

Inas Ahmed al-Ibrashy

**Title: To BE or not to BE / To Cross or not
to Cross**

**The bridge in selected short stories: A
phenomenological approach.**

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Short Bio:

Inas al-Ibrashy is an assistant professor in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University. She is particularly interested in ethnic literature as her PhD is a study of selected works of the Native American writer Leslie Marmon Silko entitled “The Return of the Repressed”. The Master's degree was a study of the British writer Paul Scott’s Raj Quartet. Al-Ibrashy is particularly interested in Postcolonial Studies, Indian Literature, Afro-American literature, Ethnic Literature, Feminist studies, Food Studies, Graphic Literature and Humor Studies.

Abstract

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The bridge in selected short stories: A phenomenological approach.

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The question of 'Being' is an ontological issue that has intrigued both philosophers and ordinary people ever since the dawn of civilization. Indeed, this question has endured variable and various responses and reactions throughout the ages. In his magnum opus, *Being and Time* (1927) (*Sein und Zeit*), the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) devoted his seminal work to the question of "What is Being" claiming that it had not been satisfactorily resolved. This study examines four short stories written by different writers of different nationalities. All short stories at hand were written in the thirties of the twentieth century and all have one focal spatial point; namely, 'the bridge'. The titles of the stories are *The Bridge* (written between 1916 and 1917 and published posthumously in 1931) or "*Die Brücke*" by the Czech writer Franz Kafka, *Old Man at the Bridge* (1938) by the American writer Earnest Hemingway, *Across the Bridge* (1938) by the British writer Graham Greene, and *The Bridge* by the Russian writer Nicolai Chukovsky (1882 - 1969) mostly known for writing children's literature. The texts will be examined with the objective of tracing the relevance of

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existential phenomenology to these short stories with special reference to Martin Heidegger.

Keywords: Heidegger, Phenomenology, Existentialism and Being, Bridges and Space, Authenticity vs. inauthenticity.

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The fate of the bridges is to be lonely; because bridges are to cross not to stay."

Mehmet Murat ildan, (Contemporary Turkish playwright and novelist)

The question of 'Being' is an ontological issue that has intrigued both philosophers and ordinary people ever since the dawn of civilization. More than three centuries before Christ, Plato in his dialogue with Timaeus hypothesizes that there is a clear cut distinction between what is and never becomes and what becomes and never is. Indeed, this question has endured variable and various responses and reactions throughout the ages. In his magnum opus, *Being and Time* (1927) (*Sein und Zeit*), the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889- 1976) devoted his seminal work to the question of "What is Being" claiming that it had not been satisfactorily resolved. He shows that numerous modern philosophical trends have decided to disregard this question claiming it to be "superfluous"; hence, sanctioning "its complete neglect":

[It] is said that 'Being' is the most universal and emptiest of concepts. As such, it resists every attempt at

definition. Nor does this most universal and hence indefinable concept require any definition, for everyone uses it constantly and already understands what he means by it (Heidegger, *Being*, 22)

This study examines four short stories written by different writers of different nationalities. All short stories at hand were written in the thirties of the twentieth century and all have one focal spatial point; namely, 'the bridge'. The titles of the stories are *The Bridge* (written between 1916 and 1917 and published posthumously in 1931) or "*Die Brücke*" by the Czech writer Franz Kafka, *Old Man at the Bridge* (1938) by the American writer Earnest Hemingway, *Across the Bridge* (1938) by the British writer Graham Greene, and *The Bridge* by the Russian writer Nicolai Chukovsky (1882 - 1969) mostly known for writing children's literature. The texts will be examined with the objective of tracing the relevance of existential phenomenology to these short stories with special reference to Martin Heidegger.

This article will be divided into two separate yet intertwined sections. It will first discuss the phenomenological interpretation of a bridge in an attempt to answer the ontological question of what *is* a bridge and the intricate relationship between bridges and being showing how this relation was manifested in the four short stories chosen for this study. Then it will examine the question of the Heideggerian 'being', the correlation between being and the critical moments in the life journey of the Bridge on one hand and the characters in the respective stories (the old man, Calloway, Kostya and the Kafkaesque Bridge) on the other. The overall objective is to trace the presence and

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effects of existential and phenomenological elements in/on the texts.

Kafka's flash fiction, *The Bridge*, entails in its conciseness the classic epic of expectation and frustration. The Bridge (both the protagonist and the antagonist in the story) yearns all his/her/its life for someone to cross, but when the awaited-for moment arrives, the Bridge turns in anxiety and anticipation to see the identity of the crosser thus collapsing into the water with the crosser.

