

Chapter - I

Introduction

This research emphasizes human freedom and choice and focuses on the sources of mendacity, anxiety, nothingness and alienation in relation to Coetzee's *Slow Man*. The term existential 'other' refers to the alienation and estrangement of the self both from the world and from itself. In *Slow Man*, Coetzee presents the world which itself is not brought into being through the projection but it retains its otherness and thus comes forth as utterly alien. The experience of 'other', basic to existential thought, contrasts most sharply with the ancient notion of a *Kosmos* in which human beings have a well-ordered place, and it connects existential thought to the modern experience of a meaningless universe. Sartre states:

It is because there are other in the world that I can take a third – person in the world perspective on myself; but this reveals the extent to which I am *alienated* from a dimension of my being: who I am in an objective sense can be originally revealed only by the Other. This has implication for existential social theory. (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 4)

Coetzee exploits this form of existential 'other' in his *Slow Man*. The protagonist, Paul can not experience himself as something- a voyeur, for instance; it is the sense of other which gives rise to the mode of his sense of alienation. The experience of 'other' also yields the existential theme of the absurd, a version of what was previously introduced as alienation from the world.

Due to the existential crisis, the protagonist Rayment does not find the alternative location from where he can celebrate his historical and cultural identity.

Moreover, another layer of his suffering is the cause of his loneliness. Richard Graves presents about the protagonist's loneliness and suffering in these words:

Rayment's leg must be amputated. In the hospital he is forced again and again to explain that he has no family, no friends who wishes to have help him. He refers a prosthetic limb. Essentially he gives up the will to live, though he also does not have the drive to kill himself.

Released from the hospital, he moves home and is dependent on nurse to wash and feed him. (1)

In existential philosophy, other refers to the human condition that is sense of alienation, estrangement, agony and loneliness. Ashcroft et al. consider this phrase in this manner [I]n existential philosophy, notably by Sartre in "Being and Nothingness" to define the relations between "Self" and "Other" in creating self-awareness and ideas of identity" (169). Rayment finds his life meaningless and purposelessness because of his accidents that make him live an undeclared death. For him, life is very miserable thing. In Coetzee's writings, Benjamin strongly observes the influence of Becket and the colonial setting at the same time. His writings tend to be "more allegorical, as stark and unforgiving as a veldt or the stage in Beckett. Each of these books imagines the dissolution of power in a plainly colonial but nevertheless a historical setting"(1). Likewise, Ron Charles states that the fragility of health, the loneliness of old age, the limits of medical care is the focus of *Slow Man* (2). He further analyses on Paul's absurd situation and his efforts in this way:

Paul knows "the situation is absurd," but he fantasizes endlessly about winning Marijana's heart, caring for her three children even serving as her "co-husband if need be, platonic if need be. "if the story never recaptures the drama of its opening moments, the one-side romance

between Paul and Marjana generates at least enough momentum to keep Slow Man moving through territory. (2)

J.M. Coetzee raises the issue of human suffering from the alternative location of displacement. His novel *Slow Man* not only addresses the issue of postcolonial apartheid, racism and colonialism but also touches the issue of wide range.

Reinforcing the same concepts, Hillary Frey writes: “As Coetzee gets older himself and shifts focus from his homeland of South Africa and the legacy of apartheid to other things (including animal rights and, more important, again) we have a lot to look forward to” (2). He further analyses that “despair” is the main issue of *Slow Man* (2).

In *Slow Man*, Coetzee is able to raise the issue of displacement and human suffering because of the existential choice: “We don’t have a choice Paul, he says. It’s not one of those situations where we have a choice. Do you understand that? Do I have your consent? (*Slow Man* 5). Rayment’s consent is only the formality because whether he agree or disagree, his leg should be caught. In the same vein whether he likes death or not, it comes without asking him: “He does not want death because he does not want anything”(26). This statement evokes the absurd situation of the protagonist. Most novels deal in subtle states of consciousness, but this one opens with a state of unconsciousness. Paul Rayment, the childless, solitary, unfulfilled 60 –year – old protagonist, is knocked off his bicycle by a car and has one leg amputated above the knee.

Rayment is already crippled enough. He is a kind of spiritual amputee who has been ‘missing himself’ all his life, adrift between life and death. Three times exiled, and now living in the vast refugee camp known as Australia, he is a foreigner to human existence, with all the sardonic, self – ironising detachment of the literary artist. If this emotionally mutilated émigré has done no harm in his desultory

existence, neither has he done any good. He is an 'after -man' like an expert photographer, he is professionally familiar.

J..M. Coetzee, a Nobel Prize winner in Literature in 2003, is a writer who is strongly influenced by his own personal background of being born and growing up in South Africa. Although a white writer living in South African during apartheid, Coetzee grew to believe in and write with strong anti- imperialist feeling. His writing is said to be mostly influenced by the postmodernist writers of Europe and America. His personal experience and assumption can be analyzed in his writing. He not only raises issues of postcolonialism in relation to the alienation, solitude, loneliness and absurdism. In the same manner, Leusmann views that Coetzee's writing are influenced by Beckett that glorify the there of alienation (1). Moreover, Cowley states about Coetzee's writing and the solitary characters in this way:

All of Coetzee's writing are similar in that they often center an a solitary character. No direct moral is ever given, but rather situation are set up for the reader to think about. Coetzee's aim is not to provide solution, but to highlight problems and have the reader their own conclusion. (2)

Similarly, Coetzee describes his sense of alienation from fellow Afrikaners in his biography, *Boyhood: Scenes From Proficiencies Life*. He also writes in his biography and his novels about the laws that divided himself and others into social categories that served to further alienate him. His *Slow Man* is a sparse but large story about humanity and hope, the restructuring of a life cramped by the strictures of consciousness. It is a novel drenched in melancholia and yet oddly whimsical, and Coetzee gives himself an open-ended platform for his ideas. Paul is a 60-year -old disheartred man in Adelaide, Australia. Divorced and childness a photographer and

photo archivist, he leads a circumspect life, bicycling here and there or visiting the library. The solitary pursuits belongs to his recent life, the past receding even as he reaches out to grab its memories:

I think we are to draw some conclusions about the nature of storytelling, the relation of fact to imagination, reality to illusion, and the very thin line between what we regard as material and what we think of as imaginary. Rayment clings to the conventional idea that novelists are always looking for a story and that he is, for the moment, the focus of Elizabeth Costello's attention. She is, however, something of a mystery, sleeping in the park among "hobos" or offering courses of action which she repudiates later. The dye phrase here, I think is her claim that "he came to her".

Rayment thinks she is referring to some geographical movement but of course she is thinking of something inspirational as in the phrase "it came to me that . . .".

In *Duskland*, Coetzee focuses on two settings: one, the US State Department during the Vietnam era and two, stories of the exploration and conquest of Southern Africa in the 1760's by a man named Jacobus Coetzee. These two vastly different locations work together to bring out the alarm and paranoia of agreeeseors no matter what the location and to show the unthinkable ways in which dominant groups impose their ways upon other cultures.

His first novel to win the Booker Prize, *The life and Times of Michael K*, is set in Cape Town, a city on the verge of racial wars, and centers around a gardener who attempts to transport his dying mother to the farm of her youth. Although she dies during the journey, Michael K continues on to her farm whither ashes. He lives quite happily in solitude on her old farm until he is captured and accused of aiding guerillas. The great weight of the novel relies on the fact that it does not focus on racial separations but is more concerned with saving humanity as a whole.

In his latest novel and the one responsible for garnering him a second Booker Prize, *Disgrace*, Coetzee deals with a south African professor name David who goes out to visit Lucy, his daughter, on her farm. While he is there a gang of two men rapes his daughter. When her father sees the boy at a party thrown by Lucy's neighbor, Petrus, he demands justice. Petrus refuses, and promises protection from further attacks to Lucy only if she marries him. The issues in this novel deal with many of the current plights of South Africa. Land, crime, rape, lack of police protection and racial divides are all themes of the novel and problems in modern day South Africa.

