

Introduction

Chapter I

Introduction

Literature is a mirror of reality. The concept of reality is questioned in the postmodern fiction. Postmodernism is a representation of literary and cultural movement which emerged after the Second World War in various fields such as literature, music, art, theatre, dance, architecture and photography. Postmodernism also includes the critical interpretations of art, architecture, literature and culture. Simon Malpas has compiled the various definitions for postmodernism given by a number of writers as follows:

... new aesthetic formation (Hassan), a condition (Lyotard, Harvey), a culture (Conner), a cultural dominant (Jameson), a set of artistic movements employing a parodic mode of self-conscious representation (Hutcheon), an ethical or political imperative (Bauman), a period in which we have reached the 'end of history' (Baudrillard, Fukuyama, Vattimo), a 'new horizon of our cultural, philosophical formation' (Callinicos), or even just a rather unfortunate mistake (Norris). (6 - 7)

Postmodernism was first used in 1940s as a reaction to the modern movement in architecture. Robert Venturi is the father of postmodern architecture. The term postmodernism was mostly used by art critics in general and literary theorist in particular. In 1960s the term was elaborately used by the American cultural critics such as Susan Sontag and Leslie Fielder in the fields of literature. The late 1960s and 1970s witnessed various artistic, literary and cultural productions which are called postmodern. The concept of postmodernism became the subject of academic study and discussion in the 1980s. Bran Nicol in his book *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* says:

In the following decades the term began to figure in academic disciplines besides literary criticism and architecture – such as social theory, cultural and media studies, visual arts, philosophy, and history. Such wide ranging usage meant that the term became overloaded with meaning, chiefly because it was being used to describe characteristics of the social and political landscape as well as a whole range of different examples of cultural production. (1)

Every new work, event or innovation is described as postmodern during the 19th century. The literature produced during this period has broken away from the traditional values of modernism. “Postmodernism means and has meant different things to different people at different conceptual levels, arising from humble literary- critical origins in the 1950s to a level of global conceptualization in the 1980s” (Bertens 1). The postmodern texts analyse the various conditions of the twentieth century.

Some of the postmodern theorists or philosophers are Jean Baudrillard, Judith Butler, Jean Francois Lyotard and Jacques Derrida. The reproduction of the exact original is pointed by the term ‘simulation’ by Jean Baudrillard. He is a French sociologist and theorist. Baudrillard published the book *Simulacra and Simulation* in 1981. Simulation is a process which leads people to realise the world around them through oppositions. Simulation not only replaces the real world but also reproduces it. Simulacram is a copy without original. Plato argues that there are two kinds of image- the accurate and faithful representation. Plato sees the second form of representation as simulacra.

Postmodernists reject the traditional way of explaining reality and consider that reality evolves from an individual’s interpretation. “Postmodernists feel that there is no

point in creating fiction that gives an illusion of life when life itself seems so illusory” (Pillai 29). The simulated version of reality creates the loss of reality which leads to mental disorder. Fredric Jameson relates mental disorder with schizophrenia, hysteria, and paranoia. “The feeling of alienation, isolation, social fragmentation that was prominent in modernism is replaced by the feeling of intensities... free-floating and impersonal and tend to be dominated by a peculiar kind of euphoria” (Jameson 16).

Fredric Jameson was born in 1934. He is an American Marxist literary critic. His book on *Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* was published in 1991. Late capitalism refers to capitalism which transformed after World War II. “Postmodernism not as a style but rather as a cultural dominant: a conception which allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate, features” (Jameson 4). Everything in this world is commoditized and economy has become the foundation of all other relationship in this society. One of the principles of Marxist philosophy is economic determinism. Culture, politics, and history can be understood through the economic structure of the society.

Francois Lyotard, a French philosopher and literary theorist in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* in 1979 says, “Postmodernism is an incredulity towards metanarrative” (xxiv). Reason helps human beings to understand everything in this universe. Rational scientific ideas have led to social progress. Lyotard’s rejection of grand narratives paves path for the emergence of little narratives. The fragmented truth and the altered reality are the themes of postmodern art.

