

## **Transcendentalism In William Saroyan's *The Cave Dwellers***

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### ***Abstract:***

Equally parallel to European romanticism is American transcendentalism. The movement which emerged in Boston in the mid-nineteenth century by some remarkable American authors was actually a reaction against the fragmented mode of thought among American writers. This disintegration was caused mainly by the rigidly commanding religious authorities, dissimilar European affiliations, accelerating urbanization leading to the destruction of nature and the atrocities of war resulting in the deformation of human soul during that phase. On the other hand, their essential principles consist in a belief in nature as glorifying, man as dignified, and truth as lying within one's intuition. The group of writers who set up the dogma of the movement is in fact reformists whose main objective is to abolish slavery, emancipate women and create a utopian community. Therefore, they reject their society because of its corruption and inequality. What they aspire to is the founding of a unique American literary association which promotes American principal characteristics. The idealistic vision of Ralf Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson

and Margaret Fuller unify them together and propel them to form their distinctive technique. *The Cave Dwellers* (1957) by William Saroyan is a play which reflects the basic features of transcendentalism, and Saroyan is a representative playwright. Almost all his writings reveal a sensitive personality, tender outlook on people and optimistic prediction of their problems. The aim of the present study is to explore in detail the essential transcendental aspects in the play and whether it is compatible with the central ideology of the early movement or not.

**Keywords:-**

Transcendentalism-Saroyan-*The Cave Dwellers*- Romanticism, Emerson-knowledge- sensory experience- nature- materialism- idealism-intuition-sentimentality- self-reliance- emotion- reason

**المخلص:**

تعد حركة التسامي حركة فكرية أمريكية مضاهية للرومانسية الأوروبية و موازية لها. ارتبط ظهور هذه الحركة بمدينة بوسطن في الأربعينات من القرن التاسع عشر، حيث سادت هناك حالة من التشظي الفكري و التيه الثقافي بين الكتاب الأمريكيين. ترجع تلك الحالة من التفكك الإيديولوجي إلى بعض العوامل الهامة منها جمود السلطة الدينية، تباين الإنتهات الأوروبية و السياسية، ناهيك عن التمدن المتنامي الذي أدى بدوره إلى تدمير البيئة، و بشكل مماثل شوهدت فظائع الحروب نفوس البشر- وأودت بآلاف الأرواح. و ارتكزت هذه الحركة الفكرية على بعض النقاط الهامة مثل الإيمان بقدسية الطبيعة و لالمحدودية العقل البشرية و الاعتماد على الذات. و من هنا أكدت تلك الحركة على ضرورة الوصول إلى الحقيقة عن طريق التأمل و الاستبصار وإعلاء دور المشاعر، وليس من خلال التجريب أو الحواس؛ مما

أدى إلى الرفض الواضح للمجتمع الفاسد ودور العبادة. لقد دفع الاعتقاد الراسخ لدى المتسامين بأن الرب موجود في كل شيء وفي كل مكان إلى نبذ الديانات والقيم المجتمعية المتحجرة والتمسك بفكرة الحدس كوسيلة لمعرفة الحقيقة. سعى المتسامين من أمثال رالف والدو إيمرسون، ناثانيال هوثرن، هنري ديفيد ثورو، إيملي ديكنسون ومارجرت فولر إلى التوحد في فلسفة جديدة تربط أفكارهم وكتاباتهم ومن هنا نشأت فكرة "نادي التسامي" الذي جمعهم في ذلك الوقت، ثم مجلة الدليل التي كانت محررتها مارجرت فلر ثم رالف والدو إيمرسون. يعد ويليام سارويان من الكتاب الأمريكيين المميزين بأسلوبهم الخاص، وتعتبر مسرحية أهل الكهف نموذجًا معبرًا عن أفكار مدرسة التسامي بشكل واضح. فرغم أن سارويان من الجيل الثاني للكتاب المتسامين، ورغم أن أهل الكهف ليست من أشهر أعماله أو أكثرها رواجًا، إلا إنها من أكثرها تعبيرًا عن أفكار إيمرسون ومدرسته الأدبية. تهدف الدراسة إلى تحليل المسرحية بشكل مفصل للكشف عن مدى ارتباطها بمدرسة التسامي أو ابتعادها عنها.

## الكلمات الدالة:

مدرسة التسامي، الفلسفة المتعالية، الطبيعة، الرومانسية، التأمل، ويليام سارويان، أهل الكهف، التجريب، الحواس، رالف والدو إيمرسون

### ***Introduction:***

Emerson's transcendentalist tenets based on an idealistic vision of truth as opposed to the materialistic one are very pertinent to intuitive knowledge, an emphasis on the inner kindness of man, a belief in the essential unity among all creatures, a mystic viewpoint of God and a unique understanding of nature. Therefore, some critics indicate an unquestionable connection between European romanticism and American transcendentalism<sup>(1)</sup>. The real source of man's knowledge, according to

transcendentalists, is not his sensory experience, but his inner speculation and contemplation of the overall power of God in addition to the beauty and serenity of natural entities. They emphasize the importance of the spiritual life of human beings as contrasted with their physical needs. Emerson is described as the forefather for some writers such as Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, and Emily Dickinson. The movement can be described as inclusive since it is not only a philosophical one comprising some intangible modes of thoughts but also applicable to other fields such as religion, ethics, politics and aesthetics. The origin of such a movement can be traced in oriental religions, classical literature, humanism, supernaturalism and Unitarian beliefs.<sup>(2)</sup>

Emerson shows that the difference between a materialist and an idealist lies mainly in their recognition of the outside world. The materialist considers man as an outcome of the external world and highly evaluates social institutions and governmental establishments; while the idealist considers the external world merely as an outer façade and depends on his consciousness in ranking its objects (1842). Poirier defends Emerson, claiming that his beliefs deny any boundaries between man and God. This elimination can be achieved by means of aesthetic experiences such as music and literature, which dignify man's insightful knowledge. To him, literature is not only a remedy by which social reform can be obtained; but also a means by which all previous experiences can be absorbed in order to initiate a new one (Delbanco 1987, 28).

