

A Critical Analysis of Randolph Stow's Merry-Go-Round in the Sea (1965) Within the Global Era

Akram Ahmed Shareef

Department of English, Al-Hadba University College, Mosul - Iraq.

Abstract

Although globalization emerged as a worldwide phenomenon no more than four decades ago, it can be, to certain extent, applicable to this novel. This study examines two subjects: recurrent topics in the novel, then global concepts, both positive and negative. The majority of the issues undertaken in *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea* (1965) are previously untacked in the way this attempt investigates. However, several basic matters, which are universal, will be discussed here. As far as I can ascertain that no study of the global themes of this novel has been done.

Keywords: Globalization, Topics, Concepts, Investigation.

تحليل نقدي لرواية الكاتب الاسترالي راندولف استاو
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وفق مبدأ العولمة

أكرم أحمد شريف

قسم اللغة الانكليزية، كلية الحداثات الجامعة، موصل - العراق.

المستخلص

على الرغم من ان العولمة كانت قد بدأت كظاهرة عالمية منذ أكثر من اربعة عقود، الا ان هذه الظاهرة يمكن ان تطبق، الى حد ما، على هذه الرواية: دوامة الخيل في البحر. تعالج هذه الدراسة نوعين من المواضيع: يشمل الموضوع الأول أفكاراً تقليدية وردت في الرواية، في حين ينطوي الموضوع الثاني على مفاهيم عولمية، الايجابية منها والسلبية. غير أن المواضيع التي تناولتها هذه الدراسة بالنقد والتحليل (دوامة الخيل في البحر) غير مطروقة مسبقاً لدى الباحثين بالطريقة التي قدمتها هذه الدراسة. على أية حال، هناك أمور أساسية عديدة تقع ضمن مفاهيم العولمة والتي تم مناقشتها بالبحث والتفصيل. ومن هنا استطيع أن أجزم بأنه لا توجد أية دراسة سابقة تناولت المواضيع كلها بالشكل الذي قدمته هذه الدراسة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العولمة، المواضيع، المفاهيم، التحري، والعالمية.

I. The Novel in Brief:

Randolph Stow's *Merry-Go-Round in the Sea* was published in 1965, recording the writer's own memories through his main character, Rob, a child who lived in Geraldton, a city in Western Australia, during World War II and the years immediately following it (1941-1949). Memories record the effects of the war on Rob, his family, their culture and environment, which form the central focus of the novel.

The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea has been a favorite book for Australians of younger and older generations. A.J. Hassall stated that it marked "a watershed for its author ...the culmination of a group of novels with common themes and preoccupations, which make up a completed phase in Stow's creative life,"[1]. Hassall regards it as "a beautifully spare and functional novel beneath its rich surface of lovingly remembered detail,"[2]. This novel is often taught in Australian high schools because it engages with a variety of ideas such as: the sense of wonder, adoration in the child's relationship with his environment, his immediate relationships with others; innocence and experience; childhood and maturity; time and change; rural upbringing and city life; unity of the family and its disintegration; cycles of life; war and peace; isolation and belonging; social life and individuality; loneliness, alienation, and nostalgia.

The whole novel is a series of memories of childhood narrated from the child's point of view. The central character, Rob, is attached to the vision of the merry-go-round in the sea, and he dreams of playing on it. When he grows up, he realizes that it is no more than a wrecked ship foundered near the seashore. The Merry-Go-Round concrete image shapes the principal structure of the novel, the innocent vision of a child that is subjected to time, change and loss. A wider meaning is

the bursting of the bubble within which Rob lives, (should be clarified later on), Australia as a separate country, once isolated and relatively undeveloped, gradually becoming more modern and open to global influence after World War II and beyond.

This novel is generally viewed as an autobiographical or semi-autobiographical novel. It is Randolph Stow who speaks to us through the protagonist Rob, six years old at the start of the story, and, relates the sequence of events. The author sheds light on many themes, including the devastating effects of the Second World War on his country, Australia, and the aftermath of war. Stow himself was six in 1941, two years after the outbreak of World War Two (1939-1945).

Some critics disagree that the novel is primarily autobiographical. For example, Bruce Bennett insists that the book remains a novel rather than an autobiography because the chronology of these events and the relationships they have been given to each other, in many instances, are entirely fictional[3]. However, an autobiographical interpretation is supported by the fact that Rick, the other central character, like the author, deserted his country in order to live outside Australia, in England in particular. He was acquainted with the feeling that living in his country, at that time, became not only boring and unbearable, but fruitless as well. Rick, to some extent, is a persona for the author as an adult, disillusioned with his country and felt limited by it. Stow spent the major part of his life outside Australia, from 1965-2010, and died in England. He represented many young Australians of the sixties and seventies, who found their country limited in opportunities and left it. This theme links to the global phenomenon of free movement among countries and migration of people.

II. Methodology:

This study adopted postmodern theory methodology, because it is both comprehensive and flexible. Raman Selden et al. state that “postmodernist writers break down conventional boundaries of discourse, between fiction and history, or autobiography, realism and fantasy, in a *bricolage* of forms and genres,”[4]. This novel is a *bricolage*, a blend of autobiography, history, fiction and fantasy contextualized by the recent history of Western Australia. However, the thematic analysis is my motivation in this study.