Both Post-structuralism and postmodernism reject ‘realism’. “Postmodernism is an umbrella term which includes feminism, post structuralism, post colonialism and

deconstruction” (Taylor 112). When postmodernism discusses the idea of human being’s separation from the real world, poststructuralism discusses the separation of language from the real world. Post-structuralism is a movement which was established in France by Roland Barthes in 1950. Post-structuralism is based on the linguistic theory of Jean Paul Saussure. According to Saussure, language is the system of signs or symbols. Signifier is the symbol or sign. Signified is the meaning. When something is spoken it is understood only through the image. After Roland Barthes, post-structuralism was adopted and practised by Derrida.

The term deconstruction came into existence from 1882. It was practised by Jacques Derrida. The term ‘deconstruction’ is derived from the work of Jacques Derrida’s *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences*, which contains the major arguments of deconstruction. He argues that all ideas of structure depend upon the concept of centre. Derrida writes: “The whole history of the concept of structure, before the rupture I spoke of must be thought of as a series of substitutions of centre for centre, as a linked chain of determinations of the centre. Successively, and in a regulated fashion, the centre receives different forms or names” (Structure 353). Logocentrism is a desire for the centre.

Judith Butler is deeply influenced by postmodern literary theory. Using postmodern theory she questioned one of the fundamental aspects of identity and the concept of gender. Gender identity has nothing to do with sexual identity because gender is constructed by society. Self-identity is influenced by society and culture. Butler argues that society has extensive taboos about gender identity. Gender identity is performative. Performativity is the act of performing gender roles as attributed by society. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler argues,

Because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis. (522)

New Historicism is a movement spear headed by Stephen Greenblatt. He is considered as the father of New Historicism. The aim of New Historicism is to redefine and reconstruct the past in literature by narrating historical events based on true facts. The Holocaust created a sense of nihilism during the Second World War because approximately six million Jews were murdered by the Nazi regime.

Postmodern literature is influenced by the socio-economic and cultural change which started after the Second World War. The writers who wrote in this period are called postmodernists. Postmodernists portrayed the chaotic world realistically. Albert Camus in his work in 1942 questioned the existence of man. Writers like Harold Pinter, James Jeanette and many others wrote about absurdity of human existence. Franz Kafka, Thomas Pynchon, Joseph Heller and Kurt Vonnegut are notable postmodern novelists.

Postmodernism came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s with the publication of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* in 1961, John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* in 1968, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* in 1969, Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* in 1973, and many other novels. The beginning of postmodern literature could be marked by significant publications or literary events. For example, some mark the beginning of postmodernism with the first publication of John Hawkes's *The Cannibal* in 1949, the first performance of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in 1953, the first publication of

Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* in 1956 or of William S. Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* in 1959.

The beginning of postmodernism is marked by moments in critical theory such as publication of Jacques Derrida's lecture *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* in 1966 or Ihab Hassan's in *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* in 1971. American literary critic Ihab Hassan was one among the first writers who employed the term 'postmodern' in his book, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Towards a Postmodern Literature* (1982) where he listed the differences between modernism and postmodernism as follows:

Modernism	Postmodernism
Creation / Totalization	Decreation /Deconstruction
Synthesis	Antithesis
Presence	Absence. (267-68)

“*Post modern* would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (*post*) anterior (*modo*)” (Lyotard 81). The main characteristic of modernism includes an emphasis on impressionism. Modernism represents fragmentation as something tragic whereas postmodernism celebrates it. Modernists follow unity, coherence and insist upon meaning in their work of art. Postmodernism does not lament over fragmentation rather accept it as it is the condition of life.