The origin of transcendentalism as a literary movement can be attributed to Aristotle, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle who are influenced by the German idealist philosophers, especially Kant whose works associate transcendentalism with the indispensable factors required by experience to reach truth and knowledge.<sup>(3)</sup> Unlike empiricists, transcendentalists think of emotional development as the main way for solving human crises. *Critique of Pure Reason* by Kant (1781) is referred to as the essential book influencing transcendental thought, maintaining that what people observe by their senses is merely "impermanent reflections"<sup>(4)</sup> and the spiritual world can only be attained by means of reason. Actually, the movement began in America among the Unitarians and flourished during the 1840s by virtue of Emerson and his followers who believed that the only benefit of the physical world is to inform man with beauty and dignity of nature. Their emphasis on self-reliance and individuality is due to their rejection of the conventionally social norms and their reinforcement of man's inner goodness.<sup>(5)</sup>

### ***Aim of Research***

Almost all of Saroyan's plays and short stories are penetrated by such transcendental ideas. This study is mainly concerned with the transcendental aspects in *The Cave Dwellers*—one of his unfamiliar plays. The play is chosen as the base for the study because of its plentiful assaults by critics who reduce its theatrical value and overlook its aesthetic importance in Saroyan's canon. The study attempts to prove that Saroyan, however a questionable writer, whose plays gained much

applaud owing mainly to their optimistic air and fantastical characters, has an insightful vision despite his apparent showiness. His plays are neither superficial nor immature as many critics claim. The researcher will investigate the characteristics of transcendentalism as a literary movement in *The Cave Dwellers* to prove that Saroyan has much in common with great writers such as Emerson, Thoreau and Hawthorne.

### ***William Saroyan as a Controversial Writer***

William Saroyan (1908-1981) is an American novelist of Armenian origins, a playwright and short-story writer whose unique simplicity, sentimentality and remarkable joyfulness during the misery years of the Depression make him override all his contemporaries. Much of his writing is a reflection of autobiographical elements obsessing his mind, such as the troubled conditions of immigrants, bewildered childhood, incompatible marriage, awakened fatherhood, and inescapable poverty (Hatcher 1939, 170). Some of his best-known works are *The Human Comedy* (1942), *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* (1934), and *My Heart's in the Highlands* (1939). *The Time of Your Life* (1939) is a play winning the Pulitzer Prize; however, Saroyan refuses to receive it because of his belief that art should not be sponsored by commercial organizations. In spite of the unmistakable attack on Saroyan as an immature and over-simplified writer, Burton Rascoe denies such aspects, claiming that "Mr. Saroyan is excited, eager, clever, honestly introspective ... narcissistic, wistful, humane, tender and the very reverse

of naïve while affecting naiveté" (Curley, *et al.* 1970, 140). Indeed, Saroyan is a paradoxical dramatist of unmatched vision and unparalleled characteristics. For example, in his Introduction to *The Cave Dwellers*, Saroyan himself puts great emphasis on the kind of individuals the author chooses to tell a story about. Such individuals are called the "human race." Saroyan believes that Shakespeare's exquisiteness is due to his creation of amicable characters, while other playwrights may be a failure because of their oblivion of the idea of "human race" in general. Saroyan advances that the writer's skill should not be measured by his commitment to the realistic depiction of certain individuals. Instead, he should be estimated chiefly by aesthetic principles. He emphasizes that the playwright's talent lies in his faithful treatment of the emotions of his characters, which may give the play a sense of beauty and sublimity. He maintains that each character should be a personification of a certain trait (1958, 9). Hatcher discards Saroyan's structure despite his high estimation of Saroyan's powerful "perception." He adds that Saroyan's philosophy of life is given in his short story "We Want a Touchdown," in which a doctor tells a newborn baby to accept life as it is, never complain at misfortune or misbehavior. The doctor advises the baby to love all people and dispense with hatred (1939, 175).

### ***The Cave Dwellers: Synopsis and Critical Overview***

The play revolves around some dispossessed characters sheltered by their desire to live and love in an uninhabited theatre. Therefore, *The*

*Cave Dwellers* is viewed as a romance because of its fantastical background and blatant sentimentality. The main characters are the Queen who was a former actress, the King a famous clown, the Duke a previous boxer, and the Girl who seems to escape from a tedious job in a toy factory. The incidents of the play begin with the innocent Girl's entrance, utterly frightened by the chilliness and wreckage sound outside, and searching for help and accommodation inside. In spite of the cave dwellers' difficulties, everyone in such an abandoned theatre tries to assist her. The Duke explains that the terrifying sound outside is the sound of buildings' destruction, and likewise their theatre will be devastated for building a commercial establishment in the East Side. The main characters are "a forgotten leading woman, dubbed the queen, and the shell of a one-time clown, known as the King. All have tasted greatness, all now look less than nothing, but in each burns a wry, comical, pathetic yearning to be helpful, to be applauded" (Aston 1957, 149). One of the most obvious evidences of Saroyan's transcendentalism is his avoiding giving his characters actual names, preferring general ones such as the King, Queen, Father, Mother, etc. Moreover, Saroyan shuns giving information about the characters age, history, or social circumstances. Actually, this may stand for his belief in the generality of the cause and the perpetuity of transcendental doctrine.

Obviously, there are more emotions and tender feelings than action and conflict in the play. The discarded theatre is turned by these fragile characters into a utopian refuge in which every one of them tries to survive. A comparison is often drawn between *The Cave Dwellers* and

*The Time of Your Life*<sup>(6)</sup> because in *The Time of Your Life*, "he [Saroyan] is examining the world and its often-tragic, frequently-funny and persistently-baffled inhabitants" (McClain 1957, 147). The leitmotif in the two plays is similar: the search for love by a crowd of heterogeneous characters assembled by estrangement and bewilderment. It seems that such a theatre represents a protection for all desolate inhabitants broken by the ruthless world outside. To those subtle people a wretched young couple with a baby is added. When such a couple joins them, their need for money increases since they have to feed the baby and its mother. The Father therefore thinks of a wrestling match between the Duke and the Bear. The Father chooses wrestling, not boxing, because he thinks that the Bear prefers wrestling, frequently related to friendship and intimacy. While boxing is associated, in the Bear's experience, with fighting. Some critics think that the match between the Duke and the Bear stands for the central conflict in the play. However, Walter Kerr claims that the wrestling match between a man and a Bear in *The Cave Dwellers* is a very minor scene in the play; the real conflict is between "William Saroyan the artist and William Saroyan the good-hearted, soft-headed evangelist" (1957, 137). Concerning plot, Brooks Atkinson comments that Saroyan's structures are plotless as he depends mainly on episodic constructions. It seems that Saroyan is one of those writers who are interested in defying rules. However, Atkinson signifies his approval of *The Cave Dwellers'* aesthetic aspects, especially wittiness, inventiveness and relieving air. Moreover, characterization is the element intensely praised in the play (1957, 135).