III. Thematic Analysis:

III.1 Recurrent Subjects:

1.A Circle of life:

The image of the merry-go-round in the title of the novel suggests the stillness of the family within the circle of life, which starts and ends in the same point. Rowley stated that “the metaphor of circularity in the novel generally implies a continuity which is conservative that inhibits progress,”[5]. The novel begins with a simple example, which later holds a metaphorical resonance. It is the physical revolving movement of the boy’s play:

The merry-go-round revolved. The world turned about him, showing the physical characters of the library, the car, the old store, the courthouse. Sunflowers, Moreton Bay figtrees, the jetty, the sea. Purple bougainvillaea against the sea,”[6].

This simple physical revolving movement of the boy’s play, the central focus of the whole novel, symbolizes that Rob and other important characters were caught in a circular movement during that time. Almost from the beginning of the novel, Rob anxiously waited to be reunited with his beloved cousin, Rick. The waiting lasted for three and a half years while Rick was at war. Four years after Rick’s return, nothing much had changed

in Rob's life, though it had for Rick. This dialogue expresses the stillness of the family's life; Rick's leave and return to it:

"It's four years since you came home," the boy said. "Since you wrote the bit of poetry in my book."

"Have you worked out yet what it means?"

"Yeah," the boy said. "It means us, the family. We stayed still, and you came back to where you started from,"[7].

This idea recurs throughout the novel. It might suggest the repeated occurrence of war all over the world. The narrator implicitly referred to this: "The year wore on, the merry-go-round of life revolved. In Asia there was war, and in Geraldton the profoundest peace,"[8].

1.B Country life:

Rob describes his surrounding environment with intimate detail: the landscape, the various trees, and the characters' connections with these natural figures like the sunflowers. Stow captured the minute details of Geraldton and its district, imagining all its smells, sounds, and sights as a bright child would sense them. His description was both precise and poetic:

The sunflowers followed the road a long way out of town. When the road ran by the white sandhills they were still there, they stood up tall and yellow against the dunes, which were dazzling, like Scottish snow. Sometimes they were framed against a broad triangle of bright sea. But as the coast fell away and the road cut across the river flats the sunflowers thinned out and vanished[9].

1.C Illusion and Reality:

The concepts of illusion and reality are relative. They cannot definitely be defined because reality basically refers to what physically exists in our surrounding, while illusion may evolve

from imagination that possibly leaves its effects on one's mind and is probably seen in reality[10]. The novel starts with a detailed description of the mirage of the merry-go-round that forms the principal image of the whole novel. This strange object drew the attention of the main character, Rob, the boy, who would like to play on it. The story followed Rob's change from a naïve boy who thought that the mast of a wrecked ship out in the sea was a merry-go-round to a full realization of its nature. Realization of the true nature of this thing was achieved when he was more mature, later in the novel.

Rowley pointed out that "Rob treasures this revolving wheel as an image of security, as a closed circle, a life-cycle which would return to the present moment,"[11]. The change in perception of both the mirage and the reality was an intellectual rather than a tangible one. It was a change in his mind's eye. Near the end of the novel, Rob discovered the genuine shape of the actual merry-go-round was on the land (not the mirage in the sea) in its miserable condition:

Rob looked up and saw the merry-go-round. It seemed he had not noticed the merry-go-round for years. The broken seat had vanished long ago, and the bent stays drooped down against the iron center post. It looked furiously forlorn. "I was mad about that," he said, "when I was a little kid,"[12].

This change of perception was a mental journey from being naïve, overwhelmed with illusion to being fully aware of the reality of this object that he used to see so alluring as a young child.

1.D Attachment and Disappointment:

One of the major themes that greatly concerns Rob is his emotional attachment to his cousin, Rick, who was away in the war in the first part of the novel, and whose absence lasted for three and a half years. Rob lived on his happy childhood

memories with Rick before the War and looked forwards towards seeing him again throughout the first part of the novel.

He thought frequently about Rick, who loved horses. He had a favorite mare called Goldie, and Rob, out of love for Rick, also liked the horse a lot. Rob was used to sleeping in Rick's room, and Rick would read him some interesting stories. On the day of Rick's departure for War, Rob was deeply troubled and could not stand seeing him leave for an unknown place for a long time. Seeing Rob depressed and almost crying, Rick said in an attempt to soothe him:

"Don't do that. I don't like to see a man cry like that, with real tears. If a man's got to cry he'd do better to bawl his head off."

"I am not crying," said the boy, with a stiff mouth.

"And I'll be back," Rick said. "I'll be back, and all you'll be able to see will be two eyes peering through gongs and fruit salad,"[13].

Later, Rob yearned to restore his intimate relationship with him. But when Rick returned from the war, Rob was disappointed and confused by Rick's strange behavior and peculiar attitudes towards life and his own country, Australia. Jennifer Wightman commented that "Rob's lack of self-awareness is contrasted with the self-knowledge forced on his idolized cousin Rick in Changi POW camp. The latter half of the book is centered on Rick's attempts to return to ordinary life,"[14]. But Rick was unable to get back again to his normal life, after agonizing terrible experiences in captivity, where he was subject to hard labor. On returning from the war, Rick wrote two lines from John Donne's love poem 'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning' in Rob's autograph book:

Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I began[15].