The first part of *Slow Man*, which depicts hospital treatment from the viewpoint of an exceedingly astute patient, should be compulsory reading for every medic. Rayment is less stricken by the sudden loss of his limb than deeply outraged, as though a total stranger has just robbed him of something unutterably precious. With the shattering of dignity, he endures the infantilizing patronage of a nurse with “bouncy, cheerful voice” who calls a bedpan a potty and his penis his willie. His healing stump reminds him first of cured ham, then of some sightless deep- water fish. When he is naked before the unbearably bouncy nurse, he averts his eyes so that she will see he does see her seeing him.

Once reinstalled in his Adelaide home, the newly lopsided Rayment falls touchingly, ridiculously in love with the strapping Croatian nurse, Marijana, assigned to his care. We are meant to see the pathos of this great passion for a woman who sexually speaking doesn't give a toss for him, but also to see it as a symptom of some subterranean spiritual rebirth. Like most men and women unaccustomed to handling emotion, Rayment grows tipsy on the tiniest slip of the stuff.

Rayment's love for Marijana, while authentic enough, takes the form of paternal fantasies of protecting her and her family; and like all well from of paternal

fantasies of protecting her and her family; and like all well meaning middle –class liberals who aren't used to human emotional involvement will make a particular hash of it if they get sucked in, rather as rest while celibates may turn out to be the greatest philanders. Rayment wants to bless Marijana's family and make them thrive. Is this the stirrings of saintliness in him, or a self- serving illusion of God like omnipotence?

Nothing in this superbly intricate novel is as unambiguous as it seems.

Rayment's self- indulgent meddling is also a genuine desire to do some selfless deep before his morally shabby existence stumbles to a close. As the narrative unfolds, we are invited to reflect on whether there can really be a disinterested love. Rayment's adolescent fixation on Marijuana is scarcely that, ridden as it is with delusion and pious self- deception; so perhaps nursing, or medical ministrations in general, may serve as an image of a kind of love that sees its object dispassionately for what it is. If this is so, then what it resembles most closely is art, which at its finest is also a delusion- free zone. Yet if medics are to tend their patients effectively, they must be as dispassionate as artist; and this is not the kind of love, which Rayment is seeking. Does genuine altruism not involve care? And does passionate care invariably involve basically not caring invariably involve a warping self- interest?

Not long after slow man gets into gear, it shifts from being a realist novel to being a modernist one, with the entry Rayment's dingy existence of the celebrated Australian novelist Elizabeth Costello. Elizabeth Costello, as Coetzee fans will be aware, is the title of his last- published work of fiction, so that Costello has strayed out of one literary text into another. Quite what she is doing here is tantalizingly enigmatic. She is part lover, part therapist, part fixer or go- between, part just a sick rootless old woman who holds up an unflattering mirror to Rayment of himself. But she is also a secret emissary of the author himself, and like Coetzee appears to be

writing a story in which Rayment figures as the central character. It isn't surprising that she tends to speak like a book. Is Rayment, then, just an unreal creation of Costello, who is in turn a figment of Coetzee's imagination? And if characters are just figments of writers, it is not true that writers are in a sense creatures of their own creations?

Introducing the author/ character relationship into a novel is hardly an original device, but it is a powerful image of the vexed relation between freedom and determinism. Can Rayment really make ethical decisions, or is he already rigorously scripted by his author? If so, is the same true of us non-fictional types, out here in the real world? Perhaps, like characters in fiction, we have freedom to act, but only within the severe limits set upon us. Most novelists feel that their characters come to assume an autonomous life of their own, behaving with surprising unpredictability and slipping rebelliously from their control; and this is certainly true of Rayment, who resents Costello's intervening in his life. Yet wouldn't "freedom" for a fictional character mean simply disappearing into thin air? Rayment can indeed shuck off Elizabeth- but only (like a successfully cured psychoanalytic patient) if he sheds his erotic fantasies about Marijana, confronts his own existence, and thus renders his "author" redundant. Elizabeth wants to "bring him to life" which is what all writers, want to do to their characters; but he can be restored to life only by bringing life to another. And this in a magnificent final scene, he does not by extravagantly giving, but by the rather more arduous act of receiving.

This, then, is a novel about redemption, as Rayment learns that he has to be worthy of being a fictional hero by bringing his heart out of hiding. Like the rest of us, he has to become a more engaging character than he actually is – which means viewing himself with something of the starkly demystified honesty with which his

author dissects him. Perhaps, then, that nasty crash on the road, as in classical tragedy, is the seed of a mysterious renewal. It has put Rayment in touch with his flesh, in more senses than one; and he ends up the novel refusing to settle for anything less than love.

Slow Man may be a grimly disenchanted narrative; but it is detached enough from its own bleakness to reflect at one point that there is some thing curiously comic about losing any part of the body- especially, Rayment adds with his steely lack of self-pity, 'one that sticks out.'

Chapter - II

Theoretical Modality

Existentialism

The term existentialism gives emphasis on the meaninglessness, purposelessness and absurd situation of human existence. It maintains that existence precedes essence which implies that the human being has no essence because he is no more than what he is. The sense of alienation and estrangement give rise to widespread of despair from the establish order and values. This term “Existentialism” came into prominence particularly in Germany and France as a philosophical movement after the world wars. These feeling of despair and streaming led to the idea that people have to create their own existence and values because of the shattered of the traditional values. Existentialism evokes the human reality that human beings are thrown into the world where suffering and pain is responsible only to himself. As with Neitzshe, man creates moral values. Besides being free, man is a finite and contingent being, existing in a world that is devoid of purpose. The pessimism, resulting from this position is like wise expressed by Camus’ doctrine of “the absurd”. Absurdity or contradictions arise from the clash between human hopes and desires and the meaningless universe into which man has been thrown.

Regarding the concept of Existential Other, Sartre illustrates the two important philosophical issues concerning freedom. The first is the individual’s freedom which is restricted by others’ judgments of his actions and the second is the definition of one’s self-identity. An individual suffers not only when others restrict his freedom of action but also when others define him. Although he acts freely and defines himself through his actions, his activities occur in the social circumstances where his activities are judged by others. As a result, these social circumstances contribute to the

definition of individual's self. Sartre in his article "No Exist" sees the conflict interpersonal relations as, "each individual aims to be free and to avoid becoming subject to others' control".(69)

Moreover, the individual-self is defined by our actions. If our actions come to half in death, they become our essence. Only our actions determine our essence because there are no alternative chances. The sense of loneliness, estrangement and alienation are the inflexible situation of being bound by our own actions. Thus, an individual is the sum total of his actions. Furthermore, the concept of Other refers to the individual's loneliness, alienation and estrangement in relation to his own actions. The sense of Other is the unavoidable human situation of being free which confines the individual's own judgment. There is no way to define individual's freedom without the consciousness of loneliness and alienation.

After the two great world wars, 'existentialism' came into prominence, particularly in Germany and France as a philosophical moment or tendency. These world wars gave rise to widespread feelings of despair and separation from the established order. These feelings led to the idea that people have to create their own values in the world in which traditional values no longer reign. Existentialism insists that choices have to be made arbitrarily by individuals, who thus create themselves, because there are no objective standards to determine choice. Existentialism draws attention to the risk, the void of human reality and admits that the human being is thrown into the world in which pain, frustration, sickness, contempt; alienation, malaise and death dominate. It was during the Second World War, when Europe found itself in a crisis and faced death and destruction, existentialist movement began to flourish. Existentialism as a contemporary philosophical trend reached its zenith in the year following the war, the time when Europe was in a despairing mood, perhaps

not without the hope of social reconstruction but pessimistic and morbid enough to accept the existentialist outlook of lack of design and intention in the universe and the nausea of human existence and its frustration. The dark portrait of such sickness could be found even in the optimistic and confident nineteenth century in the works of authors as diverse as Karl Marx, Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. Thus, the central idea of Existential theory is the idea of man being responsible for his own actions.