The researcher's viewpoint is that Saroyan, despite the obvious critical assault, is innovative playwright who introduced a new type of theatre during the misery years of the Depression. His works are usually described as unclassifiable owing to its observable simplicity and unjustifiable hopeful tone in spite of their underlying significance. He is frequently wronged by those critics who discard and underestimate his writings owing to their apparent exaggeration and fanciful elements. To consider Saroyan merely as an unrealistic author whose works produce improbable images distant from the real world, or a deliberate preacher who aim to reform his society is definitely to misunderstand his message. Saroyan is a unique author whose plays and novels have unlimited connotations worthy of admiration and further discussion. The researcher will focus on the transcendental features in *The Cave Dwellers* as the main criterion for judging Saroyan's drama, illustrating how these features enhance the aesthetic and ideological values of his theatrical works.

John Chapman refers to the "dauntless sentimentalit[y]" of the playwright, in addition to the warmth and splendor of his texts. Chapman asserts that Saroyan places unaffectedness higher than regulation. He advises critics to judge Saroyan not in terms of technical and structural adherence, but in terms of the profoundly emotional situations he gracefully introduces. He thinks that Saroyan is an expert at turning the ugly into the gorgeous. He considers Saroyan as "a poet with a loving heart who sings of the lowly of the human race. No matter what pitiful, shabby corner he pries into, he finds beauty there" (1957, 141). Beside

the autobiographical aspects in Saroyan's works which Harlen Hatcher<sup>(7)</sup> stresses, he describes him as complicated, mocking, and keen on preaching. Hatcher assumes that these unique characteristics are depreciated by many people, especially critics who underrate his achievements (1939, 170). Allen Belkind, on the other hand, attributes the publishing of Saroyan's works to James Tashjian, who was enthusiastic about arranging Saroyan's works chronologically with explanatory introductions and significant notes. Belkind believes that Tashjian's serious effort to include such information within the texts is due to his awareness of the association between his works and his life (1985, 100-101).

Bonamy Dobree' associates Saroyan's unique style with the "Hemingway tradition," claiming that his style is "an art of inarticulateness, where the silences say more than the words"(Curley *et al* 1970, 141). On the other hand, Wellace Stegner confesses that Saroyan is humorous, affectionate and "innocent" sometimes insightful, but implausible. The implausibility of Saroyan's works can be attributed to their transcendental essence. Stegner's disapproval of Saroyan's writings is due to their overt Romanticism, unrestrained imagination, tremendous love, over-estimation of children, sympathetic tone with the naive, unjustifiable fervor, unlimited joyfulness, and above all "his faith in the prompting of the heart over those of the head"(Curley *et al* 1970, 141). Harrison Smith has another outlook on Saroyan's works. He rejects Saroyan as the foremost forecaster, and undervalues the kind of literature he produces owing to its sentimentality, and inapplicable truthfulness.

Like many critics, he considers Saroyan's writing obsolete. Moreover, he thinks that Saroyan's characters are unattainable; that is, they can never be found in our world because of their primitivism, indescribable straightforwardness, and conspicuous sentimentality. Such characters give the impression that Saroyan is an author of fairy tales and allegories. His themes, therefore, are far-fetched from the real subjects which concern everybody (Curley *et al* 1970, 141).

Robert Coleman declares that Saroyan is a person gifted with love, and his works are the verbalization of such love. His real talent consists in putting the unspeakable into words. The only drawback found in Saroyan's works is his teeming the stage with miscellaneous characters, irrelevant to the main theme of the play: "He has a soaring imagination, and can put wings on words, though he sometimes uses too many of them—to the point of confusion" (1957, 143). Another critic explains another shortcoming in Saroyan's works by crystallizing the psychological aspects of his characters, especially their plain sentimentality. His confidence that his works might appeal to a specific sector of society propelled him to "reprint some of his incredibly trivial pieces instead of allowing them to be generously forgotten in ephemeral magazine issues" (Hatcher 1939, 171). Walter Kerr advances that Saroyan writes mainly about love. "And love is with us until it runs out our ears. The secret of the theater is love. To actors, even to hate is to love" (1957, 138). Similarly, Wolcott Gibbs states that the dialogue in *The Cave Dwellers* comprising two acts and eleven scenes, revolves mainly around love. "Among other things, it is observed that love is the

motivating force behind all human activities, including the theater" (1957, 160). It seems that Saroyan is in line with Emerson, especially in his trust in the primacy of emotions, nature and spirituality. To him, the outside world is merely a reflection of the spirit, and the matter is less important than the soul, as Emerson's main idea is that the goal of any contemplating process is to minimize the world into the mind (Michaud 1919, 79).

### ***Dismal Background and Cheerful Tendency***

The atmosphere in which Saroyan was brought up encouraged him to write about love, faith and beauty. In spite of his narrative association with Mark Twain for their similar exhibition technique, his principles and presentation are evidently transcendental. He is a poet of happiness in an ominous world. Part of his widespread reputation stems from the optimistic tone in which he introduces serious topics when every one else around him employs a mournful one. Even when he tackles the theme of evil, he highlights human goodness instead of viciousness, emphasizing "the American Dream of Unlimited Possibilities and Inevitable Progress [*sic*]" (Fisher 1955, 336). However, it is said that Saroyan is a writer of conflicting thoughts: he realizes and admits "the contradictions of life"(Shinn 1972, 185). The ugly aspects of human life in Saroyan's plays are often enveloped in tenderness and peacefulness. This feature perplexes critics, resulting in the unclassifiable nature of Saroyan's drama, and his rejection by some critics as an author whose works address mainly "the irrational" and "the emotional" (Shinn 1972, 185).

The charge of plain romanticism is repudiated by other critics who associate Saroyan's works with the works of Shaw, Pinter, Beckett and Ionesco (Shinn 1972, 185).

### ***Conflicting Evaluations***

The audience's reception of the play depends on each one's understanding since the beauty of a Saroyan's play can sometimes be inaccessible. The characters in *The Cave Dwellers* are the typical characters usually found in Saroyan's theatre, especially those people who combine serenity and despondent conditions. The unique point in Saroyanesque characters is their celestial essence: they seem like angels rather than human beings: "The fighter steals milk for the child, the girl falls in love with the milkman, the foreman of the wrecking crew gives a few days' reprieve to the theatre, and the play is over" (O' Connor 1962, 676). Gina Bellafante describes the characters of the play as having similar principles. She maintains that those "frail souls" resort to such a place to escape from the distressing world outside (2007, 3). Another critic regards the play as "allegorical-philosophical-existential fantasy," emphasizing that Saroyan has the talent of converting "his disdain for convention into compassion and benevolence." To Saroyan, to live is to cherish the hope of happiness in life (Klein 2002, 10). The researcher's viewpoint is that the critical attack on Saroyan's theater is inexcusable since to evaluate Saroyan's works irrespective of his intensive ideological setting is to mistake his point.

