

## reflections

### Parallel Lives

by Farah Munmun Mazid

FROM our birth to death we have a similar destination, we travel through the same journey but our attitudes towards life are different, our feelings for love and happiness are distinguishable. In "Hills Like White Elephants" Ernest Hemingway has skilfully portrayed two different characters, two different points of view using symbols and exclusive dialogues. Here the protagonists are living parallel lives, their hearts — like their bodies — have not met the same path yet. The distance they had between them was becoming more and more evident when they were facing the different stages of their love, romance, and reality feelings for each other.

We see in the whole story that the girl is not a simple human character. She is creative, much more matured than her boy friend. According to one critic's view:

In *Hills Like White Elephants* the protagonists either have not begun their journeys or are unable to travel any further. The static position of the characters in *Hills Like White Elephants* with their seemingly interminable wait for the train, suggests that their emotional condition also remains suspended. Waiting to continue their journey, they are paralyzed, perhaps permanently, by antagonism.

In the beginning of the story we can see that the girl was comparing the hills with the white elephant. Actually that elephant was a symbol of a baby to her. In her dream, in her imagination she really wanted the baby. But she also knew that the baby was the only reason of their anguish. The baby was as disposable as the white elephants to her. Nobody wants those expensive white elephants. That's why she wanted neither to lose the baby nor did she want to lose her boy friend. It was extremely hard for her to control her pathos. That's why he she was looking outside at the hills and trying to reduce her pain by comparing them with white elephants. On the other hand, her boy friend was a typical human being. He had no power of imagination, no creativity. He was self-centred and practical. He did not care about his girl friend's desire, her sacrifice. He did not even have any respect for his girl friend's sensibilities.

(Girebstein 21)

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hand, her boy friend was a typical human being. He had no power of imagination, no creativity. He was self-centred and practical. He did not care about his girl friend's desire, her sacrifice. He did not even have any respect for his girl friend's sensibilities.

This was the starting point of their conflict, misunderstanding and miscommunication. This conflict became more and more severe when the girl started to realise her mistake and when both of them discovered that they had lost something. To her boy friend, the operation was a very simple matter. He was trying to convince his girl friend that it would not hurt her physically. The abortion was his

girl friend's problem. He did not have any right to interfere with it. Besides he was taking advantage of her dependence upon him. On the opposite, the girl was self-sacrificing. She was ready to accept any pain for the sake of her love, her lover. This is really a heavenly quality of her golden heart. She was also dependent on her boy friend. So she had nothing to do besides cherish the agony of her heart. As one critic wrote:

Another possible effect of dependence is that the man will sense entrapment and withdraw. At this awkward point in their relationship, Tig's dependency is probably not one of her most endearing qualities. Her ques-

tions remind him of his responsibility for her — a point he would rather forget. Her dependency is smothering; because she is unable to make even the smallest decision on her own, the American's terseness becomes a kindness, giving her vital information to enable her to make her own decisions. (Smiley 291)

According to one critic: Hemingway's description of the abortion reflects more than the attempt to minimise its pain and inconvenience for the woman; he really portrays it in the terms he wants for their relationship: to ventilate it and restore it to spontaneity. Once the subject is introduced, it monopolises the rest of the conversation, infiltrating

the girl's defences and stimulating a little of the anger and turbulence she feels. At the same time she wants the man enough not to drive him away by assaulting him with all her rage and disgust. All this is contained in two lines, when she says — in reply to his continued exhortation, "would you please please please please please please stop talking" followed a moment later, when he utters yet another conciliatory remark, by "I'll scream." The "please" reiterated seven consecutive times without punctuation is the simple but effective device by which Hemingway communicates the sound of a woman's just barely restrained hysteria. Her subsequent smiles and assertion of well-being as the story concludes are further symptoms of her inner condition, producing an ending to the story we might describe as dynamically unresolved, not only 'open' but with fuse lighted. (Girebstein 51)

Finally at the end of the story both the girl and her boy friend were ready to bid good-bye to their love, their past relationship. The road they chose to walk, now was divided into two different roads. They have now two different parallel lives which are never going to coincide, never.

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## publication

### Sylvia Plath's Journals will be Out in April

By Mara D Bellaby

AMERICAN poet Sylvia Plath, who committed suicide after a failed marriage, blamed her mother for the death of "the only man who'd love me steady through life" — her father, according to her diaries to be published in full for the first time in April, 2000.

The diaries, extracts of which have been serialised in London's *The Guardian* newspaper recently, provide new details about Plath's troubled life and her turbulent marriage to British poet Ted Hughes. Plath gassed herself in her kitchen at the age of 30 a few months after Hughes left her for another woman.

