

**AN ANALYSIS OF POSTMODERN NARRATIVE
STRATEGIES WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO MILAN
KUNDERA'S, THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING
AND THE BOOK OF LAUGHTER AND FORGETTING**

by

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**submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

THEORY OF LITERATURE

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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SEPTEMBER 1996

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to place on record my gratitude to the following people and institutions without whose assistance my dissertation would not have been possible:

- Professor Ina Gräbe, my supervisor, who offered me excellent supervision and was willing to give my dissertation patient scrutiny;
 - My parents Mr and Mrs H.R. Orie;
 - My husband, Vishnu Patchay, for his support;
 - Mrs B. Alladeen, for her patient typing;
 - Mrs Mary-Louise Peires for her proof-reading;
 - Unisa, for the merit award I received during the 1993 and 1994 academic years;
- and
- Unitra for the financial assistance that I was awarded.

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation focuses on an analysis of postmodern narrative strategies in Milan Kundera's The Unbearable Lightness of Being (ULB) and The Book of Laughter and Forgetting (BLF). By analysing the postmodern ab/use of narrative strategies, I argue that postmodern fiction marks a decided shift from both classical realism and modernism.

My dissertation has predominantly been motivated through my contention that postmodern fiction is not elitist as it has been perceived to be. Rather, I suggest that postmodern fiction ab/uses narrative strategies to deconstruct the ontological boundaries between the political and private and fiction and 'fact'. Consequently, postmodern fiction interrogates the contrived intelligibility of History. A further argument that I raise is that postmodern fiction through its (re)appropriation, subversion and use of parodic structures creates narrative space for the Other.

In order not to canonize Kundera's texts, I situate both ULB and BLF as 'nodes' within a diffuse network of intertextual discourse. My analyses of the postmodern narrative strategies in ULB and BLF, attempt to interrogate the diffuse 'nature' of postmodern fiction which resists both authoritative analysis and closure.

In exploring the relationship between recuperation and postmodern narrative strategies in ULB and BLF and other works and/or texts

of fiction, I argue that postmodern fiction does not revel in its narrativity, it constitutes, instead, a political strategy.

KEY WORDS

postmodernism; historiographic-metafiction; modernism; classic-realism; manipulation; ontological; subversion; (re)appropriation; transgression; parodic.

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to initiate this dissertation, placing the term **POSTMODERNISM** within a context is essential. The attempt to contextualize the term is undertaken with the full realization that **POSTMODERNISM** by virtue of the paradoxes and controversies that surround it, is almost impossible to define. Nonetheless, I undertake the task to provide a background to my own dissertation; it also becomes a means to emphasize the focus of my dissertation.

According to Rice and Waugh (eds. 1989:307):

Postmodernism is a 'mood' expressed theoretically across a diverse range of theoretical discourses ... involving a focus on the collapse of grand narratives into local incommensurable language games or 'little narratives' ... Absolute systems of knowledge give way to contingencies and ironies (where) aesthetic fictionality displaces philosophical certainty.

Postmodern thought (and by implication postmodern fiction) has been widely influenced by the writings of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean Francoise Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard. Foucault's works have made a concerted effort to resist totalizing forms of thought that lay claim to account for all aspects of human experience and/or existence. As a result of negating totality, Foucault focuses attention on subaltern groups who have been

marginalized through their exclusion from mainstream and (primarily) occidental forms of representation. The Other may be perceived to be constructed in diametrical opposition to the Self as Subject. In oppressed communities, the relationship between the Self and Other is not viewed in terms of reciprocity. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (eds. 1989:103) argue,

... the participants are frozen into a hierarchical relationship in which the oppressed (Other) is locked into a position by the assumed moral superiority of the dominant group (Self). In order to maintain authority over the Other in a colonial situation, imperial discourse strives to delineate the Other as radically different from the Self, yet at the same time it must maintain sufficient identity with the Other to valorize control over it.

It is (perhaps, ironically) this exclusion that has both constructed the Other, and simultaneously urged resistance against Occidental forms of representation.

Within fiction, 'Otherness' is expressed in the (re) claiming of narrative space. According to Waugh (1992:6) Foucault's interest in transgression, 'the other of reason (desire, body, madness, multiplicity, micropolitics) and his critique of theories which claim transcendence, (...) has had a powerful influence on postmodern thought.'

Lyotard in The Postmodern Condition (1979), is closely associated with postmodern thought. His text provides a critique of totalization and his concentration on the demise of the grand

narrative has had widespread implications for society, at large, and more specifically for fiction and history where 'surface phenomena can no longer be explained as the manifestations of deeper underlying truths' (Rice and Waugh, 1989:308).

Postmodern fictions, further (ab)use and ironize the awareness that a text is no longer the product of a single origin, with a single transparent meaning which is transmitted like a message from God to the Reader. Instead, a fictive text is diffuse and is (merely) a node within a network. This is revealed through the wealth of inter-textuality that postmodern fiction (self-consciously) reflects. This leads to the awareness that no text of fiction is hermetically sealed; instead, all texts participate within the plurality of discourses. This is reflected in Roland Barthes' essay, 'The Death of the Author' (1977:142). Barthes' contention is essentially that:

The text is a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original blend and clash ... (the text) has no other origin than language itself.

Waugh (1992) contends that a substantial proportion of Postmodern theory imposes the feeling of a Dark Age of nihilistic destruction. I would disagree; rather than toll some nihilistic doom, postmodern theory (and fiction) has in its negation of the mainstream rationalism of Enlightenment created an awareness of groups marginalized by the Enlightenment's emphasis on Reason, and rather than portend nihilism, postmodernism has opened up the

field of signification. Perhaps, the only aspects that a reader may take for granted in postmodernism are those paradoxical aspects that have come to characterize postmodernism generally, and fiction specifically: RANDOMNESS, PARODY, PASTICHE, DECANONIZATION, HYBRIDIZATION, DEPTHLESSNESS AND CONSTRUCTIVISM.

Further, the dismantling of western metaphysics has had far reaching consequences for the 'TRUTH'. This has led to the re-definition of the 'nature' of TRUTH and has created opportunities for fiction to deconstruct ontological boundaries between what is perceived to be the truth (historically) and fiction. In fiction, [Milan Kundera's, The Unbearable Lightness of Being (1984) and The Book of Laughter and Forgetting (1980); Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children (1981); and Toni Morrison's, Beloved (1988)] that seeks to question the manner in which the grand narrative of History has totalized specific incidents, while papering over the cracks, the idea of Truth takes on a sinister turn. Leitch (1983:145) quotes Foucault in this regard:

The various rules and practices of exclusion designate, systematically who may speak, what may be spoken and how it may be said ... what is reasonable and what not ... (and so) collude to deny the material existence of discourse itself.

Postmodern texts like Kundera's, Rushdie's and Morrison's militate against sole possession of discourse ; further, by militating against and transgressing 'master' discourses, such texts undermine the skewed (mis)representation of modes of history.

This dissertation attempts to map out (narrative) space for Milan Kundera's, The Unbearable Lightness of Being and The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, (henceforth, ULB and BLF, respectively) within the diffuse discourse of the postmodern. By analysing the use of postmodern narrative strategies in both these texts and by considering other postmodern texts in relation to Kundera's, I attempt to avoid the pitfall of straitjacketing Kundera. This also allows me the opportunity to provide an intertextual analysis of Kundera's texts and to foreground their space within the network of discourse(s).

While this dissertation is primarily concerned with analysing postmodern narrative strategies in fiction, it also highlights the paradoxes and controversies that surround the term POSTMODERNISM. Perhaps, the most controversial for fiction has been to ask if postmodern fiction does indeed constitute a radical break with realism and modernism or whether there are points of (common) contact that the three broad periods of fiction share.

In the course of this dissertation, I provide analyses of both realism and modernism in relation to the analyses I provide for postmodernism.

The point of departure in my dissertation is that, essentially, CLASSIC REALISM may be described as 'telos-bound' in its desire to achieve closure. This closure is enhanced largely through a chronological structure that seeks essentially to unmask the true

state of events; this is coupled with a desire to overcome and/or explain any elements that may be mysterious. The desire for closure is finally signalled in the pairing off of an (ultimately) educated hero and heroine who have overcome numerous obstacles and are therefore deserving of their love and the reader's admiration. Such fiction is bent on uncovering misapprehensions and 'sealing the unit'. As Jefferson (1980:89) comments:

The pattern is so endemic to fiction that it has almost become a built-in convention of the novel, namely from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century.

Hence, the reader is told the story of an adventure; postmodernism subverts this notion by providing, instead, the adventure of the (writing of the) story.

By signalling closure which propels the story forward, classic realism also emphasizes a sense of cohesion. The artist as originator (auteur) knows all and is bent on telling all to the reader. Realism also informs its mode of readership by pushing contradictions to the margins; those elements which cannot be dealt with, are effectively marginalized. Perhaps, my argument has tended towards highlighting the general trends in classical realism and I do concede that there are examples of realist texts that differ from such 'patterns' but (as I do argue) even a (classic realist) work like the diverse Wuthering Heights (Emily Bronte, 1978) ultimately works towards closure as it reaches a point where the telling is conveniently closed. This is

significantly effected by 'othering' Heathcliff literally to the margins, especially during the latter phase of the novel. In this regard Burton ((ed) 1989:64), uses Machery's contention that such marginalization fulfills the classic realist purpose of the 'fictional resolution of ideological contradictions'.

It is, arguably, the weakness of transparency and unified intelligibility that classic realism came to be associated with, that paved the way for MODERNISM. Essentially, the movement emphasized a negation of the tyranny of plot and rather than uphold their fiction as 'a window on the world', modernists emphasized aspects of interior monologue and stream of consciousness. Further, by attempting to fracture chronology and the continuity of character, external aspects of the old stable ego became increasingly unhinged. As Jeremy Hawthorne maintains of modernism:

What we see (in modernism) is 'the tide on the turn'; a writer beginning to question the 'dogmas of realism' and to search for alternatives: alternatives to the well-made plot, the rounded and life-like character, the knowable world wholly accessible to reasoned and rational enquiry.

(1992:52)

While modernism did have a profound effect on destabilizing and challenging the certitudes presented in classic realism, it did however, seek stability in the work of art. Consequently, while modernist artists (Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad and D. H. Lawrence) sought to break away from the 'tyranny of plot', and while their works do foreground their own artistic 'reality',

it is also undisputed that increasingly the work of fiction came to be seen as a beacon of unity amidst the inchoate uncertainty of the world outside. The most disconcerting aspect of modernist fiction may be seen in its inability to deal with the 'outside world'. This is articulated most widely in the modernist avoidance of the 'nightmare of history'.

Further, while modernist fiction does fragment, I would argue that the work of fiction is ultimately held together, even unified by the skilful use of images and leitmotif. While modernist works do admit to the lack of logic in the world outside, the work of art offers its own logic and can be seen in this context as its own epiphany, or moment of sacred artistic togetherness. This is most 'eloquently' seen in Virginia Woolf's To The Lighthouse (1977) and Saul Bellow's Herzog (1978) both of which utilize the inchoate of the outside world to work towards unity for the character(s) and the work of fiction. David Lodge in The Modes of Modern Writing (1977:43) argues that,

modern fiction ... is experimental or innovatory in form, displaying marked deviations from pre-existing modes of discourse ... the structure of external 'objective' events essential to traditional narrative art is diminished in scope or scale, or presented very selectively and obliquely, or is almost completely dissolved, in order to make room for introspection, analysis, reflection and reverie.

Lodge (ibid:226), further, concurs with my foregoing arguments that while modernism may distort and/or rupture, it does

ultimately cohere and a semblance of unity is provided for the reader.

Postmodernism, does to an extent, constitute a radical break with both classic realism and modernism. When it does maintain contact with realism and modernism, it is essentially to provide parodic commentary or, (especially in the case of modernism) to further destabilize and fragment the artistic unity of modernism. However, rather than hold the work together by the use of unifying images and motif, postmodernism deliberately flaunts fragmentation, inter-textuality and self-reflexivity. The reader, therefore, is not in a position to necessarily unify the text. Since postmodernism indulges in transgressing ontological boundaries, the reader as co-producer of the text is,

... someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted: The Death of the Author constitutes the birth of the reader.

(Barthes, 1977:147)

Consequently, postmodern texts overtly signal the death of the author. In contrast, realism is overtly Authorative, in the sense that the author has the metaphoric status of God and therefore tells the reader in this omniscient capacity. While modernist authors are not as evident as authors in realism, the (modernist) author does maintain control over his/her artistic universe. Postmodernism, however, by signalling and celebrating the birth of the reader, effectively tolls the death of the

author. The shift is also seen in the postmodern refusal to shut out 'the outside'. Rather, by negating the Grand Narrative, postmodern fictions admit into the diegetic world, the 'little stories'. Consequently, the Grand Narratives of both fiction and history are 'reduced' to,

... a plurality of islands of discourse arising out of the institutionally produced language games we bring to bear on it.

(Rice and Waugh, 1989:307)

An overt foregrounding of 'a plurality of islands of discourse' is seen in the postmodern 'espousal' of intertextuality. As I argue in the first chapter of my study, intertextuality subverts the authorial stance that classic realism posits and the subtly, ambiguous stance of authorial control that modernism insinuates. Postmodern fiction, consequently, marks a decisive shift from fathering the work to placing the text within a network of discourse(s). This is compounded through the postmodern interrogation of the origin. In postmodern fiction, this has translated into aporia with regard to authorship. In his essay, 'From Work to Text', Barthes draws an integral distinction between the work and the text. He argues that:

The work (as opposed to the Text) is caught up in a process of filiation ... the author is reputed the father and owner of his work: literary science therefore teaches respect for the manuscript and the author's declared intentions ... as for the text it reads without the inscription of the Father.