A fundamental questioning of the notion of originality and correspondingly a new kind of emphasis on citation and intertextuality, parody and pastiche... (f)ragmentation in the postmodern does not depend on the possibility of an original 'unity' which has been lost.... Another way of thinking about

postmodern fragmentation is in terms of dissemination. Dissemination involves a sense of scattering of origins and ends, of identity, centre, and presence. Postmodern fragmentation is without origins, it is dissemination without any assurance of a centre or destination. (Bennet 251)

Postmodernism rejects boundaries between high and low forms of art. It also rejects rigid genre distinction, thus emphasising pastiche, parody, irony and playfulness. Postmodern writing represents fragmentation, discontinuity and chaos of the contemporary society. The fragmentariness and decentredness of the postmodern subject is revealed through fragmented language. As Ihab Hassan remarks, “The postmodern may be summarized by a list of words prefixed by ‘de’ and ‘di’: ‘deconstruction, decentring, dissemination, dispersal, displacement, difference, discontinuity, demystification, delegitimation, disappearance” (309).

Tim Woods in his book *The Beginning Postmodernism* has summarized some characteristics of postmodern fiction thus: “Narrative fragmentation and narrative reflexivity; narratives which double lack on their own presupposition; an open-ended play with formal devices and narration artifice, in which narrative self-consciously alludes to its own artifice, thus challenging some of the pre-supposition of literary realism” (66).

One of the significant characteristics of the postmodern fiction is ‘metafiction’. Metafiction is a literary device used self-consciously to draw attention to a work of imagination rather than reality. Metafiction questions the relationship between fiction and reality. Metafiction can be compared to the presentation in a theatre which does not let the audience to forget that they are viewing a play. The postmodern authors use the technique

of 'Magic realism'. They blend the world of fantasy and dream with the real world. Gabriel Gracia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is the best example of magic realism. Salman Rushdie, Italo Calvino and Gunter Grass are some of the postmodern writers who have used magical realism technique in their writings.

Postmodern writers do not accept traditional realism such as the stream of consciousness of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf as adequate representations of reality. Rather they try to change the perspective of the readers in a number of ways. One way is to disrupt the narrative illusion and remind the reader that he is reading a work of fiction. "Contemporary literature has come to register the dissolution of ideas often evoked to justify its existence: the cultural, moral, psychological premises that for many people still define the essence of literature as a humanistic enterprise. Literature is in the process of telling us how little it means" (Pillai 35).

Postmodern fiction actively engages the narrative with the moving play of signifiers. Pluralism is one of the main focuses of postmodernism. Postmodern fiction vehemently rejects a single centre of consciousness which is replaced by a series of narratives. As the British writer Jeanette Winterson says, "I am a writer who does not use plot as an engine or foundation. What I do use is stories within stories within stories" (189). Therefore, meaning is never fixed in postmodern fiction. Meaning is constantly shifting and is composed through fragmented narration.

Postmodern fiction mixes different genres and styles of high art and low art. The relationship between language and reality is another significant concern of postmodern thought. The most obvious feature in the postmodern context is the element of playfulness. The playful attitude of postmodern writers can best be observed in the way they employ

literary devices such as parody and pastiche. History is used as a means of pastiche in postmodern fiction. Fredric Jameson explains thus:

Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry. Without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody. (17)

The interdependence of past and present literary texts is denoted by allegory, symbols, metaphors and allusions. The literary works or styles adapted from other works are called intertextuality. Julia Kristeva coined the term intertextuality in 1986. She is one of the prominent post structuralists along with Roland Barthes, Todorov, Jacques Lacan and Levi-Strauss. Intertextuality is accepted as an important postmodern technique.

