

of role-playing is related to Pinter's analogy between theatrical performance and ritual, which echoes the traditional comparison between the stage and the world. The stage for Pinter is emblematic of essential reality, the world is a theatre where the artifice of roles and rituals and the ceremoniousness of games and playing shape men's lives (Kaufman174).

Thus, Harold Pinter is one of the most innovative figures in modern British theatre. The wide-ranging, self-indulgent anger of Osborne's heroes and the evenly balanced clashes of order and individualism in Arden have no place in the sparseness of Pinter's isolated rooms, last refuges of menaced nonentities. His characters are rootless and isolated, fearful that some usurper will enter the warm and womb like sanctuaries they have made their own. Pinter's victims whose crimes, like those of Kafka's characters, are never revealed. The settings are dilapidated and impoverished; his plots begin virtually at the moment of crisis a disturbed refugee or two, a vague but growing sense of disquiet, and a vast and inchoate vacuum surrounding a room provide Pinter's basic situation.

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Triumph of Romanticism in *Highway*

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Abstract: Highway, as depicted in the film serves as a connecting link, an end to charter the route to release and freedom for Veer and Mahabir Bhati. Scenes of common and rustic life with its simple language and manner abound in the film. Veera and Mahabir exemplify the spirit of rebellion against the oppressive system and tradition. Imagination, passion, emotion and mysticism take the film closer to romanticism. The elements of sadness, gloom, silence, death and escape – all defining features of romanticism suffuse the canvass of the film. Silence with all encompassing gloom works like a language in the film. Finally 'love for nature' as the ultimate feature of romanticism serves as a unifying element of the plot in the film.

Keywords: Elements of Romanticism, *Highway*, Freedom, Release, Rebellion, Escape, Silence, Nature

According to noted philosopher Isaiah Berlin, Romanticism embodied: a new and restless spirit, seeking violently to burst through old and cramping forms, a nervous preoccupation with perpetually changing inner states of consciousness, a longing for the unbounded and the indefinable, for perpetual movement and change, an effort to return to the forgotten sources of life, a passionate effort at self-assertion both individual and collective, a search after means of expressing an unappeasable yearning for unattainable goals (*The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, p. 92).

The film *Highway* exemplifies the elements of romanticism, the literary movement that started in the last decade of eighteenth century and went on progressing until about 1832, the time of death of the great romantic novelist Walter Scott. Despite severe criticism the movement faced for its over enthusiasm and transitory nature, it has kept its presence felt through sporadic efforts of writers in different genres particularly in poetry. Cinema is the most pervasive recent medium, which has benefited by the spirit of romanticism. The present essay is an attempt to analyze and evaluate the presence and influence of elements like – individual freedom; depiction of common life with its simple language and manners; the spirit of rebellion; role of imagination, passion and emotion; elements of gloom, silence death and escape; and the most significant, the presence of nature - in the film *Highway*.

The film is called a 'road movie'. The road, i.e. the highway serves as a connecting link, a means to an end for the filmmaker. The end is to charter the route to release and freedom for Veera Tripathi, the heroine of the novel. This release - from oppressive and stifling atmosphere of her home - forms the theme of the film. Her father M.K. Tripathi is a business tycoon having all the resources of comforts and luxury at his

command but Veera feels suffocated in this environment of ease glamour and splendor. She is like a captive bird, kept in a cage of gold. She has suffered regular abuse at the hands of her uncle during her childhood. As per her statement to her father, it is ironical that they taught her to be careful to the prevalent dangers and insecurities in the outside world, ignoring the bigger threat inside. As a dauntless spirit, she has to seek release.

