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## **Imprisonment of the Psyche and the Ensuing Enfranchisement Elicited by the Perusal of Twentieth Century Cross-Cultural Literature**

Society inculcates that physical imprisonment is abominable and therefore serves as a just retribution for those who violate the law. But what about those who do not infringe on the law, but instead infringe on the domains of their psyche, engendering the inchoation of an unprepossessing psychological prison? What does it mean to infringe on the domain of the psyche, and what types of psychological immurements can manifest as a proximate result? Three archetypes epitomize the psychological prisoner: we who are conditioned to interpret the immurement as freedom and thus incognizant of the enervation; we who are saddled with a paucity of will and hence not able to entrench the road of enfranchisement with the fruits of our volition; and we who are levied by oppressive impetuses which are self-engendered or incited by social, political, and religious contrivances. Freeing the psyche, then, is a gargantuan feat, requiring the contemporaneous employment of being conscious of the immurement, the will to oppose and overcome its oppressing stronghold, but most pivotally to recognize that its existence is a product of our own creation, galvanized by the indoctrination of the conventions and rhetorical machinations brought before us. This thesis is multi-faceted. Therefore, we will analyze claims by perusing seven 20th century literary classics and examine the cultural disparities emerging from these claims, thus leading us to an aerial perspective of, and hopefully edification to, the deleterious imprisonment of the psyche.

One deleterious form of psychological immurement is that which is unconsciously derived: "the subtle, insidious ... laws of conditioning" (Keefer). But, that which is unconsciously derived falls outside the sphere of awareness, and therefore how could we fortify the road with the fruits of our volition while unaware of a prevailing immurement? Conditioning, thus, is apocryphal, as it is surreptitiously covert, rendering its victims incognizant of its dominion. It follows then that a ubiquitous misnomer is the concept of free will, as "free will" is in fact a "programmed will"; a will conditioned over a lifetime of inculcation, rendering any thoughts outside the realm of its conditioning, idiosyncratic and thus trivial. We will begin our literary journey with the analysis of *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley. In this novel, myriads of human embryos are manufactured and conditioned within five castes: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, or Epsilon. The Alpha embryos are conditioned to become the leaders and thinkers of this society, while each of the succeeding castes is conditioned to be slightly less physically and intellectually impressive, but, howbeit, happy within their predetermined lots. The Epsilons, the underlings among the castes, are stunted and stupefied by oxygen deprivation and chemical treatments, and thus destined to perform menial labor. In this "New World," desire and passion have no place, as all are free to philander wantonly to satisfy their desires notwithstanding age,

but, nevertheless, forbidden to commit or develop enduring relationships. Family is nonexistent, as all are artificially manufactured, and should members become despondent, they are given *soma*, a panacea that melts their pain away and places them in a state of happy oblivion. In the quote below, Mustapha Mond, the controller of Western Europe, gives a rhetorical speech to persuade his audience of the utility of this “New World,” while concomitantly attempting to demonstrate how the “Old World”—our world—was ineffectual and necessitated change. At first glance, Mond’s claim about the Old World appears meritorious, perhaps even reasonable, but with a closer analysis, it will prove fallacious—a rhetorical machination. In the illusion he craftily exhibits, he envelops the audience in Aristotelian pathos, metaphorical imagery, and short utterances using the theme of metaphorical incarceration, and with this rhetorical technique, his claim, however fallacious, appears cogent, as he averts the focus away from and conceals the well disguised sophistry:

Mother, monogamy, romance. High spurts the fountain; fierce and foamy the wild jet. The urge has but a single outlet. My love, my baby. No wonder those poor pre-moderns were mad and wicked and miserable. Their world didn’t allow them to take things easily, didn’t allow them to be sane, virtuous, happy. What with mothers and lovers, what with the prohibitions they were not conditioned to obey, what with the temptations and the lonely remorse, what with all the diseases and the endless isolating pain, what with the uncertainties and the poverty — they were forced to feel strongly. And feeling strongly (and strongly, what was more, in solitude, in hopelessly individual isolation), how could they be stable? (41)

Mond's motivation is grounded in shattering the thinking conventions of our world's efficiency, and steering us toward a heretical, alternate world, the New World, which is allegedly more stable, and thus, as Mond contends, more effectual. To convince us, the audience of the Old World, that our societal structure and conventions are antiquated, forlorn, and nugatory is quite the gargantuan feat, requiring extraordinary rhetorical calculation and delivery. Mond's delivery is so eloquently stated and pronouncedly emotive, that the audience loses sight of the rhetorical sophistry and irony. In his pithy clause and conclusion, Mond states, “they were *forced* to feel strongly. And feeling strongly ... how could they be stable?” Quite a persuasive conclusion, as who could argue against stability and freedom from forced impetuses; who would willingly sign up for the pernicious conditions of remorse, disease, uncertainty, and poverty; who could deliberately subjugate themselves to such a life sentence of forced inconveniences? At first glance, his speech is rhetorically effective insofar as it alludes to the Old World as a prison, as we, the inhabitants, are *forced* to endure such deleterious impetuses and conditions. Accordingly, “forced” and “free will” cannot coexist, and therefore, we, devoid of free will, are, by default, metaphorical prisoners. Ironically, although our free will may be averted or perhaps shaped by the laws of conditioning, we, nevertheless, could change with the identification of, and

willingness to transcend, our programming. Conversely, the citizens of the New World are the bona fide prisoners as they possess no such luxury to change; no hope to be truly emancipated while concomitantly confined to their regulated and foreordained lives in a totalitarian society. This is actually a superb rhetorical strategy especially in the context of controlling the populace, as the argumentation is reversed, and the “imprisonment” counterclaim is thus averted, as Mond woos and evokes the audience’s empathies. Mond knows which of the two worlds the true prison is (168), but to further his pecuniary and political interests, he must calculatedly employ this rhetorical contrivance. Mond, or shall we say Huxley, is quite the rhetorical technician, indeed.

Mond’s machination exemplifies the arena of covert manipulation in which society is shaped, through the impetuses of conditioning fashioned by the state and its laws, social upbringing, education, and advertising. Although Mond’s rhetorical speech appears ostensibly sound, it is antithetically replete with hidden fallacies. These fallacies, however, are the basis to buttress the conditioned thinking habits among the populace which concomitantly evoke the prevailing psychological immurement; an immurement in which many of us, perhaps not to the extent of the New World members, may find ourselves. Through the myriad channels of conditioning, we habituate, and therefore a strict eye for rhetorical sophistry, as exhibited by Mond, is imperative to eschew credulity and to prompt awareness of these contrivances. Let us take the following counterclaim by Britton Burdick for a moment:

[But actions are voluntary]. We can choose not to put that check in the mail, the food in our child's mouth. We can chose [sic] to lie, to skip work, or to not do our homework. Freewill exists, regardless of any societal, religious, ethical, or moral responsibilities or pressures. (Burdick)

On its face, this counterclaim appears meritorious, perhaps even inarguable. However, it overlooks one cardinal premise: Many of our choices, though, seemly voluntary, are involuntary. As a literary example, Helmholtz, a heretical member of the New World, chooses to think outside the confines of his programmed thinking, yet he cannot understand or appreciate Shakespeare's concepts of marriage, family, or love, as his conditioning does not permit the acceptance of such "anathemas." Conversely, John, a protagonist not conditioned in the New World but instead in the confines of a conventional moral world, cannot comprehend how Lenina, a New World woman, could be so overtly promiscuous, and therefore any such woman must be a "valueless whore." Both characters believe they are the masters of their volition, but they fail to understand that their "free will" is in fact a "programmed will"—a social machination—and any thoughts or decisions that arise from these "voluntary choices" are, in fact, a derivative of their unconscious, conditioned prisons of thought.

Alfredo Jimeno offers the following:

My dear Britton, let me argue your point about prison being a thing self-imposed. You state that one doesn't lack freedom of expression nor ideas when in prison. In *Fahrenheit 451*, Montag only starts thinking because elements disturb his habits, hence provoking interrogations, thoughts. You are certainly [sic] doesn't seem to be a lack of freedom of neither expression nor ideas. Yet, in all fairness, these need to be provoked or for ever [sic] remain silent. . . . I believe *Fahrenheit 451* clearly points that element out. The main character suffers . . . and his suffering is identified only by the thought provoking actions of external elements. (Jimeno)

Especially in the realms of social conditioning, an arena which is unconscious to most, noncompliance to a conditioned thought process can only ensue, as Jimeno articulates, when a catalyst is evoked. Hence, to identify our conditioned thoughts, we need to be apprised accordingly through a catalyst which would enable us to question the merits of our cognitive domain and value system, thus exposing our programming.