Intertextuality is the term coined and expounded by Julia Kristeva in her interpretation of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism in her seminal work 'Word, Dialogue and Novel'. The theory of intertextuality postulates that a text cannot exist alone as a self contained, hermetic whole. It is shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures. The writer is a reader of texts and texts as structures of writing in a narrow sense, text as signifying matters in a broad sense before he is creator of texts. Therefore the word of art gets inevitably inflected with references, quotations and influences of every kind. (Waghmare 2)

Each literary text inevitably bears traces of other texts. The traditional novel is often designed to create an illusion of reality for the reader. The reader is made to willingly suspend his disbelief that he is reading a novel. A stable sense of reality is thus created by effective narrative style. It is exactly this sense of reality that postmodern novelists refuse to create for the reader. The postmodern novelists often feel the need to break the illusion of reality. John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, for example, provides multiple endings for the story. Similarly, *The Black Prince* (1973) by Iris Murdoch ends abruptly and the main story is followed by four different postscripts contradicting the preceding narrative.

Canada is one among the post-colonial countries. English and French are considered as two official languages in Canada. The French settled in Quebec and the British in Ontario. The Second World War made a complete change in Canadian history as people from Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Eastern Europe shifted to Canada because of the war devastation. People from the Asian countries like Hong Kong, India, Philippines, China and Japan immigrated to Canada. The writings of the immigrants focus on discrimination and marginalisation.

The clash of the British and the French settlements in the seventeenth century, the American Revolution, the establishments of the United States, the influx of the 'loyalties', and the British immigration to Canada following the Napoleonic wars are some of the significant landmarks in the history of the Canadian nation. (Rahman 13)

Canadian literature mainly focussed on socio-political changes and identity crisis. Identity is constructed primarily on language, myth, history, psychology, gender and race.

Canadian identity is delineated by Salt as: “Cultural pluralism and disparity are the other factors which contribute to the continuation of the Canadian enigma of identity since they thwart its growth of a homogeneous or monolithic Canadian identity” (xv).

Postmodernism helped Canadian writers to implement new forms and techniques in their writings. They created new and independent identity for Canadian Literature. The postmodern era brought new literary tradition in Canadian Literature. Many postmodern Canadian writers explore the national characteristics of Canada. The Canadian writers used historical narrative to reconstruct the colonized history of Canada. Some of the social issues such as immigrant life, impact of war, identity crisis, psychological trauma, and satirical humour are reflected in their writings. Some of the prominent Canadian writers are Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Robertson Davies, Joy Kogawa, Matt Cohen, Rudy Wiebe, Austin Clarke, Leonard Cohen, Michael Ondaatje, and Timothy Findley. Besides them there are many emerging writers in postmodern Canada. All these writers contributed to Canadian literature by incorporating experimentation in forms and styles in their writings.

Robert Kroetsch (1927-2011) is considered as the first and foremost writer of postmodern Canadian literature. Linda Hutcheon in *The Canadian Postmodern* says that, “... in many ways it is probably redundant to call Robert Kroetsch a postmodernist; he is Mr Canadian Postmodern” (160). His novels explore the issues of Canadian identity by throwing light on the aspects of region, gender and nation. His first two novels *But We Are Exiles* (1965) and *The Words of My Roaring* (1966) deal with the struggle between older and younger generation. *The Studhorse Man* (1969) deals with the history and the landscape of Canadian West. *Gone Indian* (1973) deals with the protagonist Jeremy

Sadness's argument with the world. *Badlands* (1975) unveils the story of male quest of origin from the female perspective. *What the Crow Said* (1978) blends many elements of Greek mythology. *Alibi* (1983) and *The Puppeteer* (1992) explore the socio-economic condition of Canada. *The Man from the Creeks* (1998) offers new vision for Canada.