(Barthes, 1977:155)

Barthes, further, contends that the work may be seen in terms of an organism which grows through expansion which is simultaneously both biological and rhetorical while the metaphor for the text is the network. The text is 'held' in language, unlike the work.

By situating the text within a network, it is afforded a pluralism, which the work lacks, because '(the work) closes on the signified' (ibid.). The pluralism of the postmodern text is also emphasised through intertextuality. This compounds the diffuseness of the postmodern and allows the text to cross ontological boundaries, since it is no longer contained by traditional definitions of genre. In addition to questioning and subverting authority, intertextuality is also utilized to question the conception of genres as sealed units. Hence, both ULB and BLE openly utilize intertextual material from history, poetry, art, drama, philosophy, psychology and dream. As I argue in the first chapter of this study, the utilization of intertextuality not only destabilizes the 'world' of fiction, it also signals a concerted effort to question and transgress hierarchical structures which, in various forms of discursive practice, have subsumed the representation of marginalized groups.

Intertextuality, through the dissemination that it effects, also compounds the hybridity that the postmodern flaunts and lends a further dimension to the concept of recycling old 'materials' within new contexts.

In this respect, an intriguing, overt example of intertextuality is offered by Wide Sargasso Sea (Jean Rhys, 1969), which shifts the power of Jane Eyre (Charlotte Brönte, 1977 [1847]). In its shifting of power, Wide Sargasso Sea suggests that the 'madwoman' locked in Rochester's attic in Thornfield Hall, may not be as 'mad' as Rochester has made her out to be. By taking the reader back to the Caribbean Islands in Wide Sargasso Sea, it becomes evident that Annette Cosway is the victim of Rochester's insensitivity, and his Eurocentric cynicism towards the Caribbean generally and the 'Creole' in Annette specifically. Wide Sargasso Sea, by providing an intertextual writing / reading of Jane Eyre wrests power from the centre in a bid to question both representation and authority. Wide Sargasso Sea, while providing an overt example of the ways in which the centre and the margin are no longer hermetically sealed, also allows the Other to speak.

Postmodern texts that utilize intertextual references to specifically historical contexts seek to interrogate historical representation, and to question the ways in which history has totalized and marginalized specific groups of people and their (historical) perspectives. Such texts do not revel in their narrativity, instead interrogative narrative re-presentation constitutes both a historical and political act.

In this instance therefore, the use of inter-textuality has a dual purpose. It does not only question and subvert authority but also questions the fabulation and authority of history

itself. As Brian McHale, somewhat cryptically, contends:

In postmodernist revisionist historical fiction, history and fiction exchange places, history becoming fictional and fiction becoming 'true' history and the real world seems to get lost in the shuffle. But of course this is precisely the question postmodern fiction is designed to raise: real compared to what?
(1987:96)

I return to these notions with specific reference to ULB and BLF in the first chapter of my study.

A narrative technique which may also be linked to the postmodern subversion of authority is self-reflexivity which lays bare the creation of the fictional text. This stance is radically different from classic realism which seeks to create the illusion of mimetically adequate representation; it also differs from the modernist 'project' to effect control even though authority is (only) superficially usurped. In this context, McHale (1987:199) concurs when he maintains that:

The modernists sought to remove the traces of their presence from the surface of their writing, and to this end exploited or developed various forms of ostensibly 'narratorless' texts ... Paradoxically, the more they sought to efface themselves, the more they made their presence conspicuous.

As I argue in various contexts in this study, works like To The Lighthouse (Virginia Woolf) and Herzog (Saul Bellow) aim for

autonomy through authorial insinuation and the use of unified imagery and leitmotif.

The postmodern text effaces authority differently, rather than seducing the reader into believing in the illusion of mimesis, postmodern fiction self-consciously lays bare its own status as fiction. I do not wish to intimate that postmodern texts do not create illusions. They do. However, the illusions they create, work towards unhinging the reader rather than allowing for recuperation (as Realism and Modernism do). When readers are seduced they are themselves 'placed' within the discursive network of plurality and self-reflexivity. I return to the notion of readers and the effects of self-reflexivity in the final chapter of my study, in which I also offer extended examples of the seduction of the reader.

Self-reflexivity may thus be seen as a potent form of destabilizing ontological certainty and, therefore, extends the game with the reader. By commenting on its own status as fiction, self-reflexivity is also harnessed to the notion of 'infinite regress' within the postmodern.

The negation of a 'totalizing vision' is also seen in the postmodern inscription of fragmentation. Postmodern fiction, rather than recounting in chronological sequence, worries its material. As I argue in the first two chapters of this dissertation, by denying the teleological, postmodern fiction simultaneously questions and parodies the contrived telos of

history.

The fragmentation of postmodern fiction is also echoed in the ways in which characters and narrators are fragmented. For example in Midnight's Children, (henceforth, MC), Saleem Sinai, first-person narrator and character testifies to his fragmentation at various levels in the text. I would consequently, argue that the splinters of fragmentation are the only certitudes that postmodern fiction affords its readers. I return to the notion of fragmentation of both narrators and characters in the latter stages of this study.

In their 'quest' to resist the lure of rigid binary oppositions and through the dismantling of Western metaphysics, postmodern fiction utilizes hybrid forms. Further, through the inscription of their own ontological uncertainty, and through their skilful, (often) devious manipulation of textuality, such fiction negates being rivetted to a signified.

My study is initiated through the Chapter on **Postmodernism and History**. My decision to use this as my starting point is motivated by my stance throughout this dissertation that through its wrangling with the past, postmodern fiction destabilizes the 'smoothness' of contrived intelligibility. The chapter also allows me to situate the dissertation within the very network of plural discourse, I argue for throughout my dissertation. The most salient motivation, perhaps, resides in my arguments regarding the ability of such fiction to deconstruct the

boundaries between fiction and 'history'. In doing so, my study argues, postmodernism subverts the Eurocentricism of a 'world History' where the (so-called) Third World appears as an unassailable excess.

My second chapter, **Postmodern Time**, follows the first, because it relativizes the teleological mastery of History. In this chapter, I attempt to analyse the ways in which postmodern fiction through its overt destabilization of linear time, allows the histories of the Other to surface through acts of writing, telling and re-telling. By allowing the chapters to follow each other, I heighten the tension within my own study and 'textualize' the very contradictions I foreground throughout this dissertation.

My third chapter is **The Postmodern Character**, followed by **Postmodern Narrators** which constitutes my fourth chapter. These two chapters together with chapter two [**Postmodern Time**], allow me to provide an overarching analysis of the postmodern narrative strategies pertinent to Kundera's ULB and BLF. In the course of my analysis, I have drawn from realist and modernist works and from postmodern texts that I perceive to be illuminating to my analyses of Kundera. Such a technique is two-fold. It simultaneously allows me to situate ULB and BLF within a system of intertextuality and to negate any attempt at the canonization of Kundera's fiction.

My final chapter, **Postmodernism and the Reader**, offers

perspectives into the ways in which the status of the reader in postmodern fiction has dramatically altered. The shift for the reader has entailed a movement from being a consumer to becoming a co-producer in the world of fiction. My motivation to use this as my final chapter may be seen in my awareness that postmodern fiction impacts 'directly' on (historically 'concrete') readers. After having provided an analysis of narrative strategies in ULB and BLF, I seek to trace the 'repercussions' that such fiction has on readers. In this context, the positioning of this chapter reinforces my thesis.

How do readers react when challenged by the diffuseness and self-conscious narrative strategies of postmodern fiction that deliberately seduce them and resist any closure? Perhaps, some of these 'solutions', reminiscent of the postmodern 'mood', reverberate beyond this dissertation...

CHAPTER ONE

POSTMODERNISM AND HISTORY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

With the crumbling of the Grand Metanarrative, the status of history as the mode of Discourse has been called into question. Postmodernism questions the way in which history has so conveniently signalled intelligibility and closure at the risk of effacing marginal groups.

In this context, Foucault argues that:

In every society, the production of discourse is controlled, organized, redistributed by a number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its materiality.

(Young, (ed), 1981:49)

This chapter is initiated through an overview of intertextuality. I hereby wish to explode the myth of original authorship and to link this to my overarching stance, throughout this dissertation, that the postmodern fictional text has fluid ontological boundaries. This chapter also argues that intertextuality is utilized for its subversion of hierarchical structures and the

tension that it induces within the world of fiction. I also use intertextuality to argue for the ways through which postmodern fiction deconstructs the binarity between history and fiction.

Since the postmodern text has fluid boundaries, my chapter argues that by drawing a point of contact between history and fiction, certain postmodern texts, like Salman Rushdie's, MC, ULB and BLF, question the legitimacy of the way in which history has come to be chronicled. By deconstructing the ontological boundaries of the fictional world and by creating a diffuse hybridization of intertextuality, mise-en-abyme, fragmented narrators who testify to their own loss of memory and the subversion of chronology, the certitude of history is questioned. The flux in the postmodern diegetic world is in stark contrast to the 'factual', chronologically, narrated world of history.

Frequently, pertinent questions that are raised are:

Whose History?

Whose World?

It is obvious that those who control discourse, seek to situate themselves as central in the history of their times. Those who are powerless are silenced, or mutated in the world of history: they either have no story to tell or their versions are peripheral. Postmodernism, however, by admitting pluralist discourses into its world subverts the chronological, mastery of history. In doing so it admits into its world the Other who (as it transpires) does have

a voice and a story to tell.

By harnessing the contradiction between the ability to tell and an incursion on speech (hence, powerlessness in discourse), Kundera recalls in both ULB and BLF the history of Czechoslovakia that was deliberately silenced and 'turned into poetry' for the outside world. The metaphor of silence is prevalent throughout both the texts.

Further, such postmodern texts by problematizing reference through parody, lies and elements of fantasy question those historiographers who believe that 'the representation of historical events is unproblematic (and) rests (merely) on the assumption ... that language is a perfectly transparent medium of representation' (White, 1978:130).

Most importantly, perhaps, the admission of the historical into the world of fiction, negates the postmodern impression as elitist. By literally creating space for the Other to speak, postmodernist fiction negates elitism and reveals that it is prepared to engage with the political unlike modernism that avoided 'the nightmare of history'. Postmodernism attempts to subsume the difference between 'inclusion/exclusion; inside/outside and the opposition of reason and madness (which are) effaced.' (Young (ed), 1981:48).

1.2 INTERTEXTUALITY

The term intertextuality may be traced to Julia Kristeva's reading of Bakhtin's notion of dialogism in her 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' (1967). The term has since been used by various theorists like Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Michael Riffaterre. The foregrounding of intertextuality may be seen to collectively explode the myth of autonomy and originality. Jonathan Culler, in this respect, cites Kristeva's comment that,

[whatever the semantic context of a text, its condition as a signifying practice presupposes the existence of other discourses ... every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses. (1992:104).

Intertextuality becomes in the hands of postmodern writers a powerful tool to subvert hierarchical structures that seek to marginalize and silence groups of people who are outside the discourse(s) of power. The use of intertextuality emphasizes the notion that texts are not hermetically sealed; they are instead situated within a network of discourse. In this regard, Worton and Still (eds. 1990:1) argue that,

... the theory of intertextuality insists that a text cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole and so does not function as a closed system.

This position is further given credence by Barthes' assertion that

intertextuality is 'a mirage of citations (which are) likely to prove evasive and insubstantial as soon as one attempts to grasp it' (cited in Culler, 1992:102).

That intertextuality should be evasive lends itself to postmodern fiction in the way in which it negates authority and origin, while emphasizing textual productivity. Within this context, intertextuality has a double focus. While it draws attention to the importance of prior texts, it simultaneously draws us towards considering prior texts as contributions to codes which render possible the various consequences of signification. According to Culler (1992:103):

Intertextuality thus becomes less of a name for a work's relation to particular texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture: the relationship between a text and the various languages or signifying practices of a culture and its relation to those texts which articulate the possibilities of that culture.

However, possibility is not always permissibility. As I argue later in this chapter, this is specifically shown in the numerous mechanisms that have been utilized to subsume the cultures of the Other within dominant modes of representation.

Intertextuality is also 'complicit' with postmodern fiction because it generates textual tension between belief both in original and

originating integrity and in the possibility of (re) integration and an awareness of the infinite deferral and dissemination of meaning (Worton and Still, eds. 1990:11). By utilizing and textualizing the diegetic elements with the elements of intertextuality, postmodern fiction similarly situates itself within an infinite network of deferral and dissemination of meaning.

In the late 1960s and 1970s deconstructive theorists came to perceive intertextuality as a means to question meaning and truth. Intertextuality is seen to subvert context which may be regarded as the custodian of 'regulated practice of interpretation or evaluation, it functions to curtail both textual dissemination and interpretive free play' (Leitch, 1983:161). The contrast between context and intertextuality is most obvious in their (almost) diametric opposition: where context binds and closes, intertextuality offers a 'liberating determinism' (Ibid).

Postmodern fiction, particularly what Hutcheon (1992) has come to term historiographic metafiction, is also pervaded by an atmosphere of overt sexuality and inconsistent, sometimes hysterical laughter that appears to exist within a 'lawless' vacuum. As I argue with specific reference to ULB and BLF, this is compounded through the non-causal 'logic' of dreams that persistently refer to death and sex. According to Worton and Still (1990:12), both Kristeva and Bakhtin have seen the serious side to the carnivalesque elements

that intertextuality engenders in its 'revolutionary refusal of existing hierarchies, and of social and political codes'.