Of course, society will always have a Mond, a political elitist, repeating the rhetorical sophistry such as "we believe in happiness and stability" (168) to cease heretical thinking, but this is where a perspicacious awareness is required to enfranchise from this seemingly harmless, but, nevertheless, insidious immurement and transcend to less familiar, but fruitful, cognitive areas. But, if we identify the conditioned immurement, how do we ensconce the road of enfranchisement with the harvest of our volition? And here lies the most deleterious type of imprisonment: the imprisonment of the will; namely, the unwillingness to demand and fight for, and entrench the road before us with the salubrious fruits of our volition, our greater purpose, while concomitantly denying the facilely accessible, convenient, primeval desires that offer no tangibly enduring reward. To peruse this claim, let us delve into *Lolita*, an Anglo-American story about a man named Humbert Humbert, whose indecent lechery subsumes him, as he repeatedly copulates with an adolescent girl, Lolita, showing us the deep chasms of his infirm psyche enveloping the reader in a novel renowned for its sophisticated, yet innovative prose style and linguistic artistry. Ostensibly, at first glance, *Lolita* is not exactly the quintessential novel that would lend enlightening support to the theme of imprisonment. However, its underlying themes demonstrate the comeuppance an individual will experience for failing to free himself from an immurement of his own creation. The quoted passage below appears before his relations with Lolita, but in its hyperbolic exposition, Humbert attempts to explain his biological inclination or shall we say libidinous obsession for nymphets, his defined term for adolescent girls, which introduces the reader to the inchoation of the biological imprisonment of "Lolitaism":

I was consumed by a hell furnace of localized lust for every passing nymphet whom as a law-abiding poltroon I never dared approach. The human females I was allowed to wield were but palliative agents. I am ready to believe that the sensations I derived from natural fornication were much the same as those known to normal big males consorting with their normal big mates in that routine rhythm

which shakes the world. The trouble was that those gentlemen had not, and I had, caught glimpses of an incomparably more poignant bliss. The dimmest of my pollutive dreams was a thousand times more dazzling than all the adultery the most virile writer of genius or the most talented impotent might imagine. (14)

Humbert delineates the dichotomous conundrums of desire versus law and desire versus will, as being in the "hell furnace of localized lust for every passing nymphet," but, *unfortunately*, at the mercy of being a "law-abiding poltroon" presages the internal venereal struggle in which he soon finds himself. In contrast to the heterosexual tendencies of ordinary men, Humbert feels ordinary women are "palliative agents"—temporal remedies, hardly satisfying to his licentious malady—as the petty desire of "pedestrian women" is diminutive in comparison to the gargantuan passion of his beloved "exemplary nymphets." He furthers the readers' acclimation to his pedophilic cause by demonstrating historical conventions in which pedophilia was the accepted behavior: "[m]arriage and cohabitation before the age of puberty are still not uncommon in certain East Indian provinces"; "Lepcha old men of eighty copulate with girls of eight, and nobody minds"; "Dante fell madly in love with his Beatrice when she was nine"; "when Petrarch fell madly in love with his Laureen, she was a fair-haired nymphet of twelve" (28-29). Humbert's oration continues as he attempts to appeal to the reader's morality by showing an antithetical moral servitude:

But let us be prim and civilized. Humbert Humbert tried hard to be good. Really and truly, he did. He had the utmost respect for ordinary children, with their purity and vulnerability, and under no circumstances would he have interfered with the innocence of a child, if there was the least risk of a row. (29)

Poor Humbert, the righteous, biologically subjugated man, who took the bite of the forbidden apple which had engendered his faultless pedophilic predilection; unlike we, the fortunate gentlemen of the world, who have yet to, and been fortuitous not to, catch the spellbinding "glimpses of an incomparably more poignant bliss." Such a biological atrocity, an inauspicious immurement in which he is positioned; as he ushers the reader to this awareness with the motivation to evoke sympathy and empathy to his otherwise lewd concupiscence. Yet, ironically, Humbert blunders in his moral exposition as he juxtaposes his "pollutive" passion as "a thousand times more dazzling than all the adultery the most virile writer of genius or the most talented impotent might imagine." Why must Humbert use the immoral terms of "pollutive" and "adultery," even in a metaphorical context, while concomitantly striving to gain sympathy and connect with a moral audience? His motivation to appear moral and rational does not coincide with the inadvertent use of these terms; so absent a just rationale, we can induce that Humbert's use of these conflicting terms is unconsciously derived. Nabokov, in this quoted passage, demonstrates that although Humbert claims or perhaps wishes to be a "law-abiding poltroon," moral, or just normal, he, nevertheless, cannot conceal the abysmal cracks in his moral compass, and is therefore entrapped in the ambivalent struggle between his conscious rational side and his

unconscious deviant predilection. The evidence shows Humbert strives to be moral: he fails to carry out Charlotte's murder; he hesitates to dehumanize Lolita; he requests that the book is published after Lolita's death. Antipodally, though, he marries and contemplates the murder of Charlotte to gain access to Lolita; he corrupts Lolita's innocence; he murders Quilty, the "kidnapper"—these are the acts of immorality. In the end, Humbert capitulates as his biological immurement proves too robust for his infirm will.

The foregoing passage foreshadows the internal conflict with which Humbert struggles throughout the book. His story illustrates that devoid of tenacity to our chosen ideals—our will—we are more susceptible to surrender to the whims of passion or other inauspicious unconscious processes notwithstanding the deleterious price, and therefore, conversely, if we were instead to adopt a steadfast adherence to the "chosen" path we lay before us, we could enfranchise and steer ourselves away from an inauspicious immurement; a state in which truth and stability of mind cannot prevail.

Humbert's story demonstrates a common self-deprecating tactic, which de-emphasizes the individual as the master of his or her volition, and passes the culpability upon inclinations beyond the ostensible control of the person. Looking past the pedophilia, and closer to the labyrinth of insalubrious obsession in which Humbert is immured, we can see that his thinking is baneful insofar that he feels controlled by an impetus greater than his will; thus rationalizing and relinquishing all responsibility for his actions and furthering his calamity. Perhaps some of us share a homogenous immurement. We rationalize our shortcomings and presuppose that we are not the masters of our own volition; that there is a superior impetus which supersedes our best thinking and subjugates us notwithstanding our best efforts. The problem with this specious conception is it leaves us doomed to accept our calamitous lot, and therefore precludes any propitious actions to be undertaken to reverse this immurement, and thus, in a servile response, we reluctantly accept our undesired fortune. Some of us blame our ill fortune on poor genetics such as Humphrey, others on the paucity of talent, but rarely do we take the approach that we, as volitional beings, are the masters of our fate. Rarely do we rise above our failing lots and take the volitional reins to our objective; rarely do we repave and entrench our fateful roads based on our premeditated desires; rarely do reconfigure our genetic shortcomings into genetic anomalous advantages to engender perpetuating success. We are not the prisoners to whom these fateful lies were sold; we are not slaves to oppressive circumstances; we are not the sails of a boat that follow the direction of the wind; we are the masters of our fates, and should the time arise when we feel enslaved or overpowered by an disheartening, enervating circumscription, we must vehemently oppose the tide, and remain loyal and steadfast to our will's calling and design.

It could be argued that Humbert does exercise his will, and hence is not immured, as he searches for Lolita in the 342 hotels when she escapes, and therefore he operates in his own accord. However, being "consumed by a hell furnace of localized lust" does not coincide with "willful purpose," but instead a biological immurement. Ergo, the only will Humbert governs is

that which is incited by his biology, not his greater aspirations and convictions. Moreover, Humbert recognizes his dearth of resolve: “I would be a knave to say, and the reader a fool to believe, that the shock of losing Lolita cured me of pederosis. My accursed nature could not change, no matter how my love for her did” (354).

