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The Manifestation of Uncanny in the work of Jean Rhys “Good Morning, Midnight”

***Introduction***

 It has been seen that an unusual thing impelled psycho-analysts to investigate the subject of aesthetics as it was regarded as a theory of qualities rather than being theory of beauty only. “**Uncanny”** means things that are frightening as well as familiar at the same time, that arouses the feeling of horror and dread. The word “Uncanny” is defined in a definable sense, so it coincides with fear that excites in general. It may be expected that a special core of feelings is present which justifies usage of special conceptual term. It won’t be wrong to say that uncanny is linked with certain things that lie within the field entities which frightens despite having familiarity. “Double” has been one of the important themes, being addressed over centuries. It is one of the iconic representations in Sigmund Freud’s essay titled “The Uncanny”, something that belongs to all terrible things which arouse creeping horror and dread. Uncanny makes an individual fear from things that they are familiar with but their perception changes their feelings. Sigmund believes that uncanny is the psychological experience which has the potential of being fearsome and familiar at the same time. Manifestation of uncanny could be found in films, cinemas and literature etc. Many examples of literary pieces could be found in which manifestation of uncanny has been highlighted as the most appealing element. One of the most interesting examples of Uncanny is Jean Rhys’s Good Morning, Midnight

***Discussion***

 Sigmund Freud in his essay “**Das Unheimliche**” (published in 1919) introduced the concept of uncanny. It is one of his most celebrated works of psychoanalytic criticism that deviates from the general analysis of authors and focuses on unusual themes that makes the readers uneasy. “Uncanny is the class of the terrifying objects which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar”. In “Good Morning, Midnight” by Jean Rhys, the feelings, thoughts, pain and struggle of a woman explores Paris and her soul. Sasha Jansen is a middle-aged woman who comes to Paris in 1938 after her long absence. As a young married woman, she had already visited streets and shops of Paris and she got confronted with feelings and thoughts of the time that she once spent in Paris. Manifestation of Uncanny could be predicted, coming next in this literary work as this novel begins with the lowest point of her life where she struggles with depression and remains in search of hope by visiting old locations that once used to bring happiness to her.

 Jean Rhys’s “Good Morning, Midnight” highlights the manifestation of uncanny by shedding a light on the architecture of the Parisian hotel, by providing insight into the protagonist's experience. The uncanny architecture of the Parisian structures speaks off their selves and identities. An architectural interpretation of Sigmund's "The Uncanny" provides a clear lens that helps in knowing how uncanny functions formally as well as thematically. Rhys’s representation of memory along with the uncanny architecture of Good Morning Midnight became an area of interest for several researchers.

 Critical analysis of this novel spots a light on the manifestation of uncanny as it could be seen in this novel that Sasha tries to escape unbidden spectres of her past as evident in her insistent attempts so that she could mute all the perceptions. She wanted to get rid of the things that used to be her favourite in past and for having an imaginative flight. She indulges herself in activities that not let her stay conscious all the times. Drugs, alcohol and mindless wandering are the things that she adopted for keeping her away from the things that frighten her. Primary cause of her drug and alcohol addiction is elements of past that continually threaten her that emerges in her full consciousness. From the character analysis of Sasha, it could be observed that much of her statements and thoughts are coloured by the resistance that always appears spectrally in front of her. Uncanny has been portrayed as a condition of mind in this novel and Sasha is the character who went through this psychological experience that frighten her, though it was a familiar kind of experience for her but still the shops, buildings and past experiences with her husband frightened her when she came back to Paris.

 Manifestation of uncanny became evident when it became a thought to distinguish between her past and present at times, as they are so conflated. One of the central facts that could be observed in this novel is that shame knits together body and mind, conscious and unconscious material in which time is rendered in such a way that both scenes of past and present start bleeding into each other. Generally, it becomes difficult for people to forget the shameful moments and events of their life. Affective memory plays a vital role in bringing things into the mind of people that they are familiar with but still got threatened by them. Exploring working of affective memory may help in understanding behaviour of Sasha.

 Generally, it has been witnessed that experience could not be locked away at the moment when it occurred, as it occurs over and over and any collision with each of the memory with occurrence and the residue is incorporated into individual’s subjectivity. Likewise, in this novel, Sasha’s holidays in Paris were not the period of her refuge, nor did the Paris offer her any of the new possibilities and experiences. This city (Paris) is deeply uncanny in its collapse with that of the familiarity of the strange things. On the other hand, Paris was deeply uncanny in its collapse of strange (its rooms, streets and face of past) with familiarity. Mirroring of Sasha’s state of mind has been represented as she has been interfaced by both past and present.

 Manifestation of Uncanny been represented by Freud which could be observed in this novel "Good Morning, Midnight" when the personified room is addressed by Sasha with the words "Quite like old times" in the starting lines of the novel, that points towards Sasha's absorption in her past when she rented that room (Zimmerman et al,pp. 74-92 ). Renting of this room is the moment when Sasha feels insecure, in despair and got accompanied with the feelings of homelessness. Uncanny could be looked upon by examining this fact that instead of evoking her memories of other hotels, the voice of the room prompts her to go back to her past and then she made a pictorial image of her past in her mind (there comes a scene of her humiliation). Not only the hotel’s room but also the streets outside elicit Sasha's past and threaten her what were once important to her as they used to give her a soothing effect by giving her a feeling of home.