Both ULB and BLF contain inter-textual references to, inter alia, works by Goethe, Mann, Kafka, Freud, Kant and Leclerc. Such intertextuality emphasises that the postmodern text is a synthesis that incorporates poetry, essays, reports, reflections, dream sequences and discussions. The intention is to reveal that the world is not as unified and self-contained as authors of realist texts have tried to portray. Postmodernism rather than create the illusion of unity, effectively displays contradictions and lack of resolutions. In this respect, Hutcheon (1988:192) uses Zavardadeh's observation to lend her argument more weight:

In contrast to the scattered and baffling contradictory reality ... the preceding eras of human history, notwithstanding disruptions, evaluational crises, and upheavals occasioned by natural and social disasters, enjoyed a cohering system of belief rooted in their integrative conceptual frame of reference and vision of reality.

Since intertextuality undoes the essence or origin of authorship, the author-text relationship is, therefore, replaced by the reader-text relationship which replaces authority. Rather than autonomy, intertextuality inscribes plurality and textual productivity. According to Hutcheon (1988:127) such opening up of the boundaries of the text confirms Edward Said's 'parallel textuality' and also

lends credence to Foucault's notion that:

The frontiers of a book are never clear cut: beyond the title of the first line and the last full stop ... it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences, it is a node within a network.

(ibid)

1.3 POSTMODERNISM AND HISTORY

Postmodern texts that borrow intertexts from both history and literature and whose concerns echo historical issues may be referred to as historiographic metafiction. Postmodern texts of this nature challenge the notion that the postmodern is apolitical and elitist. It further challenges the (early) Formalist belief that art should be separated from the world. The postmodern is, instead, what Foucault's terms 'art within the archive'. This archive has a dual face: historical and literary (See Hutcheon, 1988:125).

Such texts borrow from both history and literature to blur the boundaries between history and fiction and in so doing accomplish the means of questioning HISTORY and its claim to telling THE TRUTH. At any given time, post-structuralism has shown that the verifiable truth does not exist - postmodernism defers the truth and encourages multiplicity. Certain postmodern texts deliberately subvert any notion of the truth by encouraging lies that parade as

truth, characters and/or narrators who are uncertain of their own identities and narrators who either deliberately or unwittingly mislead their readers. Such techniques emphasize that history involves the 'translation from knowing to telling', it is this translation which becomes the obsession of postmodernism. Inherent in such 'knowledge' is 'whose history?'. It is obvious that it is the strongest versions of history that ultimately survive. Those versions of history that belong to the weak, underprivileged and marginalized are silenced or deliberately omitted for ideological purposes. As Rushdie so succinctly in Shame maintains:

History is a natural selection. Mutant versions of the past struggle for dominance; new species of fact arise, and old Saurian truths go to wall ... only mutations of the strong survive. The weak, the defeated, the anonymous leave few marks ... History loves only those who dominate her : it is a relationship of mutual enslavement.
(quoted in Hutcheon, 1988:120)

Since history is a natural selection and since the strongest versions do survive, can the history we know be trusted as the truth? Further, history is ultimately totalized, and narrativized. It is, therefore, pertinent to ask whose history has survived and on what basis it claims to be the TRUTH. Hutcheon (1988:108) refers to the following key passage from an early essay by Barthes (1967) to show that the realist notions of the 'truth' of history have to be contested:

... the nineteenth century gave birth to both the realist novel and narrative history - both genres are comparable in that they share a desire to select, construct and render self-sufficient and closed a narrative world that would be representational and still separate from experience and the historical process. Today history and fiction share a need to contest these very assumptions.

It is such selection, convenient closure and claims to the truth that postmodern fiction militates against.

The totalised features of history are hinted at in the opening sections of ULB:

If the French Revolution were to recur eternally, French historians would not be so proud of Robespierre ... the bloody ... Revolution has turned into mere words. Theories and discussions, have become lighter than feathers, frightening no-one.

(Kundera, 1984:4)

This is, further, compounded by the impersonal nature of wars, events, in short, history:

Several members of my family perished in Hitler's concentration camps. But what were their deaths compared with the memories of a lost period in my life. Sometimes legends make reality and become more important than facts.

(Ibid.)

This notion is also explored in Rushdie's MC where the subject is directly involved in history with his chant:

Soo ché, Saru ché!

Danda lé ké maru ché!

(Rushdie, 1981:192)

[How are you - I am well! - I'll take a stick and thrash you to hell!]

With this childish chant, Saleem Sinai, 'becomes directly responsible for triggering off the violence which ends with the partition of the state of Bombay ... (he) was on the winning side' (Rushdie, 1981:192).

Significantly, the fragmented history of Saleem's life is metaphorically extended to the fragmentation of Post-Independent India. He comes to see the perforated sheet, through which his grandfather, Dr Aziz, treated and then finally fell in love with his grandmother, as a metaphor for both his life and the history of post-independent India. The sheet,

... (dooms) my mother to love a man in segments, and condemned me to see my own life - its meanings, its structures, in fragments also, so that by the time I understood it, it was far too late.

(Rushdie, 1981:107)

It is the perforated nature of the sheet that is responsible for the holes in his parent's relationship, in his life, his religion and ultimately the history of post-independent India. How much of what we read is to be believed? The notion that history does 'push facts' in order to create a facade is echoed in various contexts in the postmodern. The fragmented nature of the subjects' life is turned into the all-knowing unity of history. Some acts of writing (history) have been so bent upon recuperating causality, plot and closure that they have not been done in good faith.

1.3.1 ALTERNATIVE 'WORLDS'

The drawing of the subject into history is significant in that it seeks to militate against the unified closure that history parades as. In MC the relationship between history and subject is initiated at birth. The midnight's children are,

only partially the off-spring of
their parents - the children of
midnight were also the children of
the time : fathered you understand
by history.

It can happen, especially in a
country that is itself a dream.

(ibid.)

The invocation of the supernatural world is important because it militates against the facts that history claims to be based on. It also opens up 'alternative realities' which are the anathema of politicians.

MC, according to Alexander (1990:139), invokes the world of the supernatural and the Arabian Nights through the play on the number 1001 which is,

... the number of the night, of magic, of alternative realities - a number beloved of poets and detested by politicians, for whom all alternative versions of the world are threats.

Hence, through the novel, what is conjured is an alternative history of India. It is through the midnight's children that such a strategy is dwelt upon. We are informed that the children who are significantly 'tied to history' are,

... endowed with features, talents or faculties that can only be described as miraculous. It was as though ... history, arriving at a point of the highest significance and promise, had chosen to sow in that instant, the seeds of a future which would genuinely differ from anything the world had seen up to that time.

(Rushdie, 1981:1)

Significantly, the government (by ironically using Saleem as a tracker) tracks down the midnight's children and sterilizes them. Their sterilization seeks to end the possibility of alterantive realities. At another level, their sterilization deconstructs the boundaries between the fictive and the historical; it recalls Indira Gandhi's controversial Act of sterilization during her premiership. Rushdie, subsequently, apologized to her (she is

referred to as 'The Widow' in the text).

Certainly, the reader does in the course of reading MC come to 'taste the pickles of history'. However, the pickles of history are not exactly faithful to the 'truth'. History is as perforated as the sheet through which Aziz first views his wife (the sheet comes to be used as an extended metaphor in the text). To compound issues, the narrator (Saleem Sinai) is himself dubious about the 'exact course of events' and quite openly admits that his narrative does err,

... errors are possible, and overstatements ... I am racing the cracks but I remain conscious that errors have already been made, and that as my decay accelerates (my writing speed is having trouble keeping up), the risk of unreliability grows ... what actually happened is less important than what the author can manage to persuade his audience to believe.

(Rushdie, 1981:270)

So the narrator's admission that he is unreliable parodies the historical in which what is 'true' is not necessarily important; it is what is made accessible, and how ideologically viable it is, that is 'transmitted'.

Similarly, in BLF, alternative realities are evoked through the evocation of the world of horoscopes. Kundera's namesake, 'Milan Kundera the astrologer' writes 'several thousand horoscopes' during

the years of his ex-communication to balance the 'incredible amount of undigested political claptrap, glorifying (their) brothers the Russians'. The world of astrology is therefore, seen as a way to violate the purity of Marxist ideology. The irony is that the excommunicated, pseudo-nuclear physicist under a pseudonym writes pseudo-horoscopes for the editor-in-chief of the magazines. The astrologer writes a carefully detailed, ten-page horoscope for the editor-in-chief in consultation with R. because,

... a horoscope can greatly influence, even dictate the way people act. It can recommend they do certain things, warn them against others, and bring them to their knees by hinting at future disasters.

(Kundera, 1980:60)

The effect on the editor-in-chief who owes his post entirely to the Russians and who had spent half his life taking Marxism - Leninism courses is incredible:

He yelled less. He had begun to have qualms about his hardheadedness - his horoscope warned against it ... his eyes would show signs of sadness, the sadness of a man who has come to realize that the stars hold nothing but suffering in store for him.

(ibid:61)

Hence, the ontological boundaries of text and 'world' are crossed and other notions of truth (plurality) are invoked to demonstrate the malleable, shifting nature of truth. This parodies the

prescriptive closure of historiography.

1.3.2 THE USE OF PARODIC STRUCTURES

In ULB and BLF, the sense of truth that history claims to give is deliberately parodied by the lack of origin and TRUTH that both texts display. Conventional notions of relationships, affairs, life-styles are subverted and substituted by music - like constructions that are elliptical, that waver and ultimately deny the solid presence of anything. By employing the use of time - manipulations, dreams, poetic constructions and multiple relationships, both texts transcend conventional notions of representing meaning and, therefore, significantly evade reductionism.

What texts of this nature actually do is to present a challenge to both history and (realist) fiction - both of which have managed, despite contradictions, to be reductionist and to produce 'plots' and subjects who are consistent and integrated. As Belsey (1980:57) says:

(metafictional texts) challenge the ... representation of the world of consistent subjects who offer an origin of meaning and action and also its presentation of a reader position from which the text is easily understandable.

Yet, it is quite clear that a non-contradictory world does not

exist.

The notion of contradictions is explored through the lack of unitariness of the characters in both ULB and BLF. As I argue in the latter stages of this study, instead of surmounting all their problems and attaining a semblance of moral development that, in Realism, would ensure the proverbial happy ending, such characters show that they are not really responsible for their own happiness. Their fates are instead, shaped by social and historical forces. This is effectively shown in Tomas' fall from surgeon to window cleaner.

Hutcheon (1988:113) argues against Lukacs' comments that the historical novel should 'enact the historical processes by presenting a microcosm which generalizes and concentrates'. According to Lukacs, the protagonist of such fiction must therefore be representative of a synthesis of 'all humanly and socially essentially determinants'. Such a notion of essential synthesis and representativity is outdated. Certainly, when history has been largely written by the colonizer, for the colonized, the need to question the essential representation of history is obvious.

Postmodern protagonists are not essential representations. If they are, they become 'representative' from the margins. Fragmented, devious, uncertain, they are ex-centric characters who 'speak' from peripheral positions. Such characters, the postmodern shows, also

court victims through lying or deliberately misrepresenting the truth.

For example Sarah Woodruff, (in FLW) lies about her status as the fallen woman, lures Charles and then deviously and systematically seduces him, as I argue (extensively) in the final chapter of this study. Hence, the narratorial questions:

'Who is Sarah?

Out of what shadows does she come?'

while they attempt to create a sense of enigma around Sarah, can actually be undone by the more 'sensitive' reader. Sarah Woodruff is actually a character of devious intent. Cast as an outcast, it is she who seduces and 'loses' the Victorian Age (referred to by the narrator earlier on). Part of the 'shadow' around her is also the 'shadow play' with the reader from whom final disclosure is cleverly withheld. Significantly, her facade is compounded by an equally devious narrator.

Similarly, lying for the characters' own ends and sexual needs occurs both in ULB and BLF. Tomas is a liar about his sexual exploits. While he claims to ease the burden of his 'sexploits' for Tereza, nothing stands in the way of his pleasuring himself. The term that the narrator uses to describe him: 'epic lover', is, in this sense, a euphemism. This begs the question: Has history itself not become a euphemism?

Similarly, Tamina sleeps with Hugo against her better judgement and the final section of ULB is overpowered by lies, misunderstandings and 'sexual copulations' which produce sterility. Such a strategy may be seen, within a larger context: It parodies the lies, misunderstandings and devious ideologies that history is a result of. The sterility of sexual copulation (emphasized through the awareness that very few sexual acts actually lead to pregnancy) may be seen to echo the sterility of historical 'knowledge', perhaps?

Another important aspect about texts like Kundera's, is that history and its representation is explored through 'working with' the links between history and fiction. Such links have recently become increasingly important for marginalized groups of people. In this regard Alexander (1990:126) comments:

As nations struggle into independence from a colonial past (they) are only now exploring through the novel, ways of expressing national identity, writers are still involved in the creation of national myths.

Through using characters who are themselves uncertain, memory of the past is shown to be shaky, certainly not the 'poetry' liberal humanists have made it out to be.

1.4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION AND HISTORY.

But what is the relationship between historiographic metafiction and history?

Obviously, they are not of the same genre, but such fiction endorses a form of contact between history and fiction by questioning their 'authenticity' and 'originality'. Hence, the 'contact' accomplishes a two-fold purpose: it simultaneously challenges the 'originality' of authority and also questions the sources and re-presentation of history. Such a stance prevents both history and fiction from being 'sealed', all-knowing units. Both are seen as provisional constructs.