At the time of her death in 1963, Plath had just one book published under her name. But a decade later, she was considered a feminist martyr, the mourned and beloved author of the "Ariel" poems and the novel "The Bell Jar."

In the third and final instalment of extracts from "The Journals of Sylvia

Plath wrote that her psychiatrist asked if she would have the "guts to admit you'd made a wrong choice?" "In a husband. I would," Plath said. "But nothing in me gets scared or worried at this question. I feel good with my husband...What is only pieces, doled out here and there to this boy and that boy, that made me like pieces of them, is all jammed together in my husband. So I don't want to look around any more: I don't need to look around for anything."

Plath. *The Guardian* published March 21 a long entry dated Dec 12, 1958, where Plath wrote about a counselling session with psychiatrist Dr Ruth Beuscher.

Describing it as better than "shock treatment," Plath said the psychiatrist gave her permission to hate her mother. "I hate her, doctor. So I feel terrific," Plath wrote.

Plath's mother, Aurelia, raised the writer and her brother, Warren, after their father died in 1940 from complications brought on by diabetes. "She came home crying like an

angel one night and woke me up and told me Daddy was gone, he was what they called dead, and we'd never see him again, but the three of us would stick together and have a jolly life anyhow, to spite his face," Plath wrote. "Me, I never knew the love of a father, the love of a steady blood-related man after the age of eight. My mother killed the only man who'd love me steady through life."

Plath admitted her mother had a "lousy life" and said she felt pity for her. "But that is only pity. Not love," Plath added.

"I hate her because he wasn't loved by her," Plath wrote. "He was an ogre. But I miss him. He was old, but she married an old man to be my father. It was her fault. Damn her eyes."

According to her journals, the counselling session also explored Plath's relationship with Hughes, whom she met at Cambridge University in England and married in 1956. After her death, Hughes, who later became Britain's poet laureate, was demonised by some Plath fans. His name was even chipped off her

tombstone.

After saying little about their marriage, Hughes died from cancer in 1998. Only months before his death, he published "Birthday Letters," a poetic — and often touching — account of their relationship that has led many to re-evaluate the famous pair.

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*The Guardian's* extracts conclude with the last line from Plath's surviving journals. Dated Nov 15, 1959, Plath wrote: "A bad day. A bad time."

Her last journal, which Plath kept until three days before her death, was destroyed by Hughes, who said he did not want their children to have to read it.

After Plath's death, Hughes maintained control over her journals and permitted only a much-edited version to be published in 1982. The couple's children are now permitting publication of the complete diaries.

"The Journals of Sylvia Plath," edited by Karen V Kukil, will be published on April 3.

(The writer is an AP writer.)

## profile

### Louis Aragon's Masks

by Anne Benjamin

ARAGON was born on 3rd October 1897. He was the illegitimate son of Louis Andrieux, a former chief commissioner of police, and Marguerite Toucas from whom he was to learn in 1918 that one of them was not his godfather and the other was not his elder sister. While he was studying medicine in 1917, he met Andre Breton and plunged wholeheartedly into the adventure of Surrealism. At the age of 24, in 1921, he published a very beautiful text, "Anicet ou le panorama". Half a century later at the age of seventy-seven, he wrote the very impressive "Theatre-Roman". Between the two, there were thousands of pages in verse or in prose which give a permanent feeling of ease. Aragon, who was too good-looking and definitely too gifted was to remain on the literary scene for nearly sixty years. His best friends included Drieu La Rochelle. They shared the same disgust with what the war had done to French society. Drieu, who was the older of the two, was fascinated by the prodigious intellectual and literary ease of his younger friend, who was just as fascinated by the ease with which Drieu covered himself with women and lived off them richly. When Aragon threw himself into the communist radicalism of Surrealism in 1925, their friendship was shattered and the comings and goings between them of one woman, Elisabeth de Lanux, were enough to make the break public and final. Although his adventure with Elisabeth de Lanux was his first sentimental affair,

Denise Levy was the woman who left Aragon broken-hearted as revealed by the letters that he wrote to her. Nancy Cunard put Aragon through all the hell of jealousy and handed a man who had just escaped suicide over to the sister of the lady companion of the Russian poet Mayakovsky, Elsa Triolet, who was to share his life from 1928. They were to build one another up again together, with the USSR between them, if which Aragon dreamt and from which Elsa could not manage to free herself. Aragon absolutely worshipped Elsa in his post-1939 poems, but Denise and Nancy were the true heroines of "Aurelien", "Blanche ou l'oubli" and "Theatre-Roman".

