complex readings of Chekhov's plays by avoiding simplistic polarized readings of these works.

Deconstruction, as applied in the criticism of literature, designates a theory and practice of reading which questions and claims to "subvert or "undermine" the assumption that the system of language provides grounds that are adequate to establish the boundaries, coherence or unity, and the determinate meanings of a literary text. Typically, a deconstructive reading seeks out to; show that conflicting forces within the text itself serve to dissipate these seeming definiteness of its structure and meanings into a indefinite array of incompatible and undecidable possibilities. The originator and namer of deconstruction is the French thinker Jacques Derrida, among his precursors were Friedrich Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger etc (56).

The implication of postmodern critical theories, particularly deconstruction, which assert that the existence in any meaningful sense of the 'playwright's play' is a fiction.

Regarding, Chekhov's Uncle Vanya critic, Leon Shestrov, in his essay titled '*Anton Chekhov: Creation from the Void*', he depicts the playwright as a Job-like proto-absurdist:

To define his tendency in a word I would say that Chekhov was the playwright of hopelessness. Stubbornly, sadly, monotonously, during all the year of his literary activity, nearly a quarter of a century long, Chekhov was doing one thing alone: by one means or another he was killing human hopes. Herein, I hold, lays the essence of his creation. Critic, Irina Kirk writes about the theme of beauty in Uncle Vanya. The two central images



embodying physical beauty are the Russian forest and Elena. The idealistic Dr. Astrov plants new trees every year because as Sonya says:

He claims that forests beautify the earth, and so teach man to understand the beautiful, and instill in him a feeling of respect and awe. Forest tempers the severity of the climate. In countries where the climate is warmer, less energy is wasted on the struggle with nature and that is why man there is more gentle and loving; the people there are beautiful, supple, and sensitive, their speech is refined and their movements graceful. (153-54)

Astrov believes that man's creative and rational powers should be devoted to the preservation of that which is aesthetic in the environment, so that in a thousand years' time the earth might still retain its loveliness.

Another critic, Richard Gilman on the characters' Hope for a Better Life' discusses Chekhov's characters' faith in the future and hope for a better life.

Critic Harvey Pitcher views that by actively subverting the theatricality of melodrama, Chekhov produces a kind of drama in which there are no clear-cut heroes or villains. Though some Chekhovian characters are more sympathetic than others, it is dangerous to take sides in their presentation. No character should be judge by the director and actor to be ' good ' or 'bad'. As he says:

To regard the professor, for example as an 'evil exploiter' and Vanya as a ' virtuous victim' misses the whole point of Vanya's portrayal, which is to show the plight of a man who really has no one but himself to blame for the mess that he has made of his life.(188)

If we assume that Chekhov knew that his plays were about, then we come to the inescapable conclusion that part of the purpose for which he wrote them was to provide some constructive criticism of the social behaviors of his contemporaries. Seen in this light, his plays conform to the 'social corrective' nature of comedy. If the plays are examined solely from an aesthetic point of view, it is possible to interpret them as expressing either a progressive or a nihilistic world view. In this second view, he depicts a world which has all the appearances of purposeless absurdity because humanity has failed to make life meaningful by refusing to work with nature in the processes of change and evolution.

Thus, this research attempts to study Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* focusing upon the issue dehierarchization of duality rather than simply the optimism/ pessimism or comic/ tragic dualisms. Evidence will be drawn from Chekhov's plays as well as from the vast crops of Chekhov criticism.

The second chapter which follows the first chapter deals with the methodology-deconstruction. The third chapter is application of the theory to study Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*. And finally, the fourth chapter concludes the research and presents the findings.

## Chapter-II

### Deconstruction: A Theoretical Methodology

As a term in literary criticism, deconstruction means a method of analyzing literature that seeks to uncover multiple layers of meanings, including the author's intentions and other meanings that are based on how the same language images or ideas have been used before. It also designates a theory and practice of readings which claims to subvert to underlined unifying or signifying grounds of all systems of language, through the meaning. But it has far reaching effects in other discourses as well. It was started by the skeptical approach to the possibility of coherent meaning in signifying system. It challenges the assumption that language systems provide grounds to establish boundaries, coherence and determinate meaning in texts. It shows how every sign is by its own nature self –contradictory. Every text is shown to contain conflicting forces within itself and which inevitably dissipates the definiteness of structure and meaning into an indefinite array of multiple, undecidable possibilities. It is a demonstration of the incompleteness or incoherence of a text or any work of language which is supposed to be meaningful. It is so a kind of “internal conceptual critique”.

The term originates in the writings of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, and rests upon the implication, as Jonathan Culler puts it, that the hierarchical oppositions of western metaphysics are themselves constructions or ideological impositions.

Deconstruction thus aim to undermine Western metaphysics by undoing or deconstructing these hierarchical opposition and by showing their logocentric reliance upon a center or presence, which reflect the idealist desire to control the play of signifiers by making them subject to some extra-systemic transcendental signified.(66)

In 1966, Derrida presented an article “Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science” which changed the idea of theories.

Derrida’s notion of Deconstruction revolted against the structuralist notion.

Structuralism which developed in France in 1960s came from three schools:

- i) Idea from Fernand de Saussure greatest of linguist, his book “Course in GeneralLinguist”. His notions that the system of language is entirely differential,
- ii) Russian formalism: during the 20s -30s in the reign of Lenin. They don’t think the outer effects of literature but the discipline of text itself.
- iii) Prague school of Linguistics.

These three schools contributed to develop structuralism. As Hazard Adams mentions:

It was Derrida’s essay “Structure Sign and Play” that really begin the critique of structuralism that is at the center of poststructuralist thought (except, of course, for the fact that deconstruction attacks all notions of center, origin, closure, and “totalization”). The target of “Structure, Sign and Play” is explicitly the anthropological structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss, but it quickly became clear that Derrida was really concerned with what he saw as a deep philosophical problem in the history of western metaphysics. (1116)

Derrida attacks allogocentrism and hierarchy like in speech / writing, nature/ culture etc. Logocentrism is the tendency for seeking center and presence.

In his essay “Structures Sign and Play”, he writes:

Perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an “event” if this loaded word did not entail a meaning which it is precisely the function of structural or structuralize thought to reduce or to suspect. Let us speak of an “event” nevertheless, and let us use quotation marks to serve as a precaution. What would this event be then? Its exterior form would be that of a rupture and a redoubling. (1117)

In this way his essay begins with the word “perhaps”, which signifies that in deconstruction, everything is provisional: We can not make positive/ definite statements. Nevertheless, we will proceed as if we can. Even as we come to understand that nothing is stable that meaning is always contingent and ambiguous, we continue to act as if nothing is wrong. Derridean deconstruction, thus, is rapture in that it challenges the law, which governs the desire for a center in the constitution of structure.