Existentialism as a school of thought devotes to the interpretation of human Existence. The term “existence” comes from the Latin root ex “out” and *istere* from stare “to stand” (Cuddon 316). Thus existence means to stand out in the universe. It takes human being as an isolated existent into an alien universe. The feeling of despair and separation gave idea that people have to create their own values. Therefore, one has to make choices and create self. One exists up to the extent one makes choices. Existentialism is less of an-‘ism’ than an attitude that expresses itself in a variety of ways. Because of the diversity of positions associated with Existentialism, no single strict definition is possible; however, it suggests one major theme; it lays stress on concrete individual existence, freedom and choice. Ryan gives an explanation of existentialism:

Hence there is no single existentialist philosophy, and no single definition of the word can give. However, it may be said that with the existentialists the problem of man is central and that they stress man’s concrete existence, his contingent nature, his personal freedom and his consequent responsibility for what he does and makes him to be. (639)

Existentialism focuses on the lack of meaning and purpose in life and solitude of human existence. Existentialism really concerns what authentic route people may

take in the world where values and certainties are smashed into fragments how people can cope with negative aspects of human existence like depression, frustration, pain, anxiety, alienation caused by modern society. Along with the consideration of the role of time and awareness of death, these questions seem to be the concern of existentialism. Existential philosophy is concerned with the existence of the individual's life and death. They do not go with traditional attempt to get the ultimate nature of the world in abstract system of thought. Instead, they search for what it is like to be an 'individual' human being in the world. Whether the thing is true or false, that depends on the decision the individual makes. What is true to one may be false to other. So, truth is subjective according to existentialism.

The existentialists conclude that human choice is subjective because individual finally must make their own choices without help from such external standards as laws, ethical rules, or traditions. Because individuals make their own choices, they are 'free', but because they choose, they are completely 'responsible' for their choices. Macintyre says, "Even if I do not choose, I have chosen not to choose" (149). The existentialists emphasize that freedom is accompanied by responsibility. Freedom is not new with the existentialists. Renaissance humanists were also the supporters of human freedom. They look very positively. Due to freedom, man can expose unlimited potentiality. But the existentialists take freedom as a curse. Sartre says "We are condemned to be free" (56). Because of freedom, there is no one to dictate us what to do and what not to. We have to do ourselves.

According to this philosophy man is a sole director of his destiny. In fact, existentialism goes back to man's pre-philosophical attempts to attain self-awareness and understanding of existence. That means the elements of existentialism can be found in the classical philosophy. The connection of being and thinking was Greek

insight and it is this very insight that the modern existentialists are trying to re-establish. The ancient Greek thought was revolutionized by Socrates who shifted the attention of the study of philosophy from nature to man. Socrates asked people to understand the need of the self. He made people responsible towards the self. In this context Richard Tarnas in *The Passion of the Western Mind* comments:

In Socrates' view, any attempts to foster true success and excellence in human life had to take account of the inner most reality of a human being, his soul and psyche. Perhaps on the basis of his own highly developed sense of individual, and, selfhood and self control, Socrates brought to the Greek mind and new awareness of the central significance of the soul, establishing it for the first time as the seat of the individual making the moral and intellectual character. (33)

Before Socrates, Philosophers were concerned with the issue of cosmos. They tried to understand the functioning of the universe. But Socrates laid stress on human existence. Like modern existentialists, Socrates laid stress on individuality. For him, self is prior to everything. The joy springs from the heart, not from external circumstances, that is reputation, power and wealth.

Existential elements can be seen even in the medieval age, especially in the philosophy of St. Augustine. Richard Tarnas, in *The Passion of the Western Mind*, supports it in the following passage:

Augustine possessed an existentialist's self-awareness with his highly developed capacity for introspection and self-confrontation, his concern with memory consciousness and time his psychological perspicacity, his doubt and remorse, his sense of solitary alienation of human self without God, his intensity of inner conflict, his intellectual skepticism

and sophistication. Augustine who could doubt in everything, but not the fact of soul's own experience of doubting and knowing, willing and existing thereby affirms certain existence of human ego in the soul.

(144)

Medieval age was characterized by the belief in god. Everything was seen through the eyes of god. So man was expected to surrender before god for salvation. Augustine asked man not to go outside himself in the quest of truth. He affirmed the existence of human ego in the soul. He gave importance to the individual self.

The existential trace can be found in the works of Montaigne as well. He writes about himself rather than handling other issues. He assigns importance to the self. In the same vein, Charles Van Doren, in *The History of Knowledge* views:

Montaigne's main aim is to reveal with utter honesty and frankness the author's mind and heart. Montaigne makes no attempt to conceal his faults but he does not beat his breast, either and demand forgiveness. He is content to report what he is, what he thinks, what he feels. He doesn't hide anything. He makes the exploration of his self. (89)

Montaigne in his essay reveals what he thinks and what he feels. He does not hide anything. He makes the exploration of his self.

Existentialism as a distinct philosophy began with the Danish Christian thinker Kierkegaard in the first half of 19th century. He was critical of Hegel's philosophical system which analyzed existence in an abstract and impersonal way. He swerved the study of philosophy to the subjective, emotional and living aspect of human existence as against Hegel's objective and abstract academization of reality. He discussed man's essence with the existential predicaments and limitations, hope, despair, anxiety.

Gaarder in *Sophie's World* acknowledged that "he thought that both the idealism of

the Romantics and Hegel's 'historicism' had obscured the individual's responsibility of his own life" (377).

The development of modern existentialism is preceded by the works of German phenomenologist Frenz Brento and Edmund Husserl. They were immediately followed by modern existentialists. Phenomenology studies the human consciousness. The world is as it appears to us. It means phenomenology gives stress on subjectivism. Skirbekk and Nils Gilje define phenomenology in this way:

Phenomenology aims to describe the every day items that we use, as they appears to us; the pencil with, which I am now writing is described as it is in this context. Phenomenology attacks the view that pencil is only a collection of atoms. In this sense, we can say that this school aims to reconstruct the universe in all of its diversity and fullness, with all of its qualities, as opposed to a one-dimensional standardization based on scientific philosophy. (440)

According to the phenomenological concept, all understanding and perceptions are subjective. An individual plays a central role in perception. The doctrine of intentionality holds that everything depends upon the consciousness of an individual who perceives things other than himself as objects. Phenomenology gives emphasis on the individuality. So the existential notion of individual can be considered as the systematic growth of phenomenological concept of intentionality.

The idea of intentionality and individuality influenced existentialism. Stressing on the human existence, Martin Heideger, Sartre, and Camus developed existentialism. Existentialism is the movement of 40's and 60's, literary and artistic as well as philosophical. Sartre is also a convenient representative of Existentialism and

offers a definition for the word. It was unusual for existentialists to identify themselves as such. So Sartre takes a convenient place to begin with.

Sartre divides existentialist thinkers into two groups: theistic and atheistic. The theistic group includes Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel who are supposed to believe in the Christian faith. In the second atheistic group, Sartre puts himself with Heidegger, Nietzsche and other French existentialists who do not believe in god. The atheistic existentialists discard the concept of God as an authentic shelter. They regarded human being as optimistically forlorn, free and supportless creatures. The absence of God implies the loss of value.

Kierkegaard is an existentialist because he accepts the absurdity of the world as fully as Sartre or Camus. But he does not begin with the postulate of non-existence of God, but with the principle that nothing in the world, nothing available to sense or reason, provides any knowledge or reason to believe in god. Kierkegaard's moral and religious seriousness offered a more promising basis for the development of existentialist themes than the basically nihilistic, egocentric, and hopeless approach of Nietzsche, Sartre. Thus, while Sartre achieved for a time a higher profile in the fashionable literary world, theistic Existentialists, like Nikolay Berdyayav, Paul Tillich and Martin Buber continued Kierkegaard's work with updated approaches to traditional religions. Atheistic Existentialism really exhausted itself. The effort of will required for Sisyphus to maintain his enthusiasm. It is really beyond most human capacity, and better the solace of traditional religion than the vicious pseudo-religions of communism or fascism.