As delineated by Humbert, the failure to govern the will is often rationalized by relinquishing culpability to an impetus ostensibly stauncher than our resolve. At times, like the members in the New World, the governing impetus could be despotism, where noncompliance could lead to expatriation. But, what if insubordination, instead, led to the death of the “perpetrator”? In such a threatening environment, then, contesting the prevailing authority could have virulent consequence, thus quashing the will. To explore this position further, let us delve into Boualem Sansal’s *The German Mujahid*, a book in which Rachel, the protagonist, after discovering his departed father’s former life as a Nazi, desperately seeks a just rationale explaining his father’s participation in such an iniquitous regime. The poem below, written by Primo Levi, is positioned in Rachel’s diary elucidating the governing thoughts in Rachel’s psyche:

You who live secure  
In your warm houses  
Who return at evening to find  
Hot food and friendly faces:

Consider whether this is a man,  
Who labours in the mud  
Who knows no peace  
Who fights for a crust of bread  
Who dies at a yes or a no.  
Consider whether this is a woman,  
Without hair or name  
With no more strength to remember  
Eyes empty and womb cold  
As a frog in winter.

Consider that this has been:  
I commend these words to you.  
Engrave them on your hearts  
When you are in your house, when you walk on your way,  
When you go to bed, when you rise.  
Repeat them to your children.  
Or may your house crumble,  
Disease render you powerless,

Your offspring avert their faces from you. (62)

As a counterclaim, it could be argued that Hans Schiller, Rachel's father, was a product of the environment, a soldier conditioned to follow orders and loyal to a government which indoctrinated his thought process: "my honour is called loyalty" (61). Antithetically, though, the notion of free will dictates that Schiller failed to choose the heretical path of defying the prevailing authority, for the sake of humanity, and removing his loyalty from such an execrable regime. Sansal introduces us to the dichotomy of the virtue of loyalty versus the unwritten law of humanity. Ultimately, Rachel commits suicide, unable to cope with the egregious acts purportedly committed by his father, as the ensuing psychological immurement proves too robust for Rachel to endure.

The Levi poem addresses those "who live secure [i]n their warm houses who return at evening to find [h]ot food and friendly faces." This opening resonates with Rachel as, diametrically, he lives insecure in a metaphorical cold house to find cold food and hostile faces. Though, Rachel's house—his life—is governed by an immured thought process spawned by conflicting interpretations of his father's former role in the Third Reich. Rachel's psychological immurement augments as he fiercely searches for evidence of his father's contribution to these execrable acts, traveling from country to country, ultimately paying retribution to the Holocaust victims "who labour[] in the mud ... know[] no peace ... fight[] for a crust of bread ... [and] die[] at a yes or no." Rachel delineates the male prisoner of the Holocaust: the prisoner who is one with the mud, the forlorn substance of a movable earth, or perhaps the self-perception of the prisoner is relegated to that of mud—the den of pigs—as these prisoners are deprived of nutrition, precluding their rudimentary human right to survive as they scrounge for remnants of bread, living in a state of terror at the mercy of a Nazi soldier—like his father—who could declare at any time, "Life or Death." Let us not forget the women of the Holocaust "[w]ithout hair or name[, w]ith no more strength to remember[, e]yes empty and womb cold[, a]s a frog in winter." As Nazis shaved the heads of these women and stamped them with serial numbers in lieu of a name, they strived to deconstruct the personalities and will of these women, leaving their "eyes empty" as they stripped away their strength and purpose, as well as to keep the "womb cold," eradicating the lineage of all the Jews, precluding their Darwinian right to reproduce and profligate, wiping them clean off the face of the earth.

Rachel, through the poetic rhetoric of Primo Levi, encourages us to remember the lugubrious lives of the Holocaust victims, and to imbue their memories into our hearts, "when [we] go to bed, when [we] rise," and to use this morbid story to appreciate that we live in a state of normalcy devoid of these inhumane atrocities. As Rachel on one hand strives to sell the idea that we should appreciate our lives, he then tangentially offers the following: "Repeat them to your children[, o]r your house may crumble, [d]isease render you powerless, [y]our offspring avert their faces from you." Engendered by the newfound awareness of his father's secret life, Rachel feels that he has been betrayed the merits of his father's genuine character, as Rachel's



house, his life, crumbles, rendering him “powerless,” evoked by the “disease” of a self-imposed immurement; an immurement spawned by the guilt of his father’s equivocal participation in egregious acts; acts which Rachel did not commit, but, nonetheless, acts so deplorable that they engender his suicide.

Sandal illustrates a tandem competitive and recursive narrative, as the reader seeks elucidation to the central dramatic question: What egregious acts had taken place that would prompt Rachel’s suicide, and does the same unprepossessing fate await his younger brother, Malrich? A provocative, though implicit, central dramatic question also arises: Did Hans Schiller have a reasonable choice to remove himself from the Third Reich, or was he, like the rest of the regime, subject to the intransigent orders of an authority to which any rational member would adhere? While it would be unfair to posit that Schiller could betray his authority as we were not present in such a precarious environment, the rationale of subjugating ourselves to the whims of a seemingly transcendental authority permits the rationalization that in some instances we are not the authority of our will, and thus, at times, we should acquiesce to the will of others to buttress our greater interest of safety. However, if this premise were veritable, then its merits could be further rationalized to capitulate the will to any impetus which is ostensibly pungent. Thus, from a binary position, agreeing with such a contention is inauspicious, as it is homogenous to Hubert’s rationalization in *Lolita*: “The trouble was that those gentlemen had not, and I had, caught glimpses of an incomparably more poignant bliss.”

The collateral immurement, which also manifests by failure to govern the will, is the ensuing lifetime of rationalization employed championing the previous conduct, notwithstanding its heinousness. Consider the following passage from *The German Mujahid*, where Rachel questions a former Nazi friend of his departed father regarding their collaboration in the Third Reich:

“Hans [, your father,] was a good boy, he was loyal, he did his duty, we all did... that’s all there is to it” . . . .

“There’s nothing to tell, Jugend, it’s ancient history. When the war came, we all went our separate ways, we all did our duty, that’s all there is to say.”

“That’s it?” . . . .

. . . “Were you one of them?”

Silence.

“Was that part of your duty?”

Silence.

“Please.”

Silence. . . .

“Duty... duty is something that must be done, there’s nothing else.”

“Whatever the circumstances?”

He got up from the table, muttering to himself.

“It’s time I was going home.”

He looked out at the blue sky, out towards Germania as though looking for some answer, then he looked me in the eye again and said, “Your father was a soldier, that’s all there is to say. Never forget that, Jugend.”

And he left, shuffling away like an old man scared of his own shadow. I pitied him, picturing him going home, climbing into his lonely bed and dying of a sudden fever in the night. What had he meant when he invoked duty as the sole justification for the workings of the world? Was he talking about papa? About himself? Was he talking about me? The word “duty” can be made to hide a multitude of sins, whole peoples can be dragged into it and hurled into the abyss. That’s all there is to it. (58-61)

How lugubrious are these prisoners of the will, capitulating to the calamitous dictum of the iniquitous regime, enveloped in an incessant collateral immurement, rationalizing the committal of egregious acts that are incongruent with their moral compass and volition. Humbert is the quintessential example of one who lacks the will to transcend the self-imposed immurement that he willingly facilitates and immerses in. Schiller is the exemplary prisoner, whose will capitulates to the stronghold of despotism, or any other seemingly intransigent authority or oppressing impetus, essentially serving primary and collateral immurements concurrently. But, how could these two archetypes overcome these ostensibly insurmountable hurdles; what could direct them to subjugate their circumscription and alter its form to augment, not attenuate, their will to transcend their condition?

Pivotaly, we must possess the consciousness to eschew credulity of the social and political machinations with which we have been indoctrinated. One such insidious, fettering convention, or shall we say specious indoctrination, is that that the purposeful exercise of the will is iniquitous, and thus we should conform to our preordained fate to remain “good.” Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* introduces us to this element as the protagonists Mr. Saladin Chamcha and Mr. Gibreel Farishta fall 29,000 feet from an exploding plane nearly plunging to an execrable death. Saladin, unlike Gibreel, wills their survival by inciting Gibreel to flap his arms and fly “until finally the two of them [are] floating down to the Channel like scraps of paper in a breeze” (18), falling gently onto the water, thus *fatefully* surviving. But, is such an occurrence elicited by an enigmatic, celestial fate; after all, did not Saladin effectuate Gibreel’s flapping, engendering, and thus *willing*, their survival as a proximate result? Although fate appears to have a preordained, seemingly intransigent, agenda, it may be supplanted by the efforts of a herculean will, which can pilot fate’s intractable course to the yield of a premeditated, auspicious design.