Rick's awakening to the savage reality of war, its torture, its death and his changed personality, disappointing and disturbing Rob, illustrated Stow's message that there was a big difference between illusion and reality. In his story, the characters that were unknowingly living on promises, hopes and expectations were shocked by the reality of their completely different experiences.

Geoffrey Dutton considered that "Stow had been one of several modern writers who had given new depth and strength to the Australian writing in the wider context of world literature,"[16]. In addition, O. N. Burgess indicated that "he [Stow] was using the novel with increasing power to embody a developing philosophy that was founded squarely on his interpretation of the realities of the life about him,"[17]. While Rick lived in his own protective and restricted environment (his home town), his ideas and attitudes towards life remained the same. But when he was separated from his homeland and endured long and severe hardships, his thoughts and attitudes totally changed. His illusions faded away, and another reality was unveiled to him.

III.2 Globally Expanded Concepts:

Stow is considered a postmodernist writer who breaks down the conventional barriers among fiction, history and biography, and in many ways he predicts the contemporary context of the Australian identity. Hence, this novel is both a literary and historical record of the developing modern Australian cultural identity.

The Australian historian, John Molony, called the decades that followed World War II the "third phase" of the country's modern history, following establishment of the colony from 1788 to 1850 and consolidation of the country from 1850 to 1945[18]. The post-war period was the era when globalization began to infiltrate the relatively unsophisticated Australian way

of life. Suman Gupta explained that “globalization is not merely a conceptual field, but one that is manifest in a widely dispersed fashion in a range of issues or topics which are as literary as they are political or sociological or philosophical...,”[19]. Globalization has entered all fields of modern life. Stow’s novel combines us a fictional, biographical and historical record of the age of change and development in the modern history of Australia.

In the post-war period, Australia had passed through a severe experience in formulating its own cultural identity, which actually occurred within the progression of its contemporary status. John Molony states:

The third phase had many contradictory aspects. Australians experienced a very long period of sustained economic growth and considered them happier than did the citizens of any other country. On the other hand, all the governments and most politicians of the time spoke and acted as if the country were under constant siege, particularly from Asians and Communists. Public policy in these years was mostly dedicated to these two contradictory themes[20].

Australian politicians feared invasion by their Asian neighbors during that time. A number of global themes can be seen in the novel’s depiction of the gradual process of change, but they are no more than beginnings. This study therefore suggests a hypothesis of doing a critical analysis of the globally extended themes of Stow’s novel. Within this global framework, a question arises: To what extent can the thematic study of this novel fall within the global domain?

III. 3 Positive aspects of globalization:

3. A Modernization:

Michael V. Moses points out that “the very process of global modernization that has made a world literature possible

has itself become a principal subject of that literature,”[21]. In an analysis of Thomas Hardy’s *Mayor of Casterbridge* (1882), and Joseph Conrad’s *Lucky Jim* (1900), as examples, Moses stressed that the two novelists believed in the “victory” of “advancing civilization” as “inevitable,”[22]. Similar themes of the inevitability of modernization can be found in *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*.

The main storyline of the novel took place in the countryside where the Maplesteads, the leading family in Geraldton, live. The large extended family had lived for four generations in that area and enjoyed intimate relationships. It was a rural environment, where they used to grow crops and rear animals:

Rob hated that. It was exile and demotion, making him again a townie instead of a bush kid. He belonged, he knew, to the country where his grandfather and great-grandfather had belonged. And yet he had no land. He would be a farmer, he thought. He would be a farmer, someday[23].

Even during the war, when they were evacuated to different places, they went to other rural locations such as Sandalwood, Andarra, Hand Cave, and Bogada. In the process of modernization, a great deal of the agricultural land was swept away. Near the end of the novel, rural societies were urbanized. Here is an image of abrupt change in the countryside:

Then the bulldozers came, and the palms went down in a roar and a fume of sand. Flames leaped, and the palm-trunks lay under sun and rain in the devastated paddock like black-scaled basking dinosaurs.

Mrs. Maplestead had sold her palms, and people were going to build houses. The town was growing in a sudden spasm. It was going to be a *real* town, everyone said[24].

There was a striking change in Geraldton. Almost everything was rapidly developing, which made the haunted

town become reborn. Rob “walked in the town and watched the town modification: the empty, dirty-windowed shops restored, the poky, shabby shops growing Yankee-flash, the swinging doors coming off the pubs,”[25]. In brief, “the whole run-down haunted town would be reborn, remade, according to standards of beauty and elegance proper in a nation which had done its pioneering in hovels,”[26]. The global transformation of people’s way of life had been also happening in Western Australia in this story. In fact, it was only a beginning of the urbanization that had seen the emergence of highly modernized cities like Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and others and of variations in every field of life, including the agricultural one.

3. B Multicultural Communities Living Together:

In this novel, there are indirect references to the peaceful way of life of people with diverse backgrounds and ancestry, which in some ways foreshadowed Australia’s present multicultural identity. In the past, after the early convict settlements, adventurous settlers from various nationalities came to colonize Australia. Most citizens had ancestry from European countries such as: Portugal, Holland, France, Italy, and Britain, but the original occupants were the Aborigines, who were called Black Fellows in the novel.

