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अन्यायाचा सामर्थ्याने ! मग असा संहार केला
वाघाच्या वाघनखांनी ! शत्रूला ठार केला..



प्रकाशक : इतिहासाचार्य वि.का.राजवाडे संशोधन मंडळ, धुळे



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या संस्थेचे त्रैमासिक

॥ संशोधक ॥

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- प्राचार्य डॉ. सर्जेराव भामरे
- प्रा. डॉ. मृदुला वर्मा
- प्राचार्य डॉ. अनिल माणिक बैसाणे
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Narrative Techniques in *Aliss at the Fire* by Jon Foss

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Abstract:

A modern writer cannot survive his career as a writer without making any experiments in his writing. All the renowned writers do something different from the other writers. In other words, experiment is the key to their success in the field of literature. The craze for inventing new and surprising narrative techniques has increased, especially, since the beginning of the twentieth century. The later writers not only invented, but also collaged already explored techniques to give a feel of anew. Characterization has also become more complex because of the presentation of their psychological upheaval and the requirement of the modern plot structure.

The rapid series of mental pictures created out of word-brush makes the narration more interesting. The description of activities in day-to-day life, the incidents, nature, and memories give the narration a feel of dramatic performance. The mythical and magical elements with hallucinations of the dead characters also provide a distinctive feature to the writing.

Keywords: Stream of Consciousness Technique, Experiments, Collage, Imagism, Imagination, Hallucination, Nature

Objectives:

- To study the narrative technique explored by the Norwegian writer, Jon Fosse's *Aliss at the Fire*.
- To study his experiments with narrative techniques.
- To study the collage of thoughts, memory, and imagination in the present novella.
- To study imagery, use of words to create mental pictures, in the present novella.

v. To study hallucinations and ghostlike appearances of the characters and their activities in the present novella.

vi. To study Nature and its impact on the thinking of the characters in the novella.

Hypotheses :

In the present novella,

- Fosse made experiments with Stream of Consciousness narrative techniques, narration in indirect speech, to be different from others.
- He collaged thoughts and memories of the characters with their imagination.
- Imagery, using words to create mental pictures, is also a feature of his writing.
- His use of hallucinations and ghostlike appearances of the characters and their activities in the present novella marks the distinct quality of the book.
- His treatment of Nature affects the thinking of the characters in the novella.

Scope and Limitations:

The present research paper studies only a single novella, *Aliss at the Fire* by Jon Fosse. No other text or book by him or any other author is explored here for the detailed analysis.

Research Methodology:

Descriptive data analysis by exploring primary and secondary online and offline sources is the method used for the present paper. In addition, MLA 9th edition style is employed here for citing references.

Stream of consciousness is an experimental technique in novel writing. It can be called an advanced version of the epistolary novel of the eighteenth century. The technique uses memory and thoughts in their collaged forms. Though the thoughts flow in a stream like current, they constantly fluctuate from one to another. Such a type of narration creates a collaged image of all the explored stuff. The feel of imagism and imagination run over one another making the technique a unique one.

It becomes more interesting and experimental when stream of consciousness technique collides with hallucinations, ghosts, and memories of implacable nature.

The Norwegian Nobel Prize-winning writer, Jon Fosse, authored the novella, *Aliss at the Fire* in 2004, later on translated into English in 2010 by Damion Searls. Fosse is known for his distinguished style of writing. All the above narrative techniques mentioned in the hypotheses are seen in the present novella.

The novella records the story of Signe who stands by the window and waits for her husband, Asle, who disappeared in the fjord in a storm twenty-three years ago. Her thoughts and imagination construct the course of the plot of the novella.