Before we explore a pivotal theme in *The Satanic Verses*; namely, the dichotomy of fate versus will, let us define the will and examine how its exercise could be prejudicially painted with the strokes of iniquity? To peruse this idea, we will begin with a close textual analysis of the following Rushdie passage, which personifies the will in its “Saladanic” form:

But at the time [Saladin Chamcha] had no doubt; what had taken him over was the will to live, unadulterated, irresistible, pure, and the first thing it did was to inform him that it wanted nothing to do with his pathetic personality, that half-reconstructed affair of mimicry and voices, it intended to bypass all that, and he found himself surrendering to it, yes, go on, as if he were a bystander in his own mind, in his own body, because it began in the very centre of his body and spread outwards, turning his blood to iron, changing his flesh to steel, except that it also felt like a fist that enveloped him from outside, holding him in a way that was both unbearably tight and intolerably gentle; until finally it had conquered him totally and could work his mouth, his fingers, whatever it chose, and once it was sure of its dominion it spread outward from his body and grabbed Gibreel Farishta by the balls. (18)

The will is "unadulterated," of unequivocal substance devoid of the carcinogenic agent of "doubt." The will is "irresistible," designating all to capitulate to its stronghold, as it casts its "dominion...outward," sucking all energy to its "very center" like the apex of a black hole. The will is obstinate but not threatening, as it is "both unbearably tight and intolerably gentle," refusing to share space with other impetuses, relegating the "pathetic personality" and the "half-reconstructed affair of mimicry and voices"—the products of conditioning—as nugatory agents; "bypass[ing]" and consigning these agents to remain as the "surrendering" audience members and innocuous "bystander[s] in [the] mind." The will incites courage as it augments a paucity of "balls." The power of the will is unquantifiable, more potent than the law of gravity, as it "[can] get you up to Everest ... and bend any law of nature you care to mention"; a supernatural impetus that could transform "blood to iron, [and] flesh to steel," or "like a fist that envelop[s] you] from the outside, subjugating all to its hegemony. The hegemony of the will, then, must be evil, as it is too powerful to be inherently human, or perhaps this is the social machination that Rushdie exemplifies, as Saladin, notwithstanding his "unadulterated" and "pure" will metamorphoses into a devil. But, if Saladin ultimately saves his and Gibreel's life, then why is he and the exercise of his herculean will painted with the strokes of iniquity?

Might we not agree that Gibreel . . . [wishes] to remain, to a large degree, *continuous*, that is, joined to and arising from his past . . . so that his is a self which, for our present purposes, we may describe as 'true' . . . whereas Saladin Chamcha is a creature of *selected* discontinuities, a *willing* re-invention; his *preferred* revolt against history being what makes him, in our chosen idiom, 'false'. . . while Gibreel, to follow the logic of our established terminology, is to be considered 'good' by virtue of *wishing* to remain, for all his vicissitudes, at the bottom an untranslated man. (404)

The terms "*preferred* revolt against history being what makes him," "*selected* discontinuities," and "*willing* re-invention" refer to Saladin's willful repudiation of his deplorable fate; while "continuous . . . joined to and arising from his past" refers to Gibreel's acquiescence to his

predetermined course. As Gibreel and Saladin are a dichotomy of “two fundamentally different types of self” (404), they also respectively symbolize the dichotomous clash of fate versus will. As Gibreel follows “the logic of established terminology”—the complaisant adherence to his natural, established calling—he is “considered ‘good’ by virtue of *wishing* to remain an untranslated man”; that is, a man who, by virtue of not translating a will which opposes his fate, is true, as he fights not what is foreordained. Antipodally, Saladin, notwithstanding his suffering of police brutality, metamorphosing into a goatish devil, losing work as well as a wife, and damaging relations with his father; nevertheless, challenges, perseveres, transcends, and reverses his unpropitious fate; and thus he *must be* “evil” for abrogating the preordainment allotted to him, as “a man who sets out to make himself up is taking on the Creator’s role, according to the one way of seeing things; he’s unnatural, a blasphemer, an abomination of abominations” (56).

Although, Saladin, who symbolizes the will transposing fate, is delineated as “evil,” he is, nonetheless, the last *self* standing. Gibreel, who symbolizes the capitulation of the will to the acquiescence of fate, is respected and loved by his peers and fans, but crumbles at the first indication of resistance, as he kills Allie and then himself. In a linear and tandem competitive narrative and antithetical climax which erupts to answer the central dramatic question of what fates await the *unfortunate* Saladin and *blessed* Gibreel, Rushdie demonstrates that the potency of the will, despite the contrivance of its iniquity, can trump the most execrable fate, and should such a fate fail to be challenged and *usurped*, an egregious downfall like that exhibited by Gibreel may ensue. And thus,

WHAT KIND OF IDEA ARE YOU? Are you the kind that compromises, does deals, accommodates itself to society, aims to find a niche, to survive; or are you the cussed-bloody-minded, ramrod-backed type of damnfool notion that would rather break than sway with the breeze? – The kind that will almost certainly, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, be smashed to bits; but the hundredth time, will change the world. (322)

Considering that our existence is temporal and an intransigent, inauspicious fate cannot prevail unless we permit, Rushdie invites the reader to pick an unequivocal side in this fate versus will dichotomy: do we capitulate to an inauspicious fate just to be “good” and conform to social expectations, acquiescing to an insidious immurement; or do we autonomously oppose an unprepossessing fate and strive to entrench the road with the will of our own design, notwithstanding the cost, with the willingness to embrace failure interminably, but the incentive of “chang[ing] the world” should we succeed?

Freeing ourselves from the beguiling conception—which presumes that acting on a will that goes against our preordained lot is discontinuous and false, and thus “evil”—is critical to eradicate any unconscious hindrances obstructing the execution of our willful design. Once we dislodge this unconscious roadblock, we then need to focalize in removing the oppressive impetus that governs the psyche. In the following two literary works, *The Patience Stone* and *God Dies by the Nile*, we will examine how two protagonists gain their psychological freedom

through the abdication of the oppressive impetuses that govern them. One protagonist voices her oppressing secrets, the source of her immurement, justifying her heretical revelations under the guise of social and religious conventions. The other protagonist inadvertently suppresses her immurement, allowing it to simmer, until the day that she explodes in a climactic enfranchisement. Let us begin with an aesthetic analysis of the following literary passage from *The Patience Stone*:

What's gotten into me now?" Her head bangs against the wall. "I really am possessed ... Yes, I see the dead ... people who aren't there ... I am ..." She pulls the black prayer beads from her pockets. "Allah ... What are you doing to me?" Her body rocks back and forth, slowly and rhythmically. "Allah, help me regain my faith! Release me! Rescue me from the illusion of these devilish ghosts and shams! As you did you Muhammad!" She stands up suddenly. Paces around the room. Into the passage. Her voice fills the house." Yes ... he was just one messenger among others ... There were more than a hundred thousand like him before he came along ... Whoever reveals something can be like him ... I am revealing myself ... I am one of them ..." Her words are lost in the murmur of water. She is washing herself. (64)

Above, the unnamed protagonist, after engaging in a bout of onanism with her comatose husband, delivers an exposition replete with religious allusions and rhetorical devices in an attempt to designate divine meaning to her otherwise unorthodox acts. Like Humbert in *Lolita*, the woman is immersed in the dichotomous clash between societal conventions and a repressed heretical desire; although, in contrast to Humbert's, her desire is not to copulate with nymphets, but to voice her history of iconoclastic acts to her unconscious husband. In these revelations, she extemporaneously and perhaps unconsciously alleviates all culpability for her conduct by placing its impetuses on social and religious conventions—all forces greater than her—as such actions could not be deliberately contrived by her “guileless and incredulous” being. She reveals that she had extramarital relations to become pregnant, but what alternative did she possess, to be marked barren and abandoned by her family like her aunt (45)? She murdered her father's quail, but that, too, was unavoidable; better to murder a bird than to be used as barter for debts like her 12-year old sister (32). She is not a perpetuator of calamity; she is simply a pawn among kings, a subordinating victim in the microcosm of Islam where a woman's voice is not permitted. Antithetically, though, in the absence of a conscious husband to judge or chastise her, she now possesses a voice; unfettered to verbalize her thoughts, her conduct, her being; to act wantonly on any impulse that she chooses, very much like Huxley's New World members. As the cognitive dissonance evoked by her newfound voice settles in, the foregoing passage begins as she absolves her confessed iniquity by apportioning it to her being "possessed," "see[ing] dead people ... who aren't there"; and thus requesting “release” and “[r]escue from the illusion of these devilish ghosts and shams”—all words used verbatim by Muhammed, the Islamic prophet. Yes, she is like Muhammed! Muhammad "was just one messenger among others ... There were

more than a hundred thousand like him before he came along". She, the novel prophet, is merely a preordained messenger acting in accordance with her deity's plan to bring freedom to the censored voices and grievances festering in and proliferating among the millions of souls of oppressed women (5). She, therefore, is not to blame for her vices; as her volition—her will—is not her own; it is Allah's, as she most artlessly "rocks back and forth, slowly and rhythmically" in religious deference and prayer to the savior, her Allah. "She paces around the room. Into the passage. Her voice fills the house." This "passage" could be construed as a scripture passage, "voice" as the novel prophet's revelations, and "house" as the newfound religion. "Whoever reveals something can be like [Muhammed]," and so as she reveals, so she becomes, as she "wash[es] herself" to purge from her predestined acts of immorality.