Standing very close to the philosophical outlook of Sartre is his life long companion and intellectual associate Simone de Beauvoir. But to suggest that because she was close to Sartre, her thoughts are a mere duplication of Sartre would be a

mistake. She gives an independent interpretation of existentialism, though not radically different from Sartre's. Unlike him, she chooses to concentrate on the personal and moral aspect of life. She attempted to apply existentialism to feminism. Sartre, it should be remembered, failed to produce his promised work on ethics. She treats existentialism from very the feminist point of view. In her book, *The Second Sex*, she takes the position that the history of attitudes of women has determined her own views. Audi says:

Her master piece, *The Second Sex*, relies heavily on the distinction, part existentialist and Hegelian in inspiration, between a life of immanence, or passive acceptance of the role into which one has been socialized, and one of transcendence, actively and freely testing one's possibilities with a view to redefining one's future. Historically, women have been consigned to the sphere of immanence, says de Beauvoir, but in fact a woman in the traditional sense is not something that one is made, without appeal, but rather something that one becomes. (256)

Beauvoir denied the existence of a basic 'female nature' or 'male nature'. It has been generally claimed that man has a 'transcending' nature so he will seek meaning and direction outside the home. Woman is 'immanent' which means she wishes to be where she is. She will therefore nurture her family, care for the environment and more homely things. For that, Beauvoir did not agree with the way we perceive the sexes.

Another French existentialist Albert Camus reflects the loss of certainties in the post-modern world. In his view, each individual has a design in their own life as a project. The choice and responsibility of that project falls entirely on them. Camus was concerned with the freedom and responsibility of the individual, the alienation of

the individual from society, and the difficulty of facing life without the comfort of believing in God or in absolute moral standards. He is associated with Existentialism because of the apparent absurdity and futility of life, the indifference of the universe, and the necessity of engagement in a just cause.

Camus thinks that human existence is absurd. The modern world is full of injustice: millions work in repetitive exploitative jobs. He thinks that we should rebel against the absurdities by refusing to participate in them. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus asserts that by refusal to surrender, Sisyphus the representative of modern man, can create meaning through a free act of affirmation in which he gives meaning to a situation which until then had none. Camus, in "The Myth of Sisyphus", says:

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of the night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (70)

To get liberation from the anxiety of the absurd world, one may go to the rules of God or he may submit himself to the hand of death. But either of these choices is ridiculous and bad for the absurd man. The living of the absurd man depends upon the maximum struggle against this absurdity. The world is full of absurdity, but Sisyphus teaches revolt against action that offers freedom and justification of continuing life.

Existentialist thinkers begin from the human situation in the world; the modes of existence, the condition of despair, the human being's tendency, to avoid authentic existence, his relation to things for his own body or to other beings with whom he

cannot come into genuine communication, and the suffering of life. Starting from the study of being, Existentialist thinkers originate their own doctrines with their own emphasis on particular aspects. Very often their view points are conflicting and sometimes contradictory; yet this philosophical attitude of being, as a whole, can be described as the existentialist movement, which stresses upon the 'being' of the human being. It is necessary to make separate discussion on some of the existential philosophers. Here follows the discussion on some prominent figures and their concept of existentialism in short.

. Soren Kierkegaard advocates that individual existence is prior to everything. In contrasting philosophy from Plato to Hegel with authentic Christianity, he emphasized the concepts of individual, of choice, of dread and of paradox. He argues that human mind of free and he can make choices and decisions of him own. "It is only when we act especially we make significant choices that we relate to our own existence" (Garder 380). When a man comes to realize that he is sourly responsible for his decisions and destiny he feels unnerved. Freedom is his bliss, into freedom to do this or that, but freedom to know him. So, Kierkegaard believes that truth is subjective. There cannot be any truth that is objective and universal. He only believes in the existence of God and not in Christian doctrine. He stresses that "Christianity is therefore not a doctrine, but the fact that God has existed" (Ellmann 857). Though he believes in God but takes as a matter of faith.

Thus, he argues, "There are two options for the individual to choose either he has to choose God and get redemption from the angst and ethic-religious choice or has to reject God and go to perdition, and atheistic choice" (830). According to him, the choice is, paradoxically, Criterion less and it is individual himself who has to fix criteria by making choice.

Nietzsche was a radical German critic of the western tradition; strongly emphasized that life should be the center of everything. Garder remarks in *Sophie's World* as: "Nietzsche, both Christianity and traditional philosophy had turned away from the real world and pointed toward 'heaven' or the world of ideas" (455). He stress on this world but not heaven or the world of ideas. For him historical knowledge does not serve life. In an essay, *On the Use and Abuse of history* Nietzsche classified that one needs education "for the life and action, not for a comfortable turning away from life and action or merely for glossing over the egoistical life and the cowardly bad act. We wish to use history only as for as it serve living" (152).

Nietzsche proclaimed the 'death of god' and went on to reject the entire Judeo-Christian moral tradition in favor of a heroic pagan ideal. He called Christianity a 'slave morality' and half that religion provides not truth because God is dead and Christianity has become the shelter of weak and disable people. In his famous essay, "The Death of God and Antichrist" he writes:

The Christian conception of God-God as God of the sick, God as a spider, and God as spirits is one of the most corrupt conceptions of he divine ever attained on earth. It may even represent the low- water mark in the descending developing of divine types. God degenerated into the contradiction of war against life, against nature, against he will to live! (912)

For him since the God is dead, there lie many possibilities and choices. Nietzsche says that life is all irrational and cruel features hover round it. Nietzsche stresses upon the individual who confronts existence heroically.

Heidegger was known as the leading existentialist thinker. His interest was in the 'question of being'. For him being is not realized in normal situation. It does not

occur all the time. It is realized in the state of boredom, anxiety as he states in “*What is Metaphysics?*” : “ It irrupts when one is bored, profound boredom drifting here and there in the abysses of our existence like a muffling fog, removes all things and men and oneself along with it into a remarkable indifference. This boredom reveals being as a whole” (4).

He explained the distinction between beings and Being. “The oblivion of Being (individual) into the beings (group) has made us lost in the unreal universe” (Ellmann 879). He believes that we have been living in an incompressible, indifferent world. The universe is alien to us. According to Heidegger, to consider individual only the representation of mass is the recurrent mistake of metaphysics. He held the belief that “man should face explicitly the problem of being; he has to determine his own existence, create his own possibility and make choice and commitment” (Perryetal 756). Human beings can never hope to understand why they are here in the world. Instead, each individual must choose a goal and follow it with passionate conviction. The principle object of investigation, for him, is the search of being and more particularly man’s being (Dasein).

Sartre was the leading advocate of existentialism and French philosopher who believes that existentialism is humanism since it traces human undertaking as the point of departure. Establishing existentialism as the humanistic philosophy, he argues that “by existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity” (10). Then existentialism gives dignity to man. It encourages human action. He thought that there was no fixed human nature or essence and so the individual has to choose his/her being.

Sartre declared that Marxism was the only contemporary philosophy; so Marxism must come to recognize the human being's existentialist freedom. He made a contrast to a divine viewpoint on the world and on human nature with a human viewpoint where there is no divine element. When God thought about creating world, he conceived it first, he had in mind what the world was going to be and what human nature was going to be. These were the "essences" of the world and of humanity, the things that will make them what they are. Then God created everything and is existence to the essences. Thus, to god, essence precedes existence. Now, Sartre did not believe in God, so there was no place for the essence of humanity to be before human existence. To us, existence comes first, the essence later. Indeed, the essence is whatever we decide it is going to be. Human existence or being differs from the being of object in that human being is self-conscious. This self conscious also gives the human subject the opportunity to define self. The individual creates his/her self by making self-directed choices.

As human existence is self-conscious without being pre-defined, we as autonomous being are 'condemned to be free' - compelled to make future directed choices. Every individual simply follows custom or social expectations in order to escape this angst; we have escaped the responsibility of making our own choices, of creating our own essence. We are free to create our own interpretation of ourselves in relation to the world, to create a project of possibilities, of authentic actions as the expression of freedom. According to Sartre, the individual has the potentiality to become more than what he or she is since "man is nothing else but what he makes of himself" (15). Each individual has to make his own universe with a meaning of his own. Sartre claims, "there is no reality, except in action" (32). Sartre divides living as

authentic and inauthentic. He chooses authentic living stressing that one must choose and make a commitment to make better.