 Second major evidence that has been found in this novel to support the manifestation of the uncanny is the presence of the self-engagement element that could be observed easily throughout the novel. Analysis of this novel shows that the city and Sasha speak to each other as several times where she addresses the city directly: “Paris is looking very nice tonight…. You are looking very nice tonight, my beautiful, my darling, and on what a bitch you can be! But you didn’t kill me after all, did you? And they could not kill me either….

 It has been seen that streets of Paris used to make her happy once in her life but that has now become a kind of torture for her from which she wanted to run away. Another important thing that must be considered is that some places and people reminds a person of some bitter memories that he/she don’t want to come across but it is life that may takes people back to those things which they never want to come across ever again. Bitter reality of the past and a flashback of the old days seems terrible to sometimes as they may be linked with some events (Short et al, pp. 133-176). In this novel the interpretive method of the main character changed with time. She had been in Paris with her husband and having presence of a loved one added more charm to the beauty of Paris, but when she came back, this place was no more same for her and her interpretive method changed somehow.

 Her fear became evident in her response as it was analysed that in situation when she came back to the streets of Paris, where once she used to walk freely. Her response to the situation was horrifying in which her past and presents both coexisted and each night she used to get drunk so that she could get rid of her fear that was getting on her nerves. Another interesting thing to note is that uncanny is often associated with the gothic genre, but in case of Sasha, it was a matter of daily life. Stable boundaries between the public and private space got confused during uncanny moments and the secured notions of people get threatened.

 Despite being supernatural, the uncanny events in “Good Morning, Midnights” could be understood as the psychological and spatial symptoms of the deracinated modern urban condition of Paris, from which penniless and single women like Sasha must contend (Vlacos et al, pp. 944-952). In this novel, the hotel has been presented as an article that explores manifestation of the uncanny in two ways i.e. physical as well as psychological and the architecture also narratives of itself.

 In Jean Rhys’ novel uncanniness is prevailed everywhere. Title of this novel also points towards the confusion as it has been seen that Good Morning and Midnight are being used together that makes some of the readers uneasy. Not only uncanny is the product of fearsome rather it is also generated by the disruption of the familiar spatial and psychological boundaries. Having no sense of belonging could be seen as a reason why she feels frightened in Paris, the rooms and the hotel seems no more familiar and horrifies her that takes her back to things that seems dreadful. Manifestation of uncanny could be looked upon as Sasha enters one of the many rooms of the hotel that makes her realize that she has come to define her marginal life.

 Sasha went to one of the hotels although the process of “inhabiting” actually takes place, the initial entry is always characterized by an uncanny dilemma of not belonging as it has been seen that initial response of Sasha towards the stark impersonality of the room is unusual. Sasha though feels safe in the room but realizes that these walls of the room are much stronger than her presence and the over-powering of the building, streets, and shops threatened her (Simpson et al, pp. 87-109). According to some of the experts, democratizing the power of the hotel has been undercut in this novel that points toward the sub-ordinated position of this single woman (Sasha). She is vulnerable, alone, penniless and weak so in this sense the room is stronger than her. It won’t be wrong to say that the room fails to make Sasha secure, though enclosed in a room, this room emerges as an uncanny space of fear and fragility to her.

 It is important to keep in consideration that Rhys’s depiction of Sasha’s voluntary acts of the recollecting the old good days must be compared with that of her experience of involuntary memory and narrative flashback that is not in her control. It could be seen that she tried her best to forget, but unfortunately, she could not entirely resist recalling the details and events from her past that were frightening her at present. Most of the time, she spent in that room was filled with conscious recollection of past events that dragged her back to the good days that were a source of trauma and fear for her (Dalloway et al.). She could never have those old good days back and the present condition threatened her as she came to realize about her weakness and vulnerability. Her memory should be blamed as the main culprits as it (memory) leads toward uncanny that occur through the process of repetition and her past came to haunt her over and over that she tried to avoid. At the end, she surrenders in front of her memories and let her past overcome her.

***Conclusion***

 It is a fact that there are many devices, symbols and signs in literature for enhancing its beauty and uncanny could be considered as one of the stylistic and thematic vigour that adds a lot to the literature. In “Good Morning, Midnight” uncanny has been used as one of the most important elements which are being used for revealing the tension that Sasha was going through. Though she put all her efforts to not let her past overtook and terrifies her but her loneliness and weakness surrenders in front of the involuntary memory, things, places and buildings she was familiar with. Involuntary memory over-powered and threatened her by reminding her of the difference that she was having between her past and present. So, as a whole, it could be said that Sigmund Freud’s uncanny could observed in this novel of Rhys as the central theme. Her past experiences, rooms of hotel and streets of Paris that she was familiar with, frightens her when she come back. She went through rows of things and got terrified of their sight that she once enjoyed with her husband. In this novel, uncanny has been represented as a theme as Sasha never wants to experience things that she enjoyed with her husband once in her life as it broke and forced her to surrender and made her untiring efforts fruitless at the end.

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