Chapter - 4

Language, Form and the Question of Representation

Postmodernist fiction, with an endless questioning of the existing canons of the past and the present, rejects all the conventional claims vis-à-vis epistemology and ontology. Postmodernists such as Derrida, Foucault, Barthes, and Lyotard have rejected the conventional ideology in terms of how one perceives and gains knowledge. Rationality, logicality, sensory data, intuitive recollection, and even language are not considered as reliable sources of knowledge for either ontology or epistemology. With the postmodern radical questioning of the very ground on which they exist, those parameters cannot be thought as reliable or authentic sources of knowledge.

Postmodern fiction, in aligning with the postmodern thinkers, adapts the postmodern deconstructive ideology, and the same is reflected in it. This epistemological and ontological questioning endorsed by postmodern thinkers influences postmodern fiction: epistemological problems in relation to the representation of the external world in the fiction (to capture the external world into textuality and narrate them in the fiction); and the ontological problems that result into the questioning of the form of the novel (the being of the novel) occupy the space in the postmodern fiction. Both the form and the notion of representation become essential issues in postmodern fiction. The representational problems include the unreliability of language, the myth of faithful capturing of the external world, and an objective representation of the same. Postmodernism deconstructs both the things, according to which neither capturing of the external world through language is possible, as language itself becomes problematic due to its unreliability resulting though the decentered system of signs-signifiers-signifieds, and in fact, critics like Derrida have already negated the possibility of the final signifieds and offered floating signifiers, nor it is possible to narrate faithful and objective reality or truth; the existence

of which is in question or negated completely by the postmodern thinkers and philosophers. The postmodernists like Rorty have denied the existence of final truths in the postmodern world.

It is construed that the postmodern problem of representation is reflected in the two sections of the fiction: form and language. Both form and language are the vehicles of representation and because of that, both form and language are questioned/subverted in the process of representation. The narrative problems in form and the referential problem in language take place in the fiction through multiple ways. Different authors utilize diverse approaches to the same representational problem. Postmodern authors from America such as Pynchon, John Barth, Paul Auster, and E L Doctorow; Latin American writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Saul Bellow; African American novelists such as Toni Morrison and Gloria Naylor; British Indian writer Salman Rushdie; Italian writers Italo Calvino, and Alberto Eco; and Canadian writers Robert Kroetsch, and Margaret Attwood contextualize the representational problems in terms of their local culture and issues.

All these postmodern writers have their own individual postmodern style, which differs from one another. Their purpose is to subvert both the conventional credibility of language and form in the quest of representation, but the approach to carry out the process is different in the works of various postmodern writers. For example, the approach of Italo Calvino is essentially different from any other postmodern American writer or any Latin American writer for that matter. But the common element is that the postmodern writers narrate this problem of representation in their fictions. In this chapter, Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* will be explored to identify the representational problems pertaining to form and language, and other postmodern works will also be discussed to support the stipulated agenda of representational problems in the postmodern fiction.

In Calvino's *If on a winter's Night a Traveller,* both the language play combining with the narratorial play, which thwarts the conventional beginning of the novel, and an involvement of the reader are identified. Here, the play is a holistic play that functions as a catalyst to an entire creation and reception of the novel. Both language and form combine collectively to present referential problems of the postmodern fiction. The self-referentiality of the novel, which involves the reader in the process of the novel, leads to an endless beginning that perpetually prolongs the span of this collective play. The narrator opens the lines, "You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler.* Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade" (3). It is not just a metafictional quality, which can be found in any modern book, but the sincere involvement of the reader in this metafictional play by literally making him one of the characters in it makes the novel a suitable example of the postmodern referential problem.

The direct address to the reader is something that we can attribute to the playful narrator, who, on the one hand, addresses directly to the reader involving him in the process, and on the other hand, proves to be equally unreliable. This is a typicality of the postmodern fiction, which can be found in many postmodern fictions. In doing so, he ironically unleashes the postmodern representational problem that stalls both the beginning and the end of the novel. The reader searching for the meaning in the novel finds only an endless deferral. And the signified meaning is something with which the writer plays the game of deferral.

On the one hand, the play of the novel involves the reader in this tricky and playful process and on the other hand, it represents the problems of referentiality and representation. The writer playfully involves the reader in the following statements: "The pages of the book are clouded like the windows of an old train, the cloud of smoke rests on the sentences" (10). This subtle and

indirect involvement intensifies the play in the novel by diffusing the transparency of language in terms of its capturing the external world and representing the same. Language, instead of illuminating things, dissolves the clear-cut predictions or structural deductions. Calvino in his novel openly opines that, "The lights of the station and the sentences you are reading seem to have a job of dissolving more than of indicating the things that surface from a veil of darkness and fog" (11). Hence, the language of the novel, instead of illuminating or revealing clear-cut meanings, dissolves the meaning into multiple channels or defers the so-called final signified. The traditional omniscient narrator describes the events and the characters with the view to generating fixed and clear-cut meanings. Whereas Calvino rejects any such final meanings or clear-cut directions in the novel. Not just Calvino, but most of the postmodern writers narrate the stories in the same lines. The writers like Umberto Eco, who, with his semiotic play in his *The Name of the Rose*, complicates the representation or narration in the novel, and D M Thomas in his *The While Hotel* stalls the representation by blurring or mixing several genres at the same time.

In the infinite process of Derridian deferral, in which the signified is simply deferred or in other words, the chain of subsequent signifieds appears, the meaning is either deferred, or it is turned into a void of emptiness. The space is called 'nothingness': the devoid of meaning in language. This 'nothingness' and endless deferral is narrativized by the postmodern writers. Calvino, instead of providing descriptive narration of a character, portrays a character or an event with this 'nothingness'. He posits, "Or, rather: that man is called "I" and you know nothing else about him, just as this station is called only "station' and beyond it there exists nothing except the unanswered signal of a telephone ringing in a dark room of a distant city" (11).

Generally, the postmodern fiction deals with this post-structural view of language. Similar examples in numerous other works can be seen. In *What the Crow Said,* an irony in the usage of language can be seen. For example, JG never utters even a single word, let alone using language. On the other hand, the crow can speak the human language fluently. Indeed, his usage of language is limited to curses and bad omens. But the juxtaposition of the soundless/speechless human character with the fluent crow creates a stark irony of the postmodern language. On certain occasions, Kroetsch narrates JG's communication pattern, "JG, locked up in the parlor, hearing the men return was excited beyond all reason; but he couldn't speak a sound. He farted loudly out of pure joy" (129). Similar case is found in Vera's boy with his unusual language, which cannot be comprehended. When he says, "Erellthay be nowsay in the orningmay" (120), the reader cannot understand the meaning of the words. However, the characters within the novel can comprehend it somehow. The writer creates linguistic gaps, which resist all the signifiers or create ample of them, and in both the cases comprehension and interpretation is stalled. His language remains the same throughout the novel, letting the reader play the guessing game of what he says. This linguistic stases or gaps can be attributed to what Derrida has said of 'aporia'.

Postmodern fiction, indeed, deals with the post-structural problems or notions of language, but the approach of different writers towards this referential problem is different. Both Calvino and Kroetsch narrate this linguistic notion in their fiction, but the ways are different, for example, Calvino plays with the multiplicity of signifiers and questions, as Derrida did, the signifiers' relationship with the final signifieds (commonly attributed in language usage), and Kroetsch creates 'aporia' in his narration and shows its inability to convey the message. Not only Kroetsch, who presents resistance to the final signified in any form, but also Paul Auster in his *City of Glass*, appears to do the same. For example, the conversation between Peter and Quinn is

something worth noting. The conversation between mentally retarded Peter and Quinn is an example of this ironical inability of language to represent reality or meaning. At one point Peter uses some private and unknown words to Quinn. Peter says, "Wimble click crumblechaw beloo. Clack clack bedrack. Numb noise, flacklemuch, chewmanna. Ya, ya, ya. Excuse me. I am the only one who understands these words" (17). It is not only the point that Peter uses his private words that are not understood by Quinn, but also the point that he makes that his reality cannot be expressed through the existing words. Indeed, their approaches are different, but the purpose to defy the connection between the signifiers and the final signifieds remains the same.

The referential problem of language coupled with the narratorial problem reiterates the inability to begin or to end for that matter. Calvino's novel, just as language, becomes depthless with only surfaces. Calvino from the beginning to the end keeps the story ironically stalled and yet moving. The story goes nowhere except exposing its own self-referential problems or metafictional play. The writer himself confesses that, "instead the sentences continue to move in vagueness, greyness, in a kind of no man's land of experience reduced to the lowest common denominator" (12). The narrator or in other words the writer himself does not fix the novel to fixities as the movement of the novel simply wavers in the narratorial play. The narrator does not impose fixed meanings to the sentences or does not guide the novel to just one direction. In fact, the novel moves in a circular way going nowhere. The narrator mentions his dilemma: "Where would I go out to? The city outside there has no name yet, we don't know if it will remain outside the novel or whether the whole story will be contained within its inky blackness" (14). Ironically, the narrator identifies with the general ignorance of the reader. The "we" in the quotation suggests this phenomenon. This unreliability or helplessness, as opposed to the godlike superiority of the realist fiction, is found in numerous postmodern fiction. John Fowls presents a similar narratorial

dilemma or impotency in his *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* Self-referentiality or metafiction coupled with the impotency of a narrator in terms of the plot and characterization can be seen on many occasions. Just like Calvino, he directly addresses the reader and narrates the dilemma:

> You may think novelists always have fixed plans to which they work, so that the future predicted by Chapter One is always inexorably the actuality of Chapter Thirteen. But novelists write for countless different reasons: for money, for fame, for reviewers, for parents, for friends, for loved ones; for vanity, for pride, for curiosity, for amusement: as skilled furniture makers enjoy making furniture, as drunkards like drinking, as judges like judging, as Sicilians like emptying a shotgun into an enemy's back (86).

He, by addressing to the reader, defies the conventional authority assigned to either the narrator or the writer. He further narrates the impotency or helplessness with regard to how the characters behave. He posits:

> We also know that a genuinely created world must be independent of its creator; a planned world (a world that fully reveals its planning) is a dead world. It is only when our characters and events begin to disobey us that they begin to live. When Charles left Sarah on her cliff edge, I ordered him to walk straight back to Lyme Regis. But he did not; he gratuitously turned and went down to the Dairy (86-7).