Ernest Hemingway's story is set in the thirties in Spain during the Spanish civil war. Trucks crossed the bridge to evacuate citizens from San Carlos and Tortosa towards Barcelona for fear of the arrival of the Fascists to the Ebro Delta. The old man cannot bring himself to cross the bridge for he has left the animals he had taken care of back home. They were a cat, two goats and four pairs of pigeons. Asked by the narrator, why he is the last one to leave the place, the old man tells him that he couldn't leave his animals. To ease his worries, he tells the narrator that he left the pigeons' cage open and the cat can "look out for itself". Nevertheless, the old man is left at the bridge, unable to cross disregarding the artillery and the Fascists.

In the third story, Graham Greene's old man does cross the bridge only to meet his end. Mr. Joseph Calloway has been extradited from Guatemala and Honduras with the accusation of embezzling a million dollars through "bogus transactions". Calloway's daily routine is going for a walk with his English dog, drinking a beer and looking "across the bridge into the United States"(79). Calloway would kick his dog with the utmost brutality every time he returned from the bridge. American detectives arrive to Mexico to arrest him, but miraculously, they do not recognize him even though they talk to him. One day the dog crosses the bridge and

when Calloway does cross the bridge to look for it, he is run over by the detectives' car while trying to save his dog.

In the Russian story, also entitled *The Bridge*, Kostya is an old child/young man who lives in the sheltered matriarchal ambience of a controlling aunt and an over-protective grandmother. He is to be sent, much to his dismay and apprehension to his uncle in Siberia to "become a man"(n.p). On the morning of his departure he goes for a last ride on his bike. By mere coincidence he sees a girl on a bike whom he decides to follow. Realizing that she is being followed, the girl speeds up to the direction of a fenceless bridge under construction. The fragile indecisive Kostya does not waver and follows her despite the obvious danger. She falls in the river almost drowning but is saved by a 'new' Kostya who metamorphoses to a brave Man. Sitting on the river bank to dry, the girl expresses her admiration and wishes to see him again but Kostya proudly announces to her and to himself that he is leaving to Siberia tonight to start work in Siberia in order to become a man.

It is clear that all these stories are primarily concerned with the binaries of success and failure, fulfillment and forfeit, self-actualization and frustrations which are primary elements of one's 'being'. Their controlling setting is the bridge either representing a turning point (or a watershed to fit the picture of bridges and rivers) for their crossers or as in the Kafkaesque example, the Bridge literally and physically 'turns' to experience *the* critical moment of 'being'.

Bridges and Existence: (Bridge to Exist)

In the famous traditional English nursery rhyme "London Bridge is falling down", the resolute urge is to keep the bridge from falling down. The advice is to support the bridge with wood, clay, bricks, mortar, iron, steel, silver and gold and to guarantee the mission's success, put a man to

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guard it and " Give him a pipe to smoke all night" lest he sleeps. Under all circumstances, the bridge must stay.

In his important essay, "Bridge and Door", German sociologist, philosopher, and critic George Simmel discusses the dialectic relationship between separation and connectedness hypothesizing that the bridge and the door concretize the basic human tendency to separate and connect. Highlighting the role of the bridge, Simmel maintains that "The bridge indicates how humankind unifies the separatedness of merely natural being, and the door how it separates the uniform, continuous unity of natural being". (68)

According to Simmel, separating and connecting are in fact two sides of the same coin. However, he attributes the door with qualities more superior to the bridge claiming that through the door 'the bounded and boundary-less adjoin one another...as the possibility of permanent interchange" (63). He also highlights the ability of the bridge to connect the separated but in order to connect one has initially to acknowledge the separation or in Simmel's words "we are at any moment those who separate the connected or connect the separate". He elaborates that

.... we can only sense those things to be related which we have previously somehow isolated from one another; things must first be separated from one another in order to be together. Practically as well as logically, it would be meaningless to connect that which was not separated, and indeed that which also remains separated in some sense. The formula according to which both types of activity come together in human undertakings, whether the connectedness or the separation is felt to be what was naturally

ordained and the respective alternative is felt to be our task, is something which can guide all our activity. (64)

In the Russian short story, *The Bridge*, on the morn of Kostya's embarking on his ambiguous and confusing trip to Siberia, burdened with all the negativities, fears, oppressions and insecurities, Kostya opens the wicket of the garden to take his last bicycle ride in the wilderness. With the opening of the wicket/ door, Kostya, unaware, "adjoins" the "bounded and the boundaryless" (Simmel 65). With the crossing of the bridge, in pursuit of the young girl riding the bike, Kostya connects what he had assumed to be separate. His alienation from his immediate family and society after his mother' death and his fears of the unknown vanish. The decisive acts of courage and heroism help the young disturbed man to re/discover traits in himself which he had never realized had existed. Kostya 'separates' only to 'connect'. He connects to his family, to society, to nature, to future and mostly to himself.