### ***Love As Essential In Life***

While there are obvious recurrent themes in Saroyan's short stories and novels, his theatrical canon is viewed as fragmented and relatively incoherent. His plays show a penchant for light activities, such as singing, dancing and various types of comedy mainly drawn from Ibsen and Oscar Wilde. His main themes are carefree childhood, manageable dreams and acceptable creeds. His stories and plays evoke joy because of their vigorous sentimentality, which celebrates life and stultifies death, troubles and viciousness (Fisher 1995, 338). His intense sentimentality is rendered in his plays through immense emotional situations experienced by the characters overwhelmed by intricate feelings. The most notable theme in *The Cave Dwellers* is the theme of love growing in very weird situations. In Act one, Scene four, there is a tremendous storm and everyone is asleep except the Duke since the Girl sleeps in his bunk. When the Girl gets up, she is chilly, and her teeth rattle. They all get up simultaneously, but the Girl repeats that she has a dream of love, and the queen a dream of life. For Saroyan, love and life are inseparable (Act I. Sc. iv. 52-53).

### ***Love Conquering Fear***

Later in the same Act, the King sees that all of those people assembled by poverty and powerlessness can be strengthened and can fight chilliness and aggression only by alliance and faithful passion. The King says, "I believed that with our arms about one another we might be a little warmer in our poor bodies." Afterwards, he explains that

cooperation is a form of love (Act I. Sc. iv. 58). Emerson describes the transcendentalists as merry and sensitive, not vulgar or cruel—"not stockfish or brute" as they might be mistaken. The most blatant characteristic distinguishing them is their love for life and their desire to be loved (1842). For the King, to unify is to love each other, and love conquers fear. Despite their tender emotions, they are terribly frightened by any visitor who infringes in their cave. The group of people in such a neglected theater is gathered by a sense of fright and indistinctness. The Girl describes this feeling as "strange." The Duke, who was an ex-boxer, utters, "I've dreamed of losing the fight before. [...]. I'm scared to death," while the Girl then replies that nothing frightens her at such a moment since she is solidified by her faithful emotions:

GIRL

*(Earnestly, trying to guess)*

I don't know. Nothing's changed, except that I *am* here.

*(Softly)*

And thankful to each of you.

*(To the QUEEN)*

It isn't that you are *like* my mother, as my poor mother never was, you *are* my mother.

*(To the KING)*

And you my father.

*(To the DUKE)*

And you—well, not my brother, and not my lover, or my husband, either, but something like *all* of them put together.  
(Sc. iv. 60)

When the Duke exclaims how radically her attitude changes from absolute fear when she joins them at first to wisdom and satisfaction later, the Girl's answer stresses the ingredients of love and harmony among them. She considers them her family, and declares her incomparable love for the Duke. Fear usually emanates from vicious sources, but Saroyan has a distinctive understanding of viciousness. William Fisher implies that even Saroyan's manipulation of evil is only for belittling its power. This attitude of self-reliance and highlighting righteousness in human being is transcendental. To him, the individual is more significant than society. Saroyan is a genuine transcendentalist since he "has no axe to grind, no gospel to preach." His treatment of human nature and social injustice is neutral. Therefore, he is seen as a new version of the traditional transcendentalists, such as Emerson and Whitman. The only way to rehabilitate the individual and enable him to conform to his society is mainly through good conduct. Most of his plays and novels emphasize a priority of the individual over society, a limitless goodness of a human being, a serenity and divinity of nature, a quest for a utopian world, a glorification of intuitive knowledge, a rejection of materialistic technology, a belief in speculation as the only means for reaching truth (1995, 336). Therefore, Saroyan's depiction of inequality and social corruption is meant to accentuate human's dignity: "the

dispossession in Saroyan's play emphasizes brotherhood of man and the dignity of the individual, the human relationships rather than the social 'realities' "(Shinn 1972, 187).

### *Aliented Characters Intruded*

Because they are Saroyanesque who appreciate their individuality and desert their society, the characters in *The Cave Dwellers* are usually overwhelmed by a sense of fear. They are a typical embodiment of Emersonian transcendental figures who are usually forlorn and prefer isolation: "the spirit of their [the transcendentalists'] writing and conversation is lonely; they repel influences; they shun general society; they incline to shut themselves in their chamber in the house, to live in the country rather than in the town, and to find their tasks and amusement in solitude" (Emerson 1842). The cave dwellers' panic increases when they hear rattling and knocks on the door. These sounds are followed by an indistinct animal groan, and then they quarrel whether to open the door or not. The Queen is audacious; she sees that they should overcome their fear and open the door; whereas, the King's point of view is not to open the door, because they have nothing to offer to any visitor. He further expresses his fear since he does not know whether the intruder is an animal or a human being—an enemy or a friend. He advances that anyone outside their accommodation can provide more assistance since they have neither food nor fuel, and they are penniless. The queen's view is to bring the visitors to their circle of love, irrespective of their affiliations. Her comment is transcendental: "It doesn't matter who they

are. They are in need. This is a theatre, Man, not a cave." The Girl stands with the Queen at this particular moment; whereas the Duke is embarrassed by the courage of the Queen and the Girl and he is overwhelmed by love. He expresses that the only power to make him open the door and welcome the visitors is the power of love: "If the girl *does* love me, as she says she does, and says open the door, what can I, twice her size, ten times her strength, say? I'll open the door, King" (Act I. Sc. iv. 63-64).

### ***Altruism As Opposed To Selfish Civilization***

Owing to the transcendental nature of the cave dwellers themselves, they accept the visitors, and their altruism is further developed. Their need for money and food urges them to depend mainly on their efforts in order to provide for the small family currently united with them. Although he is a prizefighter and despite his endless and fruitless attempts to earn his living honestly, the Duke has no choice but to steal milk for the Baby and the Mother. When the Duke comes home breathless, carrying a large container of milk for the Mother and her Baby, he describes himself as "a poor thief." The Queen suggests that the Father, Mother, Baby and the Bear joining them recently are a part of the large family of the abandoned-theater residents (Act II. Sc. i. 73). Her reaction is unwarrantable on a realistic level. It can only be explained by the transcendental principle that emotion is more important than intellect. It seems that the characters in a Saroyanesque play are motivated mainly by their feelings rather than their reason. The King, despite hunger, gives

the whole crate of milk to the Mother, and the Duke shows his readiness to be imprisoned provided that the milk is not retrieved: "They can't have both [the milk and the Duke]" (Act II. Sc. i. 74).