He opposes the idea of presenting a planned world pertaining to narrating the novelistic world. In other words, he denies the superiority of the narrator as well as finality in terms of the authorial creativity. Here, the playful narrator admits its lack of control over the characters, who take actions on their own, and the narrator is reduced to be a mere witness. He mentions the point when the protagonist takes his own route independent of the narrator/author, "That is certainly

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one explanation of what happened; but I can only report – and I am the most reliable witness – that the idea seemed to me to come clearly from Charles, not myself" (87). The similar role of a narrator is seen in Calvino's novel as well. In *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller,* two courses are found running in the same pace: language and form working together to deconstruct the notion of linearity, transparency, comprehension, interpretation, and the notions of fixities, unity and totality.

Language does not pose fixed meanings, but the piles of suppositions. Each word or a sentence carry suppositions that may be mutually accepted by the receiver and the sender. The same referential problem becomes an inherent problem in postmodern novels. Calvino narrates this problem of suppositions in communication or language delivery in his novels. He states, "Perhaps this is why the author piles suppositions on suppositions in long paragraphs without dialogue, a thick, opaque layer of lead where I may pass unnoticed, disappear" (14). In fact, this lack of trust in language, as it becomes an unreliable source in the postmodern world, is mentioned by Umberto Eco in the beginning of his novel *The Name of the Rose*. He suggests the godlike status of language with absolute assurance is a matter of the past. He ironically narrates the status of language from the context of the postmodern world:

> In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This was beginning with God and the duty of every faithful monk would be to repeat everyday with chanting humility the one never-changing event whose incontrovertible truth can be asserted. But we see now through a glass darkly, and the truth, before it is revealed to all, face to face, we see in fragments (alas, how illegible) in the error of the world, so we must spell out its faithful signals even when they seem obscure to us and as if amalgamated with a will wholly bent on evil (3).

Eco in the novel presents an unusual language play deconstructing the entire process of meaning generation. However, the patterns and approaches of both Eco and Calvino are different. For example, Calvino utilizes the partnership of the reader in this deconstructive process, and Eco carries out his process through semiotic play. Eco's semiotic play is fathomed in the following statements of the narrator, "I have never doubted the truth of signs, Adso; they are the only things man has with which to orient himself in the world. What I did not understand was the relation among signs" (599). Calvino establishes an unusual relationship between the reader and the narrator, in which the narrator seeks the reader's partnership not only in the functioning of the novel but also in all the narratorial devices that are prompted in the novel. The reader becomes one of the characters who also partakes in the collective play endorsed by Calvino in the novel. Every now and then, the narrator calls upon the reader seeking his/her partnership in the building of the novel. In fact, the writer in the functioning and development of the novel directly refers the reader.

Representational problems pertaining to language and form, instead of narrating, simplifying, and presenting things, complicate the entire process of representation. It is not only the language, but also the form that distorted or subverted. There are many instances in the novel during which both language and form are ironized and subverted, or the conventional usage relating to them is questioned. Except the fact that all the writers have different agendas and purposes, major postmodern writers represent the question of representation while questioning the unity in form and the referentiality in language. For example, feminist writers approach language with an altogether different agenda. Traditionally, language is modified/appropriated keeping in view of the centrality of the patriarchal condition of the society. In other words, "the entire official resources of language have long been appropriated by men and have in turn been associated with

them" (Davey 81). As a result, the first tendency available for the feminist writers is to deconstruct the biased stance in language. And hence, "what remains most available to someone who would write as woman are parodies and subversions of official discourse, ungrammatical and non-generic fracturing of it, or the muse's silence to which women have usually been relegated" (Davey 81). Similar practices can be found in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus,* in which ungrammatical sentences can be found as a revolt against the male centered language. For example, the sentence "I won't say things are rosy," says I" (55) suggests a deliberate mistake in the statement. Calvino, on the contrary, deconstructs language in an altogether different way. Indeed, both Calvino and Carter attempt to present the representational or referential problem, but for different causes. Similarities and differences can be identified in both language and form of their fictions.

The closed, continuous, and complete form of a novel is replaced by deviation in form that has either multivalent meanings or no meaning at all. Calvino rejects such unities and completeness or closeness of a novel, and instead, he prefers an open novel in which reader himself becomes a participating character. There is a direct relationship between the narrator and the reader. The direct reference and inclusion of a reader in the mainstream of the novel is carried out in such a way that he guides and keeps on referring to the reader regarding the incidents. The form itself becomes too open to include anything in it. He says to the reader, "To read properly you must take in both the murmuring effect and the effect of the hidden intentions, which you (and I, too) are as yet in no position to perceive" (18). The self-referentiality of the novel ironizes and problematizes the conventional narrative form, i.e. the know-all narrator or the omniscient narrator. The playful narrator of the postmodern novel does not present the external reality as it is, and in fact, he problematizes the entire notion of representation. The narrator point out, "Your

(the reader) attention, as reader, is now completely concentrated on the woman, already for several pages you have been circling around her, I have – no, the author has – been circling around the feminine presence, for several pages you have been expecting this female shadow to take shape the way female shadows take shape on the written page…" (20). He further adds, "You (the reader) surely would want to know more about what she's like, but instead only a few elements surface on the written page, her face remains hidden by the smoke and her hair, you would need to understand beyond the bitter twist of her mouth what there is that isn't bitter and twisted" (20).

It is recognized that Calvino ironizes the omniscient narrative that describes the details of the characters in the novel. The uncertainty in the narration looms over the entire novel. The frequent appearance of the narrator who is ignorant, playful, ironical or in opposition with the writer himself is seen. The uncertainty, in fact, stalls the still, continuous, and sequential narration of the novel. The narrator mentions his uncertainty, "I say; or, rather, it isn't clear whether I really say it or would like to say it or whether the author interprets in this way the half sentence I am muttering" (21).

Calvino ironizes the entire process of writing a novel including the very form of the fiction. The subtle and ironical self-referentiality deconstructs the process of writing. In fact, he posits that there is nothing original in the postmodern world; all that is found have commonalities or already said in some other texts. He literally seems to prove Barthes's point from *The Death of the Author* that "the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (146). Calvino highlights the point of repeatability. Everything that an author says is nothing but a case of repeatability. We have reached in the time where no originality exists; there are only cases of repeatability. He mentions his self-referential points, "In fact, this whole passage reads

like something I have read before" and he further adds, "Nothing: the narration is repeated, identical to the pages you have read!" (25).

It must be noticed that postmodern language differs from the modernist/structuralist views, which confirms the stability of the signified. On the other hand, the postmodern language deconstructs this very instability of the final signified. This postmodern development of language has been advocated by Derrida, who has questioned the stability of the signified offered by Saussure. According to Derrida, sign does not lead to a specific signification, but rather to endless signifieds or in other words, many more signs. This uncertainty and plurality of signs, and the phenomenon of deferral are presented by Ann Smock. He posits:

> The trace of which Derrida writes is not a vestige of an origin that disappeared. What 'trace' means is that there never was an origin to disappear – that there never is any origin at all until belatedly, so to speak, via a deferral. Something non-original – a trace – constitutes it. Thus it must be said that the trace is the origin of the origin. Even though everything hinges on the trace's not being anything original at all, it is necessary to speak of an arche-trace because otherwise the concept of the trace would remain stuck in a classical schema where it means a lingering sign of something else which isn't a trace, but a presence (73).

This suggests that the novelists from all over the world, categorized as postmodern, equally adapt the referential problems. It is worth noting that the feminists, post-colonial novelists, and other writers of the margins explore this linguistic possibility as a weapon to deconstruct the existing metanarratives or the dominant forces of the postmodern society. For example, in *Midnight's Children,* Salman Rushdie presents an unreliable narrator who plays with both the form of fiction and the content of history. Feminist writers like Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood, and Aritha van

Herk deploy postmodernism in their novels to contest the metanarratives such as patriarchy. This spirit of questioning and its subsequent subversiveness of postmodernism allows the postmodern feminist works to narrate their own stories and deconstruct the conventional metanarratives. Hutcheon has rightly mentioned in this regard, "while feminisms and postmodernism have both worked to help us understand the dominant modes of representation at work in our society, feminists have focused on the specifically female subject of representation and have begun to suggest ways of challenging and changing those dominants in both mass culture and high art" (Poetics of Postmodernism 78). She further asserts that, "postmodern parodic and ironic representational strategies have offered feminist artists an effective way of working within and yet challenging dominant patriarchal metanarrative discourses" (Poetics of Postmodernism 79).

It is worth noting that postmodernism does not approve of any metanarrative and can be dangerous for the core ideology of the feminists as it can go against their own grain. But saving this incredulity towards metanarratives, postmodernism provides a lethal weapon to deconstruct all the other metanarratives. The feminists cannot create their own metanarrative. That is why postmodernism is more of an ideological and a theoretical enterprise whereas feminism is a social enterprise. Subsequently, feminist writers employ their politics of feminism using the weaponry of postmodernism. Aritha van Herk, for example, in her *No Fixed Address* employs postmodern narrative strategies such as the mixture of multiple point of views, discontinuous narrative, and an unreliable narrator. In fact, the novel employs the third person narrative in general, but at certain intervals calling them as "notebook on a missing person", she employs a second person narrative with an altogether different line of plot. She directly refers to "you" and narrates, "You see, it is easy to find out about Archane's past, only too easy. She has a record, after all. And if there's anything missing, Lanie will fill in the spaces. She likes nothing better"

(183). Margaret Atwood employs the same postmodern narrative strategies to question not only the patriarchy, but also all the other male-centered structures. In *surfacing* or in *The Handmaid's Tale,* the woman's struggle against the larger and dominant forces of society is narrated.