Derrida, therefore, primarily attacks structuralism. He views that the concept of center does works but it is not essential; hence center is under eraser. Center is needed to form a structure but immediately it escapes from the so- called centrality. Derrida in fact, is not suggesting on the abandonment of the idea of center, but rather he acknowledges that it is illusory and constructed. He talks about the binaries of structuralism which are in hierarchical order, in which the first term is privileged over the other. These binaries are not true representations of external reality, rather are simply constructions. Any signified is not fixed. Signified also seeks meaning. When it seeks meaning it becomes signifier. So, there is chain of signifiers, there is no constant existence of signified. It means, there is no center, no margin, and no totality. As result, meaning is not determined in the text. In fact,

meaning is like jellyfish and knowledge is a matter of perpetual shifting. There is no single stable meaning. Since signifiers do not refer to thing but to themselves, text does not give any fixed meaning. In such situation, multi- meanings are possible. So, sign is only chain of signifiers. Saussure views that signifier and signified are inseparable but Derrida attacks Saussure that he himself separated the signifier and signified.

Saussure says that meaning comes in terms of difference. But Derrida says that such hierarchy is constructed and the idea to understand one in reference to other is purely haphazard, inhuman and unnecessary. One signifier has no completeness and, therefore, we need other signifiers too understand it. It is endless process and there is only chain of signifiers other than signified. Derrida says that center and margin are equally important for one depends for another. So, there is no center and no margin. Without female the concept of male can't exist. Structuralists believe that form binary opposition, single meaning comes but, Derrida says each pair of binary oppositions produces separate meanings. So, in a text there are multi meanings. Since the center lacks locus, center is not the center. So, the idea of decentering for Derrida is erasing the voice and, therefore, avoiding the possibility of logocentrism.

Derrida in his essay "Differance" tries to subvert till now accepted belief and assumption of western metaphysics. He coined this word. It is also the strategy for exposing the play of absence and presence. Till the time of Saussure, the western metaphysics was based on center seeking tendency, and this tendency has created binary opposition. To subvert this tendency he coined 'differance' which has two senses- to differ and to defer. This term is used to refer to the inadequacies of language and western metaphysics as a whole. Concept of differance is originated by Saussure's argument that

the relationship between a signifier and its signified is arbitrary and differential. Derrida criticizes in Saussure's notion that it tries to guarantee the meaning of sign, i.e. the relationship between signifier and signified.

To Derrida difference is neither a word, nor a concept, but a neographism. To be a word it should have a signified which it does not have. And to be concept, it should fall in to certain categories. We can not categories it in space and time. It is only strategy to show that there are always two opposite in play. It is empty. He focuses on 'a' instead of 'e' in difference. The 'a' in difference is written but can not be heard. It can not be apprehended in speech but will be seen Derrida rather calls it a mute mark because it is silent. It announces the death of the tyrant. We can not pronounce it. It is possible only in phonetic writing. Since it can't be heard, it is not a speech. So, it is nowhere. In this connection, Derrida writes: "the pyramidal silence of the graphic difference between the 'e' and 'a' can function, of course, only within the language and grammar which is as historical linked to phonetic writing as it is to the entire culture inseparable from phonetic writing. Derrida says, 'a' in difference shows the death of center. It can neither be heard nor spoken, it is a mysterious being. He says, it has neither existence nor essence. To have essence means to exist or to be but it does not exist. So its meaning can't be pointed out. It is everywhere but we can't show it. It is like the light. Light helps us to see things but light itself can't be seen. 'Difference' does not exist but with it we can see the play. So Derrida says, the 'difference' shows the play of difference.

Derrida attacks on Levi- Strauss two activities: the engineer and the bricoleur activities. Levi-*Strauss* contrasts the primitive science, "the science of the concrete," with modern technical (the science of the conceptual) by making an analogy on the basis of the

difference between engineering and what he calls *bricolage*. *Bricolage* is a skill that involves using bits of whatever is to be found and recombining them to create something new. In French the word is used to describe the very skillful professional DIY expert. Levi-Strauss suggest that the model of the bricoleur is a good way of characterizing the primitive scientist (medicine –men etc.) as well as the one who makes up the mythological narratives (the story teller). He says “the elements which the ‘bricoleur’ collects and uses are ‘pre-constrained’ like the constitutive units of myth, the possible combination of which are restricted by the fact that they are drawn from the language where they already possess a sense which sets a limit on the freedom of monoeuvre”.(19) Does not this sound like the structure (i.e., the language system) out of which the utterance must be drawn?

Nonetheless, Levi-Strauss still finds something to contrast the bricoleur to. “The engineer questions the universe, while the bricoleur addresses himself to a collection of oddments left over from human endeavours, that is, only a sub-set of the culture”. Yes, the engineer, who questions the universe, who is, according to Levi-Strauss, “always trying to make his way out of and go beyond the constraints imposed by a particular state of civilization,” can be constructed to the bricoleur, in so far as the latter “by inclination or necessity always remains within them”. Levi-Strauss makes the opposition even clearer by saying that the engineer works by means of concepts and the bricoleur by means of signs. You should already be able to see the trap he has fallen into here. How could a structuralist have considered a concept as being separable from a sign—or thought the sign without the concept? Derrida’s answer is the one we all ought to be able to have given by now. As he says in his essay “Structure, Sign and Play”:



If one calls bricolage the necessity of borrowing one's concepts from the text of a heritage that is more or less coherent or ruined, it must be said that every discourse is bricoleur. The engineer, whom Levi-Strauss opposes to the bricoleur, should be the one to construct the totality of his language, syntax, and lexicon. In this sense the engineer is a myth. A subject who supposedly would be the absolute origin of his own discourse.... Would be the creator of the verb, the verb itself. [Listen for the echo – in the beginning was the verb]The notion of the bricoleur who supposedly breaks with all forms of bricolage is mythopoetic, the odds are that the engineer is a myth produced by the bricoleur. (1121)

In this way, Levi-Strauss has made the hierarchy between artist and critics. He claims artist is originator but critic comes later. Likewise artist uses first hand raw materials as engineer dose but critics uses second hand raw materials. In contrary to him Derrida argues that neither artist nor critic works on first hand materials, rather both of them use the materials that were already existed and used. In this sense, there is no hierarchy between them.

In the essay [...] "That Dangerous Supplement" [...] Derrida attacks Rousseau's ideas about 'nature' and 'culture'. Rousseau highly valorizes 'nature' in his texts, and attaches it with the values, such as purity, naturalness, and incorruptibility. On the other hand, he defines culture which is impure, artificle and corruptible. He opines that culture is only the supplement of 'nature' which ultimately corrupts the nature so it is dangerous supplement. Rousseau also draws sharp distinction between speech and writing. But in the

essay, Derrida attacks the Rousseauin distinction between nature and culture, and defined supplement, not as dangerous but as an inherent quality of everything.

The Praise the Living Speech” is one of the main motifs of Rousseau. He valorizes speech because he longed for “presence” in the gesture of language, and condemns writing as destruction of presence and as “a disease of speech”. The writing only supplements deficiency and infirmity of speech. The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus. It is thus an image, a representation, or convention that comes as supplement to nature. When culture comes to supplement nature, nature is destroyed. Rousseau views this supplement is dangerous.