On his short life-changing bicycle-voyage, Kostya "dashed downhill, bouncing over a little bridge" (n.p), drives on only to reach "toward the river where a new bridge was being built to connect the state farms on both sides"(n.p). Kostya expects his uncalled for quest to come to an involuntary halt as "the road only led to the bridge now under construction, and she'd have no choice but to stop there"(n.p). This critical moment of pro-active decisiveness changes his life perspective. Crossing the unfenced bridge thereby ignoring all dangers and inherent instinctive fears was to Kostya crossing to another realm, an unfenced limitless realm where nothing was impossible:

"You can do everything." The girl looked at Kostya with admiring eyes.

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"I can," he confirmed.

....."You are leaving?"

"Yes, tonight."

"For long?"

"Forever."

....."How far are you going?"

"Very far," he replied....."To Siberia"....."I'm going by myself."(n.p)

While he answered her questions, Kostya began to see his trip in a new light. He had suddenly made a discovery—he found out something about himself he had never known: he could accomplish tasks. The future, which up to now had appeared fearful, suddenly became a grandiose adventure within reach.

"I'll guide big ships," Kostya said, getting up from excitement. "Diesel motor ships."....."I'll learn," he said, thinking of Uncle Vasya. "What one man can do another man can, too." (n.p)

Despite the simplicity of the events and the directedness of the moral, mainly due to the fact that the story belongs to children's literature, Kostya's, physical and psychological encounter with the bridge as a 'space' directs him towards rediscovering or in truth reinventing his being. In Heidegger's words, "Bridges lead in many ways" (Heidegger, *Building*, 99) A bridge according to Georg Simmel "connects the finite with the finite"(65). It provides "the wonderful feeling of floating for a moment between heaven and earth 'prescribing' unconditional security and direction" (Simmel 65). Ironically, Kostya finds his 'unconditional security' and his life regains its 'direction' in the two acts of crossing then instinctively jumping off a fenceless bridge. Simmel, however, claims that this

uncalculated spontaneous act is in fact an act of intellectual conception.

Because the human being is the connecting creature who must always separate and cannot connect without separating—that is why we must first conceive intellectually of the merely indifferent existence of two river banks as something separated in order to connect them by means of a bridge. And the human being is likewise the bordering creature who has no border (Simmel 67).

As for the two old men of Hemingway and Greene, they cannot cross. Their decision to cross is hampered by both humane and inhumane calculations respectively. The two men pursue what Heidegger calls the whole problem of humankind's situatedness in the world. The two men are situated in a specific 'space' *a fortiori* and are driven by external forces to cross the bridge. 'Space', for Heidegger "contains a sense of 'clearing away', of releasing places from wilderness (Heidegger, Building, 117). He further explains, however, that the most elemental function of space is to allow for the possibility of 'dwelling'. According to him, dwelling is directly related to being or what he calls *dasein*. For him, the paradox of Being lies in its eternal enigma and mystery despite its banality and everydayness. The *is* in any sentence is always taken for granted. No one stops to think, according to Heidegger, what is the '*is-ness*' of the cat in the famous example of 'The cat is on the mat'. He further ponders over the meaning of what he terms as 'being there' or *Dasein*.

The two men, for different reasons cannot cross in order to 'dwell' on the other side. Their 'being' or *dasein* is held captive on one side of the bridge. The animals of

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Hemingway's old man withhold him as he cannot imagine what will become of them when the Fascists arrive and war breaks out. He is imprisoned in a classic limbo space where he can neither move forward nor backwards. The foot of the bridge becomes the new abode of the old man, i.e. his 'dwelling' refuge. The reasons for not crossing for Calloway's Greene are far from altruistic. He cannot cross the bridge separating/ connecting America for fear of being caught by the American authorities for the money he had embezzled. When he is eventually forced to cross, looking for his dog, he gets killed in a car accident. The bridge also becomes his last 'dwelling' place.