Frank Davey has commented in this regard that the postmodern narratives of Margaret Atwood express issues pertaining to women. He suggests that, "not simply as woman versus man but as woman versus the ideology of capitalism (*The Edible Woman*), woman versus the mythology of patriarchy (*Power Politics*), woman imbricated into the environment and facing 'environmental abuse' (Surfacing), woman as archetypal victims of totalitarian government (*True Stories* and *The Handmaid's Tale*)" (69). It can be said that postmodern feminism unleashes a larger attack on all the metanarratives through the deconstruction of both language and form. Except that there are differences in the purposes and agendas, all the postmodern works, with reference to the postmodern spirit, fall in the line of subversiveness and plurality. For example, Calvino's narrative falls in line with any postmodern female writer, irrespective of their purposes. The fusion of multiple points of view is found in both Aritha van Herk's *No Fixed Address* and *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller.*

Calvino in his novel *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* explores this representational problems in terms of both language and form. The incapability of language to represent the true picture of the world or final signifieds is noted in the novel. Sometimes language becomes irrelevant, insufficient, or incapable to present things as they are. Rorty has rightly pointed out the incapability of language to represent true signifieds. In his pragmatic philosophy, he has mentioned the problematic relationship between reality and language. He rejects final meaning of language saying that one bit of language corrects another bit of language, and no 'final

vocabulary' is sufficient to convey true reality. He points out that language is usually 'coated' with individual perceptions, and it is not possible to get out of language to judge reality.

Calvino, similarly, explores this linguistic dilemma on several occasions. For instance, the conversation between Professor Uzzi-Tuzii and the Reader in the novel suggest this typicality. Their conversation marks many ellipses and dashes at the end of statements leaving them incomplete. The reader asks the Professor, "Excuse me, it was about some information…We telephoned you… Miss Ludmilla… Is Miss Ludmilla here?" Similarly, the Professor replies, "Are you interested in Cimmerian Literature or –" (50). This inability of language is seen everywhere in the novel. There are many incidents during which the narrator himself narrates this dilemma of referential problem: "There are days when everything seems to be charged with meaning: messages it would be difficult for me to communicate to others, define, translate into words, but which for this very reason appear to me decisive" (55).

The representation of external reality is usually a main concern of a novelist. In the present novel, the narrator uses the descriptive narrative on certain occasion, and on other occasions, he refrains from describing things. This deliberate attempt by the writer questions the descriptive technique as well as the blind trust on language. He contrasts two occasions: one suffused with detailed description and the other left alone for the reader to imagine. This is a subtle hint of the referential problem of language to represent reality as it is. The narrator mentions in one of the stories of the novel, "I convey to him the effort I am making to read between the lines of things the evasive meaning of what is in store for me" (62). Unlike Calvino's subtle references to the referential problems pertaining to language, Donald Barthelme in his *The Dead Father* narrates overtly the problems of language in the contemporary era. He literary deconstructs the sentence

patterns to highlight the utopia of stable signified. This linguistic deconstruction can be seen in one of his excerpts:

> AndI. EndI. Great endifarce teeterteeterteetertottering. Willit urt. I reiterate. Don't be cenacle. Conscientia mille testes. And having made them, where now? what now? Mens agitat molem and I wanted to doitwell, doitwell. Elegantemente. Ohe! jam satis, AndI. Pathetiqularly the bumgrab night and date through all the heures for the good of all. The Father's Day to end all. Andl understand but list, list, let's go back. To the wetbedding. To the dampdream. AndI a oneohsevenyearold boy, just like the rest of them. Pitterpatter. I reiterate&reiterate&reiterate&reiterate, pitter-patter (81).

Representational problems narrated by Calvino and other postmodern writers may have differences in respect of the narratorial play. For example, D M Thomas utilizes an altogether different way to suggest the representational problems. In his novels, endless noting of footnotes is found, which cannot be found in a conventional novel. It is this problem of representation or an ironization of representation that the writers are motivated to narrate in the novel through footnotes. The footnotes provide additional information in the novel. Thomas expresses in *The White Hotel*,"[1] Though for the most part her uncle is the "chef": from the white naval cap which he used to wear jokingly – calling himself the "chief" to her father's "Captain"; and from his huge appetite which had stuck in her armory" (141).

Similar phenomena can be found in the stories of Borges. He narrates the stories through the bibliography and a series of footnotes. In his story "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote", he extensively takes recourse to both footnotes and includes bibliography in the main text of the story. In fact, he builds the story out of these phenomena. In one of the footnotes, he notes, "*I also had the secondary intention of sketching a personal portrait of Pierre Menard. But how

could I dare to compete with the golden pages which, I am told, the Baroness de Bacourt is preparing or with the delicate and punctual pencil of Carolus Hourcade?" (65). In the cases of Calvino, Borges, and D M Thomas, It can be fathomed that postmodern fiction deforms the form in an ironical quest of representation and complicates further with the referential problem of language: the play of signifiers devoid of the final signified.

Language has been ceased to be viewed as a tool to represent reality or one meaning. The final signified is continuously deferred as suggested by Derrida in his concept of differance. Postmodern novels deconstruct the myth of single meaning or final signified. The narrator in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* puts it, "Torn between the necessity to interject glosses on multiple meanings of the text and the awareness that all interpretation is a use of violence and caprice against a text, the professor, when faced by the most complicated passages, could find no better way of aiding comprehension than to read them in the original" (68-9). It can be identified that the writer interweaves both the referential problems of language and formalistic problems, as they are associated with the task of representation.

The form of the novel, unlike any realistic novel, disavows traditional narrative techniques. On the one hand, it assumes metafictional quality by exposing the narrative process to the reader and including him in the process of the construction of the same, and on the other hand, it dwells into the referential problems of language. The reader is alert in the novel to know what he is reading as the narrator or the author directly refers to him. The narrator mentions in the midst of the novel, "The story must also work hard to keep up with us, to report a dialogue constructed on the void, speech by speech. For the story, the bridge is not finished: beneath every word there is nothingness" (83).

The entire process of representation is complicated/disrupted/parodied. The postmodern thought rejects simple and direct representation of either modern or realistic tradition. As a result, the basic tools (both form and language) in novels imbue the quality of uncertainty, incompleteness, or pseudo-completeness in them. The form of a postmodern novel ceases to be reliable in terms of explanation and representation of the events. The events, in fact, assume the quality of unpredictability and breaks away from the natural law of cause and effect. The narrative leaves the reader baffled with uncertainties and questions that are never going to be answered by the writer or narrator. Referring to the contemporary narrative techniques, David Lodge rightly mentions, "While renouncing the mythic parallelism of Joyce's treatment of Dublin, it also ignores or ridicules the conventions of realism adopted by the representative novelists of the 1930s" ("Postmodernist Fiction" 254).

Italo Calvino plays the game of representation by deconstructing the unities and transparency of both the form and language. It is interesting to note that he utilizes all the types of narrative voices instead of sticking to just one. The novel infuses third person narrative, second person narrative and first person narrative. The writer manipulates the narrative voice now and then, and shocks the reader with its fusion. For example, all the novels within the novel portray clearly the first person narrative. Indeed, most of the part of the novel is directly associated with second person narrative in which the narrator directly refers to the reader calling him "You". This "You" can be the reader portrayed as a character within the novel or the external reader who is reading the novel. This uncertainty can never be deciphered as he keeps on referring to both the readers (internal and external). His frequent inclusion of the reader (either internal or external) in the process of writing and narration, and inviting him to participate in the entire novel dilutes the common line of demarcation between the external reader and the narrator.

The conventional fixity in terms of the narrative voice is completely renounced as the narrator continuously switches from one narrative voice to another. In the sixth chapter of the novel, both the second person narrative and the first person narrative are seen running simultaneously. The writer narrates:

> The Sultan sent for me to ask me how many pages I still have to translate in order to finish the book. I realized that in his suspicions of political-conjugal infidelity, the moment he most fears is the drop in tension that will follow the end of the novel, when, before beginning another, his wife will again be attacked by impatience with her condition. He knows the conspirators are waiting for a sign from the Sultana to light the fuse, but she has given orders never to disturb her while she is reading, not even if the palace were about to blow up…. I have my own reasons for fearing that moment, which could mean the loss of my privileges at court…." (124).

Just after the first person narrative, the writer switches over to the second person narrative while referring to the reader:

> Many feelings distress you as you leaf through these letters. The book whose continuation you were already enjoying in anticipation, vicariously through a third party, breaks off again…. Ermes Marana appears to you as a serpent who injects his malice into the paradise of reading…. In the place of the Indian seer who tells all the novels of the world, here is a trap-novel designed by the treacherous translator with beginnings of novels that remain suspended… just as the revolt remains suspended, while the conspirators wait in vain to begin it with their illustrious accomplice, and time weighs motionless on the flat shores of Arabia…. Are you reading or daydreaming?" (125).

The fusion of multiple points of view is a common phenomenon in postmodern fiction. Many postmodern writers display this technique as a move to thwart unity and totality of fiction. Paul Auster's *Invisible* is a novel stuffed with plural aspects. The novel varies from first person narrative, second person narrative, and third person narrative. This suggests that postmodern fiction is prone to loosening or contesting the conventional boundaries of traditional fiction. Along with multiple points of view, multiple narrators in a single novel are also found in postmodern fictions. In *10:01,* Lance Olsen displays multiple narrators with their micro-narratives. The writer deconstructs the phenomenon of realistic representation by subverting the metanarrative of a single narrative with a powerful narrator that can capture and represent reality in its original form. The writer offers multiple micro-narratives that present individual stories with different styles such as surreal, speculative, comic, lyrical, stream-of-consciousness. These multiple narrators with different points of view resist or stall the phenomenon called representation in postmodern fictions.

In *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller,* Calvino thwarts representation differently by employing a playful narrator who distorts the norms of representation. The narrator playfully narrates the descriptions of events and characters; sometimes the characters are left without any description, sometimes they are just given mild reference, sometimes they are playfully mentioned while metafictionally involving the reader, and sometimes the entire description is parodied by providing excess of information just like the realist tradition. The reader is left on the tenterhooks while reading the novel without predicting the future course the narration. It can be construed as showing resistance to interpretation, or playing with or complicating the notion of representation. Such incidents can be found floating all over the novel. One of the incidents is as follows:

Waves of talk from which surface the vocabularies of the most specialized and most exclusive disciplines and schools are poured over this elderly editor, whom at first glance you defined as "a little man, shrunken and bent," but not because he is more of a little man, more shrunken, more bent than so many others, or because the words "little man, shrunken and bent" are part of his way of expressing himself, but because he seems to have come from a world where they still – no: he seems to have emerged from a book where you still encounter – you've got it: he seems to have come from a world in which they read books where you encounter "little man, shrunken and bent" (96).

The narratorial play, just like Calvino, in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is also interesting as the narrator/author switches over his role from a narrator to the character within the novel. Generally, a novel has a narrator who is either a character within the novel and remains the same throughout the novel (in case of the conventional novels) or the author who remains outside the story and directs it in an authoritative way. But in this novel the narrator switches his role between the character within the story and the narrator outside the story. This breaks the conventionality of the narrative form of the novel. The postmodern works flout the conventional forms using different ways. Both Calvino and Fowles are different in terms of their narrative techniques, but their purpose to defy the unity and fixities of the form remains the same.