Despite accusations that postmodernism is apolitical and ahistorical, it cannot be overlooked that the postmodern does make a significant effort to question the manner in which history (as we know it) has come to be chronicled and why this should be so. Veyne (quoted in Hutcheon, 1988:106) maintains that,

[history and fiction have always been notoriously porous genres ... at various times, both have included in their elastic boundaries such forms as the travel tale and various versions of what we now call sociology. It is therefore not unusual that they should share common ground.]

However, the postmodern, by using conventional notions of history: closure, reductionism and totalization, opens up a challenge to history and fiction.

Hutcheon maintains that Coetzee's Foe addresses the question of the relation of 'story and history - writing to truth and exclusion' (1988:107). Foe reveals that story - tellers do indeed silence, exclude and focus upon those issues they themselves are certain of. Interestingly, Foe makes it clear to Susan that her story of the truth will not be attractive, that in order to be attractive it should be embroidered 'with a dash of colour'.

A shocked Susan refuses, saying that if she cannot tell the truth of the story, then it is purposeless. And so she begins her own story:

'The Female Castaway. Being a True
Account of a Year spent on a Desert
Island.'

Ironically, she, herself, forgets the harshness of the environment she faced, and the bitterness she felt. Her subsequent story, as it progresses, romanticizes the island and her cast-away status. Hence, from her initial impression that it was 'a great rocky hill with a flat top ... dotted with drab bushes ... (giving) off a noisome stench' (Coetzee, 1986:7), she later wishes to remember it as:

Perhaps I should have written more about the pleasure I took in walking barefoot in the cool sand of the compound, more about the birds ... of the many varieties.

(Coetzee, 1986:51)

She embroiders and ultimately presents a tale 'with a dash of colour' - a tale that seeks to restore the "substance of truth". Similarly, Magda in Coetzee's, In the Heart of the Country (1977) claims that,

'... my story is my story even if it is a dull black blind stupid miserable story, ignorant of its meaning and of all its many untapped happy variants . I am I. Character is fate. History is God. Pique, pique, pique.

(Coetzee, 1980:5)

Yet, in the course of the novel, she emboiders, dreams, creates. Is history God? Which history? Whose history?

Certainly, at the time Foe was written, history is not God. What is questioned is who writes history and how true that history is. While Barton may see no need not to tell the truth, what does emerge is that 'truth' is variable and malleable. The text, further, highlights the notion of exclusion, and how people in history itself have been excluded such that renditions of history vary depending on who is writing. By using Barton as the heroine of the text, Foe also raises other related issues. What has happened to women in History? How 'sincere' has their representation been?

Hutcheon (1988) also remarks that Foe does teasingly raise the issue that Robinson Crusoe is not really written by Defoe but that the information was garnered from a subsequently silenced Susan Barton.

In this instance, Hutcheon (1988:109) and indeed the texts I discuss, challenge David Hackett Fischel's comment that:

To the truth of art, external reality is irrelevant. Art creates its own reality, within which truth and perfection of beauty is the refinement of itself. History is very different. It is an empirical search for external truths, and for the best, most complete, and most profound external truths, in a maximal corresponding relationship with the absolute reality of the past events.

1.4.1 ABSENCE, PARTIAL REPRESENTATION AND EXCLUSION

Clear-cut notions of history and art are no longer tenable. Certainly, when various subaltern groups wish to voice their marginalization, the need to challenge the 'absolute truth' of any history is evident. What postmodern novels do suggest is that there are truths only in plural.

Kundera in both ULB and BLF explores the history of Czechoslovakia and the way it has been represented. The texts also seek, in a sense, to reclaim the history that was lost to his people upon the

Russian Invasion of 1968. Hence by manipulating the porous nature of both history and fiction, both texts explore (fictionally) what does have (skewed?) historical documentation.

In this context of absence, exclusions and partial representations, the, 'all that remains of Clementis is the cap on Gottwald's head', becomes the parodic representation of the absences of the Czechoslovakian history and the inability to forget the past before it is recuperated and reclaimed. Consequently, the reader encounters the representation, at different levels, of a history misrepresented and, the 'struggle of memory against forgetting' (Kundera, 1980:3).

It becomes evident that a people/country without its history is reduced to a blur as is Tamina:

There she sits on a raft looking back ... only back. The sum total is no more than the sum of what she sees behind her. And as her past begins to shrink, disappear, fall apart, Tamina begins shrinking and blurring.

(Kundera, 1980:3)

A country / people without memory is a people without a past and with no hope for a future. In this case the 'real documented' events of the Russian Invasion are used to comment on the status of the Czechoslovakian people. In this respect, it becomes highly significant that one hundred and forty-five Russian historians were dismissed from Universities, and research institutes:

The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then ... manufacture a new culture, invent a new history ... the nation will begin to forget what it was.

(Kundera, 1980:159)

A fictional contextualization of such 'a myriad-voiced silence resounding from all over the country' is explored through the fictional silence of the narrator's father, who during the last ten years of his life loses his power of speech:

At first he simply had trouble recalling certain words ... in the end he had only a handful left ... finally he was incapable of a single word ... and all his attempts at saying anything more substantial, resulted in one of the last sentences he could articulate, 'That's strange'.

(Kundera, 1980:160)

Such silences echo the numerous silences in history. It also echoes the postmodern concern, to explore these silences and, perhaps, to posit other notions of 'truth'. This works towards breaking down the totalized structures that have come to represent history. Had the historians not been silenced what would the history of Czechoslovakia have read like? Had they not been silenced, perhaps, the past would not have been turned to poetry??

This highlights the notion that ultimately there are no immutable necessities. In this context, Hutcheon (1988:164) refers to what Foucault terms 'the true historical sense', the one that, 'confirms

our existence, among countless lost events without a landmark or a point of reference'.

In BLF, (part 6 : 'The Angels'), the forgetting that a specific ideological perspective of history presents is dealt with. By using the intertext of Kafka's Prague, a significant comment on Prague is made:

Prague in (Kafka's) novels is a city
without memory. It has even
forgotten its name.
(Kundera, 1980:157)

Certainly the time in Kafka's novel that has lost 'all continuity ... (and) no longer knows anything, nor remembers anything ... in nameless cities with nameless streets or streets with names different from the ones they had yesterday!' (Ibid), becomes a point of exploration in both ULB and BLF.

In BLF we are given an insight into the way in which the history of the people of Czechoslovakia has been lobotomized. Through mentioning the simple: the numerous name changes a single street has undergone - the wider comment is made that:

... there are all kinds of ghosts
prowling these confused streets ...
they are the ghosts of monuments
demolished by the Czech Reformation
... the Austrian Counterreformation
... the Czech Republic ... the
Communists ... Lenin statues have
sprouted up by the thousands. They

grow like weeds on the ruin ... like
 melancholy flowers of forgetting.
 (Kundera, 1980:158)

The 'section' concludes with the poignantly ironic, 'the seventh president of my country is known as the president of forgetting ... the Russians brought him into power in 1969' (!) (ibid).

Further, as a result of the monumental destruction of its history, 'the Czech Nation can glimpse its own death at close range' (ibid).

In an interview with Phillip Roth, Kundera comments, with regard to ULB, that the text is about totalitarianism 'which deprives people of memory and thus retools them as a nation of children'. Consequently, Tamina's sojourn on the island may be read as an illumination of this. Cast away on the island she ultimately realizes that the initial 'freedom' is replaced by pain. Her memory of the past induces and compounds her pain. According to Kundera, totalitarianism encourages '... cult(s), indifference to the past and mistrust of thought. In the midst of a relentlessly juvenile society, an adult equipped with (a) memory and irony feels like Tamina on the island of children' (Interview with Roth, 1980:233). The reason for Tamina's misfortune is not that the children are bad, but that she does not belong to their world:

No one makes a fuss about calves
 slaughtered in slaughterhouses.
 Calves stand outside human law (as)
 Tamina stands outside the children's
 law.

(Kundera, 1980:185)

The history of the Czech people is similarly explored in ULB and developed through the impact on the lives of Tomas and Tereza. We are informed that Prague had undergone numerous changes. This is highlighted in (Part 4) when Tomas and Tereza realize that Prague has changed, that the name of once familiar places, are now strange, 'taken from Russian geography, from Russian history ... overnight, the country had become nameless' (Kundera, 1984:165).

This notion of the lost, nameless Prague is highlighted in what is one of the most poignantly moving sections of the text when the colour from Prague is literally wrenched away, while 'everyone passed (Tereza) by, indifferent':

She was staring at the water - it seemed sadder and darker here - when suddenly she spied a strange object in the middle of the river, something red - yes, it was a bench. A wooden bench on iron legs, the kind that Prague's parks abound in. It was floating downstream, away from the city, many, many benches, more and more drifting by like the city, many, many benches, more and more, drifting by like the autumn leaves that the water carries off from the woods - red, yellow, blue.
(Kundera, 1984:171)

Just as the colour is drained away, so too Prague has been subjected to a colour - less history, a history that overlooks the suffering of its people, a history that is totalized without any access to the information of the silenced one-hundred and forty five historians. The text is, therefore, infiltrated by this

silence and the silence of a history beriddled with errors and half-truths; a history that is written at the expense of choking the 'truth'. In this context, therefore, the narrator recalls the unchronicled death of numerous Czechoslovakians that has gone unrecorded or been erased:

Mirek's was one of the names thus erased. The Mirek currently climbing the stairs to Zdena's door is really only a white stain, a fragment of a barely delineated void making its way up a spiral staircase.

(Kundera, 1980:14)

The silencing of marginalized histories is further echoed in the allegorization of the story of the ostriches:

There they were standing by the fence, jabbering away at her. She was terrified of them. She could not move. All she could do was watch their mute beaks, hypnotized. She kept her lips tightly pressed together. She had a golden ring in her mouth and she feared for its safety.

(ibid:86)

The longing for the absent history of the Czechoslovakian people in both BLF and ULB is poignantly expressed by the term LITOST: 'a feeling that is the synthesis of many others: grief, sympathy, remorse, and an indefinable longing. The first syllable, which is long and stressed, sounds like the wail of an abandoned dog' (ibid:121).

The polyphonic texture of both ULB and BLF allows the texts to flirt with the ontological boundaries of fiction and 'fact' and to parody the linearity of historical narratives. By using characters and/or narrators who lie, and openly admit to losses of memory and misinterpretation of 'facts', texts like ULB and BLF question the very representation of history. As White (1978:130) maintains:

The view that the historiographer can gain entrance to what 'really happened' in the past and that the representation of historical events is unproblematic rests on the assumption that language mirrors reality ... (historiographers assume that) language can serve as a perfectly transparent medium of representation ... if one can only find the right language for describing events, the meaning of events will display itself to consciousness.

Postmodernism questions this simplistic notion and reveals that language is certainly not the 'transparent medium' historiographers have assumed it to be.

1.5 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this chapter, I have argued against the elitism that postmodernism has come to be associated with. By its very nature, since it attempts to interrogate contrived neutrality, postmodernism is anything but apolitical. To say that because its parodic appropriation and self-reflexivity, disqualifies its political involvement, is naïve, because the 'denaturalization'

that postmodern (meta)fiction insists upon, is not appreciated by elitist academics only. My chapter has also argued that postmodern fictions that interrogate the 'papered-over cracks' of history cannot be dismissed as merely aestheticized; I have also shown why such texts should not be dismissed. In this context, Hutcheon (1989:65) quotes Wellberry who maintains that:

Postmodern ... experimentaiton
should be viewed as having an
irreducible political dimension. It
is inextricably bound up with a
critique of domination.

My chapter also argues against hermetically sealed units and through this acknowledgement I manage to detail the postmodern project to 'bring' repressed histories to the surface. In this context therefore, postmodernism has effectively contested the imperialist notions of history as objective, continuous, homogeneous and uninterrupted. My stance throughout this chapter has been that narratives are made / created; they are not natural. By opening up alternatives postmodern fiction has created narrative and historical space for the Other.

This chapter also draws a distinction between the approaches of Modernism and Postmodernism to fiction. Hutcheon (1989:80) sums this up distinctively:

Unacknowledged modernist assumptions
about closure, distance, artistic
autonomy and the apolitical nature
of representation are what
postmodernism sets out to uncover
and deconstruct.

My chapter has interrogated the ways in which Milan Kundera's fictions effectively do this.

If the alternative histories that such texts posit are treated with incredulous dismissal by cynics then it would be wise to remember that some readers treat the contrived intelligibility of traditional histories with the same cynical dismissal.

My arguments in the following chapter, **Postmodernism and Time**, are related to this chapter (**Postmodernism and History**) in the sense that it demonstrates the textual ways in which the mastery of History has been undone. The second chapter of this study, therefore, explores the ways in which writers like Kundera, Morrison and Rushdie have questioned, through fictional texts, the distorted, contrived representations of their histories. As my analyses show, the only certitude that such writings and readings grant is the questions they raise about distortion, intelligibility, power and silence. Because such fictions are interrogative as opposed to fictions of stable closure I would like to suggest that the lure of solipsism is evaded through the creation of alternative space.

CHAPTER TWO

POSTMODERN TIME

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Classic Realism is generally bound by a close chronology signalled through cause and effect which allows for coherence and recuperation. This marks its status as 'readerly'. Postmodern texts, however, subvert linearity for various reasons. Postmodern texts because they foreground the adventure of telling the story rather than telling the story of an adventure, seek to militate against a linear mode. Also, such texts transgress the classic 'cause and effect' formula and represent rather, diegetic world of diffuse elements. A further reason for refuting chronology may also be seen in the postmodern need to subvert the classic linearity of history which signals closure and rivets it to the signified (as I argue in [History and the Postmodern]).