Margaret Atwood (1939) is one of the prolific postmodern Canadian novelists who have won many awards and acclaims. She explores postmodernism from feminist perspective. She was shortlisted for Governor General Award for fiction for her novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). Most of her works focus on the patriarchal system which undermines women in the society. *The Edible Woman* (1969) depicts the story of a young woman who works for a consumer company. Her second novel *Surfacing* (1972) depicts the struggle of a woman who tries to escape from the patriarchal society especially in matters of profession, marriage and motherhood. *Lady Oracle* (1976) shows how individuality of a woman writer gets destroyed by the male writers. *Life Before Man* (1979) deals with the interpersonal relationship between a wife and her husband. *Bodily Harm* (1981) focuses on the theme of self-discovery. *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) deals with identity quest of a woman. *Cat's Eye* (1988) exposes men's prejudices over women's creativity. *Alias Grace* (1996) unfolds the nature of truth. *The Blind Assassin* (2000) depicts the story of two sisters. *Oryx and Crake* (2003) describe the socio economic condition of the present society. *The Year of the Flood* (2009) uses flashback technique to depict the survival of Toby and Ren. She employed mostly female characters as protagonists. Her novels often provided multiple endings.

Margaret Laurence (1926-1987) is one of the postmodern Canadian writers whose novels reflect upon traditional conventions of realism. Her novels are based on the fictitious place called Manawaka. Her works are *This Side of Jordan* (1960), a short story collection *The Prophet's Camel Bell* (1963), *The Stone Angel* (1964), *Diviners* (1974). Her novel *The Stone Angel* deals with the story of Hagar's last journey towards love and freedom. *A Jest of God* (1966) tells the story of Rachel Cameron who sustains his self-identity after great struggles. Her last novel *The Diviners* (1974) tells the story of a writer named Morag Gunn. All her works are considered to be a classic of Canadian literature.

Michael Ondaatje was born in 1943 in Colombo, Ceylon, and moved to England, then to Canada. Ondaatje has published four books of prose and fourteen poetry collections. He has won many literary awards. His first novel, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (1974) is a collage of Western prose, poetry, photographs which reveal Billy's alienation from his community. His second novel *Coming through Slaughter* (1976) is a mingling of historical fact and fiction which narrates the extreme alienation of Buddy Bolden, a southern jazz musician who goes mad during 1920s in New Orleans's street parade. *Running in the Family* (1982) is a genre that blends biography and fiction. *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987) narrates transformation of an isolated and alienated immigrant into a confident person. *The English Patient* (1992) is Ondaatje's most acclaimed novel to date. Set in Tuscany, Italy, at the end of World War II, the novel depicts the characters' physical and emotional damage inflicted by war and love. *Anil's Ghost* (2000) is set in civil-war ravaged Sri Lanka. The protagonist, a Sri Lankan-American forensic anthropologist, struggles to maintain her scientific objectivity against the influence of political pressure. *Divisadero* (2007) is a painful family story set in 1970s northern California.

Yann Martel is one of the most popular figures of postmodern Canadian literature. Martel weaves stories out of extraordinary and unusual events. Yann Martel was born in Salamanca, Spain, in 1963. He won a number of literary prizes, including the 2001 Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction and the 2001-2003 Asian / Pacific American Award for Literature. Though his first language is French, he writes in English. He is the son of Nicole Persons and Emile Martel. His father was a diplomat for the Canadian government. He spent his early life in Costa Rica, France, Mexico, and Canada. Martel had taken his higher education in Trinity college school. He had travelled to Iran, Turkey and India. He pursued B.A in 1985 in Ontario, Canada. He studied philosophy at Trend University. Later he did many odd jobs right from a tree planter, dishwasher and security guard before taking up writing as his career. Some of Martel's contemporaries are Douglas Coupland, David Foster Wallace, Jonathan Lethem, Lisa Moore, Colson Whitehead. Martel was influenced by Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Martel refers to this epic poem in his *Beatrice and Virgil*. He has taken reference from the Roman poet Virgil who guides Dante through Hell and Purgatory, and Beatrice, who guides him through Heaven. Martel was influenced by the writing style of Joseph Conrad. He was mostly influenced by Conrad's use of semicolon in his works. He mentions Conrad's writing style in his novel *Self*. His master degree in theology and philosophy leave its impression in all his works.