Both form and language unleash the crusade to stall the interpretive forces within and outside the novel. The formal play and the linguistic play halts the conventional meaning generation process of the novel. In doing so, the novel, at times, goes against its own grain. Objective truth, clear-cut reality, and simple meanings are subverted through the referential problem in language, and it is further complicated by the narrative carnival. The writer suggests it in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, "behind the written page is the void: the world exists only as artifice, pretense,

misunderstanding, falsehood" (239), which leads to the notion that "writing is undecipherable" (242), for it contains only traces that lead to another traces without reaching any firm conclusion.

The novel does not run smoothly by providing causal links to the subsequent chapters or parts. If we go by chapter-by-chapter analysis, we will end up making all the different analysis for all the chapters. The chapters do not have any link with each other except the fact that the reader (both internal and external) is the same for all the chapters. Each chapter has a new set of characters, new setting, new suspense, and an unusual ending, if there is any. The names that recur in the subsequent chapter assume different identities altogether, having no connection with the previous one. For example, Mr. Kauderer (an owner of the estate in Petkwo) of *Outside the town of Malbork* has no relationship with Mr. Kauderer (a meteorologist of Petkwo) of *Leaning from the Steep Slope,* or with Kauderer (a passing reference given by the writer as the Kauderer munitions factories– a possible owner of the factories or a place where munitions factories have been built) of *Without Fear of Wind or Virtigo.* In each story, the name Kauderer has different references. The writer explains a connection between the stories in an incomprehensible way. The muddle or confused errors made by the publishers is found out by the reader, but to no avail, as the justification provided by the publishing body is too complicated or complex to understand; or to put it in another way, it is very unclear or incomplete, and the reader (both internal and external) does not fathom it in its totality.

The search for the complete and meaningful story leads to an altogether different story with the same problem of incompleteness, and the chain of incompleteness continues throughout the novel. The reader gets out of one incomplete story, and in his attempt to find the remaining complete part, he enters into a different incomplete story. The trauma of incompleteness, thus, continues endlessly to lead from one story to another, creating the chain of limitless

incompleteness. The dilemma of the stories within story resists completeness and linearity, and postmodern writers, in their attempt to reject conventional linearity, employs either circular chain of stories within stories, or endless incomplete stories. Carlos Ruiz Zafon, in his *The Shadow of the Wind*, employs similar representational game by narrating stories within stories in a circular way. Just like Calvino, the writer, too, includes the reader in the fictional process of narration. The novel introduces a dilemma of the reader, in which the reader pursues, just like the reader in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, for the novelistic quest to find the final meaning. The writer intrigues the reader in the narrative play that resists easy interpretation and comprehension of the stories. What the reader gets is stories leading to other stories, signs leading to the multitudes of other signs. The quest of Daniel, a reader, explorer, corresponds with the quest of the reader in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*. Both the search for the lost meanings and the threads of the meanings suggest complexities in their journey.

In *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller,* the only commonality in all the stories is the reader (either internal character or the external reader). The writer mocks the traditional continuous narrative, which begins once, ends once, and has fixities in terms of place, characters, narrative voice, themes, and genres. These fixities have been ironized, parodied, mocked, questioned, and subverted by the writer. It is fathomed that the myth of continuous narrative does not hold any ground in the postmodern era.

Postmodern fiction suggests a breach of the continuous narrative with the rejection of simple beginning and conclusive endings. The reader does not know everything about the happenings in the novel. There are many gaps in the narration, and the deliberate gaps in the narration stall any straightforward understanding. Instead of clear-cut and continuous narration, Calvino in the present novel employs narrative gaps, and these gaps are formalistic or linguistic in nature. In

fact, the reader as a character in the novel does not have any clue of what is happing around. These deliberate gaps are created throughout the novel. The narrator says:

> "But why should the OAP hijackers want to get possession of that manuscript? You glance through the papers, seeking an explanation, but you find mostly the bragging of Marana, who gives himself credit for diplomatically arranging the agreement by which Butamatari, having disarmed the commando and got hold of the Flannery manuscript, assures its restitution to the author, asking in exchange that the author commit himself to writing a dynastic novel that will justify the leader's imperial coronation and his aims of annexing the bordering territories" (120).

The narrator himself accepts the narratorial gaps that represent the lack of correct, complete, and total information in terms of the sequence and narration of the events. It is essential to note that the novel appears to be interesting and captivating, but at the same time, it is tricky with regard to its comprehension, interpretation, and the flow of continuation. David Lodge has rightly mentioned in relation to the postmodern fiction while referring to Beckette's *Murphy* and which applies equally to Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*:

> The predictability of the style and development of the action is extremely low, and although it is a very funny book it is not at all easy to read for this reason. It resists reading by refusing to settle into a simply identifiable mode or rhythm, thus imitating, on the level of reading conventions, the resistance of the world of interpretation ("Postmodernist Fiction" 254).

In fact, the entire process of the creation of novel and its publication is questioned/fractured by the writer. He seems to be diminishing the distinction between the genuine creation, translated

work, and plagiarized work. For instance, Marana, a fictional writer, translator, plagiarizer, is shown to be publishing novels under his name, and the novels of which whereabouts is quite uncertain. Flannery, a famous and bestselling author, is exposed with dubious certifications in terms of his publications. He deconstructs the entire notions of originality and authenticity. The narrator mentions the purpose behind the meeting of Marana with Flannery that, "he seems to have gone there to defend the interests of a Belgian writer who had been shamelessly plagiarized by Flannery, Bertrand Vandervelde…." (122). Moreover, the concept of creative writing is subverted by the way of subjecting the process of creative writing to the latest computer technology. Marana says that, "our computers would be capable of completing it (incomplete works of Flannery) easily, programmed as they are to develop all the elements of a text with perfect fidelity to the stylistic and conceptual models of the author" (118).

Calvino completely removes or neglects the idea of pleasurable reading of a traditional continuous novel. The novel follows the suit of abruptness and randomness. The events and settings are abruptly changing in the novel as one reads the novel. It becomes a common phenomenon in postmodern fictions. Postmodern fictions such as *Love in the Time of Cholera*, *Naked Lunch*, *What the Crow Said, The Studhorse Man, The Name of the Rose*, and *City of Dark Magic* thwart the interpretive nature of the fiction by disrupting linearity and continuity of form. In *City of Dark Magic* (2012), Magnus Flyte narrates a complex narrative upsetting all the conventional norms. Similar case is found in *Love in the Time of Cholera*, in which Marquez rejects linearity and continuity in favour of discontinuity and disruption that resists realist interpretive nature and easy reading of the reader. Marquez presents a circular, often repetitive, and complex narrative. Pynchon in his *Gravity's Rainbow*, and *V.* narrates discontinuous threads of multiple stories, wherein it becomes a difficult task for the reader to fathom continuity and

linearity. For instance, in *V.*, the narrator presents a disruptive story with incomplete details, and the writer only creates an inconclusive story with multiple possibilities. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, an apparently simple story of Kurt Vonnegut puzzles the reader with uneven plot and its abruptness. In *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, Calvino negates unity and continuity of the novel. Marana, a fictional writer, says:

> He will break off this translation at any moment of greatest suspense and will start translating another novel, inserting it into the first through some rudimentary expedient; for example, a character in the first novel opens a book and starts reading. The second novel will also break off to yield to a third, which will not proceed very far before opening into a fourth, and so on…. (125).

The dilemma of a reader is equally mentioned by the narrator, "Ermes Marana appears to you as a serpent who injects his malice into the paradise of reading…." (125). The abruptness of events within the same framework of a narration is equally disturbing to the sequence of the story. The narrator in the novel narrates the events in a jumbled sequence. Even before finishing the account of Sultana, a character presented in a letter correspondence by Marana, a new female character appears abruptly. For example, he states, "You look through the correspondence again seeking more recent news of the Sultana…. You see other female figures appear and disappear" (126).

The narratorial gaps reiterate throughout the novel leading a sense of curiosity to its heightened intensity and leave the same unquenched by the way of narrative stasis, which hinders further meanings. For example, the reader is unable to know why certain things happen or is unable to excavate the roots behind the happenings. The narrator mentions the puzzled status of mind when a female reader at the beach is hijacked and put behind bars, "Why is she being forced to undergo as a torment what is her natural condition, reading? And what hidden plan makes the

paths of these characters cross constantly: she, Marana, the mysterious sect that steals manuscripts?" (129). The narrator himself does not know the story in its completeness and hence, it is highly unlikely that the reader can know the same.

It is also important to note that these narratorial gaps happen to resist the irresistible spirit of interpretation. That is why Lodge has mentioned the need to stall interpretation as a key area or agenda of postmodern fiction. He states, " The often – asserted resistance of the world to meaningful interpretation would be a sterile basis for writing if it were not combined with a poignant demonstration of the human obligation to attempt such interpretation, especially by the process of organizing one's memories into narrative form" (255).

The reader gathers many uncertainties and harbours serious doubts in terms of authorship. The entire notion of an attribution of a work is complicated as well as confused. The narrator himself is unsure of the authorship of various works mentioned in the book and leaves these questions hanged permanently. The narrator mentions the traumatic condition of a reader, "You want to ask Cavedagna if he can immediately let you read *In a network of lines that enlace* by the pseudo (or genuine?) Flannery, which might also be the same thing as *Looks down in the gathering shadow* by the genuine (or pseudo?) Vandervelde" (131).

The uncertainty in the novel is found in both the narrator as well as the reader. Seeing this uncertainty in the novel, Fink states, "There is a fundamental unreliability at the heart of the text, which seems to say "yes" to every critic's question and thus negates them all" (93). It seems appropriate to refer to Bakhtinian carnival that destabilizes the existing order. The carnival that is noticed in the text is the narrative carnival or the formalistic carnival that dethrones the coveted realistic and conventional ideology with reference to the creation and production of the novel.

Calvino complicates the relationship between the work of art, its creator, and the concept of authorship or originality. Different writers of the postmodern era have shown the same author-work dilemma in a different way. Kroatsch has equally narrated the same doubts over the authorship. Salat states, "Kroetsch problematizes the concept of the author and authorship in his novels by both using and abusing the idea of the author that obtains in inherited traditions. The author traditionally has been seen as the organizing principle who with his God-like omniscience knows the end before he begins and towards that end he begins ("Sub-versions and Contra-dictions" 29).