For Heidegger, the purpose of building is dwelling, therefore, "we attain to dwelling, so it seems, only by means of building. The latter, building, has the former, dwelling, as its goal" (Heidegger, Poetry, 143). The German phenomenologist, however, does not differentiate linguistically between the two verbs of 'dwell' and 'build'. He posits that "man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man" (Heidegger, Poetry, 144). Using his mother-tongue and Old English as examples, he argues how the two aforementioned verbs are synonymous:

What, then, does Bauen, building, mean? The Old English and High German word for building, *buan*, means to dwell. This signifies: to remain, to stay in a place. The real meaning of the verb *bauen*, namely, to dwell, has been lost to us. The verbs *buri*, *büren*, *beuren*, *beuron*, all signify dwelling, the abode, the place of dwelling. Now to be sure the old word *buan* not only tells us that *bauen*, to build, is really to dwell; it also gives us a clue as to how we have to think about the dwelling it signifies. When we speak of

dwelling we usually think of an activity that man performs alongside many other activities. We work here and dwell there. We do not merely dwell—that would be virtual inactivity—we practise a profession, we do business, we travel and lodge on the way, now here, now there (Heidegger, Poetry, 144).

Heidegger, however, does not consider any building to be a dwelling. He maintains that architectural constructions such as bridges, stadiums, power stations, railways stations, dams, markets, etc. are not built for dwelling, "even so, these buildings are in the domain of our dwelling" (Heidegger, Poetry, 144). Despite this, our Kafkaesque Bridge yearns to be dwelt on/ in. Kafka's 349-word masterpiece epitomizes the archetypal human dilemma of expectation that ends up in frustration. Told in the first person with the Bridge as the narrator, the image of coldness and loneliness is framed and projected in the emphatic tone of the very first statement that opens the story: "I was stiff and cold, I was a bridge" (449). The stiffness and coldness are neither due to meteorological nor architectural factors but, we are told, because "No tourist strayed to this impassable height, the bridge was not yet traced on any map. So I lay and waited; I could only wait" (449). It is noteworthy that the Bridge is attributed with psychological and physical human qualities. It has toes, clutching fingers, bushy hair. He/ She/ It has coattails. The Bridge waits, worries, and agonizes. The Bridge loses count of the number of days: "was it the first, was it the thousandth" (449) that passed in anticipation of a dweller. The Bridge does not want a mere passerby; the Bridge is waiting for human engagement on the emotional and concrete level. Like someone bereft of love and communication, the Bridge

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covets for company. Self-realization and self-actualization will be fulfilled only when as a bridge, it is crossed and as an emotional 'being' it connects. Hence, Kafka's bridge defies Heidegger's classification that bridges are not places for dwelling. The Bridge in this case pays a very dear price to be a dwelling place when it turns over to glance at its long-awaited for 'dweller'.

As for Calloway, the bridge represented his springboard to dwelling. In Mexico, he cannot dwell. As a fugitive he can only live and his life is a death-in-life situation. Unable to cross yet yearning to cross, he adopts a daily routine of strolling across the square to the Antonio Bar, having a beer, walking down between the money-changers huts in the Rio Grande and looking "across the bridge into the United States...The good hotels were on the other side of the bridge"(Greene 79). His only emotional response after returning from his walk to the bridge was to brutally kick his dog:

...but I couldn't help being revolted at the way he'd kick that animal—with a hint of cold-blooded venom, not in anger but as if he were getting even for some trick it had played him a long while ago. That generally happened when he returned from the bridge: it was the only sign of anything resembling emotion he showed. (Greene 80)

It is that dog eventually that helps him to cross from his death-in-life situation to physical death and a metaphorical life-in-death. Calloway finally crosses the bridge to look for his lost dog when he is run over by the detectives' car. Calloway crosses to die but in connecting with his English mongrel, he crosses to the humanity and compassion he had lost long ago.

Connecting, according to Simmel is "one of the greatest human achievements"(64). Physically, bridges are the material actualization of connecting. The innate will to connect begins with building "a path between two places". He further explains:

No matter how often they might have gone back and forth between the two and thus connected them subjectively, so to speak, it was only in visibly impressing the path into the surface of the earth that the places were objectively connected. The will to connection had become a shaping of things, a shaping that was available to the will at every repetition ...Path building, one could say, is a specifically human achievement...This achievement reaches its zenith in the construction of a bridge. (Simmel 64)

Intuitively, humans tend to connect the separate and the "will to connect seems to be confronted not only by the passive resistance of spatial separation but also by the active resistance of a special configuration" (Simmel 64). Kostya, the old man, Calloway and the Bridge's will to connect culminates at the bridge as a focal point. The realization of the connection, both on a cognitive and sensual level, happens either with crossing, not crossing or being crossed over. Crossing to those who crossed and not crossing to those who chose not to, was an apophantic judgment arrived at, not by comparison of possibilities and entities but by sheer examination and/or evaluation. At any rate, in all the stories in this study, and with various degrees, the bridge symbolizes "the extension of our volitional sphere over space" (Simmel 64). Again, Simmel explains how "Only for

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us are the banks of a river not just apart but ‘separated’; if we did not first connect them in our practical thoughts, in our needs and in our fantasy, then the concept of separation would have no meaning"(Simmel 64). By connecting, they exist; by connecting they find their being or their '*Dasein*'.

