



RESEARCH PAPER

**The Reconstruction of Silhouettes of Notion of Selfhood and 'Being',
in the Novel, *The Triple Mirror of the Self***

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ABSTRACT

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This paper traces the construction of self "itself" of the existing being and bring forth the profound pre-existing universal human nature through more plausible and recognized theories of selfhood. The following scrutiny further aims to draw attention towards the notion; that the text validates 'hermeneutic of suspicion', by illicitly discussing the concept of self in various silhouettes of Urim's individual being of a self. Thus, the current analysis is keeping up with the theoretical formulation of Martin Heidegger and some other theorists which will interpret and explain concept of selfhood in the text, *The Triple Mirror of the Self*, by Zulfikar Ghose. Consequently, Heidegger's being raptures through the magnum opus artifice of many "beings" who Urim meets upon the journey to India, South America and England, in defiance of the old rules of existential philosophy. He believes an individual can make sense of the things based on his experience, which forms an arbitrary alliance between *Being and Time*. Thus, Zulfikar Ghose conjure up the idea of being by raising a question of Dasein, "being there", through sheer portrayal of his character Urim in the novel, *The Triple Mirror of the Self*.

Introduction

This research paper aims to study the three snippets of narratives inside the novel which are the most perfunctory pieces that augment the idea of self reciprocally; which defines the strictures and structures of self with every new experience. According to Martin, an individual is a being; before he becomes a putrefied carcass

of nothingness. Self is a delineation of the being who stays at the fringes of existence, ever to be woken by the splintered tumults of newly created experiences. This ordeal is scrupulously prevalent in Heidegger's being, in connection with an individual self. Hans-Georg Gadamer introduces hermeneutics as a grounded interpretative method to understand the methodological variations of being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*) and the interpretation of the notion of selfhood. *The Triple Mirror of the Self*, foresees the lynching tendencies to further unveil the intentions of the author in the true portrayal of self, in reflection of the characters portrayed in the novel. The journey of the protagonist of Urim from his heyday of being Roshan to the demise of Shimmura and finally to the perigee of Urim, the cycle of self is in motion. This euphoric journey of Urim clears up the obfuscated muddled self of the protagonist in this méconnaissance always end up with an augenblick which is foretold with the help of the narrator Mr. Pons. *The Triple Mirror of the Self*, is chopped up into three parts. The first part is a narrative of a man named Urim who lives in a small village of Suxavat, located in the outskirts, somewhere in South America. Later, in the first part the village is destroyed at the hands of interior ministry and the land owners and he is amongst the sole survivors of the massacre in pursuit of discovering gold. In the second part, Urim's recorded manuscripts of his life are passed on to an American Academic, Jonathan Pons by a realist writer of South America. Pons discover close affiliation with the character Urim, although they have never met before. His inner self decides to take upon himself to finish the unfinished work of Urim and in later chapter discovers that Urim lived a life in exile in South America. He was a poet and an American academic called Zinalco Shimomura who came from England. In the last part, Pons proclaims that he was neither Urim or Zinalco Shimomura but a Muslim boy named Roshan Karim who lived in British occupied India, just before independence. This journey of the character Urim trying to discover himself in the process; tried to find a self which perpetuates the being and time, that mapped out/chalked out the concept of selfhood. Thus, rapturing through the trilogy of three selves which always an individual oneself to begin with.

Material and Methods

This research aims to analyse the aims, desires and the situation that lead into the formation of an existential being. And how the philosophy of Kierkegaard and Heidegger plays a major role in formulating the concept of "individual self" and "selfhood". The theoretical perspective that will be used for this research is the philosophy of phenomenology by Wolfgang Iser, a German critic, in 1978, in his book, *The Act of Reading*.