The second person narration involves the reader to participate in the creation and narration of the novel. In fact, the narrator unleashes an unending play through the second person narrative that involves the reader (both the reader as a character and the actual reader outside) to participate in the play governed by the narrator. The playfulness, which is infused by the tricky narrative carnival, takes the reader to the reading paradise and disowns him in the well of uncertainty at any moment. Fink rightly mentions about this phenomenon that, "by using the second person pronoun, the author wins the readers' trust and draws them into the discourse, only to defer and finally deny narrative satisfaction by bringing the story to a premature close" (94). Fink further indicates, "The game strategy emerges clearly from these few passages: by creating suspense the author captures our interest, but he keeps deferring the consummation of our curiosity by means of metacommentary, the complicated proliferation of pronouns, and eventually by attesting the story altogether" (97).

Calvino poses both ontological and epistemological questions in the present novel. By questioning the conventional form and negating it entirely, he reinvents an alternative form that is a floating one as it becomes plural and thrives on narrative carnival. In other words, the reader

seeks to comprehend one plot, and is trapped into another one. It is a continuous deferral of plots and one plot leads to another plot without assigning complete meanings to them. Calvino questions the process of meaning generation in the conventional narration.

Employing Derridian deferral, he simply provides an infinite chain of signifiers rather than providing a final signified. Despite providing the promise in the beginning of any plot, he thwarts the meanings by his narratorial as well as linguistic play leading the reader to an infinite stasis where floating signifiers dance indefinitely. Calvino deconstructs the center of authorship, final meaning in terms of completeness, and unity of form. This is how the postmodern spirit deconstructs the world of authorship and, "challenges the authorial authoritarianism and undermines such a proposition by foregrounding the fictionality of the fiction making process through self-referentiality which exposes free play and slippage" (Salat, "Sub-versions and Contra-dictions" 29).

The conventional binary of the world of the author and the world of reader dissolve in the work by paving the way to crisscross the boundaries. The narratorial play of absence and presence in terms of meaning generation involves the reader in it. This game of absence and presence, a linguistic one as proposed by Derrida in the process of endless references that a work can suggest, expresses the idea of absence in the very process. It is this idea of absence, which is responsible for the channelizing of the linguistic process, perpetuates the channel of endless signifiers. The similar dilemma is narrated by the writer, "Ideally, the book would begin by giving the sense of a space occupied by my presence, because all around me there are only inert objects, including the telephone, a space that apparently cannot contain anything but me, isolated in my interior time, and there is the interruption of the continuity of time, the space is no longer

what it was before because it is occupied by the ring, and my presence is no longer what it was before because it is conditioned by the will of this object that is calling" (133).

The uncertainty of language is overtly expressed by the author and is one of the reasons behind refraining from giving complete descriptions that is found in any common novel. The narrator confesses, "I say "should" because I doubt that written words can give even a partial idea of it" (132), while narrating one incident in the chapter *In a Line of Network that Enlace.* The novel posts several contradictions in relation to representation. These contradictions suggest the linguistic deadlocks that hinder the reader in his act of interpretation. In the story *In a Line of Network that Enlace* the narrator posits, "I do not know this Marjorie, I do not know any Marjorie…." (137). The next line uttered by the narrator negates the previous lines: "To tell the truth, here at the university there is a student named Marjorie, Marjorie Stubbs" (138). In addition to this, it is worth mentioning that human consciousness is predestined to interpret things available at the sight. It is this urge or passion that the postmodernist fiction seeks to deconstruct and hence, "the general idea of the world resisting the compulsive attempts of the human consciousness to interpret it, of the human predicament being in some sense 'absurd', does underlie a good deal of postmodernist writing" (Lodge, "Postmodernist Fiction" 255).

The postmodernist narrator usually plays with either 'excess' or 'nothing'. Both are the opposite extremes used for one purpose of stalling or halting interpretation. When there is too much of options or alternatives (excess), the desire for interpretation vanishes. When there is nothing or scanting information available on a particular incident or event, there is hardly any chance of interpretation. In the chapter *In a network of lines that enlace,* the narrator deals with endless options and alternatives; so much so that the reader does not have anything to think about. One of the incidents is as follows:

When the telephone rings in a house near mine, for a moment I wonder if it is ringing in my house – a suspicion that immediately proves unfounded but which still leaves a wake, since it is possible that the call might really be for me and through a wrong number or crossed wires it has gone to my neighbor, and this is all the more possible since in that house there is nobody to answer and the telephone keeps ringing, and then in the irrational logic that ringing never fails to provoke in me, I think: Perhaps it is indeed for me, perhaps my neighbor is at home but does not answer because he knows, perhaps also the person calling knows he is calling a wrong number but does so deliberately to keep me in this state, knowing I cannot answer but know that I should answer (133-4)

In the above paragraph, the excess of information in terms of alternatives and options on a given incident is observed. In this regard, Lodge has rightly stated that:

One equivalent, on the axis of combination, to this excess of substitution, would be the permutation of variables already discussed. But any overloading of the discourse with specificity will have the same effect: by presenting the reader with more details than he can synthesize into a whole, the discourse affirms the resistance to the world to interpretation ("Postmodernist Fiction" 267).

The narrative playfulness follows the reader (internal as well as external) like a ghost haunting him throughout the novel. It captures the reader in the tricks of narrative process involuntarily. And in doing so, an already existing metafictionality diverges into various fragments resulting into metacommentary. The self-consciousness intensifies the playfulness to the next level; nonetheless, it gives the narrator an upper hand, as he becomes the captain of the game and the reader an ordinary player with no option except to follow the commands of the captain. The

metacommentary can be seen when the narrator involuntarily comments upon both the readers (here the male and the female reader within the text). He says:

> What are you like, other reader? It is time for this book in the second person to address itself no longer to a general male you, perhaps brother and double of a hypocrite I, but directly to you who appeared already in the second chapter as Third Person necessary for the novel to be a novel, for something to happen between that male second person and the female Third, for something to take form, develop, or deteriorate according to the phase of human events (141).

Similar kind of playful narrative is found when the narrator justifies the reasons behind not giving the name to the Reader in the text and giving a name to the Third person (a female reader). He narrates:

> This book so far has been careful to leave open to the Reader who is reading the possibility of identifying himself with the Reader who is read: this is why he was not given a name, which would automatically have made him the equivalent of a Third Person, of a character (whereas to you, as Third Person, a name had to be given, Ludmilla), and so he has been kept pronoun, in the abstract condition of pronouns, suitable for any attribute and any action" (141).

This playful narrative and metacommentary intrigues the actual reader and makes him an indispensable character of the novel. In fact, the central hero of the novel is the external reader, and the reader (male reader) inside the text is an extended form of the external reader who simply performs the commands and actions of the narrator while being identified by the reader outside the text.

It used to be considered in the days of structuralism that language has a fixed system of sign, signifier and signified. The discourse has to produce fixed meanings in a fixed narrative form. But the post-structuralist wing rejecting the entire system of meaning generation paves alternative ways for the writers to follow. As a result, the narrative changes into a shaken ground with multiplicity of meanings or devoid of meanings. Franson Manjali has rightly opined on the present scenario dominated by post-structualism:

> The post-structuralist critique of structuralism was directed against two main points of view. Firstly, 'structure' understood in terms of a totalization and closure of content was not acceptable. Meaning is not trapped within a closed totality of discourse and language. The acts of meaning attributable to any specific and situated individuals always exceed this presumed closure. There is no 'code' that permanently fixes the meaning of utterances. Meanings are historically accretive as well as unstable (45).

The fragmented, deconstructed narration and the form in its totality keeps on changing like a moving water in a hilly area. The second person narration is devoted to the male reader of the novel and simultaneously to the reader outside the book, preferably male. However, the narrator disowns this privileged from the male reader at a certain juncture by creating a different "You" in the existing female character Ludmilla.

This shift of narrative point of view provides new angles of vision. It can be found when the narrator says: "You appeared for the first time to the Reader in a bookshop; you took shape, detaching yourself from a wall of shelves, as if the quantity of books made the presence of a young lady Reader necessary" (142). There is a certain claim that has been made by many feminist critics in terms of Calvino's position as favoring the male reader while giving him the center stage and keeping the female reader on the periphery. However, the claim may not be that

adequate as he keeps on shifting the narrative voice, just as it can be seen in the above lines. But it is pertinent to note that the center stage is, indeed, devoted to the male reader within and outside the novel. And within no time he returns back to the male reader openly putting his favor on the male reader. He openly informs the male reader:

> Don't believe that the book is losing sight of you, Reader. The you that was shifted to the Other Reader can, at any sentence, be addressed to you again. You are always possible you. Who would dare sentence you to loss of the you, a catastrophe as terrible as the loss of the I. For the discourse to become a novel, at least two you's are required, distinct and concomitant, which stand out from the crowd of he's, she's, they's (147).

It is recognized that despite giving importance to both the you's, the treatments and preferences are different as the male reader is considered as "distant" and the female reader as "concomitant". It clearly suggests the narrative point of view of the narrator, which is centered on the male reader invoking more feminist attacks that attribute him the label of conservative. However, the claim may be partially withdrawn from the writer, as he has attempted to create separate spaces for both of them. At a certain point in a novel, the writer unites both the reader into one "you". The narrator speaks, "I'm speaking to you two, a fairly unrecognizable tangle under the rumpled sheet" (154).

One of the tendencies of postmodern writers is to associate body with the text or in other words, language with the body; and in its course, both sexuality and textuality intermingle with one another and with the metonymic play their relationship becomes further complicated. In a postmodern novel, "the body has to be the desire of language itself for a body, the need to mere words to be embodied in a text. But the 'body' of a text is not to be found in its physical production alone of paper and glue and ink, but in its mental production of desire for an absent

presence" (Hariharan 60). In Calvino's novel, one can find the text being replaced by the body and turning into an object of reading. It is as though the body is read and not the text when the narrator puts it, "Ludmilla, now you are being read. Your body is being subjected to a systematic reading, through channels of tactile information, visual, olfactory, and not without some intervention of the taste buds" (155).