Existence and Bridges: (Exist to Bridge)

The quintessential element in understanding existentialism is to embrace existentialism, with all its multi-layered ontological attributes. The keywords embedded in existentialism, apart from existence are individuality, freedom and choice. From an existential perspective, one exists to counter and to defy predestinations and pre-ordained fate. Vehemently believing in a world devoid of any controlling transcendent power(s), existentialists, from Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche to the present, call for action, freedom and responsibility even though such initiatives are inevitably synonymous with angst, worry, anguish and dread of the unknown. However, the concept of a god-less universe is not of profound significance to all existentialists. Kierkegaard, for instance, better known as the father of existentialism, was a theologian himself. However, his perspective of religion in general and Christianity and Christendom in particular defy general traditions and norms. But for the purpose of categorization and classification, existentialists do have serious ontological questions concerning the essence and presence of an omnipotent supreme all-controlling power. Their priority however is not to prove the absence or presence of such all-controlling power, but to *exist* and to *be*.

Martin Heidegger dedicated a substantial part of his vocation as a philosopher to the study of the layered definitions of the untranslatable German term *Dasein*. In his book, *Being and Time*, he builds his theory of existence and what he calls the "situatedness" of humankind in the world, i.e. on the concept of 'my to be' or 'being there' or 'presence' or *Dasein*. Heidegger sees the experience of *being* as one that human beings must recognize as an individual yet communal experience where one is obliged to engage and be involved (passively or actively) in issues such as living, responsibilities, choices, mortality, personhood etc. because of the happenstance of existing in a world where one is completely involved yet in truth is ultimately individualized and detached. *Dasein* for Heidegger "was a way of being involved with and caring for the immediate world in which one lived, while always remaining aware of the contingent element of that involvement, of the priority of the world to the self, and of the evolving nature of the self itself" (Childers 70). Although Heidegger uses the term "entity" to describe *Dasein*, it is not an entity in the everyday usage of the word; i.e, it cannot be compared nor defined using logical parameters. It exists above and beyond any notion of categorization. It cannot be conceptualized as it is the most universal of concepts:

Dasein is an entity which, in its very Being, comports itself understandingly towards that Being. In saying this, we are calling attention to the formal concept of existence. *Dasein* exists. Furthermore, *Dasein* is an entity which in each case I myself am. Mineness belongs to any existent *Dasein*, and belongs to it as the condition which makes

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authenticity and inauthenticity possible.(Heidegger, Being, 53)

Hence, the ontological question of 'What is being' defies any logical answer. Indeed, its enigma lies in its in-definability. It is noteworthy that in the introducing chapter of "Being and Time", Heidegger shields the term from any further probing for investigation:

If it is said that 'Being' is the most universal concept, this cannot mean that it is the one which is clearest or that it needs no further discussion. It is rather the darkest of all....It has been maintained secondly that the concept of 'Being' is indefinable. This is deduced from its supreme universality... 'Being' cannot indeed be conceived as an entity... nor can it acquire such a character as to have the term "entity" applied to it. "Being" cannot be derived from higher concepts by definition, nor can it be presented through lower ones. (Heidegger, Being, 23)

According to Heidegger, primarily there is a *sein* (being). What he is concerned with though is not the *sein* in a detached world but the *dasein* which/who engages in the world coherently and lucidly as a Being-in-the-world:

The compound expression 'Being-in-the-world' indicates in the very way we have coined it, that it stands for a unitary phenomenon. This primary datum must be seen as a whole. But while Being-in-the-world cannot be broken up into contents which may be pieced together, this does not prevent it from having several constitutive items in its structure. (Heidegger, Being,78)

For the purpose of clarity and preciseness, Heidegger pays special attention to the nature of the word "in" in "Being-in-

the-world"; what he calls the "ontological Constitution of inhood [Inheit] itself". (Heidegger, Being,79). Inhood or inness, as it is sometimes termed, underscores the oneness of 'being' with the 'world'. Both must be grasped as one. Both are intricately intertwined and cannot be at odds. The affinity between the two 'entities' as Heidegger sees it does not allow for the presence of a subject and an object thereby creating a unitary phenomenon. However, this complicated state of Being-in-the-world is in fact the simplest of states as it is related to what Heidegger calls 'average everydayness'. One does not spend the day in solitary contemplation wondering over one's existence and the ontological layering of being a Being-in-the-world. One simply exists. In the short stories examined, the protagonists' re/discovery of their Dasein does not entail magnanimous actions. The average everydayness, the daily routine, the personal modest achievements guide them towards their Being-in-the-world as will be shown later.