Derrida attacks on this tendency and states if lack is fulfilled, why supplement is dangerous then. He says:

But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or itself to be insinuates itself in-the-place-of; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. Compensatory [suppleant] and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which takes-(the)-place [tient-tieu]. As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness. Somewhere, something can be filled up of *itself*; can accomplish itself, only by allowing filled through sign and proxy. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself. (319)

Derrida views that identity comes in terms of supplement. So this supplement is not dangerous. Both nature and culture are supplement of each other; they aren't self-sufficient separately. There is no hierarchy.

As a deconstructionist, Paul de man's version of deconstruction is based on two related principles. First, the incompatibility of language and nature, and second, the incompatibility of grammatical and rhetorical structures. In his essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality", he defines the first incompatibility. The first incompatibility comes out of the doubt we have about language. Nature is inexpressible in language; language has no correspondence to nature. His continuous notion of incompatibility in his second essay "Semiology and Rhetorics". Secondly, it is the incompatibility of grammatical and rhetorical structures that creates irresolvable contradiction in any text. If we value one, we ignore other, to happen simultaneously is not possible. If one gives primacy on rhetoric, the result will be indeterminacy of meaning. On the other hand, if one gives the primacy to grammatical structure, the discovery will be a false pretense to identity.

He talks about rhetoric and semiology. Rhetoric is the study of metaphor and metonymy whereas semiology is the study of whole linguistic system. Because of these rhetorics or figurative quality, every text has at least two possible meanings that create contradiction and confusion. So, text creates indeterminacy that is called 'aporia' stage.

In his essay "Semiology and Rhetorics" he writes."Let me pursue the matter of the rhetorical question through one more example. Yeat's poem "Among the School Children" ends with the famous line: How can we know the dancer from the dance?".(1178)

Rhetorically, it is statement. Here, we can't know the dancer from dance.

Grammatically, it is question which means: what is the process of knowing the dancer from the dance? So it has double meanings. But we have to take it either as a statement or as a question but not both at the same time so it creates misreading.

In this way a text has both grammar and rhetoric. When we read it grammatically, it gives one meaning and if we read rhetorically it results another meaning. Again, rhetoric has double meanings-one surface and another deep. So every text has multiple meanings.

In his famous essay "Truth and Power", Foucault shows an immense interest in defining power. He is interested in defining circular relationship among 'discourse,' 'power,' and 'truth.'

Discourse, for Foucault, is important because it joins knowledge and power. Those who have power have control over what is known or to be known and the way it is known or can be known. And those who have such knowledge have power over those who have not. In an alternative definition of discourse, Foucault states that discourse is a large group of statement, a ruled governed language- terrain defined by strategic possibilities. It includes a set of rules and conventions, system of meditation and transposition which govern the way we talk about the things. It governs "when, where and how it is to be talked about and by whom." Discourses in societies are created through various acts of representation by people who are in power. Thus in a way discourse means an authoritative way of interpreting or representing something. And whatever is represented within a discourse, propped by the power and time, becomes truth about certain things in the world. These truths later become subjects of knowledge for the people.

His revolutionary views of power stands aloof from the traditional notion of power in which power is seen in terms of repression and violence. For Foucault, power is seldom violence and a repression. Rather he believes in power as creative which determines truths of a particular period of history. In this sense, Foucault departs from Marxist notion of power and the way it is practiced in jurisdiction or by state mechanism (especially in military and police forces). He blames both Marxism and jurisdiction for any kind of negative view regarding power. This entails his rejection of Marxist reduction of power to economic terms (especially to mode of production). He argues that power becomes negative when it is used politically. Therefore, he is not concerned with the political use of power rather he focuses on its creative aspect.

Foucault asserts the omnipresence of power in society and rejects hierarchical or vertical notion of power in (as found in Marxism). Instead his notion of power resembles biosphere, that is, power is pervasive and it lacks a locus. This notion of power is interrelated with his notion of discourse in which he believes that discourses are mediums through which power is exercised in society. As discourses are multiple and rooted in every nook and corner of society, power too is dispersed everywhere. Thus power is to be seen in its dispersion, not in centralization. According to Foucault, all societies have procedures to control, to select, and to redistribute the discourse among multiple points, or different people and the purpose of these procedures of discourses or society is to resist the monocentrism of power.

Moreover, Foucault sees all claims to knowledge as intertwined with the modalities of power. Knowledge of a particular space or time for him is shaped and determined by the power. Even knowledge for him is an expression of will to power. In a way, knowledge

itself is power. In concept of power, following Foucault, there is always a resistance and within resistance there is evolution. This evolution is capable of bringing changes in every sphere of society substituting all the established tradition, institutions, discourses, knowledge and so on. Thus power is always dynamic.

Truth is a creation of power: it is, therefore, neither true nor false. It is a construct, a narration and an interpretation. Truths in societies are created within discourses or through various acts of representation. Truths about sane and insane, normal and abnormal, sex and so on – all is determined by power. Truths therefore are mere perspectives, not absolute. He clearly sees truth to be intertwined with power:

The important thing here, I believe, is that truth isn't out side power, or lacking in power [...](Truth) isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, not the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of these; it is produce only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it includes regular effects of power. (1114)

German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) in his essay “Truth and Falsity in an Ultramoral Sense” questions the age old belief that language can provide us truth and reason always deals with the “Real Knowledge”. For him the tendency of language is always toward abstraction and away from individual and real, and finally into the threat of rational fixity. This questioning of language entails his questioning of reason that makes him claim that reason never bends to truth. What most of the time, reason or human intellect is satisfied with are illusions: In the essay he claims as:

What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short a sum of human relations which became

poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned and after long usage seems to a notion fixed canonic, and bindings, truths are illusions; worn- out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses; coins which have their observes effected and now are no longer of account as coins but merely as metal. Still we do not yet know whence the impulse to truth comes, for up to now we have heard only about the obligation which society imposes in order to exist: to be truthful, that is to use the unusual metaphor, therefore expressed morally: we have heard only about the obligation to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie gregariously in a style binding for all. (636)

He refuses the idea that the world revolves around intellect. He denies the thought that the world revolves around the intellect and is guided by truth. He sees sensation and cognition as main causes of deception. Man is deeply immersed in falsehood and illusion. His sensation is satisfied with the surface knowledge of things and his cognition forms an idea of the thing out of this surface knowledge but tends to think that it is knowledge of the essence of the thing. This is an illusion with human beings and this knowledge always incapable to lead to the truth.

Nietzsche, attacks on Christianity, morality and Herd culture. His fundamental assumption was that traditional values (represented primarily by Christianity) had lost their power in the lives of individuals. He expressed this in his declaration "God is Dead". He was convinced that traditional values represented a 'slave morality', amorality created by weak and resentful individuals who encouraged such behavior as gentleness and kindness because the behaviors served their interests. He claims that new values could be created to

replace the traditional ones, and his discussion of the possibility lead to his concept of the superman. His superman is a creator of values, a creator of a 'master morality'.