The juxtaposition of body versus text has been a key aspect of a postmodern text. Diminishing the distinction between high and low art, postmodern fiction chooses all the subjects irrespective of their nature as well as social constraint. In this act, the relevance of the concepts of morality is questioned and the very boundaries (form and content) are subverted in postmodern fictions. The notion of carnivalization of language is already discussed in the third chapter wherein Bakhtinian carnivalesque is studied from the context of postmodern narrative strategies, and the writers like Kroetsch utilize it to confuse the distinction between textuality and sexuality. With the free play of signifiers coupled with the playful narrator, the fiction assumes the quality of uncertainty and multiplicity. For example, Kroetsch, utilizing this free play of signifiers, imposes endless meanings, or rather plays with the words in a way that they generate unusual and unconventional meanings.

The words like "blue" or "morality" express new connotations of sexuality. And at times the words (with too much of linguistic play) turn into a kind of aporia that resists meanings. The free play in the end turns into subversiveness as it resists and dismantles all the conventional meanings and orders that require status quo. Calvino himself suggests in the novel: "But I do not believe totality can be contained in language" (181). While referring to Koran, Calvino points out this uncertainty of language. He indicates that, "He (Abdullah) lost his faith in Allah because he lacked faith in writing, and in himself as an agent of writing" (182).

This uncertainty in terms of the language owing to its free play marks a significant difference between the realist works and the postmodern works. Calvino further mentions the postmodern trauma of language: "It is only through the confining act of writing that the immensity of the unwritten of the nonwritten becomes legible, that is, through the uncertainties of spelling, the occasional lapses, oversights, unchecked leaps of the word and the pen. Otherwise what is outside of us should not insist on communicating through the word: spoken or written: let it send its message by other paths" (183). The free play of the signifiers or the floating signifiers in the language usage that deny the final signified can be seen on several occasions. The phenomenon is identified when Ludmilla while referring to the writer's creativity mentions, "I've always thought that you write the way some animals dig holes or build anthills or make beehives" (190). The statement, though referred to the writer's creativity, can be attributed with multiple meanings as the words connote both positive and negative signals.

This post-structuralist view of language denies fixed meanings of all kinds leading to an environment of floating signifiers. Hence, there are only multitudes of traces left as an outcome of writing. It would be pertinent to quote Derrida's saying, "there is nothing outside the text" when Ludmilla points out the same phenomenon: "The truth of literature consists only in the physicality of the act of writing" (190). Hence, the writer has to equally posit that, "there is no certitude outside falsification" (193) denying the totality of truth emanating from the words or the written texts.

With the free play, Kroetsch carnivalizes language; Calvino, on the other hand, dwindles the distinctions between the text and body by exchanging the roles between them mutually. He narrates the body versus text game:

Lovers' reading of each other's bodies (of that concentrate of mind and body which lovers use to go to bed together) differs from the reading of written pages in that it is not linear. It starts at any point, skips, repeats itself, goes backward, insists, ramifies in simultaneous and divergent messages, converges again, has moments of irritation, turns the page, finds its place, gets lost. A direction can be recognized in it, a route to an end, since it tends toward a climax, and with this end in view it arranges rhythmic phases, metrical scansions, recurrences of motives (156).

The writer puts both the act of sexuality (the act of reading body), and textuality together and shows an unusual juxtaposition. The writer further narrates:

If one wanted to depict the whole thing graphically, every episode, with its climax, would require a three-dimensional model, perhaps four-dimensional, or, rather, no model: every experience is unrepeatable. What makes lovemaking and reading resemble each other most is that within both of them times and spaces open, different from measurable time and space (156).

It is gathered that in the text the act of sexuality and the act of textuality prove to be inseparable in a way that the writer has to portray common resemblance between them in terms of measurement of time and space. It should be noted that both the free play of signifiers with relation to the usage of language and the narratorial play collectively subverts the canons of realistic or modern fiction. Just as language proves to be iconoclastic in terms of meaning generation and representation, form equally plays the part in the act of subversion.

The narratorial play becomes a common tool for the postmodern writers to subvert or stall the metanarrative of the realistic representation of the world. Postmodern writers such as Italo

Calvino, Angela Carter, Robert Kroetsch, Aritha van Herk, D M Thomas and Jeanette Winterson employ this playful narrator who does not either have the all-know power of the realistic narrator or have the power to narrate the stories in an objective and reliable way. In *Written on the Body*, Winterson employs a similar narrator who disrupts the process of narration and subverts the realistic claims with relation to the objective and authentic presentation of the world. At the end of the story, the narrator mentions this playfulness that questions its own reliability: "I can tell by now that you are wondering whether I can be trusted as a narrator." (24).

Subversion in postmodern fiction plays a pivotal role and there is more than one way to carry out the task of the subversion of the metanarratives, and the social and literary canons. It has been discussed in the previous chapters the act of subversion through various postmodern narrative strategies. In the present chapter, the collective play of both narratorial play as a part of formal deformalities or rather formal multiplicities, and language with its free play of signifiers continue to subvert the canons of the past.

The form goes on to question the very authority that gives shape to its construction. As mentioned earlier, the concept of genuine authenticity does not hold any ground. Even the critics like Barthes have already claimed "the death of the author". The text is merely a collection of tissues borrowed from innumerable sources of culture, rather than a genuine or original creativity. In fact, the postmodern fiction deliberately contests the idea of originality by creating fictions through intertextuality and assembling a fiction though the practice of pastiche. Ermes Marana, a fictional writer from the novel, opines clearly in this regards that he, "dreamed of a literature made entirely of apocrypha, of false attributions, of imitations and counterfeits and pastiches" (159).

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The example of intertextuality or the direct reference to the other text can also be seen in the novel. Calvino includes few dialogues directly from Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*. Interestingly, he copies the beginning of the novel: "On an exceptionally hot evening early in July, a young man came out of the garret in which he lodged in S. Place and walked slowly, as though in hesitation towards K. Bridge" (178). The narrator does not hesitate in copying directly from the text creating postmodern intertextuality and subverting the idea of genuine authenticity. Additionally, the idea of copying only the beginning of the novel suggests the notion of the same thing the writer does in the novel, narrating only beginnings and deconstructing the ends or the closure.

There are more than one way for the narrator and the writer to deconstruct the form and the narrative patterns in the novel. As opposed to the notion of giving a fixed cause and a fix consequence, the narrator just presents endless options to the reader. The writer negates the idea of simple and easy comprehension of the form and content. For example, it is mentioned, "You have given me two copies of the same novel!" Then he presents the next option. "Or else: The young woman gets the two manuscripts mixed up. She..." It is followed by next option. "Or else: A gust of wind shuffles the two manuscripts. The reader…" (174-6).

This endless chain of options does not lead to any conclusion, but rather to an endless uncertainty. This is what according to Lodge permutation is: denying of selection and exploring all the possible options. According to him, it is, "a more radical way of defying the obligation to select is to exhaust all the possible combinations in a given field" ("Postmodernist Fiction" 259). In other words, it provides all the alternatives and options instead of the final or fixed answer opposing the tendencies of conventional narratives that tend to direct the plot in a fixed direction. In Pynchon's *V.*, instead of providing single narrative with the clear identity of V, or instead of

revealing the mystery of V, the writer provides multiple options and leaves the mystery unexplained.

Both form and language collectively deconstruct the canons of the past. Calvino does the dual task of installing and then subverting them. The modernist idea of depersonalization is both installed and then subverted collectively by both form and language. In fact, it is the underneath, buried irony in all the steps that subvert the idea of objectivity or depersonalization in this context. He asserts, "I read in a book that the objectivity of thought can be expressed using the "to think" in the impersonal third person: saying not "I think" but "it thinks" as we say "it rains" (176). The idea of replacement of "I" with "it" is suffused with irony that dismantles the notion of depersonalization or objectivity. Indeed, the collective play of language and form deconstructs these past canons. The form and language in a postmodern novel do not cease to negate the closure.

The closure is an essential point that used to be a matter of serious consideration is not accepted by the postmodernists. There are only beginnings or in other words, there is only a surface with a permanent devoid of depth. The search of the hidden meaning or deeper meaning does not find a place in postmodern fiction. The narration suggesting only surface resurfaces every now and then from both the plots of the multiple stories and the self-conscious narrative voice. Silas Flannery in his personal diary mentions, "The romantic fascination produced in the pure state by the first sentences of the first chapter of many novels is soon lost in the continuation of the story: it is the promise of a time of reading that extends before us and can comprise all possible developments" (177).

The form is doubly metafictionalized when the narrator himself narrates the same formal play that he undertakes throughout the novel. He confesses the fact that he writes only beginnings and

leaves the stories inconclusive or endless. He says, "I have had the idea of writing a novel composed only of beginnings of novels. The protagonist could be a Reader who is continually interrupted. The Reader buys the new novel A by the author Z. But it is a defective copy, he can't go beyond beginning…. He returns to the bookshop to have the volume exchanged…." (197-8). In fact, this is the same narrative play that is found throughout the novel. Calvino presents this through the mouth of the fictional writer Silas Flannery. Flannery further indicates, "I could write it all in the second person: you, Reader… I could also introduce a young lady, the Other Reader, and a counterfeiter-translator, and an old writer who keeps a diary like this diary…." (198).

One can never know whether this Flannery represents an alter ego of Calvino, but it can be certainly fathomed that this is a narratorial play that complicates the plot even further. Flannery not only mentions the way the novel has evolved so far, but also reveals the future course of the action yet to be actualized in the novel with relation to the reader's journey to trace 'the Counterfeiter' and the chance meeting with Lotaria (of course, it is not clarified that the mirror image of Lotaria is a real Lotaria or a fake Lotaria).

This narrative carnival coupled with language play demonstrates our inability to claim reality or truth in its totality. The realist writers or to some an extent modernist writers used to claim that reality or the truth can be captured in the written text. For example, the realist writers used to conquer reality and truth by the way of realist narrative techniques, whereas the modernists refrained from the so-called realist techniques, but they continue to do so by the subjectivized narrative techniques, i.e. a stream of consciousness technique. The modernists continuously pursued the search for the final signified. On the other hand, the postmodernist writers renounce the entire project of representation or the idea of realism or the final signified. On the one hand,

postmodern thinkers like Derrida and Rorty have denounced and renounced the entire campaign of realism and the final signified, and on the other hand, the trapping or capturing of reality or truth or final signified in the written text is termed as untenable. The narrator rightly points out that, "there is always something essential that remains outside the written sentence; indeed, the things that the novel does not say are necessarily more numerous than those it does say, and only a special halo around what is written can give the illusion that you are reading also what is unwritten" (203).