Hypotheses are tested below:

Hypothesis-i: Experiments with Stream of Consciousness narrative techniques :

In the words of M. H. Abrams, Stream of Consciousness is "... unbroken flow of perceptions, memories, thoughts and feelings in the waking mind;" (378)

Therefore, in the novella, the characters, especially, Signe and Asle, are given long monologues. The thoughts, feelings, and memories of Signe flow when she is either lying on the bench, standing in front of the window watching fjord, or walking the narrow road. Most of her thoughts are attributed to Asle, her husband, who disappeared into the sea 23 years ago while rowing his small boat in rough weather. An example of her thinking is: she thinks, yes well it must be Thursday, and it's March, and the year is

(१६२)

2002, yes she knows that much ... no matter what she can still be safe and solid in herself, the way she was before he disappeared, that Tuesday, in late November, in 1979, and all at once she is back in the emptiness, she thinks, (Fosse, 9)

Jon Fosse makes many experiments in *Aliss at the Fire*. The monologues are in indirect speech from the point of view of a third person. The least use of punctuation, except commas, marks the rapidity of thoughts in the character's mind. Consequently, he uses less capital letters. The first full-stop was used on page number 30, and very few afterward. This less or no use of punctuation marks is also a feature of the stream-of-consciousness technique. Even the dialogues are also not quotation marked (21, 22, 58).

Stream-of-consciousness writing is usually regarded as a special form of interior monologue and is characterized by associative leaps in thought and lack of some or all punctuation. (Wikipedia)

Although, the present novella uses stream of consciousness technique to put forth the inner feelings and thoughts of the characters; it has comments from the third-person narrator to make the things easy to understand to the readers. The commentary made by Fosse, in between the thoughts of the characters, separates the monologues from the narration. It gives the feel of telling the story in 'indirect speech', from the unknown narrator. For example, the following quotation has both, the commentary and the monologue.

she (Signe) thinks, and if only it was spring now, she thinks, if only spring would come now, with its light, with warmer days, with little flowers in the meadows, with trees putting out buds, and leaves, because this darkness, this endless darkness all the time now, she can't stand it, she thinks, (Fosse, 10-11).

Hypothesis-ii: Collage of thoughts and memories with imagination :

The narration also includes collage of many things. The characters in the novella, especially Signe and Asle, think about past incidents. Simultaneously, they

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cope with the void with their imagination. The characters memorise the past by using flashback technique. Signe imagines the incidents that happened with Asle when he went to fjord in the rough weather. She also imagines the presence of ancestors in the house. She can see them moving from one room to another, and in and out of the house. She can also listen to their voices.

... he's been gone for years, it's been years since he disappeared, but it's still here, she sees the hall door open, she sees him stand there in the doorway, she sees him walk into the room, hears him say what he's said so many times before, (Fosse, 23)

Signe finds a psychological solution to the disappearance of Asle in the imaginary dialogues of the great-great-grandmother, Aliss, and her son, Kristoffer. Actually, they were talking about the small boy, Asle, who drowned at seven. However, she, although, does not overtly agree on the death of Asle, the dialogues reveal her fear of the death of her husband, Alse.

He has gone, Asle's gone, Old Aliss, Kristoffer says

Don't just stand there like that, Old Aliss says

The Lord moves in mysterious ways, she says

He is happy, Asle's happy now with God in Heaven, so don't be sad, she says

Don't be sad, she says

God is good, He is, she says (Fosse, 58)

Hypothesis-iii: Imagery, using words to create mental pictures :

The narration also includes the minute depiction of persons, places and objects. C. Day Lewis says in his *Poetic Image* (1948, pp 17-18) that an image is "a picture made out of words", and imagery is a series of images. Fosse also described people, objects, events, scenes, and Nature very minutely. The following words create a picture of Nature in the reader's mind.

she looks out at the big road winding there along the fjord, a thin line, ... the path that runs

from the big road down to the bay and the boathouse, and to the landing, ... the fjord, so steep, plunging straight down somewhere between black and grey from the sky's light movements that are somewhere between grey and white, down to the line of trees edging the fjord, and now the trees are black too, and it would so nice if they were green again, shining green, ... like the mountain was exhaling out there as it fell further down to the place where the trees start and then foothills and meadows, and houses, ... now it is almost all black, that's how it is now, in late autumn, and that is how it is now, in late autumn, and that's how it is all winter long, (Fosse, 17-18)