Nietzsche has attacks all the so called idealistic thinkers in his famous essay "The Birth of Tragedy". In this book he has made a division between two modes of human life- Apollonian and Dionysian. The Apollonian quality motivates the life of order, clarity, illusion and reason, whereas the Dionysian impulses excite the life of intoxication, chaos, darkness, madness and the irrational forces. Nietzsche celebrates men's focus upon our Dionysian aspects of life as supposed to the current philosophical movement. He thinks that the real sense of life consists in everything, including in what is conventionally called evil, in darkness, in the risk of what is considered to be the dark mode of life. A work of art according to Nietzsche is the representation of life, in the sense that the undesirability and the complexity in the work of art is what we find in our own life. Life is a perfect work of art as we do not understand the meaning or the ultimate truth of art, so is the case of our life. Life can never be understood in terms of ultimate truths.

J. Hills Miller, once the leading American representative of the Geneva School of consciousness- criticism, later became one of the most prominent of deconstructors, known especially for his application of this type of critical reading to prose fiction. Miller's statement of his critical practice indicates how drastic the results may be of applying to work of literature the concepts and procedures that Derrida had developed for deconstructing the foundations of Western metaphysics:

Deconstruction as a mode of interpretation works by a careful and circumspect entering of each textual labyrinth [...] The deconstruction, rather, annihilates the ground on which the building stands by showing that



the text has already annihilated the ground, knowingly or unknowingly.

Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text but a

demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. (5)

Miller's conclusion is that any literary text, as a ceaseless play of "irreconcilable" and "contradictory" meanings, is "indeterminable" and "undecidable", hence, that "all reading is necessarily misreading"(60). The deconstructive critic seeks to find, by this process of retracing, the element in the system studied which is alogical, the thread in the text in question which will unravel it all, or the loose stone which will put down the whole building. (60)

Martin Heidegger's idea's of deconstruction comes from his rejection of traditional philosophic terminology in favor of an individual interpretation of the works of past thinkers. He applied original meanings and etymologies to individual words and expression, and coined hundreds of new, complex words. In his most important work, *Being and Time*. He was concerned with what he considered the essential philosophical question: What is it, to be? This leads to the question of what kinds of 'being' human beings have. They are, he said, thrown into a world that they have not made but that consists of potentially useful things, including cultural as well as natural objects. Because these objects come to humanity from the past and are used in the present for the sake of future goals, he posited a fundamental relation between the mode of objects, of humanity, and of the structure of the time.

Heidegger, in his essay "An Introduction to Metaphysics, 1953" turned to the interpretation of western concept of being. He felt that, in contrast to the ancient Greek conceptions of being, modern technological society has fostered a purely manipulative

attitude that has deprived Being and human life of meaning- a condition he called nihilism. Humanity has forgotten its true vocation and must recover the deeper understanding of Being (achieved by the early Greeks and lost by subsequent philosophers) to be receptive to new understandings of Being.

In the essay "The Nature of Language", Heidegger talks about the two ways of approaching language:

First is to treat language in a conventionally conceptual way. He goes against the traditional concept of treating words in relation with concept. For him, there is no distinction between signifier and signified as distinguished by Saussure. This is known as the meta-linguistics analysis.

The second one is experimental and involves recognition that language is not at a distance from us but we are identical with it. We experience language in case we go to new community.

Sigmund Freud developed his "depth psychology" or psychoanalysis and challenged the hitherto accepted belief and values. That man's actions are always guided by reason (18th century rationalist thinker) or human beings are guided by consciousness. But he deconstructs such consciousness worshiping tendencies and developed the concept that irrational impulses often determine what we think, what we dream and what we do. Such irrational impulses can be an expression of basic needs.

Thus, the deconstruction focuses on the multiple layers of meanings of a text, not an absolute meaning. It also dehierarchizes the dualisms. In the following chapter, this research attempts to read Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* in the light of the theory deconstruction and dehierarchizes the dualisms.

### Chapter-III

#### The Dehierarchization of Duality in *Uncle Vanya*: A Textual Analysis

Chekhov's in *Uncle Vanya* clearly deals with both tragic-comic vision of life. It dehierarchizes any polarizes reading. In *Uncle Vanya* tragic-comic dualisms are well reconcile. It presents 'characters and situations' in such a way that simultaneously as tragic and comic and the play as whole can interpreted simultaneously as both optimistic and pessimistic.

The first act of *Uncle Vanya* introduces us to a group of characters. Astrov, Vanya, Yelena, despite their various moral or psychic afflictions dilemmas is a better wordare appealing, sometimes wise; most of all they are substantial. Sonya is full of a rough sort of charm, innocent at first and then marked by sorrow. Telegin, for all his timidity and seemingly irrelevant stories, touches us. Marina is the old mothering nurse we'd all like to have had. Even Serebryakov, pompous and hypochondrical as he may be, is far from contemptible. Only Vanya's mother, forever scribbling in the margins, can be said to be wearisome, which is why Chekhov strategically keeps her off at the dramatic edges, having her stick her nose in only once in a great while, a note of tiresomeness and banal rectitude.

In the second act the same group of characters have abounded in their own sense, abounded but not bounded, for they have not made one step forward. In the third act, one of the characters, Uncle Vanya himself, exasperated beyond human endurance, lets off a pistol at Professor and misses him. That is all the action, properly speaking, there is in the play.

In the fourth act, some of the characters leave the house where the conversation has

been proceeding, and Uncle Vanya and Sonya, his niece, remain behind. That is all that happened. Yet the juxtaposition of these characters in these peculiar circumstance and the conversation which they make between them, open out vistas of thought and feeling. After seeing this play we know the whole lives of the seven or eight characters. We know their past, although they have told us little of it; we can guess their future. On the basis of these characters and events, we can deal in *Uncle Vanya* Chekhov's own double perception of short-term tragic hopelessness and long-term Comic faith. As we have seen, reflected in the seemingly contradictory beliefs of Dr Astrov, whose concern for the future seems to be combined with a personal fatalism.

**Pessimistic views and a tragic form in Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*.**

Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* clearly deals tragic elements through the different characters as: Astrov, Elina, Serebrayakhov, and Uncle Vanya etc. The vision of reality is expressed in terms of both a short view and a long view. The short view is essentially pessimistic and is expressed in a tragic form. Dr Astrov and Sonya are the two characters in the play who embody the combined short and long views of life. At the beginning of the play the overworked doctor is in just such a depressed mood. He has just lost a patient and this reminds him of the limitations of his profession and his own inability to significantly improve the lot of the peasants. Astrov, in this mood, loses the scientific objectivity that is vital for survival in the profession of medicine where the inevitability of death is a given. He recounts how his personal emotions became involved when his patient died. This leads him to voice his current feelings that perhaps his work and life in general, are futile:

Astrov: [...] they were crammed side by side in the huts... Filth, stench, smoke, calves on the ground by the sick [...] Little pigs too [...] I worked all

day, didn't sit down, didn't have a poppy- seed to eat, and I came home- to find rest - they brought me a railway points man; I put him on the table to operate and he goes and dies on me under the chloroform. And when there was absolutely no need, my feelings were aroused and conscience pricked me as if I'd killed him deliberately [...] I sat down, closed my eyes - like this - and thought: will those who will be living a hundred, two hundred years from now, those for whom we are now laying down the road to the future, will they remember us in their prayers? Nyanya, they won't!