Sartre makes a clear distinction between being-in-itself (en-soi) and being-for-itself (pour-soi). En-soi applies to things; this means a thing is basically what it is. In case of human being existence precedes essence. Therefore man is pour-soi: “The best way to conceive of the fundamental project of human reality is to say that man is the being whose project is to be God” (63). According to him we first exist, appear on the scene, make a choice and create our identity. It is through our choices that we create meaning in our life. Since our involvement in the world creates essence, there is no predetermined essence to govern our existence.

Thus, as conscious person, a man can exist shut being-in-itself. No God is needed to account for his being. So, Sartre connects existentialism with humanism, not in the sense of regarding man as the ultimate end, but in the sense of regarding man as the creator of all values.

Albert Camus was a journalist, novelist and philosopher. For him absurdity of life is the first concept. He compares the situation of human life to that of the mythical figure Sisyphus revealing that our life is a series of meaningless actions culminating in death, with no possibility of external justification. According to Camus, the human future is unique and dread full. So, he evaluates modern man and his situation in the following passage:

A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope

of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity. (13)

Camus believes that human being is an isolated existent in an alien universe. The universe does not possess any inherent truth, value or meaning. "This universe", states Camus, "henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile not futile" (Ellmann 852). Camus reached to a conclusion to declare the condition of man absurd when he realized that the speculative system of past provided no reliable guidance for life. When the absurd man becomes aware of his futile living, he is naturally filled with anxiety and helplessness. Then one realizes that forlornness, anguish, despair are the characteristics of life. To get liberation from the anxiety of the absurd world if one chooses to submit oneself to the hand of god or death, for him, either of these choices is ridiculous. He believes that one needs to accept the challenge but not to commit suicide and bow before God.

Albert Camus lays emphasis upon choices. Sisyphus is given the choices. He does not surrender to God and makes a choice. He believes that choice leads us to absurdity but joy comes out of that absurdity. As Ellmann and Fieldelson remarks, he sees man "arriving through admission of absurdity, at an affirmation of his own worth" (806). He focuses on struggle against absurdity for humanism and optimism.

To sum up, Existentialists are obsessed with the meaning of life. They focus exclusively on the individual. Though life is very difficult and does not have any objective or universally known value, yet, existentialism attempts to find happiness and meaning in a modern world characterized by alienation, isolation, loneliness, frustration, in authenticity and absurdity. Existentialism deals with man's disillusionment and despair. Existentialism maintains that man is full of anxiety with no meaning in life; just simply exist, until he makes a decisive choice because he

creates his self by making self-directed choices. Man's autonomy, assertion of his subjective self, his denial of traditional values, institution and philosophy his exercise of choice and freedom, and his experience of the absurdity and the meaninglessness of life are some of the existential themes which are reflected in the writings of the exponents of existentialism.

Chapter - III

Textual Analysis

Existential Other in Coetzee's *Slow Man*

The physical and spiritual ramifications of a life – changing event are at the heart of novel prize winner Coetzee's latest novel. While riding his bicycle one day, Paul Rayment, a sixty something's French – born photographer living in Australia, is involved in an auto accident and loses a leg. A solitary and stubborn individual by nature, he is sent spiraling deeper into depression and social isolation. Only Marijana, his level headed Croatian nurse, with whom he falls in love with her, begins to lift his gloom. Also entering his life is aging novelist Elizabeth Costello (who first appeared in Coetzee's euphoniously titled 2003 work), a mysterious presence that seems to know a great deal about his situation even before meeting him and pushes him toward uncharacteristic risks in order to shake him from his malaise. This is a finely wrought portrait of a not entirely sympathetic protagonist cripple in way that goes well beyond the loss of a limb.

Paul feels estranged and alienated from the rest of existence. He is hunted by death anxieties. He confines himself within the six-sided box and lost his sense and security in the society like other young man of his generations. Paul dangles because he is waiting to be drafted into the Second World War. Paul is very much curious to know about himself. He searches a grace or purpose. But politics, city life, human relations do not give him support. When he does not get any good response from these aspects, then he becomes isolated character. He is just dangling not longer of ordinary world gives him a special character. He loses his sense of himself. He suffers from the feelings of strangeness because his position is marginal in this world. He sees the world outside as hostile world. So he keeps himself within his own private rooms.

Paul has always been aloof. Christmas is spoiled by his selfishness. So, he tries to think his way clear. Most of the time he asks question about his self. He gradually narrows the quest of self form common humanity to single good life to self-knowledge. He has affected himself form the cycle of nature and the cycle of human life. He lives in a vacuum. His quest is the common human quest:

That's fine,' says Dr.Hansen. It's not a prosthesis we are talking about anyway, that is still down the line, this is just rehabilitation, the first step in rehabilitation. But we can start tomorrow or the next day. Just so you can see it isn't the end of the world, losing a leg.' Let me say it again: I don't want prosthesis.'Dr Hansen and Nurse Elaine exchange glances.

'If you don't want prosthesis, what would you prefer?' I would prefer to take care of myself.' (*Slow Man*, 10)

Slow Man, is written in the protagonist's principal domain that is his own sensibility, and whose principal audience is himself. The text is striking in its exclusion of the female voice. It includes the homo-social male world. He believes that intellectual and enlightenment can be attained by isolating himself within a room.

Paul appears without an identifying initial is keeping a journal while waiting for the struggle to survive. The existential man is not governed by the laws that the society has formulated. He has to create his own existence without taking care of institutional rules:

In the old days, the days before the accident, he did not have what he would call gloomy temperament. He might have been always, but only as certain male animals are solitary. There was always more than enough to keep him occupied. He took out book from the library, he

went to the cinema; he cooked for himself, he even baked his own bread; he did not own a car but rode a bicycle or walked. If such a way of life made him eccentric, it was rangy, he had preserved a certain wiry strength; he was the kind of man who might last into his nineties, eccentricities and all. (18)

For him the world lacks any inherent truth and no standard to judge human actions is absolute and truth, world is engulfed by injustice, corruption, suppression and oppression. Even if it may require risk of life, one can protest against social system to affirm existence. As Nietzsche claimed the death of good and went on to reject the entire Judo-Christian moral traditional in favor of a heroic pagan ideal, in a similar way, even Paul in the novel denies God and evokes his absurd life in this way:

Do you know offhand, Paul,' says Mrs. Putts, 'whether your insurances stretch to frail care?'

A nurse, yet another nurse. A woman with a little white cap and sensible shoes bustling about his flat, calling out in jolly tones, *Time for your pills*, Mr. R! No, I do not think my insurance will run to that,' he replies.' Well then you'll have to budget for it, won't you?