However, the dominant heritage was and is Anglo-Celtic. Anthony J. Hassall described the beginning of a multi-cultural society, with a mixture of races, “Aboriginal, Anglo-Saxon, Celt, Southern and Northern European,” and “the complex cultural heritage,” they represented[27]. The British settlers were dominant and their culture and language became the standard. Nowadays, the Australia population has a greater diversity of racial and national origins than ever before, but for the most part they live in relatively harmonious relationships. Anthony Moran described the evolution of multiculturalism in Australia thus:

The Australian experience provides a counter example; multiculturalism was conceived as a nation-building project in the context of mass, multiethnic immigration, and as a way of rethinking Australian national identity in the context of the rejection of the White Australia Policy and assimilation. This connection with reimagining the nation has been part of multiculturalism's strength and tenacity as public policy in Australia since its inception[28].

Migration, capitalism, and the movement of people of different cultures with their capitals are the dominant features of globalization throughout the world. Australia is not an exception. It exemplifies this massive variation. Australia as an excellent model to follow in its domestic relationships and democratic ways of dealing with problems and disputes. Globalization in this case has created a nation where there is a comparative harmony among people of diverse origins, beliefs and cultural identities.

In this respect, Ian Baucom explained that "the performative act that defines ... historicism is the act of invoking the dead and the past, the conjuring forth of the spirit of the non-contemporary,"[29]. Globalization tends to create homogeneity among heterogeneous communities. Herbert J. Gans reflects that:

a society of diverse people taking pride in their diversity, enriching their own and their children's lives by it, and cooperating to achieve democracy and to alleviate useless social conflict is a delightful and desirable vision. I believe that the achievement of this vision is a legitimate planning goal, and the means to achieve it should be explored[30].

3. C Openness to the World:

Anthony J. Hassall sheds light on the novel's contrasting structure:

The novel ... is as carefully wrought as a sonnet, its two parts interwoven and interconnected, and yet strikingly contrasted. The first part, in which Rick returns home, points towards *closure*. The second part, in which he chooses to go away, points towards *openness*[31]. (Emphasis added).

Openness was represented in Rick's final decision to leave his country for England, which mirrored the author's decision to leave for Britain and the US. In writing this novel, Stow expressed his desire to leave his native country and head for a world wider than his own. He also expressed his nostalgia for the Australia of his childhood. The novel can be read as an indirect prediction of Australia's future, which would one day become a global nation.

Mark Peel and Christina Twomey emphasized that "Australia by the late twentieth century was one of the world's most diverse societies, at least in its cities, which is where most of its people live. Still, in the era of globalization, the persistence of localism was a local feature,"[32]. Localism here might refer to the diverse cultural identities that make up Australian society, where co-existence and cooperation are achieved among heterogeneous communities.

The novel has two major parts: "Rick Away, 1941-1945" and "Rick Home, 1945-1949)". In the former, Rob's life was stagnant, caught in a circular movement without progression. He was preoccupied with missing Rick, his only beloved cousin. When Rick returned, bringing closure, Rob began to change his mind about his cousin and achieve self-realization, leading to openness, as Hassall described it[33], because Rob's life (like Rick's) took on a linear movement.

Stow depicted the gradual transformation in Australia in the post-war era, represented in the protagonists' altered attitudes, the construction and development of the town of Geraldton. Rick decided to travel abroad to England to express the sense of

freedom he enjoyed after a long period of loss in captivity. Moreover, his travel came in harmony with the new atmosphere of openness to the world that occurred in his home country soon after the end of the war. His close friend Hugh asked him:

“Well—what are you going to do now, mate?”

“I dunno, leave Australia, I reckon.”

“For where?”

“England, I suppose. I don’t know. But I know a fella who’s got a booking on board for England, and I think I could talk it out of him,”[34].

Rob, meanwhile, “began to build a new career for himself, in which he figured dressed in a singlet with AUSTRALIA written across it,”[35]. That suggested that he was newly aware of his country’s national identity, which had been attacked during the war, yet it survived later on. That was reflected in the modifications occurred in his town, with agrarian land being developed for housing, old shops restored and new ones built. However, Rob did not approve of that modernization, and mourned for what had been lost.

3. D A Broad-Minded Attitude toward Life:

Narrow-mindedness, in this story, turned out to be a broad-minded position, expressed in Rob’s self-realization, his change in perception of the merry-go-round and his beloved cousin, Rick. As a young child, Rob was fascinated by the merry-go-round, both as a magical idea (represented in the mirage of the wrecked ship) and a real plaything. He also looked forward toward reaching the idealized one in the sea when he was old enough.

By the end of the novel, all his enthusiastic feelings for the fantasy of merry-go-round had vanished forever when he discovered its actual shape and function. From the beginning of his life, Rob was attached to Rick, with whom he shared many

memories. Throughout the novel, he longed to be reunited with Rick. When he met him again upon his return from the War, he was deeply shocked by Rick's unexpected behavior and outlook on life. The old Rick that he used to know was lost. That was the beginning of his self-realization and emancipation from his old limited thinking. He began to look forward, beyond his familiar surroundings and close circle of people.

Moreover, Rob's development in some ways symbolized Australia's emergence from a childish country into the modern world. Hassall commented on the representation of how Rob's country had a totally different character at the end of the novel: "it is the Australian childhood experience of a generation; and it is the definitive account of it,"[36]. There were some aspects of similarities between the gradual mental development of Rob as a central character and the steady development of Australia as a new globalized country in the post-war age. In addition, Rick also was changing. He was bored and felt unable to continue his unsettled life in his own country, so he went to England to start his life afresh. That suggested the beginning of the global mobility of the Australian people.