Martel published his first short-story collection entitled *The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios and Other Stories*, in 1993 which contains the title story and three other stories. His short stories appeared in the Malahat Review in 1990. This short story collection won the 1991 Journey Prize for the best Canadian short story and in 1992 he received National Magazine Award for Best Short Story for the same book. In 1992 it was included in the Pushcart Prize XVI Anthology.

The four stories are the best results of Martel's early years as a writer. These stories demonstrate Martel's skill as a storyteller. *Helsinki* was adapted to the stage and to the screen. *Manners of Dying* was also adapted to the screen and twice to the stage and was published as a book in Canada in 1993. His first book, *The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios* (1993) is a collection of short stories, which deals with themes like illness, storytelling and the history of the twentieth century, music and war. The theme of the short story collection is about universal theme of grief over death and loss. His first novel, *Self* (1996) was shortlisted for the Chapters/Books in Canada First Novel Award. The novel *Self* is about sexual identity and gender transformation. It is a fictional autobiography of the narrator's life that includes two spontaneous gender changes. Yann Martel attended a crash course on *Feminism 101*, *The Second Sex*, *The Female Eunuch* to understand feminism. He went to India to work on his third novel and there he got the idea for *Life of Pi*.

Yann Martel became a celebrity in 2002 when he won the Man Booker Prize for Fiction for his novel, *Life of Pi* (2002). The novels of Sarah Waters, Tim Winton, William Trevor, Carol Shields, Rohinton Mistry have been short listed for the Booker Prize along with Martel. The reviewers, including the fellow Canadian and former Booker Prize winner Margaret Atwood recommended Martel's *Life of Pi* for the prize. It has been published over forty countries and translated into nearly thirty languages. *Life of Pi* has been adapted into a film by Ang Lee which was released in 2012. Later it was selected for the 2003 edition of CBC Radio's *Canada Reads* Competition. *Life of Pi* is an international bestseller book. More than twelve million copies sold out worldwide. The novel had spent more than a year in the bestseller lists of The New York Times, The Globe and Mail. In 2004 he published *We Ate the Children Last*, a collection of short stories.

In 2010, he published *Beatrice and Virgil* which won a New York Time Bestseller and a Financial Times Best Book award. His collection of letters to the prime minister of Canada has been entitled *101 Letter to a Prime Minister* (2012). His latest novel *The High Mountains of Portugal* was published in 2016. The novel poses many questions about loss, faith, suffering and love. Yann Martel lives in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. His power of imagination and the art of storytelling is amazing.

The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios is a story of a young man helping his college friend who was diagnosed with AIDS. The two men meet often over several months and collaboratively created a story, whose narrative line loosely follows the major events of the 20th century, starting with 1901. The second story, *The Time I Heard the Private Donald J. Rankin String Concerto with One Discordant Violin, by the American Composer John Morton*, is about a man's encounter with the extraordinary music of an unknown composer. The narrator visits Washington D.C. and hears a concert in an abandoned theatre which is performed by a group of Vietnam War veterans. The narrator's thoughts wander during the concert and later he talks at length with the composer and learns about his life. Their conversation raises questions about the meaning of achievement and failure.

The third story *Manners of Dying* consists of nine versions of a letter that a prison warden writes to inform a mother of how her son Kevin faced his execution for the crimes, for which he was convicted. Each letter follows the same pattern like his last meal, his interaction with a priest, his final words, but it differs in details. The final story *The Vita Aeterna Mirror Company: Mirrors to Last till Kingdom Come* is different both in form and subject matter. The text is divided in two columns with different typefaces. The grandmother's conversation is on the left, telling long stories about her youth and her dead husband.

The grandson's conversation comes across an antique mirror-making machine that is activated by spoken memories. When the mirror comes out of the machine, it is covered with the text of the spoken words, which soon fades away, leaving only a reflecting surface. It is a magical realist story, which recalls superstitions about mirrors possessing the souls of those who gazed into them, and also Yann Martel's skill of creating self-portraits.