This methodology helps tracing the silhouette of self of the existing being and bring forth the profound pre-existing universal human nature in formation of an individual and independent self. Wolfgang Iser is famous for reader-response theory and in this approach he applies phenomenological approach. In this methodology, the text as a whole is studied in connection to the dialogue between the reader and the text. For Iser, the meaning is not latent, hidden or lies dormant within the text, but it

is an event which is constructed by the reader through his own personal interpretation of the text. The meaning is realized by the reader through the act of reading, where he tries to find the connection between the text and his own personal experience. The writer gives information, descriptions and epithets in his stories, so the reader reconstruct those ideas predicting and recollecting from other texts and taking references from other writers to restructure their own understanding of the text. Iser in his essay, *Indertminancy and the Reader's Response*, states that the nonliterary and literary texts possess an object which exists independently outside the text and can be produced wrongly or rightly within or outside the text.

Socio-Critical Interpretation and Contextualization of Being and Self

Martin Heidegger discusses human beings with reference to social context in his work, *Being and Time* (1962). He traces the major contours of the individual self which correlates this conception with Dasein. Inexplicably asking an individual to venture through life to discover the individual being that is preeminently available in the modern day world. In accordance with, the notion of Dasein-Sandel uses the terminology to "discover itself". Neo-Aristotelian rarely views this existential philosopher, for they negate the ideas of both selfhood and Dasein (1993). However, Heidegger's philosophy comparatively relatable to the modern liberals, who further expands by devoicing the context and its subjects in the call of consciousness. Michael Walzer asserts that the modern liberals are much focused on the current self which is effected by the inherent society and through the process of socialization (1994). According to Heidegger the decision is made by an individual and Dasein emerges from the resoluteness of an individual (1983). As for Kierkegaard, the self can be impacted by the external confrontations. But, Heidegger negates it by stating that the self is resolute and steady, once achieved cannot be forsaken by the outer interferences and socialization. Heidegger believes life to be lived autonomously from within not from without (1962). He further elaborates being in his book, *Being and Time* by saying, "Being towards its ownmost potentialityfor-Being - that is, it is Being-free for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself' (188).

Martin Heidegger calls "moment of vision" as Augenblick, where an instant authenticates the foreseeability of the individual's decisive action. "In the instant as an ecstasies," writes Heidegger, "the existent Dasein is carried away, as resolved, into the tactically determined possibilities, circumstances, contingencies of the situation of action" (287). Thus, augenblick has been observed with the recurring experiences of self and being. He discusses augenblick in reference to meconnaissance "misinterpretation of reality" inclusively on behalf of the characters where it leads to augenblick. They both exists simultaneously in parallel to each other and never in exclusion or with the other. The concept of "other" is entirely different with Heidegger when he is talking in reference to his concept of selfhood. He asserts that "other" is "they" and the idea of self gets lost when it is mentioned with others. He substitutes his understanding in the following words linking his philosophy with both abstractions "jeder Andere kann sie vertreten" (126) in translation, "Everyone is the other, and no one is himself" (165). In other words, he discloses "self" and "other" as

two different notions. According to Heidegger, Dasein is the "logocentric" concept while the other lies as the periphery. He further asserts that "This kind of solicitude ... helps the other to become transparent to himself in his care and to become free for it" (122)

George Herbert Mead explains a brilliant example where he differentiate between the "self" and the "other" with linguistically conclusive evidence. "Mead's idea of reason is the sharing of responses through significant gestures or symbols" (1934) He further sheds light on the word "I" which can only be applicable to the self and thus leads to Dasein (being there). Similarly, Rita Felski refers to self with an individual mindset where the subconscious of an individual can be studied in alienation from other beings consciousness. Falski talks about it in reference to the following statement, "[Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche] share a commitment to unmasking 'the lies and illusions of consciousness'; they are the architects of a distinctively modern style of interpretation that circumvents obvious or self-evident meanings in order to draw out less visible and less flattering truths..." (2012). My following research is based on the preceding framework which has been employed to understand different silhouettes of selfhood and Dasein, observed in the novel, *The Triple Mirror of the self*.