There are many scenes narrated in detail. When Aliss saves her son, Kristoffer from drowning in the fjord, she holds him tight, is another example of imagery. The incident imprints the scenes in our mind as if we are watching a real scene. Some part of the scene is:

Aliss come up the hill towards him with Kristoffer pressed against her breast, she comes running, and with black hair thick around her face, and those big eyes, and Aliss is coming as fast as she can on her short legs, and then Kristoffer's terrified shrieking, and then this darkness, and these winds and the rain, (Fosse, 37)

Aliss' striving to save the small baby from drowning, lifting up and pressing the baby to her breast, running home in the rain with her wet clothes and hair, keeping the baby near hearth, and all the efforts to save the baby who has become very cold, run in the mind of the reader.

Hypothesis-iv: Hallucinations and ghostlike appearances of the characters :

The flow of thoughts of the characters about other people and their actions is a common thing in the stream-of-consciousness narrative technique. However, the appearance of ancestors who are dead much earlier is the rarest thing. Fosse's many



characters from the past act and behave in the presence of Signe. She sees them handling things, cooking food, eating food, putting on/off clothes, chatting, and so on. These incidents show the crucial events that once took place in the ancestral house. She finds herself amidst the drama of her ancestors. She sees how things evolved before she came to the house.

For instance, Signe sees the hallucination of Brita, wife of Kristoffer, calling her seven-year-old son, Asle. "then she hears a woman call out Asle, Asle and she goes around the corner of the boat house and she stops and there on the shore she sees that long thick hair of Brita's and she hears Brita again calling Asle, Asle!" (Fosse, 62)

Hypothesis-v: Treatment to Nature :

Most of the thoughts of the characters, narrated here, are about either Nature or the consequences created by it. Both the forms of Nature, pleasant and treacherous, are described here. The house is located in the beautiful scenario of a fjord and pier. The Nature has "the big road winding there along the fjord, a thin line, ... the path that runs from the big road down to the bay and the boathouse, and to the landing, ... the fjord, so steep, plunging straight down somewhere between black and grey from the sky's light movements that are somewhere between grey and white," (Fosse, 17).

The beauty is found in the narration of mountains, the winding roads, the greenery, the waves breaking on the piers, the ancestral ages-old house, seasons, and so on. At the same time, the weather also becomes rough. It is merciless to kill even a small child of two years. It is too cold to go out without a sweater and a cap. The beautiful waves become stronger to ruin a boat and the men in it; and so on.

he (Asle) thinks damn, the water is so rough now, and damn, the tide is so high, ... the weather is as terrible as it can be, ... the tide is high, so high that whenever a wave came in it crashed over the pier and up over his boots, and his boat rocking up and down out there in

the waves, so high that it seems like the boat will tip over, it tips up so high and then so far down that it seems like the next wave will crash in over the bow and fill the boat, it goes so far down, before it goes up again, and again, and yet again, (Fosse, 49)

Conclusion:

In the present novella, Fosse used a distinct narrative method. His technique is to the stream of consciousness narrative techniques. He used narration in indirect speech and used very less punctuation marks, except comma. His narrative experiment is also found in his use of collage of thoughts memories and imagination of the major characters. The imagery, and employment of hallucinations and ghosts of dead characters help the narrative to reach a new height in literary experiments.

However, one must think of the unnecessary experiments in the narratives. Sometimes, Fosse seems doing experiment for the sake of experiment. There would not have any harm in using full stops at many places, including the end lines and dialogues. But he made very less use of the punctuations. Too many experiments kill the sanity and simplicity of a work. There is also unnecessary excessive repetition of some of the phrases like 'she thinks', 'in front of window', and a few other. Although, these phrases create a rhythm in reading, it also hampers the flow of mental pictures of the readers.

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