The foregoing satirical analysis describes the internal struggles smoldering in the unnamed woman. The perilous secrets, which have been festering in the abysmal cracks of her morality for some time, engender her immurement, as should these secrets be heard by the wrong ears, a death sentence could facily ensue. And thus the central dramatic question: will the husband arise from his coma to hear the abhorrent details of his mate's heretical acts, and resultantly, what fate awaits her? As the story unfolds in a conglomerate narrative in the setting and objective voice of the room, each section reveals more profound, dissident details of her past, accentuating and heating the conflict while contemporaneously leading to a robust climax. Is she culpable for her acts or is she a product of an ineffectual religious, societal model? Could she have acted in alternate, more orthodox ways, conforming to the required social conventions while not subjecting herself to the risk of ostracism? Did she reasonably have a choice or is choice simply an illusion subject to the social and religious conditions in which she finds herself? Why does she fail to take any accountability for her actions, although ostensibly forced? These are the questions the reader wrestles with as the woman catharsizes in her prophetic revelations, and by virtue of this catharsis, she rationalizes her conduct to reconcile her new enfranchised self with her old fettered self, as secrets are divulged one at a time, until ... of course ... the patience stone—her husband— climactically explodes in a frenzied onslaught.

Similarly, we can see that heretical acts such as Humbert's pedophilia and the woman's extramarital affairs are held secret. Analogously, too, the longer these secrets are suppressed the more profound the psychological prisons in which the protagonists find themselves, furthering their heretical behavior. Both protagonists rationalize their actions without accepting culpability: Humbert by his *uncontrollable* biological predilection, and the woman as the victim of social conventions and as the divine messenger. But unlike Humbert, the woman voices her transgressions, freeing herself from her husband's minatory judgment, engendering the inchoation of her catharsis and ensuing enfranchisement. Unlike the members of the New World, she is aware of her immurement, neither fooled by her conditioning nor by the social contrivances of her town. She takes the reins to her fate and abdicates her husband's rule, his threatening judgment; she emancipates through her revelations and eradicates the oppressing impetuses—her secrets—the warden of her prison.

Confession is a powerful instrument, as pernicious secrets fester and proliferate in the chasms of the psyche invoking a self-imposed execrable immurement. A policy built on the merits of deception and lies demands further deception and lies to buttress its underpinnings. As the psyche grows saddled with the aggrandizing “what ifs,” the weight of this uncertainty metamorphoses into an elephantine, intractable stress which subsumes the rational thought process, extirpating the remnants of psychological equanimity. The overt revelation of these debilitating thoughts made directly to the oppressing source to whom it relates, then, is the most pragmatic method to escape from this type of crippling circumscription. Though, the protagonist justifies the truth under the guise of social and religion conventions, she, nevertheless, emancipates from the oppressing impetuses that govern her psyche. If the succor of *ex post facto* rationalization is employed for the sake of enfranchisement, then, perhaps, it is a necessary, well-constructed coping mechanism which permits her to govern her fate.

But, what occurs if the immurement is not so evident, like the members of the New World; what could then be done to emancipate from the stronghold of such a covert imprisonment? To examine the merits of such a conundrum, we will aesthetically analyze *God Dies by the Nile*, by Nawal El Saadawi, whose story delineates the patriarchal, oppressed lives of the plebeians of Kafr El Teen. With the traditional yet noxious vaginal mutilation, the willing surrender of provincial women for the Mayor’s carnal indulgence, the unjust incarceration of the innocent and the manipulation of religion to further the Mayor’s interests, Saadawi introduces us to the political and religious immurement in which the peasant class members of Kafr El Teen are despondently positioned. The following passage demonstrates the substratum of the story:

Its blows resounded with their regular sound like the muffled strokes of a clock striking out the hour. They devoured time, moving forwards machine-like, cut into the earth hour after hour. They never tired, never broke down, or gasped for breath, or sought respite. They went on with a steady hand thud, thud, thud echoing in the neighboring fields throughout the day, almost inhuman, relentless, frightening in the fury of their power. Even at midday, when the men broke off for a meal and an hour of rest, they went on without a stop. The buffalo might cease turning round and round for a short while, and the water-wheel would stop creaking for a moment, but her hoe kept on falling and rising, rising and falling from sky to earth, and earth to sky. (3)

Although the foregoing passage appears on page three of the novel, its kinesthetic and auditory imagery, metaphorical allusions, and symbolism presage the climactic downfall of the Mayor as well as define Zakeya’s psychological state or perhaps stuporous consciousness throughout the story. Used repetitively in the foregoing passage, Saadawi makes creative use of the word “they,” referring to the blows of Zakeya’s hoe. A hoe by definition is an agricultural tool used to cultivate vegetables from the “soil.” Metaphorically, then, these blows upon the soil illustrate that Zakeya could be construed an agent of God, as “soil” is the cultural environment from which life springs and death returns, symbolizing an element that transcends ephemeral life; a deity—a God. However, God in Kafr El Teen is quite different than the conventional deity

most religions advocates place their faith in: “We are God’s slaves when it’s time to say our prayers only. But we are the Mayor’s slaves all the time” (53). The Mayor is implicitly admitted as the God of Kafr El Teen, and accordingly the repetitive blows of her hoe could be interpreted as Zakeya’s unfaltering display of tenacious work ethic upon the soil, subserviently effected to serve the interests of the Mayor. It is this inauspicious subservience, though, that that dehumanizes her, as she serves the “deity” who exploits and tyrannizes her people; her family. And as she consciously serves this deity and his iniquitous political and religious contrivances, Zakeya finds her actions and her being in direct contradiction, engendering an altered state of consciousness—a stupor—devoid of felicity of the mind and soul and normative cognitive capacity, leaving her body in a vegetative, untiring, robotic faculty to carry out the quotidian duties for corporeal survival, “machine-like...never tir[ing], never br[eaking] down, or gasp[ing] for breath, or s[eeing] respite.”

One interpretation of the repetitive “thud, thud, thud,” aside from Saadawi's uncanny linguistic effectual use of repetition through the novel, is that it accentuates the toilsome labor in which Zakeya engages. In contrast to “the men [who] broke off for a meal, and an hour rest, the buffalo [that] might cease turning round and round for a short while, and the water-wheel [which] could stop creaking for a moment,” here, Zakeya keeps working—“relentlessly.” To understand the source of her tenacious work perseverance, let us consider the preceding paragraph in the text:

Her eyes did not look at the ground, were not fixed to her feet. They were the same. They had not changed. They were raised, fixed to some distant point with the same angry defiance which looked out of them before. And the blows of her hoe seemed to echo with an anger buried deep down as she lifted it high up in the air and swung it down with all her might into the soil. (3)