Comparative Analysis of Selfhood and Dasein in the Novel, *The Triple Mirror of the Self*

The concept of Being is defined in a subtly apt and seminally conscientious work of Heidegger. He refers to self as a subjective fulcrum of various beings trying to unveil the latent truth; that is "being qua being". He addresses the philosophy of dasein in *Being and Time*, as "The existential and ontological constitution of the totality of Dasein is grounded in temporality. Accordingly, a primordial mode of temporalizing of ecstatic temporality itself must make the ecstatic project of being in general possible. How is this mode of temporalizing of temporality to be interpreted? Is there a way leading from primordial time to the meaning of being? Does time itself reveal itself as the horizon of being". (437) The character itself reveals to be not a separate entity and conforms itself with the being. The individual being is interchangeable with many other selves which are discovered through journey, experience, accidents, trials, escapade and circumstances. The character of Urim is divided into three parts with three selves of one individual experiencing life in a different time, place and itself, where the being remains one single entity. This notion also penetrates the consciousness of the character relating to its past. On the very first page of the novel, the narrator constructs his malleable identity which defines a being of that individual in particular time and place. This meconnaissance creates a mis-interpretation of reality which was generated to accomodate to the being of that region. The narrator says in the very beginning of the first chapter:

"I am not a native of this region, no more than the scaly-barked urimbola tree with its board kidney-shaped leaves which rooted itself to this soil by some accident

of the wind...the natives named me after the immigrant tree: Urimba, the scattered one." (3)

The narrator is not sure how to adjust to the prevalent society and accommodate his being to relate even a fraction to that place. But, the character is sublime and not taking refuge in one place. He is constantly in motion and his being is not able to co-habitate with him for long. However, Heidegger allows the freedom and flexibility to enter any history or adjust to any culture and to be consumed in a self-interpreted individual being by exercising Dasein. Heidegger does not associate the individual self with wayfaring, remoteness or seclusion. Thus, the concern of individual self is reflected in the following words of Urim:

"You escape from one region to another, slipping into the areas of denser shadows, and begin to believe the body is at last flattened like a leaf on the muddy bed of a drying river, with a fossil's future of an eternity of death."(4)

But, the following self is not always expected as it wades away with time and camouflaged into a new self. The tides of selfhood are not always in favour of an individual human being. When Heidegger is making such a predicament, he is aware of the outcomes and suggests that Dasein can make individuals "*devote themselves to the same affair in common*". (SZ, 122) He is aware that the being of Urim is torn (*Zerrissenheit*) and conflicted (*Widerstreit*) and he is asking himself the existential question, "What has become of you! I have lived so long in so many worlds that it is not merely a trick of the imagination you have the sense of not having merely a trick of the imagination to have the sense of not having been born as yet; and conversely, carnal passion, a guise both of self-extinction and of rebirth, might well be a compulsion to remain in the ambiguous realm of being." (4)

George Herbert Mead and Martin Heidegger believes that the "I" also represents self which triggers the individual impulse to compensate and focuses on the individual needs which presides over the one individual self and also implicates the narcissistic expectations of an individual self. This notion has been delineated over and over again with repetitive usage of "I". This implication projects the subconscious influence of being on the self of an individual human being. In preceding chapters of the parts, there is always a page which has used deliberately the word "I" more than once or twice. For example, it has been used with different structured ideas more than sixteen times such as 'I think', 'I gave', 'I don't', 'I live', 'I believe', 'I lay', 'I reposed', 'I heard', 'I resented', 'I will', 'I may', 'I did', 'I must', 'I have' on a signal page. (6)

The boredom of an individual who is trying to find respite in daily or day to day activities has become subjected to boredoms where the self has become static. But, he is not dispersed (*Zerstreuung*) or divided (*Zwiespältigkeit*) like his friend Urim. Thus, this intricates, the hermeneutic of suspicion strips away the concealed truth which is projected in the novel through a friend of Urim, named Tambour. Tambour describes his boredom with the place and the self becoming constant that he relates his motivation to get away from all this constancy by associating it with an itch, he says,

"Its like getting an itch, you force yourself not to scratch only for so long and then go at it like a monkey". (9)