The Duke narrates the perilous experience of stealing a box of milk for the Mother without regret. The Milkman and his son chased him in a snowy, chilly weather where everything around them is merely debris. The difficulty is to find a way in such a terrible weather. He says, "I cut through the ruins when they chased me" (Act II. Sc. i. 75). The peculiar point, to the Duke, is that they chase him silently. When the Milkman's Boy reaches the theatre, he enters calmly without a single word. After a few minutes studying the theater and its inhabitants, he decides to leave as wordlessly as he comes. When the Duke suggests going with him to the police, the Boy shakes his head refusing to arrest him. The Girl falls in love with the silent Boy because he exchanges many looks with her. She realizes that he is wordless. The Girl tells them that they have an intelligible conversation despite their speechlessness: "He told me a lot of things" (Act II. Sc. i. 77). The scene ends with the climax of the play when an explosion and falling wreckage are heard. The cave dwellers then have some intruders who want to demolish their shelter for the sake of erecting urbanized establishments. The innocence and beauty of nature represented by the cave and its dwellers against the civilization invasion can be viewed as transcendental.

### ***Truthfulness in Love***

In spite of the density of love, there is a conflict in the emotions of the characters. The Girl is torn between her love for the Duke and her love for the speechless Boy. The Queen insists that the Boy loves her and she loves him despite their detachment. The Girl understands that she loves the Duke as well; however, she thinks that she is wretched because she loves them both. Her disturbed emotions bring her dismay and bewilderment; she says, "How can I be glad? The Man loves me, and needs me, and only last night I *begged* him not to deny his love. How can I be glad?" Because of her purity and young age, she is at war with herself, unable to reach a decision, unable to think reasonably. The Queen, on the other hand, summarizes her dilemma: "To be kind to the Man is to be unkind to the Boy. Unkind to him is unkind to life, and to yourself" (Act II. Sc. iii. 84). It seems that the Girl tries to persuade herself not to love the Boy because she will not see him again. Moreover, she thinks the Duke suits her more because he is as deprived as her and more potent than the Boy (Act II. Sc. iii. 85). The Queen tells her that she has played the role of a girl confused between two lovers many years ago, then the Girl asks her how the incidents of the play proceed. The Queen answers that the whole play is a failure since the playwright wants to be truthful: "He was joyous in my girl's failure. True, he said. It's true to lose, he said. He rejoiced in my wretchedness"(Act II. Sc. iii. 87).

While the transcendental characters are obsessed by their exalted feelings, they usually fall prey to emotional disturbances. One of the

most obvious examples of such a disturbance is the Girl whose vision of the Duke is so perplexed. She sympathizes with him because of his kindness and strength despite her knowledge of his fragility. In Act one, Scene four, she describes him saying, "He's a man. A very *kind* man. And now that I know he's scared, I love him more than ever" (60). However, in Act two, she complains about her tormenting love, declaring: "My love is too good for me" (Sc. iii. 85). The Queen diverts her attention to the silent Boy as the more suitable choice for her. To the Queen, any solution which would part two lovers belongs to hostility. Life and theater are intermingled in the Queen's mind because both of them have the power to turn terrible things into good ones<sup>(8)</sup> (Act I. Sc. iii. 42). All characters in Saroyan's plays are in search of love and beauty in their uncomfortable circumstances. By doing so they endeavor to have a substantial goal in their pointless lives. Like all absurdists, Saroyan is an existentialist who tries to find meaning in a meaningless world. He differs from other absurdists in that he finds meaning only in man's inner soul, namely his ability to love: "In this sense, at least, the existential theme is precisely what most concerns Saroyan" (Shinn 1972, 185-86).

### ***Determinism and Freedom***

On discussing the idea of determinism and freedom, the Girl asserts that her fate is as determined as all other creatures. The Girl thinks that she is irresponsible for what happens to her, and she is not allowed to choose. Attempting to help her, the Queen advises her to choose the silent Boy; however, the Girl's comment stresses the idea of determinism

in life: "Who chose him to be the milkman's son? Who chose the Duke to go out and steal the milk? Who chose the silent Boy to follow him here?" (Act II. Sc. iii. 88) It seems that Saroyan's idea of determinism focuses on man's narrow-mindedness and his unwillingness to change. To Saroyan, a human being estimates neither his birth nor his death since he "is a limited slob, not a free one." On the other hand, nature is "a free slob" ("Introduction" 1958, 13). Next to his belief in the unlimitedness of nature is his faith in the inevitability of life and death. In his "Preface" to the *Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*, Saroyan explains that authors can be divided into two categories: optimistic and pessimistic. The optimistic one regards death as conquerable; while, the pessimistic as unconquerable (1934, 12).

### ***Self-Reliance and Idealism***

Emerson emphasizes the concept of self-reliance in his essay "The Transcendentalist" as a crucial characteristic in every human being. For him, the transcendentalist is an idealist who estimates things mainly by his soul (1842). Almost all characters in the play adhere to the ideas of self-reliance and idealism. The father, for example, in order to support his family, suggests a wrestling match between the Bear and the Duke. In spite of the incongruity of the idea, the Father justifies that the Duke is as big as the Bear while he is too small. When the Duke is persuaded, the Girl gets so terrified that she implores them to cancel such a dangerous match. Self-reliant and transcendentalist, the Duke, on the other hand, does not show cowardice but expresses his preference for boxing (Act II.

Sc. vi. 99). Emerson correspondingly explains in his essay "The Transcendentalist" that the struggle between the spiritual and the material is open-ended where he wishes the spirit at the end to triumph. (1842). Another example of self-reliance and idealism is the King's insistence on not restoring his shoe despite the wreckers' permission. Returning home with one shoe instead of them both, the King is encountered with endless questions. He tells the cave dwellers how he gambled his shoe in order to raise money from the wreckers and their Boss. When he comes to them, it is the time for coffee where they are "standing around a little fire in the ruins." The King tells them that they all need to laugh, whereas he only needs a cup of coffee. The wreckers tell him that they need a tear, not a laugh, because they laugh habitually at the falling walls. Therefore, the King decides to make them laugh until they weep. He performs many roles before them, such as the hungry thief, the rejected lover, the ridiculous orator, but they only laugh. Self-contained, the King takes off his right shoe declaring, "I may be a shameless beggar but I am a proud clown" (Act II. Sc. iv. 94-95). The King seems to be one of those transcendental characters whose dignity and self-reliance are so obtrusive.