What is this angry defiance that Zakeya exhibits? Her dialogue throughout the novel demonstrates neither anger nor defiance, nor does she make any overt threats of vengeance or expressions of outrage. Yet, her tenacious work ethic appears to originate from this abysmal anger. We can interpret her indignation in two ways. First, as “she lift[s the hoe] high up in the air and sw[ings] it down with all her might into the soil,” she foreshadows her revenge—the murder of the Mayor—as we have established that “soil” symbolizes “the Mayor.” This interpretation elucidates her tenacious work ethic as she murders this tyrant repetitively—“thud, thud, thud”—as a purgative mechanism to cope with her unprepossessing, oppressive existence in this forlorn village. This further aligns with “her hoe kept on falling and rising, rising and falling from sky to earth, and earth to sky.” “Sky to earth and earth to sky” also symbolizes a transcendental existence, a God, thus supporting this repetitive killing of the Mayor who is “frighten[ed by] the fury of [the blows’] power” as he is so rightfully served with vengeful fury for his despotic, “inhumane” acts while Zakeya concomitantly relives this purging murder—this beautiful moment—over and over again. As a second interpretation, we observe that Zakeya



does not delineate conscious anger or defiance in her communications with any members of the regime. Hence, we may interpret that this angry defiance derives from her soul, as it originates from her eyes, ubiquitously recognized as the key to the soul. Thus, she lives as a dichotomous being: her conscious being is a subservient employee of the Mayor living in her conditioned rearing as a member of the peasantry class; not oppressed; merely a social peasant, as fate should have it, and thus, this is life. Her unconscious, however, recognizes the injustice and political contrivances employed by the Mayor and his “crew,” the calamity inflicted on her family, and the religious manipulations employed by the upper-class to exploit her people. This unconscious angry defiance metamorphoses into a climatic explosion, like in *The Patience Stone*, as she, the savior of Kafr El Teen, leaves a lasting impression on the plebeians, “echoing in the neighboring fields,” for all to witness the downfall of the nefarious Mayor. This unconscious defiance also fuels her body with enduring work ethic, almost in unlimited reserves, waiting minute by minute, hour by hour, as she “devours time” waiting for the opportune time to exercise the cardinal right of humanity—the right to freedom—until, of course, the “clock strik[es] out the hour”; the hour of her oppressor’s murder. This murder will occur quietly; not in the company of his or her peers, as it is not religiously driven nor motivated by a political agenda; just a quick, quite “muffled stroke” of the hoe to serve the hands of justice and to be free at last.

Saadawi’s story is unique in its diverse tandem, conglomerate, and linear narratives. The reader is presented with the central dramatic question, will the oppression of Zakeya and others continue to be governed by the will of this corrupt regime, or will an upheaval ensue to displace this iniquity? As the political power of such a diminutive organization can be facilely compromised with the interference of one individual, the plot begs the questions, which member of the regime, or its citizens, will precipitate its collapse? Like the protagonist in *The Patience Stone*, Zakeya emancipates herself through the eradication of her oppressing impetus, the Mayor. In contrast, though, her emancipation is invoked unconsciously. Let us reflect on Keefer's contention for a moment:

What happens when th[e] will is unconscious as is the case with Zakeya, the illiterate female peasant in *God Dies by the Nile*, who over the trajectory of the story watches and experiences the evil of the mayor without judging it, talking about it, sharing her thoughts with the reader, or taking any overt action. She gets upset as if the djinn had entered her soul but we see no will to change anything including herself. Then at the end of the book, her unconscious will erupts, she takes her hoe and chops off the Mayor's head, closing his hypocritical blue eyes forever. (Keefer)

Like the New World members, Zakeya is socially conditioned, evoking her credulity. Also like Humbert, she has “no will to change anything including herself.” Yet, her unconscious will appears to direct her upon her oppressor, in a purposeful, compensating manner, remedying the failure of her conscious will. The ensuing conflict, then, which arises between the conscious and

unconscious mind, engenders a "clash" as well as the inchoation of her "dichotomous being." Zakeya's clash is identified with the "angry defiance" emanating from her eyes, yet as Keefer states, "she experiences the evil of the mayor without judging it, talking about it, sharing her thoughts with the reader, or taking any overt action." Therefore, a discernment to identify such a clash is critical to apprise us of such a covert immurement. Just as the despondence felt by New World members prior to their soma portions, if we grow disheartened or morose without pragmatic reason; if we grow increasingly beleaguered by the quotidian duties that we entertain, this could signify a clash, thus providing an indication to introspect and identify the oppressing impetus. The solution, though, irrespective of whether it is consciously or unconsciously derived, is to unearth the oppressing impetus—and eliminate it.

We have canvassed the manner in which to emancipate from a psychological immurement; that is, to remove the unconscious hindrance of maintaining conformity especially to that of an unpropitious fate, and then unearth and eliminate the oppressing impetus. However, such a bellicose stratagem requires intrepidity and thus cannot be not facilely employed or perhaps such gallantry is not accessible to many. What vehicle, then, could we employ to mollify the burden of such a gallant feat? To examine this question, let us consider Gao Xingjian's *Soul Mountain*. Here, the narrator escapes, or perhaps is misdiagnosed with, lung cancer—the same disease that killed his father—prompting the journey to Soul Mountain, where he deconstructs the self into the four disparate selves of "I," "you," "he," and "she," thus assuaging the burden of the self by transcending his corporeal reality. As Gao completely abandons the traditional narration of a fictional plot by not "first foreshadow[ing], build[ing] to a climax, then hav[ing] a conclusion," (452), he, too, abdicates the traditional Chinese mainstream socialist realism, rejecting collectivist ideology and politics to underscore and expand the notion of the individual self and probe the human soul with an unwonted, artless directness. His peregrination comprises multifarious communities, forests, and natural reserves, where he narrates of myriad encounters with village members, but inherently searching for meaning of the self. Many of the novel's intermittent, paradoxical stories involve Taoist principles intended to evoke self-enlightenment by observing the self through divergent perspectives. One emerging theme is the immurement of fate; that is, individuals have little control to the hegemony of the enigmatic, yet intransigent hands of fate (pgs.72, 202, 291, 339). Let us analyze the passage below:

However, I thought it was ridiculous for a robust young man or a pretty young woman to be praying and whenever I heard young devotees intoning Namó Amitófu I would laugh, and clearly not without malice. I couldn't understand how people in the prime of life could do such a stupid thing, but now I have prayed, prayed devoutly, and from the depths of my heart. Fate is unyielding and humans are so frail and weak in the face of misfortune man is nothing. (72)

This passage is positioned immediately preceding the discovery of the protagonist's lung cancer misdiagnosis, and settles exceptionally well with the theme of immurement; particularly,

that when confronted with terror or consternation, we, at times, seek the succor of a higher authority that can transcend the mundane corporeal reality and gift us a miracle to evoke temporal comfort in the face of our corporeal misfortune. However, a homogenous comfort could ensue by bifurcating the corporeal self and impalpable self, thus precluding an immurement of the physical self from translating to the circumscription of the impalpable self—the psyche and the will. The narrator "thought it ridiculous for a robust man or pretty woman to be praying," as the robust man is rife with health and vigor and thus fully capable of directing his lot under his governance, and the "pretty woman," who has myriad men fawning over her and showering her with gifts and marriage proposals, can facilely ensconce her fateful road with the whims of her volition. What need, then, do these two archetypes have to pray when auspicious fortune can be whimsically paved? Is it not "ridiculous ... how people in the prime of their life could do such a stupid thing"? But, what happens when the matter is that which cannot be governed by the will, such as the narrator's onslaught of cancer; how, then, do we deal with such an abhorrent disease of the body, and does not such an abominable fate render us "frail and weak in the face of misfortune"? Although the body may be "frail and weak in the face of misfortune," that misfortune is corporeal, while the autonomous will is impalpable, and thus unfettered by the hegemony of corporeal affliction. It follows then that the distinction between the physical and impalpable self is pivotal, as allowing physical misfortune to immure the impalpable self—the cognitive domain and will—relegates both selves to a life circumscription of helplessness. In this context, "malice" is the appropriate word, as any notion which subjugates us to an execrable fate based on corporeal calamity is a malicious ideology. For frailty is not defined by the robustness, nor the potency or duration, of the physical self, or the temporal manifestation of failure, but rather by the degree of vigor and tenacity that we—the master of both selves—ensconce in the actions that represent our will, notwithstanding the condition of our physical reality. It follows then that fate is "unyielding" only to the man who "is nothing"; that is, a man with a broken will, as an unpropitious fate is simply a test to measure the resolve of the will under governance of the self, in spite of the ostensibly loathsome, yet temporal reality placed before us.