Classic Realism, since it is teleological, is haunted by a sense of ending, where all textual tensions are eased. This is compounded quite frequently in the symbolic unity of the hero and heroine. Postmodern fiction, in contrast, begins arbitrarily and refuses telos. In a bid to parody the sealed quality of classic-realism, postmodern texts have been known to duplicate their endings; (as is the case with Fowles', The French Lieutenant's

Woman), end suddenly and abruptly so that the reader may be left frustrated (as is the case in Pynchon's, The Crying of Lot 49); or, some may require that the reader go back to the beginning and reassess textual events in the light of the information the 'end' offers (this may be seen in Golding's Pincher Martin).

My chapter on time in Postmodern fiction utilizes Gerard Genette's Structural categories of time (RETROSPECT, PROLEPSIS, ACHRONY, REPETITIVE AND ITERATIVE). I use these categories essentially to attempt to analyse the way in which the formal categories of structuralism are utilized and subverted by postmodern fiction to render 'innocent' narratives, suspicious. By utilizing structuralist categories of time, my analyses reveals the way/s in which postmodern manipulation of time goes beyond structuralism.

My argument throughout has been to show that the use of time in postmodern fiction is cleverly manipulated to subvert chronology while simultaneously commenting on the superficial linearity that history has imposed on events through its (dubious) totalization. The manipulation of linear time is therefore an act of transgression.

2.2 ORDER

Traditionally, the historic present has been regarded as the ideally suited grammatical form that a narrative should assume. This traditional conception of narrative ensures 'causality, the

linking of the chain of events leading to a solution and the promise of a revelation of the truth' (Jefferson, 1980:31).

Folk tales do, perhaps, offer 'zero chronology', (Genette, 1980), where events do follow each other chronologically and are linked carefully to causality. However, even traditional forms of narrative do not offer 'zero degree of chronology' which according to Genette,

would be a condition of perfect temporal correspondence between narrative and story ... this point of reference is more hypothetical than real.

In order to show that the Genettian notion of zero-degree of chronology is merely hypothetical rather than 'real', Rimmon-Kenan (1983:16) refers to Todorov's observation that,

... the notion of story-time involves a convention which identifies it with ideal chronological order, or what is sometimes called natural chronology. However, such (ideal) succession can occur only when there is a single story-line with a single character. Immediately, there is more than one character, events become simultaneous and the story is often multi-linear rather than unilinear.

While traditional narratives may have used manipulation of time, Genette uses the example of Homer's Illiad to show that while the narrative may begin in the characteristic epic manner, in mediases, and while it utilizes retrospective devices to detail the events

that lead to the altercation, it still manages to tell the story in the historic present. Similarly, in classical realist texts 'authors' and narrators also know of / about the events before the narrative is verbalized. This ensures that the narrative is harnessed to a sense of revelation of the truth. In this capacity, classical realist works also know of the events before the narrative is 'verbalized'. This revelation of the truth attempts to provide the reader with the answer to 'what happened ... next?' As I argue in my final chapter, such a stance also provides the reader with a position of intelligibility to read from. Modernist fiction, in turning away from the impoverishment of realism, does acknowledge the lack of (universal) coherence by destabilizing liberal humanist notions of time; however, it still hones down the aesthetic work of art so that a unity (of order) is sought and ultimately found in the work of art. Truth is also penetrable in Modernism. The unity of the work of art marks its own truth; hence the aesthetic unity (of the work of art) becomes the beacon of unity amidst the chaos. I return to related notions in my arguments in **Modernism and Endings** below.

In postmodernism, however, the notion of answering, 'what happened ... next?' is subverted by 'verbalizing' narratives that are not told from any fixed point. Instead of linearity, succession and causality, there is a manipulation of time which robs the reader of reading from a position of intelligibility; it further, destabilizes and parodies linear narrative which may be seen as

'pure illusion'. For example, in MC which parodies the monolithic version of India's independence, Saleem Sinai comments:

But there is Padma at my elbow,
bullying me into the world of the
linear narrative, the universe of
'what happened next'.

(Rushdie, 1981:36)

Rather than 'what happened nextism', Saleem offers a 'chutnification'; his narrative is one from which 'history pours out of (a) fissured body' with a voice that cannot (will not?) 'even get to where (his) father met (his) mother'. As Padma succinctly comments,

'... you'd better get a move on or
you'll die before you get yourself
born'.

(Ibid:38)

Order in postmodern narrative is, therefore, manipulated and rather than attempt to reveal the solution to 'what happened next' the reader is coerced to distinguish between 'what really happened' (within the diegetic world) and what was imagined, fabricated or dreamed. This position violates linearity. The postmodern text, therefore, utilizes anachronies and achronies to verbalize the narrative text. In such writing, 'time instead of being an invisible and inert medium in which events take place, is foregrounded and problematized' (Alexander, 1990:45). In this regard, then, time may be seen to lose its objective linearity; it becomes instead a tool of subjectivity. It is hastened, slowed down, repeated (in different forms) reversed and sometimes (even) frozen. For example, in Waiting For Godot, Beckett (who may be

seen to sit 'astride' both modernism and postmodernism) freezes time: Act 1 is a repetition of Act 2, while the 'concluding' stage directions for Acts 1 and 2 read: 'They do not move'.

2.2.1 ANACHRONIES:

According to Genette (1980:35),

... to study the temporal order of a narrative is to compare the order in which events or temporal sections are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession these same events or temporal segments have in the story, to the extent that story order is explicitly indicated by the narrative itself or inferable from one or another indirect clue.

Genette's statement is generally applicable to classical realist and modernist texts; however, even though modernist texts destabilize realist notions of time, they are still capable of being recuperated, as I argue in the latter stages of this chapter.

A cursory perusal, of the contents pages of both ULB and BLF, suggest that the linearity of narrative has been subverted (See Grabe, 1989).

The contents page of BLF reads as follows:

Part One	:	'Lost Letters'
Part Two	:	'Mother'

Part Three	:	'The Angels'
Part Four	:	'Lost Letters'
Part Five	:	'Litost'
Part Six	:	'The Angels'
Part Seven	:	'The Border',

while, the contents page of ULB reads as follows:

Part One	:	'Lightness and Weight'
Part Two	:	'Soul and Body'
Part Three	:	'Words Misunderstood'
Part Four	:	'Soul and Body'
Part Five	:	'Lightness and Weight'
Part Six	:	'The Grand March'
Part Seven	:	'Karenin's Smile'

Through such a segmentation of the texts, it becomes obvious that narrative 'strands' are repetitive and patterned. It may be inferred that the parallel sections open themselves to comparison; further, such overt textual ordering and repetition, within a postmodern context, does seem to anticipate metafictional commentary and manipulation of ordering. The narrative is, therefore, not propelled forward in the classical sense, by someone who knows (the author) and who is bent on telling (to the reader). Both BLF and ULB reveal from the outset that their textuality has an 'inherent' knowledge that 'story-telling has become strictly impossible'. Further, through their deviant ordering, they seek to militate against 'order and coherence of plot (which) give a false view of

the world as ordered and intelligible' (Jefferson, 1980:15).

In ULB, Part Seven ('Karenin's Smile') precedes Part Six ('The Grand March') which is retrospective and substantially different in terms of style and structure from the preceding six parts. It is almost as though Part Seven is added on as an afterthought, negating rigid structuring and plot (which as Robbe-Grillet suggests is outdated). Similarly, BLF could have 'closed' with Part Six, 'The Angels', but Part Seven is (almost) ad-libbed into the text and (yet) is largely about useless, overt sex(uality). Commenting on this, Kundera, in an interview with Phillip Roth (1980), maintains that while the sixth part provides the laughter of angels, the seventh allows for the exploration of 'a resounding, contrary, laughter heard when things lose their meaning'. By inference it must also provide a point of contrast for the reader from traditional realist works.

While postmodern texts do not lend themselves to being recuperated in any (traditional) sense, the structural categories proposed by Genette are helpful to ascertain the manner in, and the extent to which time, in the postmodern text, has been manipulated. The 'evolution' in the way in which time is manipulated and becomes an aspect in the process of deferral (hence, negating totalization) is hinted at by Genette towards the end of his discussion on temporal relations in Narrative Discourse. Commenting in this regard, on Proust's Recherche, Genette maintains that the novel explores the

related issues of,

... time ruled, captured, bewitched,
surreptitiously subverted or better
still: perverted (it is a)
formidable game with time.
(1980:160).

Milan Kundera's ULB or BLF, both 'worry' time through their use of analepses, prolepses, simultaneous portrayal and repetitive sequences. As I have argued in the first chapter of this study, by negating linear time, postmodern texts like Kundera's exhibit their ongoing awareness of their own fictionality while simultaneously parodying the rigidity of linear time in history which has managed to organize and totalize at the risk of deleting and silencing. According to Genette (1980), and substantiated by Rummon-Kenan (1983), anachronies may occur as analepses, prolepses and achronies.

While I do not intend to use the minute detail of the structuralist concepts set down by Genette (1980) and Rimmon-Kenan (1983), I do think that a brief overview of such concepts does help to explore the way in which time in postmodern texts is foregrounded, how such a technique reflects upon the artifice of the construction of the text and how 'innocent narratives' may be re-read to produce other readings which impinge upon reader response. As Jefferson says:

Artifice is everywhere and we see
that everything is CONSTRUCTION.
There is clearly no pre-existing

story (unlike classic realism) which the novel unfolds to its conclusion, fiction no longer relays the truth through narrative. The novel as the laboratory of narrative becomes a powerful producer of explicitly fictional narratives and simultaneously makes quite audible the narrative's own discourse on itself.

(1980: 9)

2.2.1.1 ANALEPSES: EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL

EXTERNAL ANALEPSES:

External analepsis occurs outside the primary narrative and does not (strictly) impinge on the primary narrative since it falls outside this ambit. Chatman (1978:355) maintains that external analepsis, 'is an anachrony whose beginning and end occur before NOW.' Such analepses serve the purpose of 'fleshing out' the primary narrative by informing the reader of an event that occurred in the past.

Yet, I would argue that in ULB and BLF the use of external analepsis is not as neutrally used as to 'merely flesh out the primary narrative'; it is instead harnessed in such a way that it provides parallel commentary on the events of the primary narrative. Genette (1980), in seeking to distinguish between external and internal analepsis maintains that:

External analepses, by the very fact that they are external, never at any moment risk interfering with the first narrative, for their only function is to fill out the first narrative by enlightening the reader with one or another 'antecedent'.

Certainly, in the case of classic realist novels, this may be true; for example, in Pride and Prejudice, the letter that Elizabeth receives from Darcy, after she has turned down his proposal (of marriage), is conveniently placed into a separate chapter, thus ensuring that readers receive the clear delineation of Darcy's letter and isolate it from the rest of the story:

(The letter) was dated from Rosings, at eight o'clock in the morning and it was as follows ...

(Austen, 1982:152).

Such clear delineation provides the reader with a position of intelligibility to read from, unlike postmodernism which blurs such distinctions. I return to this notion in the final chapter of this study. The latter part of the letter that Elizabeth receives is clearly an example of external analepsis through which Darcy enlightens Elizabeth as to why he has fallen into disrepute with Wickham. Yet, while the reader is provided with an 'antecedent' both the primary and secondary narratives are clearly distinguishable:

With respect to that other, more weighty accusation of having hurt Mr Wickham, I can only refute it by laying before you, the whole of his connection to my family ... this madam, is a faithful narrative of every event in which we have been

concerned ... I hope you acquit me henceforth of cruelty towards Mr Wickham.

(Austen, 1982:158)

Such an analeptic sequence provides 'the true version of events' and reveals Darcy to be the 'misunderstood gentleman' who has (finally) seen through Wickham who had planned to seduce Georgiana so as to secure the thirty-thousand pounds which is Georgiana's inheritance. While 'filling in the gaps' of the events surrounding Wickham it also signals a moral growth in Elizabeth who exclaims:

How despicably have I acted ... I who have prided myself on my discernment ... yet how just a humiliation ... Till this moment, I never knew myself.

(Ibid:162)

Hence, the external analepsis assists to propel the action towards the marriage of Elizabeth and Darcy so as to provide the 'perfect closed ending'. In doing so it realizes its status as a classic realist work which according to Barthes is,

... a sealed unit, whose closure arrests meaning ... it closes the work, chains it to its letter, rivets it to its signified.

(1981:33)

Time and its manipulation is therefore used so as to 'seal the unit' and to propel the plot towards closure.

However, in postmodern texts, the technique of external analepsis is utilized differently. I would argue that rather than provide the 'antecedents' to the story that Genette refers to, such texts

utilize external analepses to provide metacommentary on parallel events in the primary narrative.

This may be illustrated through the opening section of BLF where the events of February 1948 are relayed to the reader. Through the 'airbrushing' of Clementis from the history of Czechoslovakia, a pertinent comment is made on the insidious effect of the 'history' of Communist Czechoslovakia. Clementis, seen as a dissident to Communist Czechoslovakia is 'airbrushed' from history and from the photographs of the time, yet a cynical 'voice' informs us that ... 'where Clementis once stood, there is only bare palace wall. All that remains of Clementis is the cap on Gottwald's head' (Kundera, 1980:3).