Yann Martel's first novel *Self* (1996) was short listed for the 21st Chapters/ Books in Canada first Novel Award with a prize of 5,000 Canadian dollars. The novel recollects the story of the protagonist's gender identity and transformation. The novel tells the story of a college student who wakes up one morning to discover that he has become a woman. The narrator, a male at first, explains various events from his early childhood, who lives with his parents who are working in the Canadian embassy and finally settles in Ottawa, Ontario. He goes on to explain events from his years in private school, till he graduates and travels to Portugal where he, on his eighteenth birthday, wakes up as a female. After the transformation, the narrator concludes her trip and continues studies in the university in the fictional Roetown. She begins writing, and keeps travelling, visiting places such as Spain and Thailand to name a few. Eventually her works get published, and after graduating, moves to Montreal, where she gets a job as a waitress and meets Tito, her lover. As the novel is nearing conclusion, she is raped by a neighbour in her secluded apartment and her body reverts feminine qualities and begins her life as a male again.

Martel gained widespread attention and acclaim with the publication of his novel, *Life of Pi* in 2001. It is the time when feelings of despondency and wretchedness were dominant because of the terrorist attack on the twin tower. Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* centres on human beings faith in God. His inspiration for writing *Life of Pi* is sparked

through Moacyr Scliar's Brazilian novel, *Max and the Cats* (1956). *Max and the Cats* is set in 1933, is about a young Jew who survives after the shipwreck as a lone human survivor in a lifeboat along with a panther. "Pi" in the title is Piscine Molitor Patel, a middle-aged man who lives in Canada. The story is largely told in retrospect, as Pi recounts events that occurred when he was sixteen years old. Pi's family decides to emigrate from India to Winnipeg. His father, the keeper of a municipal zoo in India, plans to bring some of the zoo animals to Canada and sell them on his arrival. There is a shipwreck and Pi is the only human survivor. He finds himself stranded on a lifeboat with some of the animals, including a zebra, a hyena, an orang-utan and a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. During Pi's 227 days on the lifeboat, he observed the food chain, demonstrated by the hyena which eats the zebra first and then the orang-utan, the tiger eats the hyena, and Pi feeds the rat to the tiger, trying to keep himself from being eaten. Pi realizes that the only way to keep the tiger from eating him is to learn to coexist with the tiger. Eventually, the boat reaches Mexico, Richard Parker runs off into the forest and Pi is rescued.

Yann Martel's novel *Beatrice and Virgil* was published in 2010. Henry, the protagonist is a novelist and has won much acclaim for his second novel, which featured wild animals. The protagonist Henry has just completed a flip book on the Holocaust. After five years of research he has produced both an essay and a novel which is back to back bound. Being rejected by his publisher, he stops writing and moves to a new city. One day he receives a mail; which contains Flaubert's short story *The Legend of Saint Julian Hospitator*. The story is accompanied by a dialogue between two characters, Beatrice and Virgil. Henry is enthusiastic to know who has written the story *Beatrice and Virgil*. He discovers that the taxidermist is trying to write a play about the monkey and the

donkey, circling around the horrors. According to the taxidermist, this horror refers to the extermination of animals. Later the protagonist comes to know that the taxidermist is trying to describe the Holocaust. Actually the taxidermist was involved in victimizing the Jews in the concentration camp.