### ***Religion and Solitude***

Very pertinent to the idea of self-reliance is the idea of religious freedom. Likewise, it seems that the cave dwellers renounce any imposed religion or patriotic mode of thought, which may violate their specialty. When the Girl utters her "allegiance to the flag, and to the Republic for

which it stands," the King grows furious asking who put these words in the script. The Duke's reference to modern theatre stresses their transcendentalist nostalgia (Act I. Sc. iii. 45). Similarly, the Queen, when viewing the circle unifying them which reminds her of the church, she withdraws from it, uttering, "No, I refuse to join the church" (Act I. Sc. iv. 54). Later in her advice to the Girl, the Queen argues that it is not suitable here to preach (Act I. Sc. iv. 57). Emerson reflects that the transcendentalist's religion is solitude. To him, the transcendentalists are not "good citizens, not good members of society; [...]; they do not willingly share in the public charities, in the public religious rites, in the enterprises of education, of missions foreign or domestic, in the abolition of the slave-trade, or in the temperance society" (1842). On the other hand, Hatcher regards Saroyan's stories as mainly personal. He adds that the axis around which the story revolves is Saroyan himself, life, and the way it should be lived. He classifies Saroyan's narrative style into two groups: some are Emersonian; others are Byronic. His writings are brilliant in "the Emerson-Whiteman manner, and some are only a little less impressive in the Byronic prose" (1939, 147).

### ***Violence & Ugliness & Death In The Outside World***

The transcendentalist's exodus from modern society and imposed religions can be attributed to the aggression and violence connected to them. It seems that the cave dwellers associate the outside world with hostility; therefore, they depart. In Act one, Scene two when the Girl asks the Duke whether he would permit her to stay or not, the King shouts, "Enough of violence. Enough, I say" (35). When the Duke then asks him

to what violence he refers, the King explains that he means the violence of the outside world. The King believes that the outer world is full of antagonistic people who let the poor down. In contrast with the tenderness and compassion inside, the cave inhabitants feel the hostility and mercilessness outside. Therefore, the King welcomes the Girl and asks her to remain with them. The Queen, on the other hand, encourages her companions to challenge everything even the concept of demise. She wanders that the King is afraid of death. To her, death is not a fright since it represents another life (Act I. Sc. iv. 55). Like all transcendentalists, the characters in *The Cave Dwellers* adhere to three basic principles—truth, goodness and beauty. These principles are connected with justice, which is not offered either by the church or by political institutions. That is why they frequently expect ugliness in the outside world. To them, the world outside is nightmarish and dystopia.

### ***Beauty and Dignity within Natural Entities***

The utopian world in which each character decides to live his entire life in spite of his belief in the inevitability of death is transcendental. Such transcendentalism appears also in their adoration of nature. To them, every natural object is personified and nature deserves meditation. The most obvious example of this glorification of nature in *The Cave Dwellers* is their personification of the Bear, Gorky. It seems that the relation between the Father and the Bear is one of friendship. This intimacy can be shown in Act two, Scene five, when the Father refers to the Bear as "Gorky's an intelligent man—well, I think of him as a man"

(98). Moreover, one can see "*(The BEAR picks him [the Father] up in his arms, rocks him, kisses him, murmurs to him, put him down gently)*" (100). The Father then gives a long speech describing his profound relation with Gorky and how inseparably they are associated. His speech again revolves around love: "Gorky still loved me" (100). The King also personifies the Bear. When Gorky moans, the King addresses him saying, "You moan most fearfully, sir" (Act II. Sc. i. 70). In the same Act, Scene five, there is a long conversation between the father and the Bear when he tries to persuade him to wrestle the Duke without hurting him (97). Also, the Father tells the Duke that Gorky understands. When the Duke tells him that he would rather wrestle with a man, not a bear, the Father describes Gorky as more powerful and merciful than ten potent men and caring fathers (98). What seems to the ordinary man great and overvalued seems to the transcendentalist useless and invaluable, and vice versa. Furthermore, he sees beauty and dignity in simple natural objects (Emerson 1842).

### ***Love Engendering Self-Sacrifice***

Hatcher entertains the view that Saroyan makes "a genuine contribution" to American literature when he introduces unusual characters and inimitable themes, which inspire many readers. Hatcher continues that the recurrent themes in Saroyan's writings are anxiety and disappointment but he has the privilege of depicting man's dignity within such a negative background (1939, 173). The Girl's self-esteem obtrudes, for example, when she shows her readiness to sell her only ring for

providing the residents with bread (Act II. Sc. i. 72). Failure and desperation of the dwellers decrease when the Boss orders his laborers to find the King and give him his shoe, describing him as a "great man" (Act II. Sc. VI. 112). The Duke's pride, for example, appears when he, hopeless of having the Girl as a lover, decides on fetching the silent Boy for her. In Act two, Scene six, the Duke appears with the Silent Boy stating: "I've been looking for this boy. He can't speak, but he can understand, and I've told him the Girl loves him" (118). The Girl's pride is blatant when she leaves the stage, searching for the Duke whom she thinks she has hurt most. Such a love theme rendered in a depressing air is later relieved by a sense of mercy and forgiveness. When the Girl appears, declaring that she returns to her man, then she deliberately runs to the Duke's arms, the Duke's behavior is subsequently impressive: "(The Duke *puts one hand at the back of her neck and the other at the back of the Boy's neck and holds them in place, staring at one another, speechless. Slowly' little by little, the Duke draws them together, and they embrace. He looks up*)" (Act II. Sc. vi. 119-120).

### ***Peacefulness Inside Versus Damage Outside***

Emerson advances that "society is good when it does not violate me; but best when it is likest to solitude" (1842). It seems that all the cave dwellers request loneliness and isolation. Like the Romantics, the transcendentalists desert urbanization and technology, preferring the purity of the country or other uninhabited places. To all people in such a deserted theatre, the outside represents destruction and infringement.