Says Mrs. Putts. (18)

Paul does not have faith on God. He says the world is full of mystic and chaotic. He also turns away from his family and friends, thus the rejecting another source of purposive and cohesive living. Paul argues in this way:

He had never thought he would have a good word to say for war, but here in his hospital bed, consuming time and being consumed, he seems to be revising his opinions. In the razing of cities, the pillage of treasure, the slaughter of innocents, in all that reckless destruction, he

begins to detect a certain wisdom as though at its deepest level history knows what it is doing. Down with the old, make way for the new! What could be more selfish, more miserly- this in specific is what gnaws at him – than dying childless, terminating the line, subtracting oneself from the great work of generation? Worse than miserly, in fact: unnatural. (18)

Paul refuses help out of his difficulties and does not feel impelled to renew contacts with his friends. Instead of keeping contacts with his friends and, he becomes more radical. He is alive to his duties. But he does not agree with it and can't be the example of the family like. Just he gives hurt to his family. So he is totally disappointed with him as he becomes more radical:

Red bad luck. There is a range of replies he can think of, starting with *Nothing to do with luck, Wayne, just real bad driving*. But what use is there in scoring points off a boy who does not have it in his power to fix what he has smashed? Go, and *sin no more*: that is the best he can think of right now. Just the kind of sententious. Old –geezerish pronouncement that the Blights, father and son, would chortle over on the way home. He closes his eyes, wishing Wayne to go away. (20-21)

Suffering is only the rewards of life. No redemption is at hand. In this empty world the possible way of authentic living is to create one's own image though right choice among many choices. Human choice is subjective because individuals family must make their own choices without help form such external standard as laws, ethical rules, or traditions. To chose individual are free. As they are free, they are completely responsible too. In similar way Paul is also free to choose not to choose. He denies the

social norms and refuses to participate in social activities. Since we make choices, we create meaning ourselves:

If Mrs. Putts were prepared to be straight with him he would be straight with her. *I have given plenty of thought of coping, he would tell her. I made my preparations long ago; even if the worst comes to the very worst, I will be able to take care of myself.* But the rules of the game make it hard for either of them to be straight. If he told Mr putts about the cache of somnex in the cabinet in the bathroom of his flat, for instance, she might feel bound by the rules of the game to consign him to counseling to protect him from himself. (17)

What is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong that depends on the Paul's decision and thought. When for him, traditional values do not work. They can't govern the individual. If the value attempt to govern him, it is necessary that he should protest. Commenting on this, Jostein Gaarder remarks in *Sophie's world*: "He thus sets the individual, or each and every man, up against the system" (379). For Kierkegaard, one should protest against the prevailing system and affirm existence. Coetzee presents the protagonist who does not believe on social norms and values. Paul takes his own decision. Thus, he does protest against the prevailing system to affirm his existence:

The pills he is given every sixth hour wash away the worst of the pain, which is good, and sometimes send him to sleep, which is better; but they also confuse his mind and bring such panic and terror to his dreams that he baulks at taking them. *Pain is nothing, he tells himself, just a warning signal from the body to the brain. Pain is no more the real thing than an X-ray photograph is the real thing.* But of course he

is wrong. Pain is the real thing; it does not have to press hard to persuade him of that, it does not have to press at all, merely to send a flash or two; after which he quickly settles for the confusion, the bad dreams. (12)

Paul's alienation bears the constant notion of having the feeling of a stranger or an outsider. Alienation generally means turning away or keeping away from associates or former friends. It is often used to name an individual's feeling of alienation toward society, nature, other people or himself. So it is the deviation of normal life.

As the existentialists say that all of our personal human relationships are poisoned by feelings of alienation from any 'other'. Alienation and hostility arise within the family between parents and children between husband and wife, between friends and relatives. Alienation affects all social work, relations and most cruelty. Alienation dominates the relationship of love. Alienation is a theme which Hegel started for the modern world on many levels and in many subtle forms. The alienation that exists in society reflects upon the alienation of individual human beings who look for their own desires in estrangement from the actual institutions working of their society:

I know a proposal of this kind was not what you expect when you began to read this letter. I mentioned to an acquaintance of mine what has been going on in my flat- the disappearance of items from my photography collection and so forth- and she suggested that I call in the police. But nothing could be further my mind. No, I am just using the opening created by this unpleasant incident to let my pen run and my heart speak (besides, how many letters does one have a chance to write nowadays? (225)

Paul is alone into his alien universe as man is basically alone. In a same way, the protagonist of the novel is alone. He finds one alone even among the relatives. Generally alienation occurs when an individual can't integrate into a social structure and custom. Paul suffers from a feeling of strangeness. He does not find any social structure and customs. He sees only open sky lying under a cloud. Sky is a roof and earth is a home for him. His older self says:

A Memory comes back; a childhood visit to Paris, to the Galeries Lafayette; watching scraps of paper being screwed into *cartouches* and shot from one department to another along pneumatic tubes. When the hatch in the tube was opened, he remembers, there came from the bowels of the apparatus a subdued roar of air. A vanished system of communication. A vanished world, rationalized out of existence. What happened to them, all those silvery *cartouches* melted down, probably, for shell casings or guided missiles. (223)

Paul does not find the real world. What is at hand is only copied. He says that to some extent all human beings share a feeling of strangeness to the view of the existential man, even his parents are pretenders and he feels that his real life is elsewhere.

Paul feels estranged and alienated form the rest of existence. His commits ex-friends do not recognize him. He thinks that he has wasted his life. His life with Marijana has also quite cooled off. Goodness, love and harmony can be achieved in company but he is alienated. Art of imagination is also one of the best parts of mankind:

‘Don’t be ridiculous, Paul. You don’t resolve a crisis like the present one, whose essence is moral, by beating someone up or shooting him dead. Even you must recognize that. But if my suggestion offends you,

I withdraw it. Don't speak to Drago. Don't speak to his mother. If I can't persuade you, I certainly can't force you. If you are happy to lose your precious picture, so be it.' (222)

Paul's day-to-day encounter with nurses and even with total strangers force on him the recognition that he too is earthy and common vulnerable to anger, suspicious and humiliation that often an object of pity. He quarrels with his nurses and struck by her facial resemblance to him and recalls with discomfiture. As Camus believes that human being is an isolated existent in an alien universe. His famous novel *The Stranger* (1960) concentrates on the alienation of human being in the midst of silent universe. The universe does not possess any inherent truth, value or meaning. And it is absurd to seek meaning into this universe. We are simply keeping the illusion that the universe has a meaning. But there is nothingness in the world. So he states in the *Myth of Sisyphus* that "in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusion and of light, man feels a stranger. He is an irremediable . . . This divers between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity" (68). In the same way, Coetzee presents an isolated existent in an alien universe:

Not nearly as difficult as restoring frescoes, but specialized work nonetheless. That was my hobby for years. That was how I spend my spare time. If your time is not worth much in itself, at least you can put it to a good use. So I told myself on my death I will donate the collection. It will become public property. Part of our historical record.' And he throws up his hands in an odd, unintended gesture. Astonishingly, he is close to tears. Why? Because he dares to mention his own death to this boy, this forerunner of the generation that will take over his world and trample on it? (177)

Paul has fare even to meet with his acquaintances. He feels that they will express surprise at seeing at him and ask question. So he is very careful about his acquaintance. After all, he is alienated character who bears the constant notion of having the feeling of stranger or an outsider. This sense of alienation laid stress on the relationship between husbands and wife and friends and relatives. Thus Paul is alone even among friends and relatives:

Perhaps. But more likely it is because for our. *Our record, your and mine*. Because just possibly this image before them, this distribution of particles of silver that records the way the sunlight fell, one day in 1855, on the faces of two long- dead Irishwomen, an image in whose making he, the title boy from Lourdes, had no part and in which Dragon, son of Dubrovnik, has had no part either, may, like a mystical charm- I was here, I lived, I suffered have the power to draw them together. (177)

Coetzee portrays twentieth-century life as divisive and fragmented. Its celebrants claim that the fragmentation and disorder are finally too great to overcome. He shows the ugly picture of the break down of society, mass culture and the senselessness and splintering of individual consciousness.

People have lost their faith in 'man' and can only portray him as an important victim of overwhelming forces which are beyond his ability to comprehend or control. When the Japanese attacked at United States at pearl Harbour in December 1941, they did not simply force Americans to war, they also formed its economy, redirected its national purpose, and set it on its role as the greats post-war super power. The depression era ended as military spending boosted the national economy, and the United States emerged from the war as a nation of growing material affluence.

The material rewards of mass consumer society spread ever further and the world became a land of unprecedented affluence of others. But the age of affluence was also an age of materialism and conformity. The world role implicated it in the deep disorders and conflicts of the modern world. In this disorders and conflicts of modern world, Coetzee describes Paul as becoming something of a dreamer and isolated within his own family:

Family, for instance. Who and where are his families, the papers ask, and how should they be informed? And insurance. Who are his insures? What cover does his policy provide? Insurance is no problem. He is insured to the hilt, there is a card in his wallet to prove it, he is nothing if not prudent (*but where is his wallet, where are his clothes?*) family is a less straight forward matter. Who are his family? What is the right answer? He has a sister. She passed on twelve years ago, but she till lives in him or with him, just as has a mother who, at the times when she is not in or with him, awaits the angels; clarion from her plot in the cemetery in Ballarat. (8)

Coetzee's hero is doomed to bear because the supporting structures of family and religion are no longer available to him. He has no option except to submit to the implacable judgments of his lost family and religious traditions. He is alone and fragmented because there is no other place for him. He is in the quest, for existence as an authentic being. He tries to create his true self by the will and efforts of his own.

