

## Down All the Days

---

Rahul Ahluwalia

---

Article Received: 18/05/2023

Article Revised: 28/06/2023

Article Accepted: 29/06/2023

Published Online: 30/06/2023

DOI:10.47311/IJOES.2023.5.06.186

---

### Abstract:

This paper aims to study the life of the cerebral stricken Irish writer 'Christy Brown', who was the subject of the 1989 Jim Sheridan film, 'My Left Foot', which won Daniel Day Lewis his first academy award for Best Actor. Christy Brown wrote the autobiographical work 'Down All the Days'. Through this venture he was able to garner acclaim from several literary critics worldwide, and he was even compared to James Joyce for his writing style. My paper looks to examine Christy's life beyond the realm of writing and how he became a victim to a society that was not conducive to accept disability as just another facet or aspect of carving out a meaningful existence.

**Keywords:** Christy's life, writing, victim, disability, existence.

This paper aims to look at 'My Left Foot', a film by Jim Sheridan based on the eponymous book by Christy Brown, a critically acclaimed Irish author who was able to win renown for himself as an artist and an author despite being born with cerebral palsy which rendered three of his four limbs utterly useless. The principle reason here for his success can be and has been attributed to the people around him and the environment he was given in order to nurture the perceptive artist within his soul thus enabling him to give a clear cut expression and evocation to his thoughts and experience. Christy through his life and work was able to get a discussion started on overcoming the odds of a disability to win worldwide literary acclaim. His two principal works namely 'My Left Foot' and, its immediate successor 'Down All the Days' verily juxtapose each other in almost every aspect. 'Down All the Days' even drew parallels to James Joyce's Ulysses when in an Irish times review Bernard Share claimed the work was "the most important Irish novel since Ulysses." Like James Joyce, Brown employed the stream-of-consciousness technique and sought to document Dublin's culture through the use of humor, accurate dialects and intricate

character description. Despite this, his life was met with an ill fated end as his marriage to Mary Carr and her lack of interest in him greatly diminished his artistic endeavors which had greatly flourished under the guidance of a married American woman named Beth Moore, she had greatly assisted him in finishing his magnum opus 'Down all the Days'. Although he passed away 35 years ago, he continues to garner pop culture references. Rock bands like U2, The Pogues and The Man They Couldn't Hang have each based a song of his novel 'Down All The Days' which Daniel Day Lewis, son of the reputed poet Cecil Day Lewis won the Academy Award for the Best Actor in a leading role for his role as Christy in the aforesaid movie. Yet, this man whose fate was anchored by three different women remains relatively unknown at the international level in literary circles. His was a life riddled with struggles and this paper is an attempt to evaluate the female associates, namely his mother, his muse Beth Moore and his wife Mary Carr that affected the progression of his life through the lens of the religious, cultural and psychoanalytic modules.

#### Religion in Ireland

In order to understand the implications of the progression of Brown's life, it is imperative to understand the religious construct of Ireland, his native country. Ireland was at the central flux of propagation of religious aphorism during the Christianization of Europe as missionaries like St. Patrick and Palladius set base in the country as early the 5th century. Firm believers in the Roman Catholicism, Augustinianism were at the epoch of thought's influx. The preaching of Augustinianism melted the iron clad human will into smithereens as human beings were reduced to going for periodic communions, upon which a kind of resistance towards developing abstractions in the form of perspective or vice versa , what we are left with then is a rendition of the fable of the Wolf and the Lamb. As Christianity spread so did the diversity of faith in the divinity, various churches were in full operation by the time Christy was born in June 1932. Protestantism was well established in the shape of the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church and the Church of Ireland. Each of these churches sought to instill their own versions of religion and faith in people. The Anglican Church was also well established in Ireland well before the birth of Christy.

However, the overreliance reliance on God and obdurate adherence to scripture left them isolated to the plight of the disabled, partially due to misconstrued descriptions of leprosy and palsy among other disabilities have been interspaced across the bible and other religious scriptures. Thus, a cognitive lapse at the foundational level greatly contributes to the disparity between the able-bodied people and the disabled people.