In the ninth chapter, during the conversation between Lotaria (Corinna-Gertrude-Sheila-Alfonsina-Ingrid-Alexandra: the real identity is not revealed owing to the fact that neither the narrator nor the Reader knows the real identity; the phenomenon can be attributed to the deconstruction of the myth of the all-know narrator of the realist fiction) and the Reader suggest the binary of the truth and false in an ironical way leading to the chain of falsification, one falsification signifying another falsification without leaving any trace of truth. Corinna (Lotaria?) says, "The counterrevolution and the revolution fight with salvos of falsification: the result is that nobody can be sure what is true and what is false, the political police simulate revolutionary actions and the revolutionaries disguise themselves as policemen" (212). Rather than showing the truths in the novel, the narrator simply attempts to show the chain of falsification.

The resistance to the truth or external reality leads the writer to construct the kind of language that ceases to be meaningful. The narrator says: "The multicolored wires now grind out the dust of dissolved words: the the the, of of of of, from from from from, that that that that, in columns according to their respective frequency. The book has been crumbled, dissolved, can no longer be recomposed, like a sand dune blown away by the wind" (220). The conventional role of a protagonist that is to lead the novel and play a pivotal role in the progress of a novel is

deconstructed. In fact, the central character or the protagonist, the Reader, indulges in various crusades filled with irony and finally, invokes irony in the entire making of the protagonist.

The myth of powerful protagonist does not exist in a postmodern novel. The postmodern protagonist simply turns into an ironical figure. Calvino not only installs the protagonist and gives him a significant role to play, but also subverts him by reducing him to nothing more than a puppet and turning into an ironical figure. He mentions the condition of a protagonist in the following words: "You had flung yourself into the action, filled with adventurous impulses: and then? Your function was quickly reduced to that of one who records situations decided by others, who submits to whims, finds himself involved in events that elude his control. Then what use is your role as protagonist to you?" (218).

In fact, the protagonist of the novel is not the Reader or any other person, but the form or the frame of the novel itself. It is the form of the novel that guides both the Reader and controls the entire system of the novel. The form becomes the central protagonist and takes the charge of the events take place within and outside the novel. Form is both the subject and the object of the novel. With the close analysis of the novel, It is found that all the formal aspects such as the narrative techniques, beginning and end, climax, characterization, descriptions, continuity, and the unity of form are deconstructed and given new definitions, or the void replaces them throughout the novel.

Calvino deconstructs both the beginnings and the ends. There is more than one beginning of the novel, and in some way, there are no ends. The narrative frame of the novel runs on four ways: the story of the both internal as well as external reader; the story of the counterfeiter Marana; the story of Silas Flannery, a fictional author; and ten unfinished novels within the main novel. In other words, within one novel, there are multiple novels and hence, there is more than one plot in

the novel. Throughout the novel, Calvino negates the idea of totality and unity. A chain of unfinished stories is witnessed, which only forms multiple beginnings within the same novel.

The postmodernist writers do not accept the myth of a complete story with final answers. All the ten stories of novels within the novel are presented with unusual ends and almost left incomplete. If the stories are examined one by one, the phenomenon can be seen quite clearly. The story of the first chapter *If on a winter's night a traveler*, which is full of narratorial gaps, leaves the reader gasping for more information. In addition, just as the reader is completely engrossed in the reading, the story abruptly ends. For example, it can never be known what the traveler carried in his bag and his hidden purpose apart from the plan of exchanging it with the other traveller.

The story only reveals the traveller carrying the bag and his agenda of handing it over to the other person. The writer succeeds in creating suspense, but leaves the suspense unrevealed towards the end. In the end, the narrator states, "The express arrives at the top speed. It slows down, stops, erases me from the chief's sight, pulls out again" (24). The reader can only know that the traveler vanishes from the platform. The end represents closure, and this closure with regard to meaning generation or in terms of ending the story with completeness is deconstructed. The ends are given unusual and different treatments in postmodern fictions. Lodge rightly puts it, "Instead of the closed ending of the traditional novel, in which mystery is explained and fortunes are settled, and instead of the open ending, of the modernist novel, 'satisfying but not final' as Conrad said of Henry James, we get the multiple ending, the false ending, the mock ending, the mock ending or parody ending" ("Postmodernist Fiction" 256).

In the present novel, all the types of endings are witnessed except the closed or the open ending. All the novels within the novel generate different beginnings and leaves the stories devoid of ends or with unusual ends. Having finished the first story, the reader enters into the second story

Outside the town of Malbork. It is apparently a simple story in which the narrator is going to be replaced by another character Ponko for the duties in the house, which has lasting and intimate relationship with the narrator. The story does not reveal anything once the replacement is done. Hardly had the story begun properly when it ended inconclusively. The reader is uncertain about the future of the narrator or Ponko in the house.

By deconstructing the ends, the writer suggests the incomprehensibility of life or the impossibility of representing the world through words that have no relation with the externality. Only the chain of endless beginnings (devoid of their ends) continues in the novel. For example, *Leaning from the steep slope*: a personal diary of one week which leads nowhere once the week is over and neither the narrator nor the reader knows about the prisoner who escapes the prison and approaches the narrator, *Without fear of wind or vertigo*: an erotic story set against the backdrop of revolution does not answer all the questions pertaining to the life of the narrator who is charged with the treason in the end, *Looks down in the gathering*: a story of a murder, in which the narrator is caught while disposing off the body, does not lead to any other consequence afterwards, *In a network of lines that enlace*: a story in which a telephone ring follows the narrator like a ghost or a shadow, *In a network of lines that intersect*: a story in which the billionaire narrator gets kidnapped once by his own wife Elfrida leaving plenty of doubts and questions in the end, *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon*: a story of a narrator who indulges in an erotic romance with the wife of the professor and proposes romance to the daughter of the professor, *Around an empty grave*: a magical story that describes the story of a narrator who, as suggested by father, goes to Oquedal to find his mother, and *What story down there awaits its end?*: a story of a narrator who erases everything that surrounds the earth just to

increase the chances of meeting Franziska and meets 'nothingness' in the end, represent either nothingness or inconclusiveness.

The writer presents multiple ends and all the ends are suffused with irony and incomprehensiveness. The idea of fixity and completeness is either parodied or rejected in the novel. Moreover, the plots within plots, novels within novel create a kind of labyrinth that cannot be fathomed. Lodge mentions in this regards, "We shall never be able to unravel the plots of John Fowles's *The Magus* (1966) or Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Le Voyeur* (1955) or Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), for they are labyrinths without exits" ("Postmodernist Fiction" 256). It is essential to note that *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* also falls into the same category as there are only beginnings, and the exits are complicated with the labyrinths of form and language.

Similar example can be found in *Calendar of Regrets* in which Lance Olsen, just as Calvino, present multiple narratives. Twelve narratives, each for one month, are interconnected; and each story of a particular narrative present an independent thread with a different style of genre. The unreliable narrators narrate the stories that are not linear and full of abruptness. The problem of representation is widely expressed by the postmodern writers, and the metanarrative of stable representation with stable narratives is widely subverted by postmodern writers. Olsen, on a similar note of that of Calvino, represents the dilemma of representation in the postmodern era.

Calvino deconstructs both the linguistic closure and narratorial closure, the fixities and unities of which pervade in the modernist and realist novels. It is essential to note that modernist novels, despite following the same conventions as the postmodernists do, exhibit differences in treatment and nature of the spirit. It is implied in the postmodern fiction that, "in place of the well-wrought urn, in other words, postmodernism posits the module of a kaleidoscope wherein there are no

fixies and finite patterns but multiple possibilities" (Salat, "Sub-versions and Contra-dictions" 24). Despite using the same narrative conventions, the modern writers attempt to portray some kind of unity, and hence, "the well-wrought urn" suits to the modernist art which seeks to create unity and totality, and "kaleidoscope" suits well to the postmodern art as it gets rid of the unities and accepts with both hands the multiplicity and celebrates the void created by 'nothingness'.

It is not that all the 'ends' pertaining to the novels within novel show the same point of inconclusiveness. In fact, each end leaves a different mark on the reader. All the ends have their own typicality: a thoughtfulness, curiosity, sheer suspense, and shock. For example, the story of *What story down there awaits its end?* provokes thoughtfulness on 'nothingness' of the world. The narrator puts it, "nothingness is stronger and has occupied the whole earth" (251). It also explores the nothingness of the words, "The world is reduced to a sheet of paper on which nothing can be written except abstract words, as if all concrete nouns were finished; if one could only succeed in writing the word "chair", then it would be possible to write also "spoon", "gravy", "stove", but the stylistic formula of the text prohibits it" (251). It is fathomed that both linguistic incapability as well as formal discontinuities combine to create the world of nothingness vis-a-vis representation.

All the stories bound by the narrative frame revel in multiplicity with regard to linguistic capability (multiple signifiers) and narrative possibilities (negation of fixities). It is not that the Reader as a central character plays a part only outside those stories. Despite having first person narrative in all the stories within the novel, the narrator, for example, in some stories directly refer to the Reader making the complicated plot of the novel even further complicated. In the first story *If on a winter's night a traveler,* the narrator of the novel within novel refers to the Reader, "You surely would want to know more about what she's like, but instead only a few

elements surface on the written page, her face remains hidden by the smoke and her hair, you would need to understand beyond the bitter twist of her mouth what there is that isn't bitter and twisted" (20).

 Even the end of the novel is not the simple one. The novel ends with the marriage of the male reader with the female reader Ludmilla. The seemingly happy end is not a conventional ending; it is a parodied, or a pseudo end, which defies, ironizes and parodies the conventional end of the realist novel. The novel deconstructs the myth of the ending that posits that "the ultimate meaning to which all stories refer has two faces: the continuity of life, the inevitability of death" (259). It is sudden and without any justification, and that is why it leads us into believing that the end is a pseudo or mock end. The same phenomenon of toying with the closure or deconstructing the end is seen in multiple postmodern works.

Angela Carter in her book *Nights at the Circus* presents a parody of an end, wherein the narrator itself mocks the finality of the end. In fact, even after narrating the entire story, the narrator questions the credibility of the narration and questions the reliability of the written text as well as the narratorial intentions. It can be found in the following lines:

> Fevvers, only the one question… why did yoy go to such lengths, once upon a time, to convince me you were the "only fully-feathered intacta in the history of the world"?