Marina: Man may not remember, but God will.

Astrov: Thank you for that. It was well said. (146)

Astrov's long - term epic vision- of a better life, evidenced by his reference to the future generation for whom he and others are working, is at this point eclipsed by his short-term sense of futility. What we witness here is a momentary loss of faith on Astrov's part. We later find out that, unlike Marina and Sonya, Astrov has no belief in God to sustain him. In Act Two, after having drunk too much vodka, he embarks on a late- night talk with Sonya in which he describes this lacks of faith and sense of hopelessness by using a metaphorical image:

Sonya: So you don't like life?

Astrov: I love life in general, but I can't stand our narrow Russian provincial life, and I despise it with all the strength of my soul. And as far as my own personal life is concerned, Lord, there's really nothing good there. You know, when you walk in the forest on a dark night and if you then see a tiny light in the distance, you don't notice exhaustion or darkness or the

brambles hitting you in the face. As you know I work harder than anyone in the district, I am unremittingly knocked about by fate, from time to time I suffer unbearably, but there's no tiny light in the distance for me. I now expect nothing for myself, I don't love humanity [...] It's a long time since I loved anyone. (166-67)

Despite Astrov's awareness that from his personal individual view point there is no hope; he nevertheless continues to behave in a manner that takes into account future generations. He continues to practice medicine and also, like the playwright, he plants trees in order to halt the environmental degradation that would adversely affect the living conditions of those yet unborn. Though Dr Astrov does not appear to believe in any afterlife, he retains his faith in the idea of creating a better future for humanity. When Astrov describes the ways in which the Russian forests' are crashing down before the axe' he does not ascribe this ecological disaster to fate. According to Astrov, it is human beings who are responsible because they have chosen to behave in this irresponsible manner:

Astrov: [...] There isn't a trace of the settlements, farms, monasteries; mills there once were In general terms a picture of gradual and definite decline, which clearly will take some ten to fifteen years to become total. You may say that these are cultural influences, that the old life was naturally bound to give way to the new. Yes, I understand that: if in place of these destroyed forests they had laid highways and railroads, if in we had here factories, mills, schools, the people would be healthier, richer, better educated - but there is nothing of the kind! The district has the same swamps and

misquotes, the same lack of roads, poverty, typhus, diphtherias, fires [...].  
(177-78)

Dr. Astrov may appear to be a crank to those characters who do nothing to improve life, but to those such as Sonya, who works, appears to be almost heroic. It is hardly surprising that in Act One, when confronted by Sonya's adulation and the other characters' skepticism at his attempts to do something to save Russia's forest, he should cover his embarrassment by calling himself a 'crank'. Astrov's real attitude is revealed in his long late- night discussion with Sonya, when, having drunk a lot of vodka, he pours out his feelings to her. He admits that he may appear odd to others, but that is only because these others think , 'sallow little thoughts' and 'not one of them can see farther than the end of his own nose'. It is quiet clear from his behavior and the tone of this speech that Astrov is frustrated by the small - mindedness of those around him who, because of their irresponsible lack of effective action, make him seem the odd one out. No one else seems to be doing anything:

Astrov: [...] They whine and hate and utter their morbid gossip, they sidle up to a man and look at him sideways and decide 'Oh, he's a psychopath!' or 'He's a phrasemonger!' And when they don't know what label to stick to my forehead, they say 'He's a strange man, strange!' I love forest-that's strange; I don't eat met-that's strange; too. They have no direct, clean, free relationship with nature and with people ... None, none! [He is about to drink.](167)

In Act two both Astrov and Vanya resort to alcohol, which of course encourages their tendency toward self-pity. But unlike Vanya, Astrov is able to laugh at the very movement when he envisions a noble image of himself:

Astrov: What? Yes [...] I must admit, I am becoming coarse. You see, I'm drunk too. I usually get this drunk once a month. When I'm in this condition, I become extremely aggressive and ambitious. I can do anything then! I take on the most difficult operations and do them perfectly; I draw up the grandest plans for the future; I don't then think myself an eccentric, and I can believe I am bringing colossal benefits to mankind - colossal! Also at these times I have my own system of philosophy, and all of you, my friends, appear to me as just so many insects- microbes [...].  
(164)

Yelena makes no systematic effort to dramatize her life, but in her scene with Sonya in the second act she does fall into the trap;

Yelena Andreyevna : [...] I wish you happiness with all my heart, you deserve it ... [*Gets up*] But I am a boring incidental character[ ...] In my music and my husband's house, in all my romance-in a word, in every thing, I've always just been an incidental character. In truth, Sonya, if I think about it, I'm very, very happy! [*In her emotion, walks about the stage*] There's no happiness for me on this earth. None! Why are you laughing? (171)

Sonya explains that she is happy, but this does not prevent her laughter from undercutting Yelena's momentary self-pity. Of course, there is a further irony here in that Sonya's dream of happiness proves chimerical.



Sonya is sensitive, intelligent young girl but not attractive and thus unable to win the attention of the man she loves, Astrov. She likes Astoves. In act III the conversation between Sonya and Yelena, Sonya presents her attitudes towards Astroves which clarifies her tragic mood, as:

Yelena: You have lovely hair.

Soyna: No! [*Turns round to look at herself in a mirror.*] No! When a women is plain, people say to her, ' You have lovely eyes, you have lovely hair'...I've loved him for six years now, I love him more than my mother; every minute I hear him, I feel the pressure of his handshake, and I look at the door, I wait, I always think he's about to walk in. And, you see, I keep in coming to you to talk about him. Now he is here every day, but he doesn't look at me, he doesn't see me [...] its torment! I have no hope, none, none! [*Desperately*] O God, send me strength ... I prayed all night [...] I often go up to him, I open conversations with him, I look him in the eye [...] I've no pride now, no strength for self control [...] I gave in and yesterday I confessed to Uncle Vanya that I love ... And all the servants know that I love him. Everyone knows. (175)

Dr. Astrov's is successful to win the heart of Sonya. She is impressed with Astrov's faith that restoration of trees can restore the country side to its former state before the peasants cut down forest. Sonya tries to win Astrov's heart through Yelena but he is attracted to Yelena. He is drawn to her. From the conversation between Yelena and Astrovs it becomes clear:

Yelena: It concerns my stepdaughter Sonya. Do you like her?

Astrov: Yes, I respect her.

Yelena: Are you attracted to her as a woman?