Heidegger, in his book, again relates the concept of 'inness' to dwelling. He says that the German preposition 'in' comes from the English word 'inn' which means 'to dwell'. An extensive linguistic discussion proves that the origin of 'in' is not a preposition but a verb: the archaic German verb 'innan' which means to reside. Therefore, the inness in Being-in-the-world is a state, practically lived and pragmatically experienced. In this sense, the bridge in the four stories is a dwelling place where all the characters re-discover their Dasein and become beings- in-the-world in the sense of belonging intricately and inherently in the physical and mental state. The choices that are made at the bridge sanction their existence.

Authenticity and inauthenticity are two of Heidegger's most essential elements that determine a Dasein's character.

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Existentially, authenticity is a gauge of truth with oneself, a reflection of the degree of accordance with one's spirit and personhood regardless of the tensions and anxieties of any externalities. The two concepts of authenticity and inauthenticity come parallel with the ability or inability of choice and triumph. According to Heidegger, you can either choose and win hence attaining authenticity or the reverse. The reverse, however, does not necessarily replicate negativity and passivity; it is simply another state of a Dasein. So, a Dasein chooses or a Dasein chooses not to choose. This point is essential to the understanding of the texts at hand and hence worth quoting in full:

In each case Dasein is its possibility, and it 'has' this possibility And because Dasein is in each case essentially its own possibility, it can, in its very Being, 'choose' itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself; or only 'seem' to do so. But only in so far as it is essentially something which can be authentic-that is, something of its own -can it have lost itself and not yet won itself. As modes of Being, authenticity and inauthenticity ...are both grounded in the fact that any Dasein whatsoever is characterized by mineness. But the inauthenticity of Dasein does not signify any 'less' Being or any 'lower' degree of Being. Rather it is the case that even in its fullest concretion Dasein can be characterized by inauthenticity -when busy, when excited, when interested, when ready for enjoyment. (Heidegger, Being, 68)

According to J. Collins and H. Selina in their book, *Heidegger for Beginners*, authenticity and inauthenticity

involve choice. Authentic voice, however, connotes "turning away from the collective world of Them, to face Dasein, one's individuality, one's own limited life-span, one's own being. (81). Heidegger thus intended the concept of Dasein to provide a stepping stone in the questioning of what it means to be. Hence, authentic choices are not determined by, they are determining. Each Dasein determines its own being. That explains why Dasein is not only or merely **being**, it is **my being** or what Heidegger rightfully terms "my to be". The Dasein of Kostya, Calloway, The old man and the Bridge made them make the 'apophantic' judgment of to cross or not to cross and thus their Dasein was designed. At a specific moment, they become in unison with their bridge, irrespective of the emanating consequences. This has a "purely apophantical signification in the sense of letting something be seen in its togetherness" (Heidegger, Being, 33). Kostya goes a step further and vocalizes his apophantic choice. Heidegger provides an existential explanation for the need to vocalize;

When fully concrete, discoursing (letting something be seen) has the character of speaking [Sprechens]-vocal proclamation in words. ...an utterance in which something is sighted in each case.

(Heidegger, Being, 56)

After rescuing the girl, the bikes and himself, Kostya and the girl sit to dry themselves on the riverside of the opposite side of the bridge. The following, uncalled for conversation takes place. Its apophantical significance, as it were, cannot be missed:

"You can do everything." The girl looked at Kostya with admiring eyes.

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"I can," he confirmed... ..

"You are leaving?"

"Yes, tonight."

"For long?"

"Forever."

"And when will you come back?" she asked.

"Probably never."

The impression his words made on her affected him too.

"Never," the girl repeated slowly. "How far are you going?"

"Very far," "I'm going by myself." (n.p)

While hearing himself as he answers her questions, Kostya begins to see his trip in a new light. He has suddenly made a discovery—he has found out something about himself he had never known: he could accomplish tasks. The future, which up to now had appeared fearful, suddenly becomes a grandiose adventure within reach.

"I'll learn," he said, thinking of Uncle Vasya. "What one man can do another man can, too."