They admire the abandoned theatre because of its isolation, and they like each other because of their similarity. The Queen suggests that they could manage by themselves if only they cooperate and dispense with all principles of the outer world (Act I. Sc. iv. 58). Shinn maintains that Saroyan, like most modern dramatists, regards life as unfair because it prohibits kind people from living together in their serene community, explaining that such people in their rejection of their hideous world, they look for beauty within themselves. He defends Saroyan's "romantic" and "sentimental" aspects by associating him with "Emerson, Thoreau, Hart Crane, any artist who believes that man can transcend the injustice of the external world by looking within himself and that man can find a beauty within himself" (1972, 188). Chapman comments that the characters in *The Cave Dwellers* are plainly Saroyanesque who are grouped by optimism and the ability to challenge difficulties (1957, 142). Both the insiders and the outsiders of the cave admire the place but in different manners. On the contrary, the wreckers and their Boss are gathered together by the concept of damage. Annihilation seems to be their only means by which they claim to set up a new life.

Boss.

So it is, so it is, but down it comes just the same first thing tomorrow morning, along with all other buildings in this area. Rooming houses, offices, stores, churches—all old, all rotted, all finished—to make way for the new. But I've loved every poor old wreck of a place that my men and I have brought down. Look up there, Jamie—it's a *high* and handsome place, now, isn't it? (Act II. Sc. v. 108)

### *Disappointment and Departure*

When the Boss realizes the cave dwellers' collaboration and self-confidence, he postpones destroying the building for three other days until the Mother and the child are able to move. When the Queen asks him about the secret of his sympathy and whether the Mother and the child are his only reason, the Boss tells her that what moves him most is the King. He tells her how all the laborers laughed at his performance except him who "wept bitterly from the beginning of the great Clown's work to the end of it, and fell to the bottom of his soul with grief and admiration at the Clown's refusal of our [their] coins" (Act I. Sc. vi. 113). In Act two, Scene six, when all of them have packed their luggage and waited for departure, they discover that the name of the theatre in which they dwell is Monday, which happens to be the same day of their departure. Although they are provided with good food by the wreckers and they find another accommodation, they are obsessed with a feeling of alienation. The Queen at first denies such a feeling then she confesses (Act I. Sc. vi. 115-116). Emerson illustrates that the transcendentalist's tendency to isolate themselves from their society is an ingrained feature in their personalities due to their celestial core. Concerning their idealism, their skeptical characteristics make them very critical to other people surrounding them; however, they genuinely sympathize with youth discontent. (1842).

### ***Restoring Individuality***

Saroyan's characters are typically Emersonian: they are the most solid and the most fragile at the same time. Their solidity appears when they challenge their poverty, coldness, lack of resources and ignorance of each other. They are the most fragile because of their sensibility and idealistic vision. Like his contemporaries', Saroyan's plays and short stories tackle the themes of desperation and helplessness, but unlike them, he manipulates these themes with a gleam of hope. Although Saroyan confesses that he is an apolitical writer with no political bias, his message is so comprehensive and profound. His objective is transcendental—to bring man back to his humanity. The process is described as restoring individuality. This "restored individuality" can be achieved by distancing man from his corrupted society to bring him back to his pure soul (Fisher 1955, 337).

### ***Opposing Moral Principles***

Compared with the degraded people outside, the cave dwellers show their transparency in a transcendental way. In Act two, Scene five, for example, the Queen's aim of life is sharply contrasted with the Boss's. Dispossessed and neglected as she is, the Queen thinks that she has no trouble in life at all. In other words, she seems satisfied with her miseries—never trying to improve her life. In addition, when asked about the problem of her family, she retorts simply, "survival and love." Like all transcendentalists, she wishes to remain alive merely to love. Encountered by the same question, the Boss' reply shows his aggressive

worldly nature: "How best, swiftest, most safely, and least expensively to bring this mansion down into ruins, and then to clear away the debris" (110). The two worlds are harshly opposed—the serene and peaceful world inside against the destructive world outside. The cave dwellers are much attached to their cave because it protects their idealistic fragility. In such a cave, moral principles have dissimilar connotations; consequently, sometimes truth may be unjustifiable. In Act two, Scene five, for example, the Girl confesses that when she tells the truth, the Duke disappears; however, his lies make her remain. Regretting telling the stripped truth as she learnt outside, the Girl describes herself as "a truthful dirty liar," and promises to bring the Duke back. It seems that all the principles inside are opposite to those outside. Their morality is matchless and has a special case because of their unique transcendental vision. The King's viewpoint is ultimately remarkable. He thinks that they are determined to behave as they did, and they have no other choice and therefore they should be glad and satisfied, irrespective of the rightness or wrongness of their decisions. The King digresses that lies are warrantable in their circumstances if they are invented to survive (105).

### ***Plausibility of Incidents***

The invented moral codes with which they live unite them in stronger familial bonds and make them admire each other in spite of the external social rejection. They are attached by their similar mentalities, wistful detachment and eternal agonies. Atkinson expresses his fascination of Saroyan's flair for persuading the audience of the

probability of what happens on the stage. This may be attributed to his skilful delineation of the characters involved, the unique, impressive dialogue and concise plot. The group of miscellaneous people constituting a small isolated community is capable of surviving provided that there is no outer intrusion. Even the Bear is given a plausible character (1957, 135-136). Commenting on the character of the Father, Chapman maintains that he is the real core of the play since life comes to the theatre when he joins them with his wife whose new-born baby is a sign of vividness coming again into the dead theatre (1957, 142). Belkind is one of those who admire Saroyan's celebrated works, yet he rejects his overt involvement in exploring inner feelings, complex propositions and his investigation in dialectical topics which mainly centre on "the miracle of birth and the meaning of life" (1985, 101).

### ***Skepticism & Didacticism & Intuition***

It is argued that there is a certain development in Saroyan's writings. At the beginning of his career his attitude had been so optimistic that he could not have seen but the positive side of human life; however, afterwards he was acquainted with the despondency and misfortune of human beings. Yet his transcendental vision enabled him to display the propensity of humankind to overcome them. It seems that his main drawback is that in his works ideas are conflicted and the reader gets baffled. "At the same time that he took cognizance of the dark side of life, he began trying to prove all for the best in the best of all possible worlds, with the result that his novels and plays became strange

battlegrounds where belief struggled with skepticism" (Fisher 1955, 338). Another shortcoming found in *The Cave Dwellers* is the direct message conveyed by means of affirmations and "didacticism." Shinn considers the play as less persuasive than Saroyan's other plays since "the use of romanticism has become an immersion in romanticism" (1972, 194). Nona Balakian maintains that Saroyan's ideas of virtue and human tenderness are associated with life and love. He eventually attains plausibility by his factual persuasion and aesthetic perfection. She claims that Saroyan is deeply influenced by Bernard Shaw. The difference between them lies in the fact that "Saroyan's faith in the life force does not stem from dialectic but from his intuitive feeling of the ultimate meaning of things and events" (Curley *et al* 1970, 142).