Astrov [after a pause]: No. (179)

After knowing Sonya's deep love for Dr. Astrov, Yelena delivers her love message to Dr. Astrov but he does not show any interest to Sonya's love. He reveals that he is interested towards Yelena. He is only attracted to Sonya's beauty and he respects her. Yelena conveys to Sonya the message that Astrov does not love her by saying he won't be coming to the estate in the future. Having heard Dr Astrov, the man she loves, state that the only thing that still thrills him is 'beauty', Sonya laments:

Sonya: [*alone*]: He said nothing to me [...] His heart and soul are still hidden from me, But why do I feel so happy? [*Laughs with happiness.*] I said to him, you are cultured, noble, you have such a gentle voice [...] I can feel it in the air. But when I talked to him about a younger sister, he didn't understand. [*Wringing her hands*] Oh how I hate being plain! It's dreadful! And I know it [...] Last Sunday when we were leaving church, I heard people talking about me, and one woman said, 'She's kind and generous, but it's a pity that she's so plain.' Plain [...]. (168)

Because of Sonya's deep love to Astrov, she begs Uncle Vanya to return Astrov's narcotic once she begs Astrov to stop drinking, telling him he is handsome and should create rather than destroying himself. And in the last act of the play, Astrov drinks the vodka and goes out. Sonya follows him with a candle to see him off clarifies the tragic ending of Sonya's love to Astrove.

Uncle Vanya's fantasized dramatic scenarios is the one in which he imagines what his life might have been if he, instead of the professor, had married Helen. In one of those undisguised soliloquies that function rather awkwardly in this essentially realistic drama, Voynitsky plays the role of a young lover in his drama:

Voynitsky [*alone*]: She is gone.

[*Pause.*]

I used to meet her ten years ago at my sister's. She was seventeen then and I was thirty-seven. Why didn't I fall in love with her then and propose to her? I could have—quite easily! And she would now be my wife [...] Yes [...] We would both now have been woken by the storm, she would be frightened by the thunder and I would hold her in my arms and whisper, Don't be afraid, I'm here. (162-63)

Ilya Ilich Telegin one of the minor character in Chekhov's Uncle Vanya. An impoverished landowner, Telegin lives on the estate and dines regularly with the family. Chekhov describes his speech as high-pitched and pretentious. Nicknamed "Waffle" because of his pockmarked face, Telegin argues for faithfulness, describing how his wife left him the day after their wedding because of his appearance, yet he remained loyal to her, supporting the children she had with her lover. His tragic endings of marriage life as he mention in act one:

Telegin: Excuse me, Vanya. Because of my unprepossessing looks my wife ran off the day after our wedding with a man she loved. Since then I haven't abandoned my duty. I still love for her and am faithful to her, I help with what I can and given up my property for the education of the children she

had by the man she loved. I lost my happiness but I kept my pride. And what became of her? Her youth has now gone, by the laws of nature her beauty has faded, the man she loved has passed on [...] What has she left? (149-150)

By the time Serebryakov departs at the end of the play, it is clear that he has learned absolutely nothing:

Serebryakov: We shall let bygones be bygones. After all I've been through these last few hours; I've had much to reconsider. I believe I could benefit posterity by writing an entire tract on how to live. (196)

He remains the same pompous oaf he was in the beginning, and he demonstrates this by trying to say the opposite. He is rather reminiscent of Telegin at this moment.

### **Optimistic view and comic form in *Uncle Vanya*.**

Most of the characters in *Uncle Vanya* set themselves up for situations in which it is relatively easy to undercut them clearly because they try to maximize the minimum, creating the effect of anticlimax. The way they do this is by regularly resorting to self-dramatization or indulging in self-pity. The play consists of a collection of characters who are determined to see the drama in their own lives, but who at the same time make false one another's dramas. Serebryakov is an obvious case in point to his self-pity at the opening of the second act: The young wife dutifully ministers to him while the mind of the old egotist flits from notion to notion: the heat, the time, the book he wants, his health, and his age. This could be Serebryakov's trouble too. His self - pity becomes laughable, and so remote an association with the great adds to the comedy. In his attempt to dramatize his own predicament, his self- pity undermines his effort to dramatize:

Serebryakov: It turns out that thanks to me, everyone is exhausted and bored and wasting their youth, while I'm the only one to enjoy life and have satisfaction. Of course.

Yelena: Oh, be quiet! You've worn me down!

Serebryakov: I've worn you all down. Of course.

Yelena [*with tears in her eyes*]: It's intolerable! Tell me, what do you want from me?

Serebrykov: Nothing.

Yelena: Then be quiet. I beg you.

Serebrykov: It's a funny thing, if Ivan Petrovich or that old idiot Mariya starts talking - it's all right, everyone listens, but if I so much as say one word, then everyone begins to feel unhappy. Even the sound of my voice you find repulsive. Well, I may be repulsive, egotistical, a tyrant, but don't I even, in my old age, have some right to egoism? Don't I deserve that? I ask you, do I not have the right to a peaceful old age, to people's consideration?

Yelena: Wait, be patient: in five or six years' time I too am going to be old.[...]. (158-59)

As he goes on tormenting Yelena, he sets himself up for her one-line deflation of his self - pity. He feels neglected by every one. He tries to prove himself as a man who is not responsible to waste anyone's life in a round way. In reality he is responsible to ruin everybody life. He is not ready to accept such guilt. The result is that he appears merely pathetic.

It is only when Astrov realizes the real purpose of Helen's private conclusion that the bantering ironic tone appears. He wags his finger at her and calls her 'a little box of tricks', 'little vampire', and a 'beautiful furry little weasel'. Attracted as he is to Helen's beauty, he evinces no real passion for her. Indeed, when the time comes for him to say goodbye, realistically the situation by pointing out to Helen that their would-be affair was really only a comic interlude which for a brief time took the place of his real passion:

Astrov: [...] You came here with your husband and everyone who was busily working here and creating something had to drop what they were doing and devote the whole summer of looking after your husband's gout and you yourself. Both of you-he and you-infected all of us with your idleness. I was attracted and did nothing for a whole month, and during that time people was ill, and the peasants put their cattle out to feed in my woods with their young trees [...] And so, wherever you and your husband tread, you bring destruction. I'm joking of course, but still [...] it's strange, and I'm convinced that if you had stayed, the devastation would have been enormous. And I would have been lost, and you [...] it wouldn't have been good for you. So, leave.

In the love between Astrov and professor's wife, Chekhov depicts Astrov in an anti-romantic fashion, not as some thwarted passionate lover but as a realist who sees life without illusions and endures. It is Uncle Vanya, who attempts to be the passionate lover, and Chekhov depicts his attempts at seduction in a comic fashion. Nothing could be more ludicrous than Vanya's perfect comic entrance bearing autumn roses for Helen and finding her in the arms of Astrov. It is Vayna who,

having wasted his own life, blames the professors for his own lack of vision and then makes the comically ludicrous claim, which even he realizes is silly, that, but for the professor, he would have been a man of genius:

Voynitsky: My life is over! I am talented, clever, ambitious [...] If I'd lived normally, I might have been a Schopenhauer, a Dostoyevsky [...] I'm babbling! I'm losing my mind [...] Mother, I'm desperate! Mother!

Marina Vasilyevna [*silently*]: Listen to Aleksandr! (186)

Vanya's pain is real, but his reaction to what is in effect a mid- life crisis is ludicrously inappropriate. Here he acts with a lack of maturity and emotional independence. Vanya is middle-aged and still behave like a child in his mother's presence. It is Astrov who is forced to make Vanya face the harsh reality of his life when the unhappy self-pitying man asks the doctor to help him earlier to create a new life or help him out of this one. Astrov gives advice to Vanya when he bemoaned his un-lived life. He refuses to bolster Vanya's illusions:

Voynitsky [Vanya]: [...] what am I to do? What am I to do?