> She began to laugh.

> 'I fooled you, then!' she said. 'Gawd, I fooled you!'

> She laughed so much the bed shook.

'You mustn't believe what you write in the papers!' she assured him, stuttering and hiccupping with mirth. 'To think I fooled you!' (294).

She further affirms towards the end that whatever she has said is a lie. She says, "To think I really fooled you! She marveled. 'It just goes to show there's nothing like confidence'" (295). In the statements, it is seen that it is not only the journalist who is fooled by the narrator but also the readers who have read the novel from the beginning to the end. Similar kinds of ends are common when the narrator just proves to be unreliable and presents an end, which is either a fake end or a pseudo end. When the postmodern novels are perused, the certainty of uncertainty in terms of the end and closure is found in almost all of them. Kroetsch does not present logical endings in his novels. With reference to Kroetsch's novels, Salat states that, "his narratives do not posit resolutions of the narrative quests within a prophetic vision of closure" ("Sub-versions and Contra-dictions" 27). He further mentions that, "he (Kroetsch) provides no definitive predictions or logical endings and thus repudiates the humanist/modernist notions of logicality, coherence and closure" ("Sub-versions and Contra-dictions" 27).

The same problem with the end can be found in *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* which offers multiple endings. Defying the conventional ideology of the form, the writer opts to provide three endings to the same story and asks the reader to choose one from them. The novel portrays a conventional love triangle between Charles as a protagonist, Sarah, a woman with modern perspective and Ernestina, a woman with Victorian ideology. The writer presents all the three options: the conventional end by putting together Charles with Ernestina; the end may not be the ideal one but suitable for any conventional writer to go ahead with as it appeals to the popular taste, the second end pertaining to the protagonist's desire to marry Sarah is placed in which Sarah's individual freedom is sacrificed and proves to be an another conventional end, and the

third end comes with the option of keeping both Charles and Sarah separated and it allows both the characters to lead their individual pursuits against the backdrop of existential philosophy. The readers are given the final authority to choose anyone as per their individual tastes. This shows the postmodern play with the end, and a similar kind of play is seen in Calvino's novel in which the end is literally denied by presenting only beginnings of various stories.

Apart from the contention of the closure, the form of the novel is never a stable one. The novel never assumes a single form in terms of its unity and totality. For example, the novel during the various phases of sub-novels and on regular intervals changes its nature and genre. It is this hybridity consisting of multiple genres such as a detective story, a magic realist story, a fantasy, a diary, letters, a satire, an erotic story, a romance, and a quest set the novel apart from the conventional novel. In fact, it installs all the various forms and deconstructs them simultaneously. The idea of narrating a story with one genre, i.e., having a single genre at a time is rejected in favor of creating a culture of hybridity wherein the novel assumes the quality of multiple genres simultaneously.

In the chapter *Around an empty grave,* the writer narrates the glimpse of magic realism. Defying the binaries of life and death – a common phenomenon in a magic realist text – Faustino Higueras, who had been killed long back and buried in the grave, comes to the town to fight against Nacho Zamora during the final scene. The story ends without any further details, but it gives sufficient details to assign magic realist qualities to it. During the sixth chapter, the novel turns into the letters written by Ermes Marana, his correspondence with Cavedagna. In the eighth chapter, the novel becomes a diary written by the fictional writer Silas Flannery. *What story down there awaits its end?* is a stark satire on various things: the end of the story, human existence and its pursuance for the futile things, and the world at large which turns into

nothingness towards the so-called end of the story. *On a carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon* is an erotic story where an erotic relationship between the narrator and the wife of the professor is narrated. Erotism has been shown quite often in the novel; the story *Without fear of wind or vertigo* narrates similar kind of erotic scenes with an uninhibited approach. In one of the scenes it can be seen: "There are two serpents whose heads Irina grasps with her hands, and they react to her grasp, intensifying their own aptitude for rectilinear penetration, while she was insisting, on the contrary, that the maximum of controlled power should correspond to a reptile pliability bending to overtake her in impossible contortions" (89).

The narrator equally presents the bodily relationship of the Reader with both the female readers (Ludmilla and Lotaria?). In fact, body and text have been juxtaposed quite often – as discussed earlier – taking the route to erotism in the end. From the point of view of formal carnival, the fusion of the various genres in the single novel seeks our attention and makes the novel unpredictable and uncertain. The reader encounters a thriller story in *Look down in the gathering shadow* in which the murder of Jojo is eerily narrated, and in the end, it shocks the reader with its unpredictability. On certain occasions, the novel becomes a detective or a spy story too. The very first chapter *If on a winter's night a traveler* is a detective novel. The tenth chapter becomes a story of a secret agent in which none other than the reader himself plays the role of a secret agent to carry out official functions in exchange for his freedom from prison. With this hybridity, which includes multiple genres, it achieves a status of a true carnival festival of multiple genres colliding, mixing, opposing, and yet creating a postmodern fusion. Multiple genres and a postmodern hybridity becomes a common phenomenon in major postmodern fictions. Postmodern hybridity becomes a vehicle to deconstruct the metanarrative of unity in genre. It allows the postmodern writers to question and subvert the boundaries between various genres

and sub-genres. In *The Shadow of the Wind*, Carlos Ruiz Zafon presents a similar narrative quest that creates a postmodern hybridity and transgresses the boundaries in various genres. The novel ceases to be a single genre and assumes many genres simultaneously such as suspense fiction, thriller, and magic realistic fiction. In *Calendar of Regrets*, Olsen presents multiple genres and creates a hybrid culture in the novel, in which the writer fuses the thriller story, mystery, fantasy, mythical story, and an erotic story. Along with multiple genres, the narratorial play rejects the stable notions regarding the representation. Donald Barthelme in his *The Dead Father* narrates goes into an extreme by rejecting the ideas of cohesive plot. In the story, the writer does not follow the conventional plot structure and narrates the novel through a series of revelations, unrelated stories, anecdotes, dialogues, dreamlike snapshots of reality, and personal rendering of the characters' impressions or recordings. Along with the formal carnival, the writer, too, deconstructs language by presenting deconstructed sentences and rejecting the stability in the meaning generation system.

The conventional boundaries are, "questioned and contested in postmodern discourse through deliberate genre-blurring" (Salat, "Sub-versions and Contra-dictions" 31). The postmodern narrative, in addition to the blurring of several genres by creating a mixture or a fusion, subverts individual genres by questioning its unity and authenticity. For example, Calvino not only creates fusions, but also subverts and deconstructs the genres. The novel transforms as a detective novel or a diary or an erotic story and none of the genres holds true ground in the fiction.

In fact, the genre of detective novel, just as used by Calvino is an apt tool for the postmodernist writers as the form suggests the quest of truth, which the writers seek to deconstruct. Umberto Eco uses the form of a detective novel in *The Name of the Rose* and ends up being an anti-

detective novel. It is rightly mentioned with reference to the novel that "in *The Name of the Rose*, Eco uses the form of detective fiction to deconstruct, disrupt and undermine the rationality of the models of conjecture conventionally provided by the form" (Cheek and Gough 304). In *City of Dark Magic,* Flyte narrates a story that does not fit into any single genre. The postmodern novel assumes multiple genres simultaneously and resists to be categorized into a single genre. Just like Calvino's novel, *City of Dark Magic*, too, assumes the form of historical fiction, spy fiction, magic realist fiction, and romantic fiction simultaneously. The conventional narrative framework does not fit into postmodern fictions. Postmodern writers like Flyte, Eco, Pynchon, and Calvino toy the conventional narrative frame by flouting its norms.

The postmodern novel questions the credibility of reason with which the detective attempts to search the truth; and the failure of the detective is synonymous with the failure of rationality and its inadequateness in the postmodern society. Auster's *The City of Glass,* a detective genre, portrays the character of the private investigator Quinn, who in search of the truth of the case goes insane. Auster shows the insufficiency of language and reason as adequate tools for the epistemological or ontological quests, and in doing so, the narrator flouts the norms of the detective genre. Calvino, on the other hand, gives up the quest for the truth even before it gets a proper shape and denies the existence of such truths to be found out by the writers. He goes on to question the form of the detective fiction and its vehicles such as rationality and its ally, language.

Calvino questions the authenticity and credibility of these genres as well. A similar case can be found in numerous postmodern fictions where same narrative techniques have been employed. In the case of *The Studhorse Man,* a similar technique is found as the writer questions the very foundations of biography on which the novel rely. He, "deliberately uses and abuses the

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conventions of biography in his writings to subvert notions of objectivity, veracity and reliability associated with the form" of biography ("Sub-versions and Contra-dictions" 31).   In Paul Auster's *Invisible*, along with the multiple points of view, the novel breaks away from the conventional form of novel; it becomes an essay, a letter, a biography, a poem, or a non-fiction art. For example, the smooth going novel suddenly becomes a poem at a certain point:

I love the jubilance of springtime

When leaves and flowers burgeon forth,

And I exult in the mirth of bird songs

Resounding through the woods; (26).

Towards the end, the novel also turns into a pseudo-autobiography of the narrator and then, turns into Cecile Juin's diary. The postmodern fiction suggests that there are no fixed boundaries attached to fiction. D M Thomas's *The White Hotel* begins as a collage of letters fused together in order. It turns into a long narrative poem, which runs into several pages before turning into a third person narrative fiction. In fact, the switching from a novel to a collage of letters and vice versa continues in the novel. The few stanzas of the narrative poem full of amorous scenes are as follows:

I opened up my dress, and my ache shot

a gush out even before his mouth had closed

upon my nipple, and I let the old

kind priest who dined with us take out the other,

the guests were gazing with a kind of wonder,

but smilingly, as if to say, you must,

for nothing in the white hotel but love

is offered at a price we can afford,

the chef stood beaming in the open door.

The milk was too much for two men, the chef

came through and held a glass under my breast,

draining it off he said that it was good, (22-3)

One of the reasons behind this postmodern deconstruction of the form is to negate the forces of rationality and metanarrative. Postmodernism always seeks to deconstruct the rationality in one way or the other. This negation of rationality, thus, leads to discontinuous narrative, blurring of the various sub-genres of fiction, making the fusion of multiple genres, and non-linear representation. These are indicative of the postmodern negation of the supremacy of rationality and its hegemony in the postmodern world.

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