Further, the use of external analepsis may be seen to parallel the concerns of BLF which are echoed at various points in the texts through lost letters (ironically, Mirek chooses to destroy his passionate letters to Zdena so as to forget that part of his personal history while Tamina wishes to retrieve her letters to stop herself from forgetting); lapses in memory, silences and threats to freedom of expression. What is striking about BLF is the way in which historians are forced into silence and the silence of the narrator's father in 'Angels' is paralleled by the silence of the historians:

The silence of my father, whom all words eluded, the silence of the hundred and forty-five historians, who have been forbidden to remember,

that myriad voiced silence
 resounding from all over my country
 forms the background of the picture
 against which I paint Tamina.

(Kundera, 1980:161)

Such 'confrontation between the public and the personal' deconstructs the ontological boundaries between the private and the public and 'continually shows that political events are governed by the same laws as private happenings, (See Phillip Roth's interview with Kundera, 1980:244).

Similarly utilized, is the 'story' of Stalin's son who lays down his 'life for shit'. While the story of Yakov is external to the lives of the characters in ULB, details of his death are given so as to comment on 'the general idiocy of the war'. Seen in this perspective 'the death of Stalin's son stands out as the sole metaphysical death'. His death (for shit) is, therefore, a more 'honourable' death than the deaths of the Germans who attempted to extend the country's territory to the east and the death of the Russians who died, while attempting to extend their country's territory to the west. This section also parallels the 'weighty' consideration of the onerous position of shit - the status of which is elevated, for 'without shit there would be no sexual love ... kitsch is the absolute denial of shit' (Kundera, 1984:238).

The section where Stalin's son hurls his body at the electrified fence may also be seen to parallel the section where Franz in a moment of 'deliriousness' wishes to 'run out (onto) the bridge

joining Thailand to Cambodia ... (to) scream ... and to die in a great clatter of gunfire' (Ibid:268).

It also continues to deconstruct the clear cut binary oppositions within given polarities 'when there (is) no longer any difference between sublime and squalid, angel and fly' (ibid). This simultaneously draws closer the concept of the void:

when the north pole comes so close
as to touch the south pole, the
earth disappears and man finds
himself in a void that makes his
head spin and beckons him to fall.
(Ibid:244).

INTERNAL ANALEPSES

While I am aware that Genette (1980) distinguishes between two 'varieties' of internal analepses (Heterodiegetic and Homodiegetic), I shall not make such (minute) distinctions. I see my task as analysing why internal analepses are utilized within postmodern texts and consider that such distinctions are not relevant to the aims of this dissertation. Rather than minute distinctions, (which I see as more of a structural task), I concern myself with a (somewhat) broad analysis of internal analepses and attempt to 'justify' their use within a postmodern context.

Within the scope of this dissertation, internal analepses may be seen to comprise of:

... retrospective sections that fill in, after the event an earlier gap, in the narrative (which is) organized by temporary omissions and more or less belated reparations.

(Genette, 1980:68)

A narrative strategy of delaying and/or withholding the narrative sequence and (only) providing the 'complete' sequence at a later stage in the narrative may be seen to be a strategy that foregrounds the fictionality of the text. The text in this instance announces itself as text and compounds its playfulness with the reader.

Furthermore, Chatman (1978) and Ireland (1986) focus on similar distinctions with the text. Ireland uses the term DELAYED CONTINUATION. According to his analysis such a sequence is effected by the delay on the level of discourse of presenting data which results in deliberately withholding the temporal sequence of the 'story'.

Similarly, Chatman also sees the 'value' of such analysis for postmodern texts. According to him ellipsis is:

... a convenient term for the situation in which the discourse halts though time continues to pass in the story.

(1974:360)

While such usage increases the lack of reconciliation between story time and discourse time I would argue that it is an important strategy for Kundera in that by parodying both linearity and totalization, it affords the narrative the opportunity to comment

upon the manner in which the history of Czechoslovakia has been distorted. The narrative itself is illuminated and reassessed through 'bits and pieces' of information relayed in retrospect. The process of representation is consequently never 'complete' and the past throughout both novels rises like a spectre to be dealt with and negotiated. Neither the self-reflexivity of the novel nor the process of reading is allowed to come to terms with the past - it is left significantly unresolved through the endings of both novels. In this context, Elam (1992:15) maintains:

'Coming to terms with the past'
[Aufar-beitung] does not imply a serious working through of the past, the breaking of its spell through the act of clear consciousness. It suggests, rather, wishing to turn the page and, if possible, wiping it from memory.

Both novels negate being 'sealed units' because they deliberately avoid totalization. The manner in which time is used compounds this even further, and because it evades 'coming to terms with' narrative time, it makes a powerful statement with regard to history. By emphasizing textuality and the complex play with the reader, the only aspect that becomes apparent is that 'by displacing realism, postmodernism (...) is able to call into question the place of the referent in history' (Elam, 1992:12). By problematizing the referent of history postmodern texts such as Kundera's, ensure that 'coming to terms with history' is just as obsolete as any dependence on history to provide 'essential meanings'.

Let me illustrate how the use of internal analepses causes the reader to oscillate within a state of 'fruitful uncertainty'. In the sequence that shows Tomas standing half-naked with a fully-dressed Sabina standing alongside him, the functions of the bowler hat are listed in a five-point plan (see Kundera, 1984:87). The last point dwells on the manner in which the bowler hat assumes the proportions of a motif in Sabina's life that 'returned again and again, each time with a different meaning ... the bowler hat was a bed through which each time Sabina saw another river flow' (ibid). This notion of 'return(ed) again and again', may be seen as a metaphor for the internal analeptic sequences in the text and the manner in which such returns force the reader to reassess his / her previous stance in the light of the new material presented: such an activity itself destabilizes linearity: the 'past' of the text(ual) is compared to and contrasted with the 'present' of the text(ual). A position of reiteration of this type is imperative within postmodern texts because it 'modifies the meaning of the past, either by making significant what was not so originally or by refuting a first interpretation and replacing it with a new one' (Genette, 1980:56). This strategy defers providing meaning in toto at any point of the text.

Further, through the return of the motif of the bowler hat, the reader is provided with the realization that the relationship between Franz and Sabina is doomed since 'their musical compositions are more or less complete, and every motif, every

object means something different' (Kundera, 1984:89).

Yet, the sequence of the pending doom in their relationship is only completed sexually and literally on p. 128; it is a sequence significantly, inscribed within, the 'Dictionary of Misunderstood Words':

Each was riding the other like a horse, and both were galloping off into the distance ... Franz was riding Sabina and had betrayed his wife; Sabina was riding Franz and had betrayed Franz.

Hence, the bowler hat recurs both in Sabina's life and in the course of the text; the motif may be seen as a repetitive musical sequence that holds a musical composition together. At each point a bit more is revealed until we are told:

In part III of this novel I told of the tale of Sabina standing half-naked with the bowler hat ... there is something I failed to mention at the time ... She had a fantasy of Tomas ... watching her void her bowels ... and (she) immediately let out an orgasmic shout.

(Ibid:247).

Hence, the delayed relaying of this information allows the reader an insight into the 'nature' of their relationship and also parallels the sections on Kitsch and the importance of shit. Such sequences may further be seen to emphasize the artificial closure of historical works that continue to allow the existence of silences through gaps that are not filled in. As I argue in the first chapter of this study, this negates 'totalized representations' which, as metafictional texts have come to show,

are farcical since they represent only canonized versions of 'truths'.

A similar form of deferral at the temporal level is evidenced in the way in which the details surrounding the death of Tamina's husband are relayed. In the sequence, 'Lost Letters', the reader is told that on board the ship her husband had fallen seriously ill and 'all she could do was sit by and watch as death slowly took him' (Kundera, 1980:83). The sequence of his death is ostensibly complete (to the reader, at any rate) through the scattering of his ashes at sea, 'since (Tamina) had no home and was afraid that she would be forced to carry her husband around for the rest of her life like so much hand - luggage she (therefore) had his ashes scattered' (Ibid.).

Yet, the details leading to his death are provided much later on (p. 171). This information may be seen in the light of what Chatman (1978) refers to as explicit ellipsis. The reader is informed that:

Her husband died in a hospital. She stayed with him as much as she could but he died in the night alone ... 'they took him by the legs and dragged him along the floor. They thought I was asleep. I saw his head bumped against the threshold.'

Apart from the obvious manipulation of time and providing information at a later stage, what is striking about the 'present' of the details provided is the stark, lonely suffering Tamina's

husband goes through. The 'past' of this sequences has the ashes scattered in an apparent attempt to seal the event. The 'present' re-reading alters the 'picture'. I would suggest that the parallel to historical totalization is almost obvious in such an instance. Totalized configurations 'paper over the cracks' in an attempt to ideologically impose; metafiction attempts to undermine this. The 'details' added at various instances in the text (seem to) suggest that history itself should be re-read and re-interpreted at various stages. It is the lack of re-reading and re-interpretation that ensures that, 'the history of the Czechs ... is a pair of sketches from the pen of mankind's fateful, inexperience. History is as light as individual human life, unbearably light, light as a feather, as dust swirling in the air, as whatever will no longer exist tomorrow' (Kundera, 1984:223).

Both BLF and ULB seek to militate against the history of Czechoslovakia becoming something that 'will no longer exist tomorrow'.

I wish to argue, further, that another function of the use of internal analeptic sequences may be to draw the subject into history. Such a sequence is apparent in Tamina's meeting with the ostriches. She believes that they may have to come to tell her something yet 'their vocal cords had been slit by the enemy'. Consequently,

... they run along the fence after
(her), still clicking their beaks

and warning her about something but what she did not know.

(Kundera, 1980:92).

The sequence is yet again taken up,

That night Tamina had a dream about the ostriches ... all she could do was watch their mute beaks hypnotized.

(ibid:102)

The sequence is ostensibly completed with:

Tamina will never know what they came to tell her. But I do ... they came to tell her about themselves.

(ibid:104)

Apart from the analeptic sequence, what is apparent is that the ostriches (who have had their vocal cords slit) came to tell her about themselves, which is what so many versions of history have effaced. The notion of the subject becoming directly involved in history seeks (essentially) to militate against the contrived ideological perception that history is about heroes. 'Every day people / characters' also have a history. This is cleverly illuminated and manipulated in Rushdie's MC where Saleem is directly involved in the 'principal events' that shaped India's history, in the (immediate) years following its history. He becomes directly responsible for 'triggering off violence which ended with the partition of the state of Bombay' (Rushdie, 1981:192). Further, Saleem is also by his own admission the (hidden) cause of the Indo-Pakistani war in which his family is eliminated.

Similarly, Kundera creates space through the use of internal analepses for the Other to be heard. In both ULB and BLF rather

than subscribe to the metanarrative of history, the personal pain of characters is explored and paralleled by the (use of) internal analepses. The characters are personally involved in the struggle, yet not necessarily always determined by it. This line of argument does tend to highlight that political decisions are shaped by and decided upon by the characters rather than political decisions determining the lives of characters. Tomas, for example, decides to opt for window washing not (only) for political reasons but because it allows him an opportunity to encounter 'erotic adventures': being a window washer was his way of having a holiday; it also becomes a way to undermine the system:

(the customer) would greet Tomas with a bottle of champagne, ... sign for thirteen windows on the order slip, and chat with him for two hours.

(Kundera, 1984:197).

Tomas, further, refuses to sign the petition to grant amnesty for political prisoners because he is 'urged' by Tereza's situation not to and is persuaded by his conscience that it is better to save her than to sign the petition. In this way he refuses to give in to the stereotype of being a victim to history and ostensibly uses his own power.

Yet, the situation is not as clear-cut as it appears to be: it is in fact ambivalent; while through the use of internal analepsis the reassessment and positing of alternative versions cuts through the delusion of grandeur of history, it simultaneously (perhaps

ironically) focuses on the powerlessness of such characters as well. In this instance, Alexander (1990:141), in a related context, concurs:

... (such actions) obliquely suggest a similar combination of paranoia and delusions of grandeur among politicians (evidenced in numerous aspects of ULB and BLF) ... at the same time ... the readers' perception ... becomes a focus of (their) pitiful powerlessness ... in the face of their government's acts.

This powerlessness is best evidenced in Kundera in the numerous references to enforced silence(s), the threat of the way in which Czechoslovakian literary artists were silenced and the pervasive terror of the secret police, who negate any form of privacy:

When a private talk over a bottle of wine is broadcast on the radio, what can it mean but that the world is turning into a concentration camp?
(Kundera, 1984:136)

The use of (internal) analepses, therefore, is not merely a means of playfulness; it does have a political purpose as well, which should negate accusations that the postmodern concerns itself with its own fictionality at the risk of ignoring the political. Certainly, the postmodern 'embraces' the histories of the Other by creating 'narrative space' unlike modernist writers who preferred to ignore the 'nightmare of history'. Of postmodern literatures that place the (narrating) subject within the discourse of history to disseminate canonized historical discourse, Anderson (1990:120) maintains:

(such fiction) attempts to imagine a new and different relationship between subjectivity and history, unsettling our notions of identity, language and history, whilst at the same time situating the characters within history and showing the way it shapes and (in)forms subjectivity.

2.2.1.2 PROLEPSES: EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL

EXTERNAL

Traditionally, sequences of prolepses occur less often than analepses. This would be especially relevant in omniscient narration where, the reader is told about the events as they occur.

Hence, an omniscient narrator may 'know all' but is not obliged to tell all. Within a realist convention, examples of prolepses are rare, it is almost as though allusions to anticipation can not be made before the story is told.

The situation does alter with the use of first-person narratives. Since the 'narrating I' can also be the 'experiencing I', the narrator can allude to events that are proleptic. More contemporary novelists, utilizing first person narrators, are more receptive to using proleptic sequences. However, it may (still) be argued that the use of such prolepses are directed towards story-telling, rather than any self-conscious effort to reveal the fictionality of the work.