Astrov: Nothing.

Voynitsky: Give me something! Oh my God ... I'm forty seven; if I live, say, to sixty, I've still got thirteen years. A long time! How will I get through those thirteen years? What shall I do, how will I fill them? Oh, you have to understand ... [*convulsively shakes Astrov's hand*] you have to understand, if only I could live the rest of my life somehow afresh. Could wake to a bright calm morning and feel that I'd begun to live anew, that all the past was

forgotten, dissolved like smoke. [*Weeps*] Begin a new life [...] Advise me how to begin [...] where to begin [...]. (192)

Vionitsky laments for the wasted past life. He feels nervous. He thinks that he lost his past forty seven years without doing any memorable work. He imagines his total age will be sixty years. He wants to use his remaining thirteen years in useful work. In such pathetic condition he has still hope for better life. If he gets Dr. Astrov's cooperation, he will make life better. He wants some advice from Dr. Astrov. He has still enthusiasm to begin new life. He tries to forget bitter past for better future.

Astrov: [*irritatedly*] what a fool you are! What new life out there! Our situation, yours and mine, is hopeless.

Voynitsky: Is it?

Astrov: I'm sure of it.

Voynitsky: Give me something ... [*Pointing to his heart.*] There's a burning feeling here.

Astrov: [*shouting angrily*]: Stop it! [*Calming down.*] Those who will live after us in a hundred or two hundred years' time and who will despise us for living our lives so foolishly and with such a lack of taste-they may find a way of being happy, but we ... You and I have only one hope. The hope that when we lie in our coffins we'll be visited by visions, perhaps even agreeable ones. [*Sighing*] [...]. (193)

Sonya shares Astrov's faith in the efficacy of work but, unlike him, she is concealed by her belief in God and an afterlife. It is this faith that allows her to endure her individual pain at not being loved by Dr Astrov. The inconsolable Vanya, having lost his faith in the



usefulness of work, comes to the realization that he has wasted his life. While Chekhov may not have believed in God, there is little doubt that he could appreciate the sustaining power of such a belief for those who could have faith. Both Astrov's faith in ecology and Sonya's faith in God could be interpreted as a rather blatant thesis, advocating the need for faith, were it not for Chekhov's ironic undercutting of their most committed utterance. Astrov's examination of the maps that show the ecological damage occurring in Russia and his fervent resolution to do something to reserve this process is undercut by the fact that Helen (Yelena) is far more interested in him as an attractive man than as a visionary man of ideas. The scene witnessed by the audience is not one in which an environmental thesis is driven home. Instead, the scene is one of comic 'crossed wires' in which the committed Astrov is so engrossed in advancing his thesis that he is comically unaware that Helen is not listening to his ideas.

By the fourth act Dr Astrov is able to see the farcical side of his passionate scene with Yelena, which is interrupted by the arrival of Vanya with a bouquet of roses:

Yelena [*taking a pencil from his table and quickly putting it away*]: I'm taking this pencil as a souvenir.

Astrov: Isn't it strange [...] We were friends and suddenly, for some reason [...] we won't ever see each other again. It's like everything in the world [...] While there's no one here, before Uncle Vanya comes in with a bunch of flowers, allow me to [...] kiss you [...] To say goodbye [...] Yes? [*Kisses her on her cheek.*] So [...] good. (195)

The comic conversation takes place between Serebryakov and Voynitsky.

In act II, after the midnight. The professor complained of pains in his legs, this time

keeping his wife awake for two nights. Believing that he had earned the right to be disagreeable and tyrannical at his age, and feeling that he was in a vault with stupid people who made foolish conversation. He refuses to see the doctor he had summoned. He begged not to be left with Uncle Vanya, who would talk him to death. Only Marina seemed to be able to handle him; she led him away so that the other could rest.

Serebryakov [*nervously*]: No, no! Don't leave me with him! No. He'll wear me out with his talk!

Voynitsky: But you must give them some rest. It's the second night they haven't slept.

Serebryakov: Let them go to bed, but you go off too. I'd be grateful. I beg you. In the name of our former friendship, don't protest. We'll talk later.

Voynitsky [*with irony*]: Our former friendship [...] Former[...]

Sonya: Shut up, Uncle Vanya.

Serebryakov [*to his wife*]: My dear, don't leave me with him. He'll wear me out.

Voynitsky: It's even becoming funny. (160)

While Yelena may be indolent and incapable of involving herself in any useful occupation, she is intelligent enough to see her own lack of worth when compared to Astrov. She admits to Sonya that she is 'just a tiresome character and not a very important one', but she recognizes, like Sonya, that part of what makes the doctor attractive is his belief in the possibility of creating a better future :

Yelena: It's not a question of trees, or medicine [...] You see, my dear, its talent! And do you know what talent means? Courage, a free mind, a board

sweep [...] He plants a little tree and he can foretell what will come of it in a thousand years, he's already dreaming of the happiness of mankind. Such men are rare, to be loved ... he drinks, he's often a bit coarse-but what [...]

(171)

Astrov is bothered because, as he tells his old nurse, "there is nothing I want, nothing I need no one I love." Astrov has stepped backward. Uncle Vanya steps forward and kicks the wall he sees before him. If man will strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall?" Before firing an (inaccurate) shot at Serebryakov, Uncle Vanya screams while barring his path:

Voynitsky: I will not be silent! [*Blocking Serebryakov's way.*] Stay here, I haven't finished! You have destroyed my life! I haven't lived, I haven't lived! Thanks to you I wasted, I destroyed the best years of my life! You are my best enemy! (186)

But Uncle Vanya discovers that it is his own foot that hurts when he kicks the obstacle.

Just as Astrov fails to create, Uncle Vanya does not succeed in culminating his destructive impulses. He has already sacrificed the greater part of his life in a false dedication to the professor, who is a fraud. When Vanya becomes aware of the implications of his wasted life he attempts to shoot the professor and then himself. Both times he fails, and as a further insult to his masochistic pride, no one attempts to arrest him. Uncle Vanya is denied even the comfort of being thought of as a madman or a potential murderer; he is just a jester, devoid of any distinguishing personal trait. In his failure to destroy lies his inability ultimately to act out anything at all.

Uncle Vanya does not arouse anyone's sympathy. There is something comic in his love for Yelena and in his homely dreams of a mediocre life with her. It is also obvious that while Yelina responds to Astrov as a man, she does not to Uncle Vanya. As she responds

Yelena: You never used to drink, and you never used to talk so much [...] Go to bed! I'm bored with you.

Voynitsky [*kissing her hand*]: My darling [...] wonderful woman!

Yelena [*angrily*]: Leave me alone! It's disgusting.

[*Goes out.*](162)

Being an intellectual person Astrov's attraction towards Yelena's beauty. His emotions like a teenager's boy. In such condition Yelena succeeds in resisting the temptation to consummate her attraction to Astrove.