Living in a limited and a restricted environment is not part of a globalized world. There is a great freedom and mobility in today's world, as Mike Featherstone describes:

Flows of information, knowledge, money, commodities, people and images have intensified to the extent that the sense of spatial distance which separated and insulated people from the need to take into account all the other people which make up what has become known as humanity has become eroded. In effect, we are all in each other's backyard[37].

This is a mini panoramic view of the world, where people travel freely around the globe, sharing their information, knowledge, cultural values and capital. Through their mobility, they are exposed to a lot of new ideas and may become more

open minded and flexible. This is really a significant benefit of globalization.

3. E Futility of Using Force

Norman Angell's book, *The Great Illusion*[38], was published at the beginning of the twentieth century and before the First World War, yet its ideology is still valid in the present world. Angell wrote of the futility of using force and going to war to solve disputes between nations and achieve financial targets and economic gains. This principle was embodied in Stow's character, Rick. Rick's belief in the meaninglessness of war after coming back from captivity is a global theme, in essence, in the novel. When he returned from the War, Rick declared the futility of using force to solve conflicts between nations. He fought with the Australian Army outside his country and was captured as a prisoner of war by the Japanese, and endured hard labour and torture. That dreadful experience changed his personality and outlook on life. During the extreme experience of being a prisoner, he lost belief in his own citizenship and sense of national and personal identity, and when he returned home, he was unsettled and confused. He wrote in his diary:

War is a different country. It doesn't matter which side you were on, or if you won or lost, if you fought a war you became a citizen of another, extra nation, not on the map.... When you have belonged to that country you do not really go back to the known nations[39].

He strongly believes in the uselessness of using force among nations. *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea* was set at the time when Japan was an oppressive power that had invaded several countries such as China, Malaya, the Philippines and Singapore, and bombed the City of Darwin in northern Australia. Many Australians in Western Australia were evacuated to a more

secure place, so their sense of security and stability was shaken. Security, both internal and external, was an essential factor in a nation's collective wellbeing and in global relationships among nations, and the illusion that war would protect was challenged in this novel.

John Hogan argued that "science fortunately reveals that war, far from being deeply rooted in our nature, is a recent human invention that many societies have relinquished. We have no good excuses to keep fighting,"[40]. The way to ensure stability is to seek peaceful solutions to the nations' differences rather than resorting to war. Hogan compared war to cancer in its destructive effects on people: "... like cancer, war causes immense suffering, and it diverts vast amounts of human energy, intelligence, and resources away from other dire problems,"[41].

Moreover, R. J. Rummel argues that:

Democracies not only do not make war on each other, but the more democratic two nations the less likely they will commit violence against each other. Moreover, the more democratic a regime, the less likely it will commit violence overall, have domestic political violence, or murder its own people[42].

In other words, quiet dialogue and peaceful solutions are the best way of resolving differences and conflicts among democratic regimes. In the post-war period, more developed countries have tended to prefer peaceful solutions, as a compromise and a reconciliation to their disputes, including the forty years (1950-1990) of the Cold War between the Eastern and Western Super Powers. Rummel comments:

Peace plans and designs, universal treaties and schemes for multilateral organizations have been put forward to end war. It has been thoroughly studied and researched, its causes and conditions dissected. And solutions have been proposed. Education, cultural exchange, economic development, socialism, internationalism, international sports, free trade, functional

organizations, better balancing of power, artful diplomacy, deterrence, crisis management, arms control, world government, peace research, and so on, have their proponents. All to some extent have been tried or been achieved[43].

Consequently, our developing countries need to adopt these principles, particularly in the Middle East, where nations are waging wars and force is excessively used to settle problems inside and outside the countries involved. Violence breeds violence and terrorism leads to an opposite drastic reaction, namely counterterrorism.

The devastation of War and its complexities imposed their hegemony on Rob and Rick to the extent that they lost the certainties and beliefs that dominated their early life. They were also awakened to the harsh reality of life in wartime and afterwards. Illusion faded away and reality was unveiled, as we see in Rob's altering perception of his surroundings. Rick, the second protagonist, in his disillusionment with the Australia of his youth, was on the point of varying ethics and values in Australia after the War, a coming of age.

The ineffectiveness of war is a very important principle, not only for the Iraqi people, but for all developing countries. The Middle-Eastern countries in particular, engulfed in endless waves of violence and continuous confusion, need to realize this great fact. National leaders need to learn from other nations' overwhelming experience in such wars as the Second World War. Similarly, this came in harmony with Rick's experiences and those who loved him in Stow's novel.

III. 4 Passive Consequences of Globalization:

4. A Extended Family No Longer Exists:

Traditional extended families of several generations living near each other have become uncommon in the globalized countries. In Maplestead family in the novel, generations had

lived in one area for a long time. However, such families were no longer found even in the Australian rural environments. Michael Gilding focused on the structure of the Australian families over the last hundred years, and reflected on the rapid changes in the last fifty years:

Late in sixties, the marriage rate declined. Young people delayed marriage and having children. They increasingly entered into de facto relationships. Openly homosexual relationships became more widespread. The divorce rate spiralled. Sole-parent households proliferated. So did other household arrangements, such as stepfamilies and group households. At the same time, the feminist and gay liberation movements challenged the old certainties about the family and sexuality[44].