Coetzee's characters prefer freedom and choice. Almost all in his writings he presents his heroes as freedom fighters. His concept of choice and freedom is concerned more with inner reality of the hero. His hero is more subjective, thoughtful and alienated. Whether his inner heart suggests, his character just does it. Life is not

frustration, life is not disaster, major or minor; and life is not knowledge. It means open feelings. It means love for oneself and for follow human beings, and it also means confidence and faith. This is Coetzee's message which his hero converse in his novel. Soren Kierkegaard writes that "the choice itself if decisive for the content of personality, through the choice the personality immersions itself in the thing chosen, and when it does not chose it withers its way in consumption" (Choice 829).

Kierkegaard is of the opinion that man can not create but choose himself.

Coetzee, from the very beginning to the end, is apparently seen as indulging in choice as said by Sartre, "What we chose is always better; and nothing can be better for us unless it is better for all" ("Choice in a World without God" 835). Paul has resigned the social norms. He says that he took such decision himself. It is his own choice. Here, his own words can be more relevant to clarify his choice:

‘Good.’ He pauses. ‘We don’t have a choice, Paul,’ he says. ‘It is not one of those situations where we have a choice. Do you understand that? Do I have your consent? I an not going to ask you to sign on the dotted line, but do we have your consent to proceed? We will save what we can, but you took quite a blow, there has been a lot of damage, I can’t say right how whether we can save the knee, for example. The knee has been pretty thoroughly mashed, and some of the tibia too.’(5)

First we exist, and then create essence ourselves. We are what we make ourselves to be in that sense we are in the state of becoming not in the state of being. We don't know what we become after all because we are constantly choosing and creating ourselves.

It is not possible for us to be without choice. Even when we are not choosing, we are still choosing. Since we make choices, we create meaning ourselves. Coetzee also supports the choice and freedom. He says that the enjoyment and happiness depend upon our choice and interest. To make out life as heaven or hell, it depends on our choice and responsibility. All our comforts depend upon the occurrence of external phenomena. It is our duty to confront with external phenomena and make our life meaningful:

That is how normal people behave, people like Marijana and Miroslav. Life is not an exchange of diplomatic notes. Au contraire, life is drama; life is action, action and passion! Surely you, with your French background, know that. Be polite if you wish, no harm in politeness, but not at the expense of the passions, think of French theatre. Think of Racine. You can't be more French than Racine. Racine is not about people sitting hunched up in corners plotting and calculating. Racine is about confrontation, are huge tirade pitted against another.'(227)

Inevitably, Paul appears to be moving toward the act of cutting himself off from life. It is not usual that he reject help. It is a bit like Dostoevsky's notes from underground and somewhat like Kafkas study of the self-debasing person who frightened stared out the world. In a few details as well it resembles Jean Paul Sartre's Nausea; both Coetzee's and Satre's heroes seek to cut themselves off from the past and to find an area in which self choice may become effective.

Paul's consciousness is central issue of the novel. As in existentialism, the question of identity is central: basically, who am I? Sartre though that is my relation to the social and physical world. There seems to be something problematic in the relationship between individual and community as conceived in Sartre's

existentialism. People generally can identify themselves basis of their gender, color and ethnicity. Identity is not something that we 'have' like hair color or genetic makeup. It is something that we gain through a tension-filled with inter-subjective process and it is something that can be endlessly rechallenge. To define our identity we are free so we all bear the responsibility to find the answer to his existential riddle. Struggle for identities are struggle within individual and individual with group:

Again and again, healthcare workers ask if he has anyone—any family? Any friends?—to call for help, which forces him to consider as never before how sterile and isolated his life has been. “What could be more selfish,” he thinks, “more miserly – this in specific is what gnaws at him—than dying childless, terminating the line, subtracting oneself from the great work of generation? Worse than miserly, in fact: unnatural.” As the gloom settles in and he becomes convinced that his universe is now permanently contracted, he contemplates killing himself. (Charles 1)

Paul keeps in his mind the vital existential question that how should a good man live; what ought he to do? *Slow Man* is about confrontation with these questions during the period of waiting which follows his resignation from help. He seeks the answer of this question by submitting himself to a painful trail of loneliness and self security, discovering in proves that all possible avenues of escape into life status, ideology aestheticism, religions, family and friends-have been barred to him:

Rayment, an Australian photographer, is a solitary man who never remarried after a childless union and early divorce. Harrington’s life has been focused on his wife, Helen, and their three daughters. The loss of his leg confines Rayment to his apartment and his

neighborhood. Harrington's wife's death and his grown daughters' independence propel him from Chicago to Texas, where he buys an avocado ranch. But for both men the longing for love and family is central, as is the struggle to understand and find meaning in the pattern of their lives. The conic, the absurd and the fantastic mark the year for them both. (Bush 1)

At the very beginning of the novel, Paul tells the reader that the prevalent code of toughness prescribes a strict control on one's nature. Paul's hero proposes introspection to keep track of his inward transactions and to face boldly the vital questions of self. Paul commits act of violence one after another. The outer world represented by the war and its degenerative ramification.

Paul aimless rages, thought directed at particular objects, are really, Coetzee indicates, aimed at himself. When his identity is denied, he asserts is by striking out in rage at the man who has ignored him. This is the significant statement of existential philosophy when some one does not find his value on existence in the society; he tries to establish it by action. Even Kierkegaard says: "I heard, therefore I am". Coetzee supports the idea that self realization of the individual comes then when takes full responsibility for his life like other existential philosopher. Most of the existentialist have insisted that personal experience and acting on one's own convictions are essential to arrive at truth:

Rayment's leg must be amputated. In the hospital he is forced again and again to explain that he has no family, no friends he wishes to have help him. He refuses a prosthetic limb. Essentially he gives up the will to live, though he also does not have the drive to kill himself. Released

from the hospital, he moves home and is dependent on nurse to wash and feed him. (Graves 1)

Paul's sense of guilt, indeterminate and obsessive, haunts him like an idiot ghost, forcing him to assume responsibility for sins not his own. Marijana, Paul's lover whose plane was shot down in combat, provides Paul with an objective occasion to accommodate his guilt. By not participating, by not risking his life, Paul had let others help for him.

A self-conscious Dostoevskin, Paul wants to enter the struggle, not to kill but be killed, to be purged of his guilt. Unable to bear the terrible responsibility of his nominal freedom, he gives himself up to the struggle, seeking redemption perhaps through death, seeking escape from the consciousness of his guilt through mindless action.

Since Paul's consciousness is central to the novel, all else being peripheral, a valid approach to the theme can be made through an analysis of his view of himself. To himself, Paul is the I, the participant in experience and the source of contemplation, as well as the he, an object to be discussed and commented upon. This ability to view himself as a separate entity is both liberation and limiting in its range: it brings into perspective not only the two planes on which Paul lives, but also the crippling inability of the viewer in him to remedy the sickness from which the protagonist suffers:

Paul knows "The situation is absurd," but he fantasizes endlessly about winning Marijana's heart, caring for her three children, even serving as her "Co-husband if need be, platonic if need be." If the story never recaptures the drama of its opening moments, the one-side romance between Paul and Marijana generates at least enough momentum to

keep *Slow Man* moving through territory that Anita Brokner has been mapping for decades. (Charles 2)

There were varieties of response to the crisis of consciousness especially during and after world I and II. The old values concerning human existence ceased to operate. In the evaluation of new vision, regarding man and his existence, no one is whole, rather one passes over a number of cross- fertilizing influences. Critics support that the idea of absurdity and purposelessness of man emerged in literature with the publication of *The Myth of Sisyphus* in 1942. Camus tried to diagnose the human situation in a world of shattered beliefs. Thrown into an incoherent, disordered and chaotic universe in which individual destinies were obstructed and torn apart by the Second World War. People, especially the philosophers and litterateurs, could not believe in old concepts like unity, rationality, morality, value, and even in Christianity. They saw the world total absurd, incoherent, disintegrated, disordered, and chance and contingency. This feeling of an existence without justification became the main proposition of the twentieth century. Ellmann and Feidelson note that Camus sees the affirmation of individual's worth only through the acceptance of absurdity, repudiating the illusion of hope and ultimate meaning which enables the individual to recognize the peculiar meaning of his very condition: "In a hopeless and meaningless state, the individual is liberated to make commitment but his liberation only affirms the continual revolt against absurdity like Sisyphus" (806).