In 1927, he joined the French Communist party. With Elsa, he made lengthy stays in the USSR and became a journalist on "L'Humanite". In 1932, he broke with Andre Breton and the Surrealists for good. Immediately before the war, Aragon could see clearly. In an editorial in "Ce Soir", dated 31/12/1938, he wrote: "I wish for the peace that will wipe out the memory of Munich right in its foundations and if re-establishing peace means resisting with weapons in our hands ... whom among us would such a thing frighten?" And, indeed, he took part in the 1940 war bravely and, during the Occupation, played the card of patriotism. His lyrical poems link the woman he loves with the motherland ("Cantique a Elsa" or "Les Yeux d'Elsa" 1942) and when Aragon sings "My party has given me back the colours of France", he exercised his drama. His

lines reveal the heart-ache of the soldier of Dunkirk for the ruin of his country, which meant turning his back on the cooperation with Germany that the Germano-Soviet pact demanded, pressure that Aragon was to deliberately ignore, not making contact with the clandestine French Communist party again till just before the Nazi attack on Russia on 22/6/1941. Triumphant communism was then to catch up with him.

From 1954, Aragon held a position on the French Communist party's central committee which, even today, causes lasting resentment as he tends to be blamed for all the excesses of the Communist party. In his short stories "Le Mentir-Vrai" (true-lying) (1980), he writes an apology for lying: "What is lied in a novel liberates the writer and enables him to show the reality in its nakedness". Against all evidence, Aragon has always denied that will, anchored in the dramas of childhood, to belong to a group or a party to, as his biographer notes, remain the sole possessor of his story and to rewrite it as will as if it were his most precious possession. Aragon himself said, "What matters in what one says about oneself, are the gaps and the silence". Although he often showed the need to be taken in hand, he also had to be able to escape through "true-lying", through a continually remodeled biography which is transposed and which, for that reason, he was obviously unable to write. In 1970, after Elsa's death, the French Communist party informed him that his financial support to "Let-

ters Francaises", a review that Aragon headed, had become incompatible with the positions he had taken in particular on the suicide of the son of a Czech intellectual. Although, in the last issue of the publication he admits, "I have wasted my life", he continued to support the party and to receive honours and benefits from it until his death in 1982.

But Aragon is triumphant when he is borne along by this language of "the noblest French", Pierre Daix notes. He is a "writer as he breathes". Finally casting aside the mask, he reveals his deepest truth, a novel is organised language for me ... a construction in which I can live". In writing novels, Aragon does not stop questioning himself on literature and on the mechanisms of literary creation. His novels first of all explore the real world ("Les Cloches de Bale" 1934 and "Les Beaux Quartiers" 1936). After that, he was to write about the same themes, love and history, in inexhaustible variations. His novel "Aurelien", written during the war and partly inspired by his friend Drieu La Rochelle, is the story of love which comes to an end in the tragedy of history.

Similarly, Aragon's poetical work is prodigious. From his first poem in 1918 in the "Nord-Sud" review to "Les Adieux" in 1981, specialists compare them to those of Victor Hugo, with his illuminations, his laments, his outrage, his plain-song and his melodies. "Sur le Pont-Neuf j'ai rencon-

tre/Semblance d'avant que je naisse/Cet enfant toujours effare/Le fantome de ma Jeunesse". (On Pont-Neuf bridge I met/a semblance of before I was born/ that always frightened child/the ghost of my youth). Aragon was never to break with what Apollinaire called "the old play with lines" and he explained that, as an en-

emy of "poetry schools," he returned to the alexandrine, the octopod and the decasyllable as a reaction against them. He was obviously skilled at using French verse in poems which were influenced by popular songs as well as by elegiac laments in rhyming lines of 16 feet, the apex of Aragon's poetic work.

## poem

### Forget the wretched

by Hasan Hafiz

At the end of the day  
The pitcher of sorrow is filled to the brim  
Can I now say good-bye?  
Hungry night at the monastery  
That you'll have to guard  
Oh the mistress of the woods!  
The sins and the good deeds are all yours,  
Without dreams, and without luck since long  
The memory of mating  
Only hangs in the air!  
Don't keep it in your mind  
You'll not get any thing if you remember this refuge  
And yet if you still remember  
You'll have to repent  
And you'll have to play the last part of the act  
A perfect imposter!  
The scene is changed as the evils are banished  
Now I want to go  
I've not the least hopes for getting anything  
But why still do I wait for a few moments  
It's my fault  
I win you and then lose you over and over again ...

Translated by: Roushan Zaman