



Confessional Elements in the *Memories Look At Me*

Asha G. A.

Department of English, Emmanuel College of Arts and Science, Vazhichal, India

Email - asha5773@gmail.com

Abstract : *The 21st century has witnessed vast development in the field of psychology and so simultaneously, literature too reflects this contemporary scenario. From the psychoanalytical point of view the characters in literature clearly reflects the repressed feeling in author's personality. Confessional poetry which openly declares the autobiographical elements in poetry is molded on the features like traumatic mental state, surrealism, loneliness etcetera. Thomas Transtromer's Memories Look At Me can be analyzed in such a perspective though his work's primary beauty lies in its translucent imagery. This paper is written to foreground the confessional elements in Memories Look At Me.*

Keywords : *Confessional poetry, Thomas Transtromer, Nobel Prize 2011, autobiographical way of narration, Stockholm, Mr.X and Helmy, Grammar School, exorcism.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Human mind which is molded by the experiences that we have from infancy, or fetus stage onwards, is highly complicated. Psycho analytical criticism which is influenced by psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud always gives priority to the repressed feelings and its consequences in human mind. In most of the creative works the author's repressed anguish or deepest emotion can be seen. Tomas Transtromer, the Swedish poet, the winner of 2011 Noble Prize is noted for his poems embedded in translucent images. His memoir *Memories look at me* which is appeared in the year 1993, gives a glimpse into his early life. But under these perfectly crafted descriptions there are undertones of confession though the work does not openly declare the confessional lineage. Confessional poetry, which has been officially heralded by the publication of *Life Studies* by Robert Lowell in 1959, usually deals with the theme of depression, death, trauma, relationships etcetera. The chief proponents like Silvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and W.D Snodgrass etcetera followed an autobiographical mode of narration. In contemporary English literature Marie Howe, Sharon Olds like poets shows confessional lineage. In Indian English poetry Kamala Das has established her unique place in Confessional poetry by her open approach to the themes related with personal relationships.

Traumatic mental state, one of the marking features of Confessional poetry is very evident in Transtromer's narration of his childhood which is described in the very first paragraph itself- "It is difficult to remove these concentrated regions, it is dangerous, it feels I am coming close to death itself". He was born in Stockholm in 1931 and raised by his mother Helmy after her divorce from his father Gosta Transtromer. Up to three he enjoyed a very luxurious life in his father's place and so he always kept a sense of pride. After divorce they moved to Folkungagatan 57, a lower class apartment and he compares his life there to a film in 30's or 40's. The only information that he knows about his father from his grandfather is "But surely you must agree that Mr.X is crook". The impact that the absence his father creates in the mind of a school boy is high. In the school he could not bring his father and the only thing that he had as the sign of his father was the letter that his father had sent to Transtromer. In order to stop the teasing of the students he wanted to provide the letter before the student as he was that much traumatized. Later due to the absence of his father he could not take the book *The Animals of Scandinavia: A History of Their Migration* from an adult's only library.

War time traumatic experiences sometimes come in confessional poetry. War time disturbances in the life of a divorced mother and a nine year old little boy is narrated in a plane way. During the first year of the Second World War planes were made for the evacuation of all school children. So his mother wrote the name Transtromer with marking ink on the sheet.

His Experiences in the Grammar School, the single sexed Monastery School are full of ambivalence which are expressed thus "A smell that was at once suffocating and comforting". His loneliness in school is compared to a



particular scene in Ingmar Bergman's film *Hets* in which people appear as extras in several scenes. Later he gets a friend Pale in Sodra Latin, whose father is absent mother is a devoted one like Transtromer's mother. He appears in school as pale one leg amputated and after some days he dies because of some illness. He feels difficulty to accept the absence of his favorite friend. His total experience in school is described as "My total experience in school was mixed with more darkness than light, just like my image in society has become"

Surrealism, mental illness like features can be seen in the chapter 'Exorcism' in which he explains his days of anxiety when he was 15 years old. He could hardly sleep in night but sat up in bed. The books that he read on those days left no mark in his memory. After some days his body started shaking, especially the legs, the cramps were beyond the control of his will and he screamed for help. He compares the situation to the opening scene in *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*: a factory where someone hides while the machine and room vibrate. He was almost insane because of hypochondria. In his opinion his condition was similar to "a film where an innocuous apartment interior changes its character entirely when ominous music is heard". He thought that an evil power has discovered him. In a surrealistic manner he envisions that "I was surrounded by ghosts. A ghost that walked to school every morning and sat through the lessons without revealing its secrets "At that time he was skeptical about all religions and did not have prayers. He attempted exorcism by way of music and began to hammer at the piano. But in one spring evening he discovered that all his terrors were then marginal. He considers that part of his life as purgatory.

Critics are of the opinion that he deviates too much from the contemporary realist poetry by focusing too much on the beauty of his native land. Like his poetry invites the readers to visit his homeland, his memoir, which is a response to his friend Baudelair's advise to write about Transtromers childhood, invites the readers to visit their own childhood . The exquisite charm of his memories are summed up by using a short poem *Memories look at me* with charming line "the greenery is dense / with memories, they follow me with their gaze" and the depth of his attachment is revealed in the line "They are so close that I can hear them breath".

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