In this context, Nick Carraway, (The Great Gatsby, 1967 [1926]), who is the first - person narrator in the work, provides the reader with an anticipation of the darkness yet to come:

No, Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby; what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-minded elations of men.

(Fitzgerald; 1967:6)

This proleptic sequence anticipates the tone and texture of The Great Gatsby and may even be seen to 'link up' to the final sequence of the narrator's cynical comment of disenchantment:

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future, that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then ... so we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly.

(Ibid:156)

Similarly, a more contemporary novel, André Brink's, A Dry White Season, by utilizing a first-person narrator, leads the reader to anticipate the death of Ben du Toit from the outset:

It was reported in a humdrum enough fashion - page four, third column of the evening paper. Johannesburg Teacher killed in an accident, knocked down by hit and run driver. Mr Ben du Toit (53) at about 11 o'clock last night, on his way to post a letter, etc. Survived by his wife Susan, two daughters and a young son.

(Brink, 1979:9)

However, the narrator's knowledge of Ben's death is detailed in a 'detective-like' manner. The narrator in the course of the novel

is responsible for piecing together information received by Ben, in the form of letters, which leads both reader (and narrator) to unmask the truth, and to the realization that Ben du Toit is a character diametrically in contrast to the 'hum-drum' article that reports his death. In this context, the novel is, therefore, concerned with the revelation of the truth. In seeking to do so, the protagonist (Ben du Toit) must play off the apartheid South Africa's version of Truth against his solitary discovery of truth. Similarly, the reader is invited to share in this unmasked truth that reveals the demonic nature of apartheid in South Africa.

In such novels, the use of prolepsis 'stabilizes' the narrative. The 'anticipation' it creates does not work against the linear flow of the narrative; it tends to draw together the narrative strands rather than to tear them asunder. Such texts rely on 'delayed truth' which is ultimately revealed. The use of prolepsis in postmodern texts, however, is utilized not so much to provide stability and intelligibility as it is to heighten textual fictionality. If there is any revelation made through external prolepsis in postmodern texts, it is that the text is a work of fabrication and that strict linearity is an illusion just as chronological ordering is.

In the light of this, it can be argued that, the penultimate section of ULB may be seen to be proleptic in the sense that it provides (proleptic) commentary external to the story line. In

this context, it may be discussed in terms of Genette's (1980) comment where the provision / inclusion of an epilogue may be seen to correspond with the present of the narrator:

What remains of the dying population of Cambodia? One large photograph of an American actress holding an Asian child in her arms.
 What remains of Tomas?
 An inscription reading HE WANTED THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH. What remains of Beethoven?
 A frown, an improbable mane, and a somber voice intoning 'Es muss sein!'
 What remains of Franz?
 An inscription reading A RETURN AFTER LONG WANDERINGS.
 And so on and so forth. Before we are forgotten, we will be turned into Kitsch. Kitsch is the stopover between being and oblivion.
 (Kundera, 1984:278)

Through deviant ordering the epilogue sequence precedes 'Karenin's Smile' which reads almost like a soppy love story that (re)unites the protagonists as lovers in a quiet, stable relationship; they are lovers who have shared the painful (Kitsch-like?) death of their dog. Yet, this sequence goes almost unnoticed; the impact is 'cancelled' in the sequence of the 'Grand March' in which we are informed of the deaths of the protagonists.

In BLF, the reader is informed that:

One of a novelist's inalienable rights is to be able to rework his novel. If he takes a dislike to (something) he can rewrite it or cross it out entirely.
 (Kundera, 1980:11)

The same notion of play is brought into the text so that the reader is not seduced into the illusion of mimesis. Read as such, 'Karenin's Smile', almost an 'afterthought' in the textuality may be seen to function under the postmodern concept of ERASURE. Such a strategy is highlighted again in BLF in the section entitled 'Litost' where the reader is told:

I was originally going to call this chapter 'Who is the Student?' But even if it now deals with the emotion I call Litost, it still is very much about the student (as well).

(Kundera, 1980:122)

This 'inalienable right' of the author is also seen in a parodic light, because whereas external prolepses may be used in traditional realist works to harness the work to movement from concealment to revelation; the postmodern text, undoes this sense of movement to revelation; instead it plays with the reader and unmasks the artifice of fiction. Hence, 'The Grand March', emphasises the fictionality of the text and utilizes the notion of closure before the text is 'concluded' (suspended?). The narrator also uses the opportunity to provide the reader with the details regarding Sabina and her 'life' as a painter:

She had no trouble selling her painting ... one day she composed a will in which she requested that her dead body be cremated and its ashes be thrown to the winds ... as Parmenides would put it the negative would change into positive.

(Ibid:272)

Such a technique may be seen to co-incide with what Genette (1980:68) maintains:

... takes place at a point later in the story (than the duration of the diegetic) ... (it) functions most often as (an) epilogue serving to continue one or another line of action on to its logical conclusion.

While 'The Grand March' is proleptic, it does not allow for a logical conclusion in the traditional sense, because the entire section is deviantly ordered, hence, laying bare the fictionality of the text. The foregrounding of the fictive is further compounded by metatextual commentary.

INTERNAL PROLEPSES

Internal prolepses may be analysed similarly to internal analepses which, as has been argued above, essentially fracture continuity at the level of diegesis.

Through skilful handling of the material of both ULB and BLF, Kundera fractures continuity in both texts and hereby emphasises the fictive and the playful.

Several incidents are exploited in the texts to anticipate and/or create sequences of parallelism at a later stage. In this regard the most extended use of prolepsis (through parallel 'stories') is created through the textual anticipation that Tereza will die at the hands of Tomas. This is pre-empted in Part One, 'Lightness and Weight' where Tereza dreams of being sent to her death (by Tomas):

Once when he woke her as she screamed in the dead of night, she told him about it. 'I was at a large indoor swimming pool. There were about twenty of us. All women. We were naked and marching around the pool ... You (Tomas) kept giving us orders. Shouting at us ... If one of us did a bad kneebend, you would shoot (her) with a pistol and she would fall into the pool ... the pool was full of corpses floating below the surface. And I knew I lacked the strength to do the next knee - bend and you were going to shoot me.'

(Kundera, 1984:18)

The anticipation of her death at the hands of Tomas is further, 'sustained' through the dream sequence on Petrin Hill which is 'concluded' through the plea:

With a wave of his hand, he (Tomas) signalled her to move on ... Someone had to help her, after all! Tomas wouldn't. Tomas was sending her to her death. Someone else would have to help her.

(Ibid:151)

The sequences that anticipate her death at Tomas' hands is 'completed' with the telegram that Tomas' son receives which urges him 'to jump on his motorcycle and arrive in time to arrange for the funeral (Ibid:277). The proleptic details of their death are conveyed to the reader through Sabina, much earlier on in the text. In part 3: 'Words Misunderstood', we are told of the letter Sabina received from Tomas' son in which,

... he informed her of the death of Tomas and Tereza ... From time to time, they would drive over to the next town and spend the night in a cheap hotel ... their pick-up had

crashed and hurtled down a steep incline. Their bodies had been crushed to a pulp. The police determined that the brakes were in a disastrous condition.

(Ibid:123)

Significantly, in 'Karenin's Smile', Tereza recalls a conversation she had had with the chairman of the collective farm:

He told her that Tomas' pickup was in miserable condition ... Tomas knows the insides of the body better than the insides of an engine.

(Ibid:309)

The proleptic sequence of their death, long before their death is 'reported' (briefly) by Tomas' son reveals the fictionality of the text: the texture of creativity does not (necessarily) abide by linearity.

Similar sequences of internal prolepses may be observed in BLF. For example, Tamina's death 'by water', is anticipated due to the metaphoric use of the way she sits upon a raft, 'looking back, only back'. Further, the (allegoric) use of the voiceless ostriches and the silence of the narrator's father in Angels, seem to portend her silence in drowning.

The use of time therefore, distinguishes both ULB and BLF from a work of fiction and both may instead be seen as texts. This recalls my arguments (in my introduction) between work and text. The way in which time is manipulated and (even) repeated emphasizes the Barthesian notion of text:

The text is not co-existence of meanings but passage, traversal, thus it answers not to an interpretation, (...) but to an explosion, a dissemination.

(Barthes, 1977:76)

2.2.2 REPETITION : SINGULATIVE, REPETITIVE AND ITERATIVE

In addition to the use of analepses and prolepses, Kundera utilizes repetition; a concept Genette (1980) terms 'narrative frequency'. Technically one may distinguish amongst four broad types of narrative frequency:

SINGULATIVE

1.1 NARRATING ONCE WHAT HAPPENED ONCE: This seems to be the more traditional method of telling and does, perhaps, allow for the greatest degree of sequential ordering. This would be the form that traditional realist texts utilize. For example, Pride and Prejudice, with the exception of a few sequences of analepses, as has been argued above, is generally linear and tells once what happened once.

1.2 NARRATING 'N' TIMES WHAT HAPPENED 'N' TIMES: This type may still be described as singulative. Rimmon - Kenan (1983) maintains that Sancho in Don Quixote parodies this when he tells the story of a fisherman who had to transport three hundred goats in a boat that could carry only one goat (at a

time). As Sancho begins to tell of the fisherman's trips to rescue the goats, it becomes obvious that he intends to narrate separately the three-hundred journeys that the fisherman had to undertake. He is only stopped by Quixote's impatient:

'Take it that they are all across ... and do not go on coming and going like that ... or you will never get them all over in a year.'
(ibid.57)

According to Genette (1980) such a type is reducible to the singulative since 'the repetitions of the narrative simply correspond to the repetitions of the story. The singulative is therefore defined not by the number of occurrences on both sides but by the equality of this number' (Genette, 1980:115).

REPETITIVE

2.1. NARRATING 'N' TIMES WHAT HAPPENED ONCE. Such a technique is widely used in both modernist and postmodernist texts and is accompanied by variations in the retelling. Different narrative versions of what happened once, provoke reader instability, diegetic playfulness and lack of closure. This strategy is utilized quite often in Kundera.

ITERATIVE

2.2 NARRATING ONE TIME WHAT HAPPENED 'N' TIMES. This type of narrative Genette terms ITERATIVE and is the type of narrative 'where a single narrative utterance takes upon itself several

occurrences together of the same event (i.e. several events considered only in terms of their analogy).' Genette maintains that such a form has been widely used and is a traditional method of telling.

In this instance Rimmon-Kenan uses the example that Lawrence creates in Women in Love where what happens n times is told once:

Their life and interrelations were such: feeling the pulse and the body of the soil, that opened to their furrow for the grain and became smooth and supple after their ploughing, and clung to their feet and a weight that pulled like desire, lying and responsive when the crops were shorn away ... They took the udder of the cows ... (and) the pulse of the blood of the teats of the cows beat into the pulse of the hands of the men.

(1983:58)

Hence, the action carried out 'n' times is subsumed through the analogy of 'one time'.

A similar example may be found in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man (1965:370):

The crowd boiled, sweated, heaved, women with shopping bags, men with highly polished shoes ... the crowd were boiling figures seen through steaming glass from inside a washing machine; and in the streets the mounted police detail stood looking on, their eyes non-committal beneath the polished visors of their caps, their bodies slanting forward, reins slackly alert, men and horses of flesh imitating men and horses of stone.

For the purpose of my dissertation, I am particularly interested in the 'ITERATIVE and the REPETITIVE' and the potential that such interplay creates for Kundera's texts to 'flee' from realism, as it were.

Iterative sequences are used in both ULB and BLF to 'reveal' the manner in which historical totalization (and its grand metanarrative) has said only once what has occurred many times so as to dull the impact of pain and suffering of the people of Czechoslovakia. Consequently, what happened many times (suffering, ideological domination and indoctrination) may be seen in the tension between what has ideologically and historically become iterative and the 'playful', repetitive quality of the texts which negate traditional, linear telling and ordering. Through the iterative (in historical chronicles), the history of Czechoslovakia has been reduced:

The history of the Czechs and of Europe is a pair of sketches from the pen of mankind's fateful inexperience. History (consequently) is as light as individual human life, unbearably light, light as a feather, as dust swirling into the air, as whatever will no longer exist tomorrow.

(Kundera, 1984:224)

And yet, the iterative while inscribed is undone through the use of the repetitive. By inscribing iterative statements that make certain (textual) incidents 'as light as a feather, (like) dust swirling into the air' and then (paradoxically) inscribing them

repetitively, the texts aim to recuperate the burden of heaviness which has (deliberately) been made light.

Consequently, while the history of Czechoslovakia may have been rendered a sketch, both ULB and BLF attempt to recuperate a sense of that forgetting: the paradoxical 'nature' of the project is hinted at in the titles of the texts themselves. Both inscribe paradox in their titles and the texts are illuminated with the same paradox and interplay: The weight of forgetting and/or remembering, together with the weight of the artistic responsibility is placed against the lightness / weightlessness of artistic creativity and the play with the reader. Hence, the titles of both texts cross ontological boundaries and establish themselves as part of a system of deferral and dispersal.

The nature of the iterative vs the repetitive 'allows' for the undercutting of the grand-metanarratives of both fiction and history. The Czechoslovakian history may have been chronicled meta-narratively as ITERATIVE but the text by blurring the boundaries between 'fact' and fiction and by the repetitive sequences that are simultaneously heavy and playful avert closure and explore 'ruptures' in linear chronicles. The texts manage to recuperate the history of the Other and to simultaneously parody and undercut integrated unity of character and 'plot'. The result is the, ironically, repeated:

Muss es sein?