At the beginning of the novel, Rob was a favored grandson among an extended family: grandparents, aunts and cousins in addition to his own parents. This is a fantastic portrayal of Stow's own family. Martin Leer commented that "he [Stow] grew up in Geraldton and on stations in the surrounding district, belonging to his mother's family, the Sewells, who were a prominent pioneering family of the area, thinly disguised as the fictional Maplesteds,"[45]. There are many similarities between Stow's own career and the family tree, inter-relationships and important events mentioned in the novel, as well as the place names and surroundings. Over time, such ancestral families disappeared and gradually became small families of limited members, reflecting the globalized as well as the modernized life.

In the modern globalized world, it is rare to find such a traditional family. Near the end of the novel, Rob began to realize his own identity as a separate individual: "the world and the clan and Australia had been a myth of his mind, and he had been, all the time, an individual,"[46]. Yet he was troubled by his unstable adolescent feelings at the age of fourteen. This

could be a positive aspect of modern life, where people may have a separate sense of identity in their own society, without the burden of the traditional rules, yet it began to disappear under the obligations of the new era of globalization. That was why the author rejected tradition and left his country, early in his life, for Britain and US, looking for a better atmosphere to live in.

However, Anthony J. Marsella suggested that there was a negative side to this freedom: “self-indulgence, one of the principal values inherent in ‘hegemonic’ globalization, encourages narrow self-interests and individuality,”[47]. In other words, within the globalized world, people tend to be busily engaged, looking after their own interests, cultivating their individuality, caring mainly about following their self-interest.

In Stow’s novel, Geraldton, as an example of Australian provincial society, began at the collective end of the spectrum, unified by its stable conventions, and for most of the novel remained stagnant. Then changes began to emerge, represented in Rob’s self-realization and Rick’s fundamentally altered attitude toward life, culminating in his departure for Britain. That movement reflected a transition from a collective to an individualistic stage.

4. B Individuality, Alienation and Nostalgia:

Apparently, these three concepts: individuality, alienation and nostalgia are separate entities, yet initially they are associated to each other as they are concerned in one way or another with human loss of identity. They have become almost common subjects in modern literature as a result of so many influential factors that have taken place in different literary genres in modern time[48]. As the individual has the feeling of being alienated from his/her environment, he looks nostalgically into his/her past, when he could find relief and sense of security.

Talking about their existence and effects, one can speculate that not all effects of globalisation are positive to all people, and what may be positive to some people or nations may become negative to others. So, not all the themes in Stow's novel were positive within the framework of globalisation. Some changes had ambiguous effects on the main characters. Notable themes in this novel were a sense of individuality, alienation, and nostalgia. Those three concepts seemed to be initially associated with each other. Arguing that this novel is autobiographical, with the author's attitudes embodied in the two main characters, Rob and Rick, Hassall states:

...the theme of alienation, of the separation of the artist from the country of his birth, which yet remains the source of his inspiration, has been a major theme of the twentieth century, and particularly of twentieth-century Australian art, where special factors of distance and cultural isolation have operated[49].

Individuality may lead to alienation, which obliges people to go back to their early, pleasant memories as an outlet and relief. This may be the result of undergoing a state of hardship and agony, which might occur in the experience of separation of a person. Rick, for example, through his experience of war, was alienated from the country of his birth, yet it remained the source of his inspiration, at least until he left for England. The stress of loneliness, being both physically and mentally isolated from his relatives and surroundings, had a deep psychological impact. Rick Maplestead was one of those who were traumatised by a forced expatriation.

When Rob was reunited with Rick, after a long separation and yearning, he experienced disappointment and confusion. Among his numerous cousins and relatives, Rob was attached to Rick to the point of adoration. They were accustomed to being together, talking intimately and riding Rick's mare, Goldie. On

the day when Rick left to join the Army, Rob spent the whole day and night with him, and slept in Rick's bedroom.

Next morning, "... the boy sat up in bed. Rick was pulling on khaki trousers and buttoning them. He was sitting down on his bed and putting on khaki socks,"[50]. He wished that Rick would not go, but in vain. He kissed him, crying. Rob could not forget Rick.

He felt lost without him, and in his absence, "the boy's life had no progression, his days led nowhere. He woke in the morning in his room, and at night he slept: the wheel turning full circle, the merry-go-round of his life revolving,"[51]. The image of the revolving merry-go-round symbolised Rob's dull and meaningless life. He was forced to be an individual, leading a lonely life, alienated among his family members. Later on, the author showed Rob's increasing awareness of his individuality, which culminated in the isolation of his adolescence[52].

The two major themes of individuality and loneliness recurred throughout the novel. Generally, in times of continuous suffering, people turn to old memories in nostalgia or a yearning for the past. Rob therefore found his memories pleasing even if they seemed commonplace. He lived on his old memories as a kind of escape from the unhappy atmosphere surrounding him:

In the boy's memory his own past took on the enchantment of poems, so that already his uncle Paul's bleak farm at Dartmoor was transformed, was a poem, a piercing nostalgia. Anything might bring it back to him: the smell of yeast or of a certain soap, a smell of petals like the big New Guinea bean flowers sweetly wilting. The farm was summed up in one perfect image, like a poem: a morning of mist, himself at the door, saying: "What, look at what?" and then seeing, and sighing: "Oh." Sighing: "Dawn's got a foal. Oh,"[53].