In an alternate interpretation, Keefer states the following:

The ravages of fate and the strength of will oscillate throughout the novel but I am not sure the end result is to bifurcate mind and frail body. In fact, Gao strengthens his body through all this hiking and clears his mind by letting his being dissolve into the four pronouns that deconstruct spatially to travel through time and nature. At the end, snow is falling, and he exists tranquilly in the "now," devoid of the linear direction of a purposeful "will." So his immurement is transcended by dissolving the conventional sense of self, wrapped up in the "we" of conditioning, particularly Maoist thought, to experience the sensuality of all aspects of mind/body/spirit and the fusion of experience in the divine now where he plays with the Zen koan of God as a frog. (Keefer, Progress Report, 2012)

However, both interpretations of the foregoing Gao passage, although seemingly disparate, lead to a homogeneous conclusion: Immurements can be transcended by dissolving the conventional sense of self, and experiencing the self as an instrument of the mind, body, and spirit in the divine now, and not subject to the predominance of physical misfortune or corporeal reality. To exist tranquilly in the "now" requires a conscious, yet strong command of our cognitive domain, demanding the constant directing of the consciousness to the equanimity of the present, thus also demonstrating the exercise of a purposeful will, although such exercise is not the conventional obstinacy to a linear course of action. However, by integrating both notions, we discover that because the steadfast adherence to a purposeful will could at times be a laborious and valiant feat, to assuage the burden, perhaps we could de-emphasize the self in the physical sense, relish in the placidity of the moment, and observe the self in its linear course as a protagonist in a novel through the lens of a reader, thus not subjecting our resolve to the caprices of transient physical stress-inducing failures. Such an aerial perspective of the self, as exhibited by Gao, mollifies the onus of exercising such a herculean will and augments our fortitude, as our resolve is rarely tested and thus not at risk of compromise.

#### *Cross-Cultural Comparison of Seven Literary Classics*

We have perused the law of conditioning along with its governing rhetorical machinations. We have observed the deleterious consequence of failing to govern the will and capitulating to inauspicious impetuses as well as the *ex post facto* rationalization that manifests as a result. We have demonstrated the manner in which to gain freedom, through the relinquishment of indoctrinated hindrances and the identification and eradication of governing impetuses. We have outlined a method to attenuate the burden of enfranchisement by de-emphasizing the self and apperceiving the willful linear course through the lens of a reader. We will now begin the cross-cultural comparison; namely, the identification and disparateness of the diverse social, political, and religious conventions as delineated in *Brave New World*, *Lolita*, *The Patience Stone*, *God Dies by the Nile*, *The Satanic Verses*, *The German Mujahid*, and *Soul Mountain*. Through the examination of these seven literary works, one claim undeniably emerges: In some societies, the governing authority, through the imposition of fear and employment of social, political, and religious machinations, controls its citizens and shapes their ideals to further its political, and sometimes disreputable, interests, which evoke the psychological immurement of the populace, thus leaving enduring control to, and furthering the sovereignty of, the authority.

Let us begin with the *Maslovian* convention. In contrast to the Anglo-American culture, as demonstrated in *The Patience Stone*, the virtue of honor supersedes the value of family, as wives and children could be so facilely discarded (32,45), but honor is a superlative virtue worth dying for (47). Yet, in *Lolita*, Humbert although pursuing an adolescent girl, willingly compromises his honor for the pursuit of love, as the notion of love and family takes precedence in Anglo-American ideals. Potentially, these disparate cultural conventions are spawned by the

security and stability of their respective societies, with the virtues of each culture shaped by Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. As Maslow theorizes, security is a primal and thus precedential need, governing the organism's prevailing behavior. Once security is procured, higher ideals are desiderated and pursued. In *The Patience Stone*, society is in constant upheaval, and therefore honor for the sake of freedom is internalized and of superlative virtuosity to ensure survival of its people. One must predominantly honor himself to be psychologically fitted and willing to fight to death for the value of freedom. Whereas, in the Anglo-American culture, the average citizen is not burdened by threats of security; therefore, honor is not of optimal priority leaving higher aspirations to be sought, such as love and family. Ergo, we may be able to identify the security and stability of a nation, by looking at the prevailing ideals of its populace.

Considering the prevailing virtues of a militant society, let us delve into the gender disparities for a moment. In the patriarchal society shown in *The Patience Stone*, survival is constantly threatened, and thus men, the militants of the populace, hold greater perceived value as they are the underpinnings of society: They fight and die in war to effect perpetuity of the state and its citizens. Thus, in furtherance of the state's interest, women, the "ineffectual gender," are oppressed and dehumanized, and men, the "heroes," are acclaimed and approbated. Men, also, are befitted for onerous physical labor, and therefore an invaluable asset to incite pecuniary growth in a traditional economy. These social conventions imbue the ideals of the people, sculpting their values, with even an inadvertent transgression translating to the ostracism of or death to the pariah:

Anyway, my aunt was infertile. In other words, no good. So her husband sent her to his parents' place in the countryside, to be their servant. As she was both beautiful and infertile, her father-in-law used to fuck her, without a care in the world. Day and night. Eventually she cracked. Bashed his head in. They threw her out of her in-laws' house. Her husband sent her away, too. She was abandoned by her own family, she vanished, leaving a note saying she had put an end to her days. Sacrificed her body, reduced it to ashes! Leaving no trace. No grave. And of course, this suited everyone just fine. No funeral. No service for that 'witch'! (45)

As the penalty of noncompliance is socially reinforced with egregious suffering to the "perpetrator," the dominion of these social conventions aggrandizes. Resultantly, some Islamic states stand to gain principally, thus indoctrinating and inculcating these social contrivances to further their political power, evoking the psychological immurement of the populace with the enervating fear of noncompliance.

The enervating fear elicited by the deleterious consequences of noncompliance is a common despotic artifice employed also by some Islamic authorities to secure compliance to their hegemony. Using the literary support of *The German Mujahid*, Jordon Houghton maintains the following:

In *The German Mujahid*, Malrich's estate becomes thick with chaos after the gang-like imam is arrested. A new series of jihadist leaders take his place of power and begin implementing their new rules for the estate. Upon hearing of this set of news, Malrich asks the following:

“These guys are no-bullshit, they’re from the AIG, they were sent in from Boufarik, that’s where they’ve got all the Taliban training camps. The day they showed up they issued a fatwa. First: anyone who is not with them is against them. Second: girls aren’t allowed out on the street anymore. Third: we’re forbidden from talking to the Jews, Christians, animists, communists, queers, or journalists. Fourth: they’ve banned speed, blow, cigarettes, beer, pinball, sports, music, books, TV, movies...I don’t know the rest.”  
“What about the people on the estate, what are they doing about it?”

“Same old, same old, they just play dead.” (113)

The people of the estate are physically imprisoned in their bodies, homes, and estate, but moreover they have become imprisoned to the will of their leaders. As Malrich's friends explain, they "just play dead." (Houghton)

How paralyzing is the fear of noncompliance that should the prevailing Islamic authority impose an unconscionable decretum, not even a protest surfaces? In response, Laura Gardner notes the following:

Perhaps their spirit was dead, Jordan. When people are ruled by fear, who really wants to be the one to openly object and face the consequences? Look at what they did to Nadia-- with the blow torch. She was the symbol of the jihadists' depravity.

“What were they talking about? What were they thinking about? About Nadia? About what might happen to them? They probably weren't thinking about anything. They looked like concentration camp prisoners waiting for time to pass..... They looked so crushed, so sheepish, it disgusted me” (Sansal 59).

These people on the estate were prisoners of fear, overpowered by those who had money, lawyers, connections, and friends in high places. How could they possibly overtake them? (Gardner)

As Nadia—a sixteen-year old Arab girl who is stripped naked and tied up with barbed wire, her face and body burnt to shit with a blowtorch" (66)—is effected as the paragon to all nonconformists, insubordination deliquesces as fear transmutes to terror, furthering the sovereignty of Islamic authority. The ensuing "will-less" prisoners are effectively bludgeoned and terrorized like “concentration camp prisoners waiting for time to pass,” hoping that their apotheosis of a Zakeya surfaces from the ranks to avenge their oppression. Unlike, the fear of

ostracism embedded in the social contrivance as demonstrated in *The Patience Stone*, here, the fear of torture or death to the maverick arrests the hearts of the citizens rendering them paralyzed, fostering their passivity.

While the social and political machinations employed by some Islamic authorities are catalyzed by fear, both traditional and modern China harbor an alternate approach. Consider the following passage in the introduction of *Soul Mountain*:

Human history abounds with cases of the individual being induced by force or ideological persuasion to submit to the power of the collective; the surrender of the self to the collective eventually becomes habit, norm convention and tradition, and this phenomenon is not unique to any one culture.