In addition to the above stated predicament, the reputation of self is concealed in the novel but not defiled. There are limits to all the characters and there understanding of the true inner self that is somehow projected beautifully in the stories of the natives who are endorsing another self, a true self which is not the "cause of our ignorance" but caused due to ignorance itself. In the first part, a man narrates a story about self on an event in the village of Suxavat. The man who somehow leaves his soul behind and when he tried to get to it, it was frozen solid in the form of ice. "He sits there, waiting, watching the last surviving drop of water from the oceans that evaporated 10,000 years ago. From that drop of water will rise a cloud and out of that cloud will come in a fluttering of white wings the souls of the next age of the universe". (13) These lines enunciates Heidegger's "voice of conscience" which can easily be interpreted as "voice of being". The man is portrayed as a lost cause without his being; he is just a maverick without a solid reason to go on. The individual lives a life a hermit waiting to be united with the soul (inner self) again. Heidegger refers to this realization as *augenblick*, where the being is called "from itself to itself". The narrator also experiences his *augenblick* when he becomes a hostage of a man named Renzo; who was taking human cargo to work as gold diggers in Xurupá (on their free consent, because they wanted to test their lucks). The narrator when felt threatened that Renzo might take his life for he was a hostage. He cooked up a scheme where he said to the rest of the men on truck in Portuguese, "My friend here is an American geologist... He can tell you where to find gold without your needing to look for it". (43) The men when reached their destination, it was either a *meconnaissance* on their behalf or it was in their favour in the form of an *augenblick*, for it was self-made choice which has lead them to Xurupá. Heidegger resorts to calling it destiny (*Geschick*) and fate (*Schicksals*); which can easily be influenced by the outward circumstances. This self I realization (*augenblick*) was the zenith of their imagination, but here the self was lost (*meconnaissance*) as the narrator elaborates this appropriation (*ereignis*) as "Groups of recently arrived men were scattered about the square, looking dazed now that they had reached the center of their chosen reality." (45)

Urim when decided to go to Suxavat, he was not sure whether he was making the right decision. Heidegger claims it to be a dilemma where the prerequisite could occur where the individual waits for an accidental *augenblick* not a preconceived *augenblick*. His sole purpose of enactment is build upon his prior confused self. Thus, in a state of confusion, his self became muddled, he describes the surroundings after leaving Xurupá for Suxavat. He narrates, "For a few minutes, it seemed we had fallen into the solid blackness which was yet without substance, that we were in motion though the movement was not progressively over a real surface but was rather a deluded conception of the mind." (58) However, when he saw the place, Urim was overcome with self contentment and accepted being-there (*Dasein*). He ended this chapter by saying, "and entered again the renewed progression of the wheel of life". (59) To agree that he has accepted the favorable outcome of his *augenblick* and moved

on with himself towards a new reality, exists equiprimordially between the real and the non real.

Similarly, if you compare Tambour's decisions with the decisions of Urim, both are on the same level. However, Urim is a person who rarely act out on his self resolve but Tambour adjudicate relentlessly. Dasein refers to it as a switching from inauthentic to authentic which is contrived as moving from "end of philosophy" to the "task of thinking". When Tambour took a hold of village of Suxavat, he delivered a speech, he believed that the people of the village were losing the deeper connection with the inner true selves and they were deceiving themselves by lying not only to themselves but the people as well. He was renouncing the muddled and confused state of man, by venturing on his own self and taking a responsibility upon himself on changing the people and took an active part by announcing his self proclaimed ventures and forcing it upon the natives of the village. He said that, "There is too much deception in Suxavat" and "We live in a maza of lies and believe in disguises. That is the way of treachery against the soul". (68)

The narrator also experiences another *augenblick* and realizes himself when the buried memories resurfaces again. These revelations of self (*selbst*) interplays with character's (*charakter*) ability to invoke the irreducible subjectivity of Dasein. He explains, "But I recognized that some of the images were not unique to my experience. My memory was also the repository of fabulous fictions of the self." (75) In the next paragraph, he experiences a recollection from the past to which he says, "This is not the force of memory, I almost said aloud, this is the collection of disturbing dreams submitted to some celebrated seer with the hope of receiving from him an interpretation that would solve the complex riddle of the buried self." (75)

"Being with Others belongs to the Being of Dasein" (BT, 160). Rather, Dasein can understood with another through "Knowing oneself is grounded in Being-with, which understands primordially [*Das Sichkennen grundet in dem urspruenglich verstehenden Mitsein*]" (BT, 161). The character of Urim when compared with, an academic realist (from South America) Sadaba, in the second part, conceives this notion that the mystery of the great unknown can only be learned through profound experience. And, here he wanted the American research, the "other" to learn from the being of Urim who experienced dasein (being there) through out his journey. He helped Jonathan Pons discover the untapped realities of the world and on his last meet up presented with the unfinished manuscript of Urim, by saying that "You are familiar with techniques of research and should be able to establish for yourself what it is". (116)

