

Reflection of 'Other' in *To Wake the Dead* and *The Exorcist*

Dr. Advait. D. Joshi
Associate Professor
Sadashivrao Mandlik
Mahavidyalaya, Murgud

Abstract- Ramsey Campbell's *To Wake the Dead* (1980) and William Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971) present the invasion of 'other' in human life especially in the life of women. In post-modern era the possession of a human body by the 'other' is a recurring motif of horror fiction and cross-genre writers. Keeping in view, the present paper aims at discussing the reflection of 'other' in Ramsey Campbell's *To Wake the Dead* (1980) and William Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971).

To Wake the Dead is the first novel which introduces cosmic horror. The famous American weird writer H. P. Lovecraft popularized the term cosmic horror which resembles to supernatural horror. The cosmic horror depicts insignificance of human beings against cosmic 'other'. The cosmic horror fiction is based on the idea of human vulnerability and cosmic power. In short, Campbell's juxtaposition of horrors renders the novel superior quality and holds its position high in the total scenario of weird fiction. But a comparative approach is necessary to point out similarities and disparities of the selected novel and the novels produced in the same decade. Naturally, in the history of weird fiction *The Exorcist* and *To Wake the Dead* will be compared as both the novels present the entry of paranormal elements into female bodies. There is a basic difference in the nature of these two novels. *The Exorcist* falls under the category of storyteller horror whereas *To Wake the Dead* falls under the category of visceral horror. Rose Tierney and Regan MacNeil in *The Exorcist* are possessed by spirits and their behavior can be

explained in terms of possession by supernatural entities. Rose is paranoid whereas Regan exercises some cruel powers. This becomes clear when Regan begins exhibiting uncharacteristic traits. She is taken to psychiatrist. Some drugs are prescribed but they do not affect Regan and her behavior becomes more and more bizarre. Regan's masturbating with a crucifix is a height of her bizarre behavior. A significant point is that Rose discovers about her possession but Regan does not; it is the exorcist who saves Regan. But Rose becomes a victim of the spirit as it possesses her unborn child. Though these novels resemble in presenting the traditional icons of horror, they differ in their philosophical outlook. *The Exorcist* underlines the triumph of good over evil. The novel focuses on the philosophy of Blatty. According to Blatty if there is a demon then there is a God and Catholicism is one true religion. It seems that Blatty's writing tends to prove the existence of God in the Universe. His work is addressed as the catholic weird fiction. *To Wake the Dead* underlines the triumph of evil over good. Campbell also points out that the whole world is polluted by an evil. It is very difficult to identify good and evil in this world. What worries Campbell is the deceptive nature of good and evil. It is this nature that arouses horror. Campbell's characters are victims of the deceptive nature of good and evil. The shadows of horror, for Campbell, have long life to survive and to chase the victims. Campbell is and has been praised for the aftereffects of his novels and *To Wake the Dead* serves this purpose. In short, Campbell's world is full of horror and devoid of exorcists where evil can play and victimize people at its will to turn human life in to a hell. Indisputably, *The Exorcist* has proved as the best horror novel and its version of film created history in the film industry. Blatty must be congratulated for this as people have not forgotten both the novel and the movie since many novels and movies were produced after *The Exorcist*. But *To Wake the Dead* does not lack in arousing horror. It is in a true sense a horror novel because it displays a spirit's wish for

afterlife. They are no longer traditional spirits who after their wish fulfillment used to return to their worlds. These are the modern spirits living in the modern world. Spirit's interest in producing their legacy using female body arouses loathsome and everlasting horror. Moreover, spirit's interest in female bodies makes them either very cruelly active or very passive. It is the possession of Rose by a spirit leads her to transformation and relationship with her husband deteriorates as she is preoccupied with her mystifying experiences. She becomes paranoid, alienated and withdrawn. Her paranoia, increasing withdrawal, and alienation remind readers of paranoia and alienation of Campbell's mother. Rose's paranoid quality is revealed when she is caught in Collin's green house. She senses an evil being in the green house:

Now the sounds were far too clear. They sounded moist and tentative, but determined. She thought their source was clumsy, lopsided as an infant, but she could tell it was considerably larger than an infant – perhaps incomplete, then. A muffled creaking told her that it was clambering out of one of the tubes of earth (Dead 138).

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