Veera clamors to seek free and fresh air of the outside world. She persuades her fiancé Vijay to take her for a ride on the highway only for fifteen minutes at the least, on a night barely four days before her planned marriage. As fate would have it, she is kidnapped here from a gas station at the highway by Mahabir Bhati and his men. Mahabir decides to see through with his plan despite being warned by all of his gang for the risk involved in confronting such a high profile and powerful person as Tripathi. Barring initial shock and fright Veera gets round to her fate and starts looking at the brighter side of it. Here her craving for freedom takes hold of the better part of her personality. The urge, to be free not from her kidnappers but from her oppressive and suffocating elite society rules her heart. She tries to run from her captivity, making a lot of clatter in the process, seen by Mahabir who surprisingly allowed her to run if she could. Here in the barren extensive landscape of Rajasthan she could find no direction despite running as hard as she could. She falls down and suddenly feels overawed by the overwhelming impact of this open and limitless star spangled sky. This first taste of nature and its elements is potent enough to embolden her insatiable spirit to seek more of it. She is mesmerized and a little confused at this sudden revelation. How could she get full release in a moment when she has been bounded down by the shackles of superfluous sophistication for years? At first, it is a little more than she can handle. It is beyond her understanding as to why she hides herself in the tempo to escape being noticed by the policemen at a check post when it was her only chance to go back to her parents. From now onwards she starts savoring her moments of true freedom. The confrontation gives birth to cooperation. It was a change around, a reversal. Now she takes hold of the situation, no longer afraid of Mahabir's aggression. She becomes an aid in her abduction. Realizing the precariousness of the situation Mahabir seeks escape, tells her to go back but she is adamant. How can she let go her so painfully achieved, newly found sense of freedom? It is noteworthy that this is not a selfish kind of freedom. This is an ennobling feeling, which carries with it a sense of responsibility, that breeds love and care of other distressed and oppressed souls like her. Seeds of love are sown in her heart for Mahabir. This love is unconventional in the sense that she does not want it to culminate in marriage and children. Under the benign influence of this sense of freedom and joy she can now discern the deep and true nature of

Mahabir, the distressed and oppressed soul, trapped in the vicious circle of crime and offence. He has to relent and pour his heart out before her. Now both of them are two bodies and one soul, complementing each other in finding ultimate freedom and release for themselves. This sense of love and freedom changes a hardened criminal (Mahabir has committed three murders already) to an innocent and repentant soul, who cries his heart out at last and decides to change his ways for good. At Veera's insistence, he throws away his pistol and risks his life. He is killed in the end but not before exemplifying that true sense of freedom and love is worth sacrificing anything in life. He dies to live in Veera's heart forever.

Depiction of ordinary common or rustic life with its simple language and manners as stressed by Wordsworth in Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) through phrases "common life" and "a selection of language really used by men" is the next important element which relates the film to romantic tradition. Major portion of the film has nothing to do with the privileged elite class with its luxury and comfort except the fact that it has Veera as its sole physical representative who is always eager to mix with commonality with its paraphernalia. Though Mahabir Bhati and his henchmen are not ordinary and common in the sense that they are involved in illegal and anti social activities, they are almost rustic and simple in their manners and language. Veera is drawn and captivated towards their simplicity, having not an iota of hate or denigration. She eats the simple food given to her, it seems with relish, as in one scene she licks her fingers while eating. She enjoys listening to the folk songs sung by rural folk singers once in Rajasthan and then in Laddakh though she also dances on an English song in Kalimpong, which shows her free and lively spirit. The point is that she never misses and never demands anything in particular associated with the richness, luxury and comfort of her class. She is happy with bare amenities and cherishes an abandoned mud house with thatched roof as her dream home. On one occasion early in the film she insists on sitting on the front seat with Mahabir so that she could enjoy the scenes of ordinariness of common and rustic life. The film depicts ordinary life with its rural setting consisting of Haryana Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Laddakh.

The spirit of rebellion against the system and tradition is the next point of relatedness between romanticism and the film. Veera is a rebellion outright. She is fed up with the glamour, comfort and luxuries, all superficial elements hiding an inside rot. She is always impatient with the inherent hypocrisy and contradictions of life. Even her parents are complicit in this rot and decay. Her mother keeps on telling her not to expose her uncle and her (Veera's) own abuse at his hands, as it might invite social ignominy to the family. Her father tells her to be careful outside, at the same allowing the rot to fester inside. Initially Veera's