Paul, the hero of *Slow Man* appears in ridiculous manner. His statement perplexes the readers that they can easily guess him, as an absurd man. Even in the question of love and marriage, he responds in a perplexing and mysterious way.

Camus sees utter meaninglessness even in the machinery of justice and law courts. He sees social values as meaningless and corrupt. Paul shows no interest on

this on this matter also. The truth, mainly that human existence is meaningless. The remarkable in this respect, for the good understanding of the novel, which centers around the hero's belief that death, the great leveler, is, in fact, the focal point of life's absurdity. Paul's aim is to tell him not merely how he feels about his life, but he thinks about his existence. And the meeting of the hero with the priest underlines his absurdity:

Coetzee's protagonist go through the same dilemma as the undead in Beckett's *Endgame*, who, in light of their memories, are demand to relive their pasts over and over again. The redeeming consolation Beckett generously provides-comic, grotesque, lunatic-is not forthcoming from Coetzee. Instead, he forces his readers to look into abysses they do not really want to look into but are actually unable to turn away from anymore. His aesthetics of failure almost borders on the absolute. (Leusmann 1)

Life for him is utterly meaningless and worthless. It seems that he equates life with death. If life is meaningless and absurd, killing is also the same. So, it is neither sin, nor a crime, just a meaningless etc. For Camus, it is death which renders human existence meaningless. In his view, first death must be annihilation. There is no god and therefore no possibility of immortality with him. Paul has been presented as an absurdist hero not only because his life is meaningless, rather it lacks a particular kind of meaning. For him, there is always the alternative; either annihilating death or something similar. Absurdity and meaningless, in Coetzee's writings, have no meaning in isolation. They have implications for the authentic being of the human world:

Rayment is an unremarkable man. Divorced, with no children, he lives in flat filled with the previous owner's furniture. He is French, but grew up in Australia; as an adult, Rayment tried to repatriate himself to his birth country but found it unwelcoming, and returned to his adopted nation to take photos and begin collecting old images of native Australians, those families and workers who, unlike him, are rooted to a particular place. Rayment seems to have always been incapable of joy, but it's even worse after the accident so Marijana arrives to a particularly dark situation. (Frey 1)

Modern man, especially after the break out of the second world war, has been cast down on a deserted land. He has been abandoned and rejected not only from mankind in general, but also from his nearest and dearest ones. Almost all the writers who wrote in the existentialist trend focused more on this aspect. Albert Camus, in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, writes:

[. . .], in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity. (13)

There is direct connection between feelings of absurdity, consequence of alienation, and the longing for death. Paul is no more than the title itself suggests. Throughout the novel he has been presented as an alien, disillusioned, disinterested, irrational and ridiculous character. Paul found himself alone as a stranger, alienated and cast off person. Camus calls this world absurd and unreasonable. He says that the tradition of what may be called humiliated thought has never caused to exist. The criticism of irrationality has been made so often that it seems unnecessary to begin. The only reality is 'anxiety' in the whole chain of beings.

Chapter - IV

Conclusion

Coetzee presents the modern man's condition as the victim of injustice and irrationality. This vast world is engulfed by alienation, fragmentation, disillusionment and absurdity. The estranged man is guilty by birth. Meaninglessness is the meaning of life. Suffering is only reward of life. No redemption is at hand because God is dead. There is not any divinity. In this empty world, the possible way of authentic being is to create god in one's own image through right choice among many choices.

Paul is the protagonist of *Slow Man* and his choice is subjective because individuals finally make their own choices without help from the external standards like laws, ethical rules, or traditions. What is true and what is false or what is right and what is wrong depends on his decision and thought. Then traditional values do not work. He takes his decision on his own and he is not governed by any social norms and values. So Paul protests against the prevailing system to affirm his existence. He is a lonely figure. He finds himself alone even among the relatives. He suffers from a feeling of strangeness. Truly, he is a stranger, an outsider or an exile. He has no promised land; he has no fundamental rights and freedom. He is divorced from life and purpose: "Existence involves freedom and thought and action: Both our ability to be self-conscious and our ability to lurch ourselves into action are aspect of human freedom" (Patrik, 40)

Society is non-existent. Brotherhood is meaningless. Religion brings no fulfillment. So, whatever Paul does is his absolute and intentional choice. The futility of human effort in incoherent world can be perceived from the very beginning of the novel. The people in his surrounding do not recognize him, his nurses who keep pressing their help on him think that he has wasted his life. From the very beginning,

Paul, the existential hero, seems to have lost his struggle, the monotony of completely futile events, which offer no hope. It, however, creates a condition which, in fact, becomes a way to understand life better. He explores the possibility of existence even in the world devoid of meaning. His existence is meaningful only in the sense that he opposes the traditional propositions like that of Christianity. Like Sisyphus, Paul does protest in the alarmingly insecure and incoherent world. Existence precedes essence is truly applicable in Paul's case. He first believes in existence, and makes the essence thereafter. He exists therefore he protests. Denial is only the mark of his life, nothing beyond it. For Sartre, as well as for Coetzee, existentialism leaves to man a possibility of choice. For them God is costly hypothesis which never exists. Paul, too, is of the opinion that he isn't concerned with God. He thinks that man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. He is only sure in his individuality and subjectivity. He opposes crowd which always misguides the individuals: "A solitary and stubborn individual by nature, he is sent spiraling deeper into depression and social isolation"(Rungren, 1). As the existentialists show a fundamental existence of man unlike other beings, Paul has nothing to consider about, but he all the time is worried about himself and consequently the whole humanity.

Paul is in the quest to exist as an authentic existent i.e. human being. He tries to create his true self by the will and efforts of his own. *Slow Man* is about confrontation with existential questions during the period of waiting which follows his resignation for help. He seeks the answer of his question by submitting himself to a painful trail of loneliness and alienation, discovering in the process that all possible awareness of escape into the life status, ideology, aestheticism, religion, family and friends- have been barred to him.

Actions are the major themes with the existentialist hero. The hero has concept of free choice. He has no concern with moral and immoral things. Paul commits violent acts one after another. When someone does not find his value or existence in the society, he tries to establish it by action. Coetzee supports the idea that self realization of the individual comes when he takes full responsibility for his life like other existential philosophers. Most of the existentialists have insisted that personal experience and acting on one's own conviction are essential to the truth.

Paul is aware of his own existence. It is towards the end of the novel his quest for individual freedom is revealed. He says that the hopeless condition can destroy him physically, but he will take account of it as long as he is alive. He does not have fear of death. As long as he is alive, he struggles and exists both physically and mentally. Although Paul is crippled and unable to take part in social activities, he may be destroyed but does not have the feeling of defeat.

Through the protagonist Paul, Coetzee evokes the anxiety of human beings that provides a lucid experience of freedom which characterizes human existence. For him, the concept of existential 'other' is the dislocation of consciousness from its object or the negation by means of which consciousness can grasp its object without losing itself in it. He opines that to be conscious of something is to be conscious of not being it. Consequently, the individual's consciousness raises the sense of alienation and loneliness from his own 'self'. Considering the same vein, Charles says that the fragility of health, the loneliness and the limits of medical care are the main issues of *Slow Man* (2).

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