As for the Kafkaesque bridge, the Heideggerian 'unitary phenomenon' finds its fullest expression. The Bridge, the subject to be crossed, identifies with the crosser, the object, when it turns itself to see the identity of the long-awaited—for 'dweller'. Aware or unaware of the disastrous results incurred upon both parties, the bridge eagerly turns to inspect the identity of the crosser:

Who was it? A child? A dream? A wayfarer? A suicide? A tempter? A destroyer? And I turned around so as to see him. A bridge to turn around! I had not yet turned quite around when I already began to fall. (449)

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According to Roderick Munday, in his online Glossary of Terms in Being and Time "apophantic judgements are made either by attributing a predicate to a subject (insofar as it pertains to the subject as a property of it); or conversely denying a predicate to a subject (insofar as it does not pertain to it), However, in both cases the subject and predicates belong to the entity itself and not to something else."(Munday, Glossary) In this case, the 'subject and the 'predicate' endure the same existential fate. The emphasis, however, is on the subject (I) not on the predicate (the crosser). It is the bridge that falls and is transpierced because it is the bridge that made the authentic choice to turn. The crosser's was an inauthentic choice. i.e a casual act of everydayness.

I fell and in a moment I was torn and transpierced by the sharp rocks which had always gazed up at me so peacefully from the rushing water.(Kafka 449)

In the examined short stories, all protagonists echo the authentic voice that calls for turning from the collective to the individual. In some cases, the choice is consciously pre-meditated and calculated and in others it is what Karl Jaspers, calls 'a leap of faith'. According to Jaspers, the German psychiatrist and existential philosopher (though he too refuted to be categorized as existential), humans, intuitively, question reality and by doing so, are confronted by borders that cannot be crossed by simply following empirical, scientific or logical thinking. One simply has to make a choice: sink into despair and resignation, or take a leap of faith toward what Jaspers calls "Transcendence". In making this leap, individuals confront their own limitless

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freedom, which Jaspers calls Existenz, and can finally experience authentic existence.

According to Heidegger, the future of any Dasein is shaped by its past. Though 'my to be' is shaped by its past, it is always geared towards what lies ahead, towards future possibilities. Past experiences are what set the boundaries for future hopes and achievements. This may explain why Hemingway's old man is locked in the past with his animals and Greene's Calloway is manacled by his past money and Chukovski's Kostya is driven by the familial and societal restrictions and expectations which enveloped him. As for the Kafkaesque bridge, he/she/it lives/d only in the past realm of waiting for Godot; for the dweller, even if it entailed self- extermination, hence embodying the archetypal dilemma of anxiety, desperation and aborted expectations. This is what Heidegger terms as Historicality or *Geschichtlichkeit*. Historicality differs from the typical history that is determined by stories that are re-told by man for purpose of documenting and positioning and reiterating. In this context, Heidegger correlates Dasein with temporality. Temporality in turn allows for the state of historicality. Both entities interchange. What 'was' is temporal because it is past and whatever is temporal is bound to be historical at one point in time. Therefore, "Dasein's Being finds its meaning in temporality" (Heidegger, *Being*, 41) because what was, though temporal, defines what is. Therefore, a Dasein's 'is' is in actuality a face of its 'was'.

The design of a Dasein is not only influenced by its past attributes but also by its encompassing environment; by the 'crowd'. The expected requirements of a society are always questioned. Does a Dasein succeed by following a crowd or by following its own intents; those intents that

work towards the building-up of Being-in-the world? In this effect, Kierkegaard in his essay "The crowd is "Untruth"" (1859) calls for discounting the crowd;

...wherever there is a crowd there is untruth, so that (to consider for a moment the extreme case), even if every individual, each for himself in private, were to be in possession of the truth, yet in case they were all to get together in a crowd -- a crowd to which any sort of decisive significance is attributed, a voting, noisy, audible crowd -- untruth would at once be in evidence. **[A] crowd in its very concept is the untruth**, by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent and irresponsible, or at least weakens his sense of responsibility by reducing it to a fraction.

In this effect, Hemingway's old man stays at the foot of the bridge. He can neither move forward nor backward. He is expected to follow the crowd and to ride the bus which crosses the bridge towards safety. He, however, has his own crowd to think of. He does not want to leave his eight pigeons, the goats and the cat because of his sense of responsibility towards their well-being. Consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously he realizes that his psychological sanity and physical well-being are closely intertwined with their safety. Symbolic of nature, staying with or staying from them represents the classic city paradox i.e. the city being the abode of miserable frustrations and failed expectations. The recurrent image of the *flaneur* roaming aimlessly in a city is juxtaposed to the settled, satisfied rural dweller even if in this case the purpose is a few pigeons, a sheep and a cat. Unable to go

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back because of the war (again another facet of modernity), he makes the authentic choice to 'exist' at the foot of the bridge; the closest alternative to where his 'Being' wants to be in the 'world'.