### ***Similarity with the Daring Young Man on The Flying Trapeze***

Although Saroyan wrote numerous successful stories afterwards, Hatcher thinks that *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* is unparalleled. To him, it is incomparable to all his following stories. Similarly, the story is about a penniless writer who, like the cave dwellers, isolates himself from the grating city to remain alone in his detached room. Gradually, he becomes unenthusiastic to write and feels that his society is no longer in need of his talent. It is a minimized picture of the humiliation of a young writer in a materialistic world. Like *The Cave Dwellers*, *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* is described as the most brilliant story which exquisitely depicts the

unfulfilled hopes and discouraging conditions of the impecunious people, especially young authors during the Depression years (1939, 172).

### ***Conclusion***

Instead of limiting himself to being only an ethnic writer who introduces the Armenian paradigm into American literature, Saroyan enthusiastically converts to American transcendentalism. The writer who was cultivated in confounding circumstances of the WWI and witnessed the atrocities of WWII, and the depression years rejected the prevailing deceitfulness in his society and the profane social principles. *The Cave Dwellers* is a play which generally represents most of Saroyan's transcendental ideas. Apparently, Saroyan, like all transcendentalists, believes that truth can be reached merely by distancing oneself from the sensory world outside and occupying oneself primarily with inner experience. As a sentimentalist, he dignifies nature, connecting it with the over-soul who informs and illuminates all human beings. Accordingly, the cave dwellers desert their society and lodge in a deserted theatre, which they consider as their habitat and the only shelter.

The Queen in *The Cave Dwellers* sets a good example to the others. She repudiates the church despite her piety; moreover, she rejects anybody discussing religious issues. Similarly, the transcendentalists discard all religious ideas and governmental institutions since they believe in their hypocrisy. They think that these institutions interfere between a human being and God and distort the relation. The cave dwellers are themselves transcendentalists who believe in the holiness of

the human being. Despite their wretchedness and poor conditions, they behave with dignity and they value even the simple natural objects surrounding them. They deny social morality, replacing it with intuition, which enables them to be acquainted with righteousness.

Self-reliant and self-confident, the cave dwellers depend mainly on themselves in earning their livings and refuse outer assistance. They try to forget their past, which reminds them of deception and disappointment. Their resort to such an abandoned theatre is due to the misleading principles and social injustice of the outside world. Like all transcendentalists, they are not in harmony with their society and dislike its infringement. When they are evacuated from their refuge, they look for another theatre or another building—distant and isolated like their own cave. The outside world dignifies the material aspects of life, whereas the transcendentalists dignify passion and emotions. Therefore, they are destined to remain estranged and separated from their society.

***Notes:***

(<sup>1</sup>) See "Transcendentalism" in *The New Caxton Encyclopedia*. (1979) p. 320, and *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (1995) pp. 754-56.

(<sup>2</sup>) See *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (1995), Vol. 6. p. 754. The Encyclopedia elaborates on Emerson's early life and works. His impressive emotional experience with Ellen Louisa Tucker whom he married in 1829, and died two years later. Owing to her death, he is converted to speculation as his main creed. Though the period after her

death was characterized by his extensive literary writings, he turned into Unitarianism and deserted his job in the ministry. The most important event influencing his philosophical and literary career afterwards was his voyage to Europe to meet three notable Romantic writers: Wordsworth, Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle. His journey to Europe where he visited natural museums, his meeting and discussion with Romantic writers, and his reading scientific books on nature and natural objects subsequently constitute the original core of his transcendental vision.

(<sup>3</sup>) See *The New Caxton Encyclopedia*, "Transcendentalism." (1979) p. 320. It indicates that Transcendentalism also had a considerable effect on Romantic writers such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle.

(<sup>4</sup>) For Transcendentalists, reality can only be found in the spiritual world. The physical world observed by man is deceitful. For more details, see *The World Book Encyclopedia*. (1991) p. 371.

(<sup>5</sup>) See *The World Book Encyclopedia*. (1991) p. 371.

(<sup>6</sup>) *The Time of Your Life* (1939) is a five-act play by William Saroyan, winning Pulitzer Prize for Drama and New York Drama Critics Circle Award. It was received by unpredictable applaud and severe attack simultaneously. The weakest points in the play are its loose structure, unrealistic themes and vague message, and the strongest point is its poignant emotions and romantic characters. It was set in a shabby San Francisco waterfront saloon and restaurant in which a group of homeless characters is gathered. Like the characters in *The Cave Dwellers*, they are fortified by love and tolerance. The bar is owned by Nick, an Italian immigrant who loves horses, and spends his life lavishly. The main characters are Joe, a wealthy but kind-hearted man and his friend

Tom who owes him a favor thereby obeying him indisputably. The other important characters are Kitty, a former prostitute, who pretends to be a famous actress with whom Tom falls in love, and Krupp, a baffled policeman who seems to be the vicious character in the play. The play's main themes are the dreams of humble people in a disruptive community, and the inevitable ability of love to improve one's life.

(<sup>7</sup>) Harlan Hatcher (1898-1998) was a notable critic and a professor of American literature at Ohio State University. He was promoted in the academic field until reaching the position of the eighth president of the University of Michigan. He published three novels and several books and papers in literature. The graduate library was named after him in 1968.

(<sup>8</sup>) Some critics believe that aspects in drama that emphasize the theatricality of characters and incidents and their unrealistic creation can be described as metatheatre. It includes many aspects such as direct address to the audience: in the form of epilogues, prologues, soliloquies and asides. In addition, it may be represented by the author's deliberate technique of drawing the audience attention to the artificiality of the dramatic works, such as employing masques, plays-within-plays, characters' awareness of their playing roles, spectatorship, breaking the fourth wall, etc. The instance of metatheatre in *The Cave Dwellers* is when the Queen tells the Girl that she played the role of a bewildered lover many years ago. Her confession that life and theatre are one is also another metatheatrical expression. Her regret that in her previous play she could not choose the boy whom she loved because her fate was previously determined by a ruthless author is also metatheatrical reference. Her insistence that the Girl should have the right to choose and not give her life to an ignorant author is an incident rendered in a metatheatrical way.

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