On other occasions, when he was troubled, he had awful dreams. "Rob, too, undergoes symbolic death, entering the realm

of 'darkness'. Once he dreamed that he had died, imagining himself in a coffin, and later, he fell out of a tree and lost consciousness, hallucinating Rick beside him,"[54]. The fear of death haunted him:

One night he woke up in a coffin in a grave. He woke in the dark and stretched up his arms, yawning, and felt his knuckles bang on the lid of the coffin. He went quiet inside. Then he screamed. Then he could not scream any longer, his heart was so quiet inside him. He knelt in the coffin and pushed with his hands at the coffin lid, but he could not move it. He pushed at the coffin lid, sobbing, his tongue between his gapped teeth, his mouth grinning[55].

His mind was so preoccupied with the emptiness of his life that he was entrapped in his fearful dreams. Again, he dreamed of Rick in a seemingly endless night. When he woke up he asked for Rick. "Where is Rick?" He swore that "Rick was here.... I saw him.... I want Rick, please. Where is Rick?" His grandmother assured that he was only dreaming[56].

Then he had another horrible experience, when he fell down from a gumtree and began walking in darkness: "He had walked into the darkness of amnesia, spreading out like a stain from the moment of his fall,"[57]. This hallucinatory state reflected his attachment to his cousin, Rick, whom he worshipped and from whom he was separated.

Near the end of the novel, Rob was fourteen, confused by his own adolescent turmoil. He looked back to the safe circle of his childhood life. "I wish I was a kid again" he said twice in the final scene with Rick[58]. He regressed from hope and anticipation of the future to nostalgia for childhood that seemed the only relief for his unsettled psyche. After Rick's return, suffering from profound depression and confusion, Rob still loved him and wanted to be with him all the time:

His love for Rick was like an ache in the body. He leaned against Rick's back and put his arms round Rick's neck and hugged him, roughly, as the kids sometimes hugged each other when they felt affection. He hugged Rick, with his face against Rick's wet hair[59].

Rick also wanted to be young again, and in a mood of bitterness, he felt that he was dead in his own country in its contemporary state, more dead than when he had been half-dead in captivity in Thailand. His only release was to dream of being young again. "I want to be young before I am old," he told Rob. "Hell, when I was half-dead in Thailand [as a POW] I was more alive than I am now,"[60]. This expressed the depth of his sense of alienation among his own family, and of his sense of isolation and individuality inside his own country. He wanted to run away from the miserable circumstances of his country, which was once very dear to him, to be young again or to escape to somewhere, nowhere. Rowley commented that "Rick is effectively lost to the world...he is transformed when he returns from 'that yonder zone' in which he suffered a loss of 'personal individuation,'[61].

In the last pages of the novel, the sense of loss was greatly deepened in Rick, who asserted his separation from family and country by saying: "I don't want a family, I don't want a country. Families and countries are biological accidents. I've grown up, and I'm on my own,"[62]. Paul D. Higginbotham reflects:

... *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea* ends with Rob unable to find his hero-worship vindicated in Rick, and considering himself to be alone, while Rick comes to realize the futility of using force in solving human problems, as a result of fighting the Japanese[63].

Rick decides to run away not only from his own boring state, but also from the country of his birth and his family, with

whom he could no longer identify. Martin Leer commented that "Rob in *The Merry-go-round in the Sea* has no sense of living in Australia, which is something that comes to him from school, from patriotic songs and the reports of the War,"[64]. Leer referred to this passage from the novel:

Gradually Australia formed itself for the boy: bare, melancholy, littered with gallant bones. He had a clear idea where Australia began. Its border with his world was somewhere near his Uncle Paul's farm, in the dry red country. Once past the boundary fence, the bones would start. He built in his mind a vision of Australia, brave and sad, which was both what soldiers went away to die for and the mood in which they died. Deep inside him he yearned towards Australia; but he did not expect ever to go there[65].

Rob began to realize his individuality when he was disillusioned by Rick's drastic changes. Rick's changes had their genesis in his wartime suffering and were reinforced by his return to his homeland. Each was terribly disappointed in his own way. Rob mourned the loss and his new enforced sense of individuality merged with one of failure and frustration:

He stared at the blue patch of Rick, feeling bitter, uncryable tears. Rick was going, although everyone had loved him. Rick was going, although the boy loved him, and he had taken back the lines that he had written in the boy's book at the end of the war. The world the boy had believed in did not, after all, exist. The world and the clan and Australia had been a myth of his mind, and he had been, all the time, *an individual*[66].

This would be a part of what globalization would soon bring in within time. Individuality and alienation appeased by nostalgia were global phenomena and a universal theme in literature. Rick's Australia no longer had meaning for him. Rob had an idealized image of Australia, which he had to shed as he

grew up and lost his intimacy with Rick and sense of home as a sheltered, secure place he belonged in.

In brief, the two central characters were lost, suffering from the sense of loneliness, alienation, and individuality, which created in them both a depth of bitterness. The contrasting situations of the two characters could be understood as ambivalent. Rick became a representative of the coming Australian generation who would enjoy freedom of travel and mobility throughout the world, and thus represented *openness*. After returning from the war and staying for four years, making a desperate attempt to be the Rick that he used to be before going to the war. He therefore ran away from his confined and restricted circumstances in Australia. He suffered from loneliness and alienation among his relatives, yearning back to his early memories. So his new openness to experience came from alienation.