On the other hand, the Kafkaesque bridge follows the crowd. Unanimously, it is an acknowledged fact that a bridge is made to be crossed. A bridge is not granted the identity of a bridge unless it undergoes the process of being crossed. The bridge suffers from the tripartite city syndrome of loneliness, expectations and frustrations. The genderless bridge says "No tourist strayed to this impassable height, the bridge was not yet traced on any map. So I lay and waited; I could only wait" (449). Trapped in the form of a bridge because "no bridge, once spanned, can cease to be a bridge", (449) his/her/its only alternative is to wait for the 'tourist' as this is his only passport to his Dasein even if the ensuing consequence is reaching the state of a Laquanian being-for-death: (etre-pour-la-mort). The bridge's fate could be read in the light of Fyodor Karamazov's words to his youngest Alyosha in *The Brothers Karamazov* "You will burn and you will burn out; you will be healed and come back again." The Bridge 'burns' its only dweller and self-destructs with the hopeful anticipation of coming back healed with knowledge and discovery about self, space and surroundings.

Kostya and Calloway do not follow the crowd; each in his own way. Kostya's impetuous decision to cross the bridge in pursuit of the girl despite the dangers entailed is a decision that would be unaccepted by the crowd, yet, ironically, it eventually *is* his gateway to being accepted by/in the crowd. By crossing, he sees himself in a new

light. Though crossing is not a calculated choice but a Jaspersian 'leap of faith', it eventually promotes him to a self-fulfilled being, This self-fulfillment, however, is due to the feeling of security of ultimately becoming a Being-in-the-world after he had spend his young life as a 'no-being' out of the world. After crossing, he gets the sudden revelation that his abhorred Siberia trip is his heaven and haven. So in not following the crowd, he becomes one of the crowd. Calloway, as well, does not follow the crowd. The question of why he doesn't cross to the U.S to be able to enjoy his money intrigues many of the Mexican inhabitants. His unusual daily routine is silently witnessed by all of those who know him. When he ultimately crosses, he does so not to relish in his illegal wealth; an unaccepted behavior yet accepted by the crowd, but in care of his mongrel English setter, an accepted behavior, the opposite of which, i.e. his maltreatment of the dog, had been willingly accepted by the crowd. In all four cases, by following or unfollowing, each finds his own Dasein.

Conclusion

Existential phenomenology is a blend of the existential ideals of Kierkegaard and Heidegger and the phenomenological notions of Husserl and Heidegger as well among other philosophical figures. Thus Martin Heidegger, followed by many others, fuses both philosophical trends in one philosophical school of thought in which the focus is on the subjective human experience and the concrete human existence within the scope of the ability or inability of a being to choose or to choose not to choose. The concern is mainly on the action

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and the subjectivity and creativity of that action not on how far the action conforms to external influences. The meaning of existence is interpreted not against the expectations of a 'crowd' but more according to the individual subjective experience which echoes individual values, objectives and responses. These responses are usually active rather than passive or reactive and creative rather than created. The purpose is the invention or reinvention of one's being, one's *Dasien*, one's subjective, individual, idiosyncratic attitude to the lived/living/ to be lived experience.

Although the ontological questions of what being is and if essence preceded existence or vice versa had been the pressing concerns of philosophers since Aristotle and Plato, the same question persisted and thrived in modern existentialism particularly in the post-first World War chaotic times. With the cataclysmic ending of the war, sweeping feelings of fear and frustration prevailed along with the realization or decision that the philosophical focus should be essentially on the human subject; on any acting, feeling, interactive subject not solely the thinking one. Laden with all kinds of fears of the known and the unknown and burdened with the classic ailments of anxieties, human existential phenomenological subjects are centrally engaged in finding their 'being'; a being that does not conform but perform. The challenge of this performance lies in finding an individual place for one's being in an absurd world that enforces passivity, conformity and submission. Such a magnanimous mission does not involve equally magnanimous decisions and actions. On the contrary, the examined texts exemplify that the living experience is merely a patchwork of "average everydayness" and the ability to make the

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"authentic choice" regarding those average everyday events. All the 'subjects' who/which act and interact in the texts experience existential metamorphosis at the bridge. The bridge, therefore, becomes the focal place where the Dasein is either created or re-created. By connecting the separated, the bridge empowers the protagonists to make the authentic choice of crossing and not crossing. The result is a richer, more purposeful lived experience bringing to mind Fyodor Dostoevsky's famous words: "The the secret of man's being is not only to live but to have something to live for." (320)

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