rebellion against the family and class seems a mere escape; it takes its true shape when the father, as the head of this system, wreaks havoc in her life by mobilizing his forces of evil to ensure the killing of her lover. She screams in agony and anger, like a wounded lioness at this betrayal. She cannot forgive it (the class) for such inhumanity. She is ready to take cudgels to fight against it once she is allowed to come to her own after the calamity. She exposes the perverted uncle and decides to leave the family for good so that she could live alone amidst the elements of nature, cherishing memories of her love. Mahabir Bhati is also a rebel of his own. He resembles a romantic hero who as noted by Northrop Frye, is often “placed outside the structure of civilization and therefore represents the force of physical nature, amoral or ruthless, yet with a sense of power, and often leadership, that society has impoverished itself by rejecting” (as cited in Imre Salusinszky, 2005, p. 119). He rebels against his cowed down henchmen as they warn him for the dire consequences of confronting the likes of Tripathi. Bhati decides to see through with his plan on his own. And the plan is to seek retribution against Tripathi, the representative of all those rich and powerful, who could force the poor people like him (Bhati) to offer their wives to satiate the lust of such voluptuous predatory wolves. So Bhati's is a double rebellion, one against his own people, even his own father who was a cruel husband as is made clear by the images of recalling his disturbed childhood. The other against the rich, powerful and oppressive class just mentioned. Though it goes without saying that his rebellious nature dilutes at the end by the soft, soothing and calming influence of love.

Role of imagination, passion, emotion and mysticism is also there in the film, which takes it closer to romanticism. The director's imagination has taken run riot, which is potent enough to fire the imagination of his audience as well. The highway literally serves as a link to join and give structure to provide concrete form to his imagination in the depiction of exotic and far away beautiful places of nature. The two lead characters are passionate by nature. This passion takes form of a rebellion against the system and class in both the cases. It leads them to love each other despite all odds and precarious conclusion of their journey in one's death and other's severed ties with her society. As with emotion, it has already been mentioned that there are enough emotional outbursts on the part of both the characters. Veera gets mystical and philosophical more than once in the film. In the first half, she cannot understand sudden revelation and consequent change in her personality. She gives importance to present and living life in the moment. Near the interval part she says that the journey is what she likes rather than what is left behind and what lies ahead. Later on, Bhati also dabbles in philosophy when he says that one bullet kills two people, one at whom it is fired and the other who fires it. The elements of sadness, gloom, silence, death and

escape are also employed by the director to make the film romantic in the classical sense of the term. Silence works like the part of language in the film. It enhances the gloom and sadness prevalent in most of the early and later parts of the film. It helps the audience to better listen to the sounds of nature and its elements, the unbroken strains of the film. However, it also becomes deafening just before the climactic scene, enhancing its dramatic effect. Three deaths are already caused by Bhati before the film starts which leave their indelible imprints on his personality make up. He seems obsessed by these deaths, feels guilt ridden subconsciously, willing to seek an escape despite realizing the prospect of a deadly end (dog's death in his own words). This obsession with death, which has made him a hardened criminal, slackens only at the end when he comes into the rejuvenating powers of love, which somehow reawakens his wish to live for the sake of his love. Though it was too late and the redemption and release have to come only through death. The escape and pursuit, the two romantic elements are cleverly handled by the film director involving both the lead characters in the plot.

Love for nature is undoubtedly the most important element of romanticism. Nature in its various forms and shapes serves as a unifying element in the plot of the film. Veera yearns to breathe in open air rather than living in the suffocating and stifling atmosphere of her home, a symbol of abuse and assault. The combined stroke of her insistence and chance brings her face to face with the elements of nature in its various manifestations. She together with the audience is fed with a panorama of nature, from the flat fields of Haryana to the deserts of Rajasthan, from circuitous hilly areas of Himachal Pradesh to the snow capped heights of Laddakh. More than just serving as an idyllic background to a dramatic love story, the all-encompassing nature is presented as an important character in the film. It has a part to play and becomes not just a passive setting or atmosphere but a potent presence in the film.

For Veera, nature represents everything she wants and whatever she lacks in her life. As the relation between Veera and Mahabir gains momentum and strength there appears a gradual shift of focus in landscape from the planes of Haryana and Rajasthan to the heights of Himachal Pradesh and Laddakh. Plains, the initial home for both the characters, breed a lot of chaos and confusion. They serve as the setting for abuse, crime, corruption and perversion of all kinds. Veera and Mahabir are entangled and trapped in their respective situations. There ensues pain, torture and confrontation as a result of their first encounter in this setting. Under the influence of benevolent forces of nature, they come out of this muddle and mire as they go along and gain height in their journey. In the latter part of the film both agree that they like mountains more than the plains or oceans. Here nature provides the healing touch for both the troubled