The key to *Uncle Vanya* is in the doomed trees. Astrov's passionate defense of them is comic because it bores and puzzles his listener, Yelena; but it switches the audience's concern from the disrupted family to nature off-stage, which desperately signals its distress to the uncaring characters. Uncle Vanya is thus out of focus, for all his eponymous status: his irrelevance makes him, in the last analysis, comic.

The core of the play is the arrival of the professor and his young second wife, disrupting the life, and threatening the livelihood, of his daughter Sonya and of Uncle Vanya. That the Uncle turns the gun against the professor, not himself, but farcically fails to alter anything; secondly, that a new Act IV makes a mockery of reconciliation and instead lives the old professor in full charge while the remaining characters are

abandon to their desolate future; and thirdly, that the catalyst of the action- the ecological idealist, the doctor- is also a lecherous alcoholic. Thus the inverted principals of Chekhovian comedy are established: age triumphs over youth, the servants rule their masters, and the normal world has crumbled.

**Optimistic- pessimistic view and Tragic-comic form in Uncle Vanya.**

In *Uncle Vanya*, Chekhov creates situations that are potentially tragic for the play's nominal protagonist. Despite this, Vanya's attempts to have himself seen as a person of tragic stature are constantly undercut by Chekhov. Vanya's ludicrous attempts to seduce Helen [Yelina] and kill her husband make him comically pathetic rather than tragically heroic. His claim that Serebryakov stopped him from being a Schopenhauer or a Dostoevsky is a further example of his comic tendency to overplay his part:

Voynitsky: My life is over! I am talented, clever, ambitious [...] If I had lived normally, I might have been a Schopenhauer, a Dostoyevsky [...] I'm babbling! I'm losing my mind [...] Mother, I'm desperate! Mother! (

Sonya's long speech of faith at the end of the play is undercut by the fact that she is preaching to the unconverted. Vanya appears to have little faith in the existence of Sonya's God and, even though he has now resumed working, he no longer has faith in the value of work. Sonya's lyrical last speeches are played against a background of Vanya's quiet sobbing. The sharp juxtaposition of Sonya's hope with Vanya's despair undercuts the power of her polemics while it enriches the tragi-comic complexity of the play's conclusion:

Sonya: What can I do, we've got to live!

[A pause.]

We shall live, Uncle Vanya. We shall live out many, many days and long evenings; we shall patiently bear the trails fate sends us; we shall labour for others both now and in our old age, knowing no rest, and when our tie comes, we shall meekly die, and there beyond the grave we shall say that we suffered, that we wept, that we were sorrowful, and God will have pity on us, and you and I, dear Uncle, shall see a life that is bright and beautiful and full of grace, we shall rejoice and look back on our present woes with tenderness, with a smile-and we shall rest. I believe that, Uncle, I believe fervently, passionately [...] [*Kneels before him and lays her head on his hands; in an exhausted voice*] we shall rest! (200)

In this way, in Uncle Vanya we feel the hopelessness of Sonya and Uncle Vanya, who have dedicated their lives to a mistaken ideal in supporting Professor Serebryakov, and yet we feel at least Sonya's faith that they will have eventual rest for their troubles.

We have an almost perfect example of Chekhov's tragi-comic technique, at the climatic moment in Act Three when Vanya makes his inept attempt to shoot Serebryakov. at this in the play Marina is comforting Sonya while, off-stage, Vanya and the Professor appear to be continuing their earlier on-stage quarrel. As:

Serebryakov [*running in, stumbling in fright*]: Hold him! Hold him! He's gone mad!

[*Yelensa and Voynitsky are struggling in the doorway.*]

Yelena [*trying to take a revolver from him*]: Give it to me! Give it to me, I adore you!Voynitsky: Let me go, Helene! Let me go! [*Feeling himself, he*

*runs in and looks for Serebryakov.*] Where is he? There he is! [*Shoots at him.*]Bang!

[*A pause.*] Haven't I hit him? Missed again? [*Angrily*] The devil, devil... devils take you. [*Hurls the revolver on the floor and sits down on a chair exhausted. Serebryakov is in shock; Yelena leans against a wall, she is feeling faint.*]

Yelena: Take me away from here! Take me, kill me, but [...] I can't stay here, I can't.

Voynitsky [*desperately*]: Oh what am I doing! What am I doing!

Sonya [*Quietly*]: Nyanya! Dearest Nyanya!

[*Curtain.*] (187-88)

This highly melodramatic scene, replete with two pistol shots, may initially suggest to an audience that Vanya has committed suicide off-stage. Chekhov then increases the theatrical excitement by introducing the theatrical twist of having the possibility of suicide removed and replacing on-stage. Having developed the melodramatic possibilities of the scene to their utmost, Chekhov then proceeds, through the use of comic bathos, to transform it into something that, if it were not also potentially tragic, would be akin to farce. Effective tragic action turns into empty comic gesture.

## Chapter-IV

### Conclusion

After the detailed discussion and analysis of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* from the perspective of deconstruction, this research concludes that Chekhov in *Uncle Vanya* believed in dehierarchization of duality rather than simply the optimism/pessimism or tragic/comic dualisms. It is injustice to interpret *Uncle Vanya* as a tragic or comic play by negating one and highlighting other. Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* represents both tragic and comic aspects of life. Life is not comic or tragic only. So *Uncle Vanya* captures the reality of life by giving equal priority to both tragic and comic happenings.

In *Uncle Vanya* characters as Vanya, Astrov, Sonya, and Yelena are the main characters and each experiences similar frustration and in a tragic form. In short term, there is nothing for the characters to do but endure. This does not mean that they should sit around and mope but, rather, do as Astrov and Sonya and even Uncle Vanya do in their different ways: works.

In *Uncle Vanya* we feel the hopelessness of Sonya and Vanya, who have dedicated their lives to a mistaken ideal in supporting Professor Serebryakov and yet we feel at least Sonya's faith that they will have eventual rest for their troubles.

Chekhov's uses comedy for philosophical purpose. Comedy is used as a kind of 'alienation effect' that works against the creation of any 'cathartic experience' and highlights both the choice that the characters have made different choices. The distancing effect of comedy allows spectators to see the situation more clearly than if they are encouraged to have the kind of uncritical empathetic response that pure tragedy tends to promote



Vanya in the play seizes gun, fires twice at his ungrateful brother-in-law and misses. In the end, however, all is forgiven: the professor and his beautiful wife leave the city while Uncle Vanya and his niece promise to keep sending him money and go on working hard to make their unhappiness bearable. *Uncle Vanya* leave us bemused: should we laugh or cry?

While he holds out no hope for any salvation in his own lifetime or in any afterlife, Astrov is able to endure because of his faith in future generations. The importance of interpreting this character in terms both of his short-term pessimism and his long-term optimism cannot be overstressed as it is only when both are realized on stage that Chekhov's tragic-comic vision can be experienced by an audience.

In concluding point, all the characters and events in Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* that manifests itself in the form of synthetic tragi-comedy. In *Uncle Vanya*, the vision of reality is expressed in terms of both a short view and a long view. The short view is pessimistic and in a tragic form, while the long view is optimistic and associated with the comic aspect of the play.

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