A disabled person, having overcome its detrimental effects, can very easily stop taking things for granted or at face value. Christy, in an interview recorded much after he gained considerable success as a skillful artist and writer, confess that he took

nothing for granted and continued to live with the same issues that he did before he became famous as an artist. He further accredits his mother as a constant support in his battle against the obstacles of everyday life. This in-turn is a testament to his mother, a devout Christian and how she contrasts to the impact made by the other women in his life despite the fact. This I shall aim to posit in another section of this paper.

Returning to the argument at hand, despite the grim realities of the time and age, and tremendous efforts by people to get his parents to get him committed to a medical institution, his parents demonstrated resolute character in an effort to ensure that he was brought up in an average environment. The people in doing so have defied the very cornerstone of Christian faith and belief i.e. judgment. Thus imbuing new life in the words of Milton and Dostoevsky and setting an example of how ambition can mar the process of actualization. Renewed evidence of the same will be presented herewith in the next section.

The role of women in Christy's Life

As aforementioned, Christy attributed his ability to overcome the odds of disability to his family, especially his mother. The environment (that of a conducive disposition) they, the family, facilitated him with, assisted his growth and enrichment and finds its root in the biological connection.

An improvisation of the Ovidian theme of motherhood and the Sartrean notion of the elimination of 'bad faith' can be seen here, replicated in the actions of his parents, his mother went as far as using a coal truck to take him to church on Sundays. The concern for Christy's well being was planted in the mother right from her palsy stricken child's birth. She was at the base of the mountain of Christy's struggle in the worldly sphere. Her support of Christy in his peril echoes the words of the German philosopher and art critic Friedrich Nietzsche which he propounded on in his work 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra, published in 1883 and a frontrunner for the prototype of an existential work of literature, demonstrative of the philosophy behind Christy's approach to life.

The woman, however, who impacted his writing the most, was Beth Moore, an American. She was a married woman but transgressed the vows of the marital oath to assist Brown in the completion of 'Down All the Days '. Moore eventually sought divorce from her then husband, with the intention to marry Brown. Christy's childishness came to the fore as he did not reciprocate Moore's willingness and, left her in favor of one Mary Carr. The association and marriage between Mary Carr and Christy Brown will serve as the focal point of study for this paper.

Mary Carr and Christy Brown.

Everything imbues within it a mind of its own.

This statement aptly sums up the turbulent relationship between Christy Brown and Mary Carr. An epistemological enquiry into the disposition of their

cathartic experiences yields a cataclysmic divide between the knowledge of empiricism and the knowledge of experience pointing to a catatonic direction.

As Georgina Hambleton's book points out, Christy died of neglect from his marriage with Mary Carr. Several bruises were found on Christy Brown presumably pointing to physical abuse. These happenstances raise a number of follies in Carr's general character and ineffectiveness of the human rights of the disabled people. The aberrant degrees of compartmentalization of Brown by Carr lead to a permanent seclusion for Brown. Her actions echo of Michel Foucault's 'Discipline and Punish', a treatise of the methodologies of employing an efficacious means of containment by creating an artificial space of existence. Here we see the collapsing and shattering of a reality which in turn takes down a barrage of anchors and a score of ideologies associated with it.

The betrayal of human trust in this is one key factor. Usually, an able-bodied lives an independent life void of extraneous dependence, but a person with a disability is reliant on outward assistance to lead a progressive and comfortable life. Christy, in thinking, of Carr as a source of anchoring deeply deceived as the Carr of Christy's thought was a figment of his own imagination. An incredibly perceptive human, Christy was overcome with impulse and a consequence of the raw boisterous spirit (which even Daniel Day Lewis made mention of in an interview) that had helped him overcome the odds of living with severe spasticity. Brown used the ability of his left foot, his only functional limb, to write and paint. Most of his paintings, immaculately furnished reveal the simple everyday life of his native city, Dublin. This reflects most of all, a blissful state of mind endorsed with a sort of contentment and acceptance of the circumstances he was put in. It is a very simple approach to life, with a spirit of appreciation of merely being able to exist and make a difference.