In traditional China, the philosophy of Confucius was developed into an autocratic ideology alongside infrastructures that allowed it to permeate all levels of society, and the individual after birth was conditioned to be subservient to a clearly defined hierarchy of authorities. . . . Self-sacrifice became an entrenched habit that facilitated, aided and abetted the extremes of social conformity demanded by the Cultural Revolution which was engineered by sophisticated modern strategies for ideological control. Writers and artists for whom creation was the expression of the self were relentlessly and effectively silenced. (12-13)

As Gao articulates, these social and political sophistries imposed on the common citizen “eventually become[] habit, norm convention and tradition.” Accordingly, the citizens champion these artifices not based on their merits, or fear, but rather predicated on habituation to such a profound extent that their advocacy is called “tradition.” Like the members in the New World, the Chinese citizens are indoctrinated with the state’s chicaneries, with any overt breaches perverted as dishonor to their tradition. The brilliance of this machination is who could refute “tradition,” thus demonstrating the potency of this politically evoked immurement. And as the writers and artists who evoke novel, unorthodox ideas, which fail to benefit the state, are “relentlessly and effectively silenced,” “tradition” flourishes, furthering the state’s ascendancy.

The manipulation of social and political conventions is not the state’s sole modus operandi to serve its interests. Let us examine the following dialogue between a soldier and the protagonist of *The Patience Stone*, as the soldier bursts into her house demanding to know her occupation:

“I sell my body, as you sell your blood.”

“What are you on about?”

“I sell my body for the pleasure of men!”

Overcome with rage, the man spits, “*Allah, Al-Rahman! Al-Mu’min!* Protect me!

“Against who?”

The cigarette smoke spews out of the man's mouth as he continues to invoke his God, "In the name of Allah!" to drive away the devil, "Protect me from Satan!" then takes another huge drag to belch out alongside his words of fury, "But aren't you ashamed to say this?!"

"To say it, or to do it?"

"Are you a Muslim, or aren't you?"

"I'm a Muslim"

"You will be stoned to death! You'll be burned alive in the flames of hell!" (42)

Notice the consternation, or perhaps terror, in the man's tone, as if he were conversing with a demon. The belief of sexual propriety is indoctrinated from birth; accordingly, the heretical act of marketing wanton sexual relations is the most ignoble of traits. But why do some interpretations of the Islamic religion decry extramarital fornication? Illegitimate children separate the familial structure excommunicating its members, leaving boys, the new generation of soldiers, to abscond from, rather than champion the interests of, the state. Hence, some Islamic states condemn wanton sexual relations through the guise of religion to maintain stability and security within its sector. This claim is not to buttress the morality of a wanton, but rather to understand the superlative motivations among societal members, and how these indoctrinated beliefs shape the values of the populace, engendering a scathing immurement, as the citizens willingly and tenaciously sacrifice their lives to ascribe to the state's machinations.

Religious machinations are no exception. As illustrated in the foregoing quote, religion is fashioned as a rhetorical vehicle to influence the masses, but unfortunately the substratum of religion is so imbued that its implicit tenets are pliable and thus subjectively interpreted; hence, its merits could be facilely contrived by the state and even its citizens, engendering "prophets" to promulgate inauspicious edicts. In *The Satanic Verses*, we observe Ayesha, the prophet, who commands a following in which the ingenuous adherents willingly march into the sea, sacrificing their lives to demonstrate steadfast, unequivocal loyalty to their synagogue of the mind:

Once Ayesha had entered the waters the villagers began to run. Those who could not leapt upon the backs of those who could. Holding their babies, the mothers of Titlipur rushed into the sea; grandsons bore their grandmothers on their shoulders and rushed into the waves. Within minutes the entire village was in the water, splashing around, falling over, getting up, moving steadily forwards, towards the horizon, never looking back to shore.

It was too late. The villages, whose heads could be seen bobbing around in the distance, had reached the edge of the underwater shelf. Almost all together, making no visible attempt to save themselves, they dropped beneath the water's surface. In moments, every one of the Ayesha Pilgrims had sunk out of sight.



None of them reappeared. Not a single gasping head or thrashing arm. (470-471)

How sad are these subjects who fail to observe the world outside the confines of their parochial view, spawned by the misinterpretations of religious doctrine, only to lose reasonable objectivity and a rational thought process, thus fecklessly losing their lives for the ascription to an ostensible transcendent virtue, which is not a virtue, but rather an egregious immurement.

Do we witness a homogeneous religious chicanery in *God Dies by the Nile*? The cultural disparities in this novel are analogous among the clitoral mutilation, the oppression and exploitation of plebeian women to assuage the Mayor's sexual desires, the unjust incarceration of plebeian men to buttress the interests of the regime, and the power of the state over family as the fathers willingly gift their daughters to the Mayor for abject pay as opposed to suffering the deleterious consequence of noncompliance. Similar to *The Patience Stone*, boys are favored over girls: "... the very first moment of her life when her father stuck her mother on the head because she had not borne him the son he expected" (Saadawi, 95). However, Saadawi demonstrates how the state duplicitously and overtly manipulates religion to serve its interests. Consider the following passage apprised to Zakeya by a member of the regime to cure her stuporous condition:

Start with the four ordained prostrations, then follow them with the four *Sunna* prostrations. After that you are to repeat the holy verse of the *Seat* ten times. On the following day, before dawn, Zeinab is to take another bath with clean water from the Nile, meanwhile repeating the testimony three times. Then do her prayer at the crack of dawn. Once this is over she is to open the door of your house before sunrise, stand on the threshold facing its direction and recite the first verse of the Koran ten times. In front of her she will see a big iron gate. She is to walk towards it, open it and walk in. She must never walk out of it again until the owner of the house orders her to do so. (115-116)

The big iron gate is the entrance to the Mayor's house, and this religious machination is utilized to direct Zakeya's young pulchritudinous niece, Zeinab, to the house of the Mayor to serve his carnal indulgences, and "never walk out of it again until the owner of the house orders her to do so" (116). Like the soldier in *The Patience Stone*, Zeinab and Zakeya willingly accede to the religious contrivance, as the merits of indoctrinated beliefs, colored by the cloak of religion, are rarely challenged. The men of Kafr El Teen are also immured in the sophism, as they willingly surrender their daughters to the regime, and beat them into acquiescent compliance upon request: "Beat her. Don't you know that girls and women never do what they're told unless you beat them?" (27). And as two innocent plebeian men are unjustly incarcerated, the state, through its unconscionable contrivances, once again, psychologically immures its citizens, impregnating them with the enfeebling fear of noncompliance.

It could be argued that this type of political structure bolstered by religious artifice is effectual as it secures the stability of the populace, precluding turmoil as exhibited by the totalitarian governmental structure in *The Brave New World*, and therefore the hegemony of the state is a diminutive price in relation to the pivotal value of security. However, such a counterclaim contemporaneously espouses corruption, opprobrious abuse, manipulation of philanthropic conventions, and inhumane servility. The objective is to erect security of the populace without encroaching on the human rights of its members.

In the Anglo-American culture, we do not live in an overt despotism, nor is the state suffused with security issues; thus, our *Maslovian* ideals are different. We, however, live in a republic, not a direct democracy. A republic is distinguished through an elected government constituting a representative democracy, not a direct democracy in which everyone takes part in making a decision, as in a town meeting or a referendum (Meyers, 2002). Therefore, manipulation can and does occur in the electing of representatives through the succor of extensive political funding subsidized by the financial elite. The despotism, thus, is covert and not as pungent as some Islamic authorities, but, nevertheless, not entirely equitable as a direct democracy would entail. Moreover, laws are also shaped by the judicial branch of government, whereas alterations in case law supersede statutory law, leaving a biased judicial system predominated by large law firms employed by major corporations throughout America. Accordingly, by virtue of the covert governance of financial patricians, laws that intermittently change are shaped to augment opportunism for those in the pecuniary apex of social, religious, and political arenas, not always to serve the interests of the public. Hence, the use of social, political, and religious chicanery occurs in every culture, some more covertly imposed than others. The potency of these contrivances, though, is homogenous, relying on the immurement of the underlings and bourgeoisie of the populace to further the dominion of these sophistries. With the identification and renouncement of these machinations, buttressed by a herculean will, perhaps, we can enfranchise ourselves of the incapacitating circumscriptions and fashion a novel peregrination with the yield of our own design.

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