Furthermore, some critics claims that the "inner self-prexists" and this idea of being can never be confused with the "other", they are two distinctively divided selves formulated as a whole being. It would also appear in the novel, Urim when he was Shimomura while voyaging to England, he discovered his torn up self. He further elaborates the situation that transcends the fulcrum of transitory self, when he discloses his inner dreads and fears by voicing his inner demons, "A charming

sentimentality had me bemused for a moment as I pondered the phenomenon of the divided self. My body was voyaging towards England. My mind throbbed with pulsations as it received impressions of the world's novelty". (124) On the contrary, the gist of novel constantly circulates on the idea of selfhood and not the divided selves of an individual being. The narrator is constantly struggling in his state of mind; to be united with his one true being. However, according to Heidegger "the state of mind" (*Bfindichkeit*) can only be formed when an individual is a child. Heidegger defines the usages of this term as "the effective state of mind in which one finds oneself".

In third part of the novel, the journey of Roshan has been disclosed as a mere Muslim boy of thirteen who starts his journey of selfhood towards rediscovery from "A-for-Apple" in Bombay towards living in the suburbs of South America. He lived in a beautiful profound illusion of a facade of romance, mythical realm of poetry, fancising about foreign beauties and discovering thrill seeking adventures upon his way, while overcoming the harsh realities of the ordained past, present and the future. Consequently, he was experiencing *befindlichkeit*. Not only Roshan but also all of his age mates. His friend Adi In later chapters states: "Its when you have a self, you then have a craving to be omnipresent". (253) Similarly, he later refuted Adi's words through his own experiences of selfhood, he conjures by saying while referring to love for a Hindu female teacher, "He perceived self-love as an imitation of love". (255)

Finally, Heidegger describes anxiety "angst" as a trigger for self-realization and projects itself as "empty mercilessness"(BT, 393) which either directs an individual towards his *dasein* or helps him face the heinous world of disorder by showing the utmost potential to face it or denounce it, by accepting the *Dasein* and rejecting the *meconnaissance*. Furthermore, in the final pages of the novel, he states to himself from the place he started his journey. When he was a mere boy of six years old, he said to himself, "You are lost, lost." And he ends by making him realize his individual self. "But you But you But you" (343). The latter created a self out of severe heartbreak, disappointment, closure from the outside, experience and realization. This perceived inclination remains grounded to his inner self and creates an individual being, not transitory but a complete being of time and space, suggested by Heidegger. In simple words, Roshan's resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) shoulders his life long journey in pursuance of self-discovery, which is recognized in the last lines of the novel, *The Triple Mirror of the self*.

Conclusion

The preceding conclusion is irreducible with the notion of Dasein and selfhood. The following rhetoric is similar to the notion of Heidegger's philosophical gesture of being. A grand narrative which targets a particular being who undermines the looming shadows of existential philosophy and thus, inculcates the individual's struggle in finding oneself. This ruptures the final ordeal of selfhood in relation to the idea of Dasein (being there). The three narratives idiosyncratically sheds lights upon the different unrelenting experiences of an individual "being". Thus, the characters are exposing and advocating the existential unilateral side of the selfhood that further intensifies the inherent stance and peels away the rationale which augments the explicit meaning of "being". Simultaneously, this perfunctory discussion created a prelude in favour of the sublime notion of "being" and selfhood. Nevertheless, the notion of Dasein and selfhood remains unchallenged and unhinged for it provide an expository side to the inner self, which only be discovered with experience of an individual being with the passage of time. Therefore, the novel, both explicitly and implicitly discusses the character of Urim either he himself narrating or someone else doing the deed on his behalf. This non-delusional tribulation of the journey of the self throughout the novel justifies the philosophy of Heidegger that there are many recurring silhouettes of being and selfhood, which can be discovered with experience and time spend with oneself.

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