The research proposes to apply postmodern themes and techniques to reflect postmodern reality in Yann Martel's select fiction. Theme of Paranoia is applied to Yann Martel's *The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios and Other Stories*. The chapter examines the theme of paranoia and its ensuing effects on individuals in Martel's four short stories. *The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios* is a story of a narrator who helps his friend who is affected by AIDS. The narrator is affected psychologically as he watches his friend succumb to AIDS. *The Time I Heard the Private Donald J. Rankin String Concerto with One Discordant Violin, by the American Composer John Morton*, is about a Vietnam veteran who is traumatized by war. His musical compositions express his loneliness, emptiness and suffering through the discordant violin he plays. *Manners of Dying* consists of nine versions of a letter that a prison warden writes to inform a mother of how her son Kevin faced his execution for the crimes, for which he was convicted. The trauma of executing death sentence and witnessing it is brought out through the letter. *The Vita Aeterna Mirror Company: Mirrors to Last till Kingdom Come* is about an antique mirror-making machine that is activated by spoken memories. The mental health condition of the various characters is affected either by undergoing suffering or by witnessing suffering at close quarters. The traumatic suffering creates a kind of delusion that keeps people away from reality and results in paranoia.

Queer Theory is applied to the novel *Self*. According to Judith Butler, gender is performatively constituted. The novel recollects the story of the protagonist's gender identity and transformation. The narrator, who is a male transforms biologically into a woman due to the psychological stress caused by the sudden death of his parents. The narrator identifies himself as queer or as intersexual. His intersexual body clearly challenges the social construction of sexuality and gender. The narrator's sufferings, longings, loneliness and mental agony erase all traces of happiness once he is aware of his unnatural gender identity which is a biological issue as well as psychological problem. Yann Martel analyses the psychological trauma of people with subverted gender identities through the narrator's transformation from one to the other sexual identity and orientation. Yann Martel promotes the cause of social inclusion of people with 'other' sexual orientation, and biological identity such as transgender, bisexuals, lesbian, and gay who are relegated to the margins of the society by representing their trauma in his literary creation.

The concept of Logocentrism is applied to Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*. The novel tells the story of a sixteen year old boy who survives 227 days in the Pacific Ocean as a lone human survivor because of his faith in God. His life in the Ocean is a mechanical routine devoid of any specific purpose or aim. This purposelessness shakes the solid ground of reason and blows the leaf of faith and makes him desolate. Reality has been established through the centuries by considering God as the transcendental signified. Logos is a Greek word which means the centre of this world. Derrida terms this desire for center as 'logocentrism'. In *Life of Pi*, God is represented as a logocentric concept because of the protagonist's belief in the presence of God. He tries to understand the true purpose of his life and the meaning of his existence by trying to decipher the enigmatic

philosophical ideology of various religions. Retaining faith in an atmosphere devoid of humanism becomes a challenging task to the postmodern society. The protagonist has strong will-power to overcome his depression and psychological trauma only through his faith in the transcendental signified.

Beatrice and Virgil narrates the guilty conscience of the Holocaust victimizer who tells his story as a fragmented memory in the form of an allegory. Holocaust is passed on and remembered forever as a postmodern condition that emphasizes upon absurdity of human life. Symbolism is one of the main elements of allegorical fiction which involves the fictional representation of an object or place. The taxidermist is trying to write a play about the monkey and the donkey, circling around the horrors. According to the taxidermist, this horror refers to the extermination of animals. Later it is revealed that the taxidermist is trying to describe the Holocaust and he is one of the victimizer. The extermination of human being is expressed through the suffering of speechless creatures named Beatrice, a donkey and Virgil, a howler monkey and their subsequent death. The taxidermist's rendering of the story is a reaction of his guilt ridden psyche as he tries to redeem himself off his sins by recording the cruelty meted out to the innocent people. His sense of guilt urges him to re-create the dead animals and infuse life into them. Understanding holocaust by reading and imagining is the only way to bring to limelight the suffering and trauma of the victims.

The thesis proposes to analyse the representation of postmodern reality by identifying the theme and technique employed in the select fiction taken for study. Yann Martel uses different literary devices and techniques to provide a unique perspective to convey universal themes through his fiction. The postmodern techniques such as intertextuality,

pastiche, temporal distortion, historiographic metafiction, magic realism are employed by Martel in his fiction. The following chapters present a detailed analysis of Paranoia, Queer Theory, Logocentrism, and Allegory as prominent postmodern concepts as depicted in the select fiction of Yann Martel.