Rob was emancipated from his emotional attachment to the merry-go-round and to Rick, and finally achieved self-realization. At the same time, he agonised over his sense of *individuality*, forced on him by Rick's abandonment. The following dialogue shed light on the separation of the two from each other, and from their former selves. Rob declared his decision to leave:

"We always liked you," the boy said, angrily. "Don't you care if people like you?" "Oh, kid," Rick said, reining the old gelding in, and riding knee-to-knee with the boy, "I know how you feel. I was your age myself. And I try to be the sort of bloke you think I am, but I'm not."

"I don't know what sort of fellow I think you are," the boy said....

"We're being pretty honest with each other," Rick said. "You love me, don't you, Rob?"

“No,” said the boy, bitterly. “Not if you’re going to leave me to grow up all by myself,”[67].

For Rick, even passion, love and the prospect of marriage led to loneliness and escape. Unlike most fiction, which dramatized the theme of love and marriage even during wartime, this novel touched upon this topic only slightly. For example, Rick used to be in love with a lady called Jane Wexford, whose passionate relationship finally was tested. He tried to establish their relationship in marriage, but she refused his offer and tried to commit suicide. That issue increased his sense of individuality and alienation. He and Rob spent a lot of time riding his mare his town. This may be interpreted as compensation for his emotional failure with Jane. It was his sense of individuality and loneliness that made him unable to unite with the woman he loved and accelerated his escape from a disappointing reality.

Individuality, coupled with alienation and nostalgia, are new phenomena that have emerged in the post-war period in Western societies. Like other global hegemonic matters, these psychological states have spread all over the world. In Stow’s novel, they were represented in the two major characters, Rob and Rick, who represented the new Australian generation in the post-war era.

In the modern Australian society, families and their traditions have gradually been changed, with increasing numbers of broken families, and many traditional values have been abandoned. Marriage is still common, but people tend to marry later, rates of divorce and single parenthood have risen, and individuality is a salient feature of society. Sexuality is more explicit and open, and heterosexual monogamy is no longer as privileged as it was in Stow’s age. David de Vaus has written a comprehensive study of statistical data about social life in contemporary Australia:

The diversity of families reflects a range of factors. Some families include children while others are in the pre-child or post-child phase. Other families will remain childless. Many families are couple families but even couple families come in a variety of forms. Many couples are legally married but an increasing proportion live together in a cohabiting relationship. Some are based on two parents of the children in the household, and the children are natural brothers and sisters. Most couples are heterosexual but a small proportion are homosexual[68].

In addition, Vaus stated that “there is a growing trend of people living alone in Australia and over 9 per cent of Australians lived alone. From the age of 15, 13 per cent lived alone in 2001,”[69]. These statistics reflect the increasing trend to individuality and the revision of traditional patterns of family as the basic unit of society.

To return to the novel, when it began, Rob and Rick belonged to a big family of four generations, having numerous family members, enjoying normal social relationships, practising their own conventions and customs. In the course of the story, Rob and Rick suffered from loneliness and alienation and looked nostalgically towards their lost bright past, before they each, separately and in different ways, realized that they could not return and had to make their own way in life independently.

4. C Vicious circle of life:

Stow had built his narrative on the circular movement of life at that time. Life started and ended at the same point, as Rick had written in Rob’s diary, quoting John Donne’s love poem, “Valediction: Forbidding Mourning”:

Thy firmness makes my circle just
And makes me end, where I began[70].

4. D Post-traumatic stress disorder:

In his novel, Stow depicted Rick suffering from post-traumatic disorder after his dreadful experience in captivity in Thailand under Japanese domination. He was overwhelmed with depression. He spent the night's awake, smoking cigarettes and sometimes crying:

Rick was crying. Tears shone on his face.

A cigarette end glowed, and the match went out. The glow of the butt followed Rick back to his pillow[71].

Rob was with him in his bedroom and watched him all the time, "there were times when he was almost afraid of Rick, of the effect that things he said might have on Rick. There had been terrible moments when he had said things to Rick that had changed Rick's face,"[72]. Rick had been tortured by "a red-hot bayonet that had made the scars" on his ankles[73]. He suffered a state of loneliness and alienation, yearning for his happy past. When he failed to recover his equilibrium, he escaped his mental prison by going to England. In some ways, he was representative of the restlessness and disillusionment of many Australians, particularly returned soldiers, after the War. His tragic case was one of the disastrous by-products of war.

Martin Wight[74] strongly believes in the slogan of global civil society, whereby different nations of different traditions could achieve peaceful cosmopolitan relations among peoples all over the world, in a global world with no problems or disputes. In addition, Andrew Linklater writes of the aspiration that "once habits of cooperation are established within international institutions, states can further widen their horizons to embrace questions of cosmopolitan justice,"[75]. Such ideals are promising, but in today's world, seem to be a utopian dream.

To conclude, this paper has tackled and analysed the traditional subject matters in their essential relations to the two main characters, Rob and Rick, and their stable as well as

changeable circumstances before and after World War II in the modern Australian history. Yet the major focus falls on several concepts emerged in the aftermath. They are analyzed within the globalization phenomenon that has swept the current world in general more than forty years ago. These concepts have been thoroughly investigated in this attempt.

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