Mary Carr's approach to life served as a direct contrast to Christy's. She worked as a nurse by day and a prostitute by night. She was a bisexual by orientation, and had multiple. Thus, the intellectual disparity between the two also shines through as a crucial point of difference between the two. The coarse perception of Carr resulted in her physical abuse of Brown; the prime supposition here could be because of his being a liability on her conscience citing his inability to carry out the mundane tasks of daily life. Having the roots of an underpaid nurse, it is also quite possible that materialism weighed down on her cognitive faculties. Thus, in a Nietzschean terminology it can be stated that she was unwilling to stare into the abyss and self actualize the gravity of her actions.

Brown's aloofness with the world with the world was a metaphysical one if we are to look at the situation under a Freudian lens. Right from the start of his conscious life, Brown was faced with abstract experiences, one which don't entail in the sphere of an average person's formative development. Thus, according to various Freudian theories it can be expostulated that Brown's sense of individualism was far from the

empirical approach that is propagated through texts and scriptures, one that only comes about with experiences of the most servile kind. Such experiences if interpreted in a productive can yield a spirit of Iron to safeguard against the precarious position of a life such as Brown's. The creation of a metaconsciousness helps appreciate the finer aspects of existence, conceit in such cases is replaced with an admiration of an ability to exist in any circumstance but to live on with the spirit of a warrior, by whatever means necessary, in that is negated the kitsch emotive impulses and that it replaced with a niche understanding of the surrounding environment at a fundamental level.

The dominion of reciprocation of experiential exchanges is ruled by compassion and empathy rather than a superficiality of association that is predominant in the case of Carr. Whenever materialism is the greatest crisis felt by an individual it erodes and stifles the finer segments of the energy channelized towards stabilizing a bonding.

One must keep in mind always the fundamental principle that the real always varies from the ideal. Hence, we presuppose that a living being has the ability to make themselves capable of being beneficial to society by putting themselves in the position of the deprived for a given period of time.

Perspectives can only be fully developed at the functional level through the elimination of unnecessary superstition especially the ones that aim to create a divide among fellow human being.

However, the dearth of realists shines through as people are drawn in by commercial marketing gimmicks, an artificial space created for material exploitation, such is I feel the case with Mary Carr as well as the majority of the people in world whose perspectives are reduced to understanding optimism and pessimism as a positivity and negativity. The aforesaid terminology is just an umbrella term for finer sublime feelings that consummate the human character. Appertaining people whose sensory domain is of the fractured variety, this worldview satiates as the premier anchor that satiates their existence as hinted at by Zapffe in 'The Last Messiah'. Although, the writing qualifies under antinatalism, it brings to fore certain principles adhered to under the branch of ableism, the discrimination against the disabled people by the fully abled folk. Such practices were very common in the regimes of Stalin and Hitler, which can be a fully descriptive area of research in a paper elsewhere.

To conclude, I state a very strict regimen needs to be adhered to, in order to level the playing field for a disabled person, regardless of the nature of their disability as I feel viewpoints previously unheard of will be etched in the annals of history through the process.

**References:**

Shestov, Lev and Lev Shestov. Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, And Nietzsche. [Athens]: Ohio University Press, 1969. Print.

- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, Constance Garnett, and Ralph E Matlaw. The Brothers Karamazov. Print.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, Marion Faber, and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. Beyond Good And Evil. Print.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. Thus Spake Zarathustra. New York: Algora Pub., 2003. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund et al. The Standard Edition Of The Complete Psychological Works Of Sigmund Freud. London: Hogarth Press, 1953. Print.
- Brown, Christy. Down All The Days. New York: Stein and Day, 1970. Print.
- Brown, Christy. The Childhood Story Of Christy Brown: (Previously Entitled My Left Foot). London: Pan Books, 1972. Print.
- Hambleton, Georgina Louise and Christy Brown. Christy Brown. Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2007. Print.
- Ovid, and Rolfe Humphries. Metamorphoses.. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr., 1972. Print.