Es muss sein!
 Es muss sein!
 (Kundera, 1984:32)

Yet, the repetitive quality of both ULB and BLF allows very little to be (Ja, es muss sein!). Through the interrogative, repetitive structure of the text, that which is ideologically repressed is 'revisited'. In ULB the repetitive quality of the image of Tereza in the bullrush basket swimming down the river, becomes an image to simultaneously explore the burden she becomes to Tomas (the heaviness of the unbearable), the burden of the pain of the historical suffering of Czechoslovakia (largely silenced) and the manner in which 'lightness of being' can (in whatever form) evolve from the burden that represses, for:

... in the sunset of dissolution
 everything is illuminated by the
 aura of nostalgia...
 (ibid.4)

I would argue that when the nostalgia is provoked by things, events, images, deliberately left unsaid, the power to 'illuminate the aura of nostalgia' is far more significant.

So while the concept of 'eternal return' is negated, both texts do subscribe (through their repetitive structures) to a 'new code' of eternal return:

Let us therefore agree that the idea of eternal return implies a perspective from which things appear other than as we know them: they appear without the mitigating circumstance or their transitory nature.

(ibid)

By repeating, in different forms and through various (cryptic) images, the notion of eternal return is 'explored' in the course of both texts. This also enables both ULB and BLF to deconstruct binary polarities: in ULB it is the pitting of weight against / and lightness; in BLF, it is the pitting of forgetting against / and (re) memory and (ultimately) of 'fact' and 'fiction'.

The concept of the ITERATIVE vs the REPETITIVE is similarly used in Morrison's Beloved to explore and attempt to recuperate a history of the Other where Other represents the suppressed history of female slaves. As Baby Suggs says:

Not a house in this country ain't packed to the
rafters with some dead Negro's grief.
(Morrison, 1988:5)

It is the 'grief' of Other that the text seeks to explore, by iteratively beginning with the inequality, grief and ominous silence of female slaves. The ruptures in historical representation become apparent through the ruptures in the narrative which collapse the boundaries between the past and present, between the character and the symbolized. In her ruptured narrative, Beloved says (to Sethe):

You are my face; I am you. Why did
you leave me who am you.
(ibid.216)

The re-memory of what may have happened at the ironically named Sweet Home Plantation surfaces through re-exploring the stories of Sethe, Paul D, Beloved and Denver. The analeptic, repetitive

quality of the narrative allows that which has been repressed to surface, literally, from the dead. While the repetition refuses to prioritise linear narrative, the repetitive quality of the stories, with each character adding on details believed to be missing or deliberately silenced, the reader comes to salvage a semblance of what may have happened. In this context, Sethe's admission earlier on in the novel of how her breasts, still heavy from feeding the 'already crawling?' baby are emptied by schoolteacher's nephews,

I am full ... of two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast, the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up,

(ibid.70)

becomes a point of exploration for what may have occurred on the night she was to have escaped with Halle. Where was Halle? Through the interweaving and repetition of the narrative of various characters, it becomes evident that Halle inadvertently happens upon the incident and is rendered immobile. Upon Paul D's disclosure, eighteen years later, Sethe says:

And my husband watching above in the loft, close by ... looking down upon what I couldn't look at at all.

(ibid)

By the use of the iterative (which 'prescribes' a collective misrepresented history) which is contrasted with the (analeptic) repetitive sequences, versions of subjective history are posited and an attempt is made to salvage a semblance of a history of a female slave narrative that within the discourses of power has come

to be repressed. While such repetitive sequences work against Barthes' contention of 'inoculation', it also emphasizes the patriarchal ideology of power which according to Foucault, rules both practice and exclusion:

The various rules and practices of exclusion (in fact) designate, systematically who may speak what may be spoken and how it may be said; in addition, they prescribe what is true and what is false, what is reasonable and what not, what is meant and what not (and so) collude to deny the material existence of discourse itself.

(Leitch, 1983:145)

Because Beloved allows that which is repressed to surface and because it creates space for Otherness; it also seeks to present what, within the Power of Discourse, has come to be seen as 'unpresentable'.

The sequences of repetition in postmodernism, I would further argue, seek to militate against closed readings of texts; by the use of repetition, totalization (seen in this context through the almost simultaneous inscription of the iterative) is negated and through reading the (differing) versions of the 'same stories' the reader perceives aspects of the text anew, while the fictionality of the text is laid bare. In this sense postmodern narratives, by manipulating and problematizing time, negate innocent narratives that 'impose an image of a stable, coherent, continuous, unambiguous, entirely decipherable universe'. Telling chronological stories about an intelligible world is as mythical as

the search for 'ultimate truths' (Jefferson, 1990:15). The way in which time is used in both BLF and ULB seeks to negate the superficial 'intelligible lie' (on the (surface) and to explore the 'unintelligible truth showing through underneath' (Kundera, 1984):254).

2.2.3 ACHRONY

While my discussion has sought to delineate between instances of analepses and prolepses, it is worth mentioning that there are 'moments' in both ULB and BLF when such instances occur simultaneously. This strategy may be seen to break through all conventional boundaries of time. Genette (1980) refers to such instances as ACHRONY. Such a strategy may be seen to continue the postmodern wrangling with time by juxtaposing time(s) present, past and glimpses of (erased) futures.

For example during the earlier stages of this chapter, under the sub-heading: 'Internal Analepses', I discuss the (internal) analeptic sequence that is apparent in Tamina's meeting with the ostriches. The ostriches as I argue, in this section of the chapter had come to tell her about themselves yet could not because their vocal cords are significantly slit, echoing the silences of history, or the 'selves' that history has complicitly effaced. I would like to add that the sequence may also be seen as an achronic sequence because as I argue under 'Internal Prolepses', the

(allegoric) use of the voiceless ostriches portend Tamina's silence in drowning and the voiceless communication between Tamina and the children:

Her head ducked under water. By struggling violently, she managed to raise it back up several times, and each time she saw the boat and the children's eyes observing her. Then she disappeared beneath the surface.
(ibid:191)

For the sake of clarity, I would like to refer to a few more examples of achrony in both ULB and BLF.

Consider, for example, the following extract of ULB which serves to illustrate achrony. This illustrates that linearity of time does not exist within ULB. Besides the juxtaposing of time past and present there is also a glimpse into what may have been a possible future for Franz and Sabina.

And Sabina - what had come over her? Nothing. She had left a man because she felt like leaving him. Had he persecuted her? Had he tried to take revenge on her? Her drama was a drama not of heaviness but of lightness. What fell to her lot was not the burden but the unbearable lightness of being.

Until that time, her betrayals had filled her with excitement and joy, because they opened up new paths to new adventures of betrayal. But what if the paths came to an end? One could betray one's parents, husband, country, love, but when parents, husband, country, and love were gone - what was left to betray?

Sabina felt emptiness all around her. What if that emptiness was the goal of all her betrayals?

Naturally she had not realized it until now. How could she have? The goals we pursue are always veiled. A girl who longs for marriage longs for something she knows nothing about. The boy who hankers after fame has no idea what fame is. The thing that gives our every move its meaning is always totally unknown to us. Sabina was unaware of the goal that lay behind her longing to betray. The unbearable lightness of being - was that the goal? Her departure from Geneva brought her considerably closer to it.

Three years after moving to Paris, she received a letter from Prague. It was from Tomas's son. Somehow or other he had found out about her and got hold of her address, and now he was writing to her as his father's "closest friend." He informed her of the deaths of Tomas and Tereza. For the past few years they had been living in a village, where Tomas was employed as a driver at a collective farm. From time to time they would drive over to the next town and spend the night in a cheap hotel. The road there wound through some hills, and their pickup had crashed and hurtled down a steep incline. Their bodies had been crushed to a pulp. The police determined later that the brakes were in disastrous condition.

She could not get over the news. The last link to her past had been broken.

According to her old habit, she decided to calm herself by taking a walk in a cemetery. The Montparnasse Cemetery was the closest. It was all tiny houses, miniature chapels over each grave.

Sabina could not understand why the dead would want to have imitation palaces built over them. The cemetery was vanity transmogrified into stone. Instead of growing more sensible in death, the inhabitants of the cemetery were sillier than they had been in life. Their monuments were meant to display how important they were. There were no fathers, brothers, sons, or grandmothers buried there, only public figures, the bearers of titles, degrees, and honors; even the postal clerk celebrated his chosen profession, his social significance - his dignity.

Walking along a row of graves, she noticed people gathering for a burial. The funeral director had an armful of flowers and was giving one to each mourner. He handed one to Sabina as well. She joined the group. They made a detour past many monuments before they came to the grave, free for the moment of its heavy gravestone. She leaned over the hole. It was extremely deep. She dropped in the flower. It sailed down to the coffin in graceful somersaults. In Bohemia the graves were not so deep. In Paris the graves were deeper, just as the buildings were taller. Her eye fell on the stone, which lay next to the grave. It chilled her, and she hurried home.

She thought about that stone all day. Why had it horrified her so?

She answered herself: When graves are covered with stones, the dead can no longer get out.

But the dead can't get out anyway! What difference does it make whether they're covered with soil or stones?

The difference is that if a grave is covered with a stone it means we

don't want the deceased to come back. The heavy stone tells the deceased, "Stay where you care!"

That made Sabina think about her father's grave. There was soil above his grave with flowers growing out of it and a maple tree reaching down to it, and the roots and flowers offered his corpse a path out of the grave. If her father had been covered with a stone, she would never have been able to communicate with him after he died, and hear his voice in the trees pardoning her.

What was it like in the cemetery where Tereza and Tomas were buried?

Once more she started thinking about them. From time to time they would drive over to the next town and spend the night in a cheap hotel. That passage in the letter had caught her eye. It meant they were happy. And again she pictured Tomas as if he were one of her paintings: Don Juan in the foreground, a spacious stage-set by a naive painter, and through a crack in the set - Tristan. He died as Tristan, not as Don Juan. Sabina's parents had died in the same week. Tomas and Tereza in the same second. Suddenly, she missed Franz terribly.

When she told him about her cemetery walks, he gave a shiver of disgust and called cemeteries bone and stone dumps. A gulf of misunderstanding had immediately opened between them. Not until that day at the Montparnasse Cemetery did she see what he meant. She was sorry to have been so impatient with him. Perhaps if they had stayed together longer, Sabina and Franz would have begun to understand the words they used. Gradually, timorously, their vocabularies would have come together, like bashful lovers, and the music of one would have begun to

intersect with the music of the
 other. But it was too late now.
 (Kundera, 1984:122-124)

'Firstly', the extract details, through Sabina's interior monologue her 'present' state of mind: her fear that her betrayals have led to the very emptiness she seeks to evade. It also focuses on the past that is dead, made evident in the 'report' of the deaths of Toman and Tereza; it is a past she paradoxically seeks refuge in, evidenced in, 'according to her old habit, she decided to calm herself by taking a walk in the cemetery'. The refuge she seeks, however, eludes her, for she, instead, dwells on the deaths of Tomas and Tereza. This is compounded by the conjuring of her father's death; a father she was once proud to betray. Further, there is the memory of Franz's reaction to cemeteries and a possible future is postulated in:

Perhaps if they had stayed together
 ... their vocabularies would have
 come together ... but it was too
 late now.

This future is significantly erased in the text. (See related arguments in analepses).

A simultaneous, juxtaposed time sequence is also evident 'through' Tereza's world. Her present life (with Tomas), her past (almost defiled by her mother, the memories of which intrude upon her present) and her intense dream sequences are granted almost a simultaneous portrayal in the text. Her world is further disrupted by narratorial intervention. This simultaneous portrayal of Tereza's past, present and dream is compounded with the blurring

between her dream sequences and diegetic 'reality'. For example the dream sequence that details the event on Petrin Hill intrudes upon her reality and upon the reality of events in her life (for the reader). It is this deliberate blurring of events real and dreamed that (sometimes) lead me to believe that conventional notions of time are banished, not only Tereza's time but the reader's sense of stable time is also forsaken.

The narrative strategy of achrony is just as effectively manipulated in BLF. For example, in the following extract the use of achrony is evident.

Her husband died in a hospital. She stayed with him as much as she could, but he died in the night, alone. When she arrived the next day and found his bed empty, the old man he had shared the room with said to her, "You should file a complaint. The way they treat the dead!" There was fear in his eyes. He knew he hadn't long to live. "They took him by the legs and dragged him along the floor. They thought I was asleep. I saw his head bump against the threshold."

Death has two faces. One is nonbeing; the other is the terrifying material being that is the corpse.

When Tamina was very young, death would appear to her only in the first form, the form of nothingness, and the fear of death (a rather vague fear, in any case) meant the fear that someday she would cease to be. As she grew older, that fear diminished, almost disappeared (the

thought that she would one day stop seeing trees or the sky did not scare her in the least), and she paid more and more attention to the second, material side of death. She was terrified of becoming a corpse.

Being a corpse struck her as an unbearable disgrace. One minute you are a human being protected by modesty - the sanctity of nudity and privacy - and the next you die, and your body is suddenly up for grabs. Anyone can tear your clothes off, rip you open, inspect your insides, and - holding his nose to keep the stink away - stick you into the deepfreeze or the flames. One of the reasons she asked to have her husband cremated and his ashes thrown to the winds was that she did not want to torture herself over the thought of what might become of his dearly beloved body.

(Kundera, 1980:171-172)

Their past is 'short circuited' to the present through the narratorial:

Death has two faces. One is non-being: the other is the terrifying material being that is the corpse.

This narratorial comment is followed by Tamina's changing attitudes to death as a child growing into puberty (Past). This is followed by her (present) reminiscences about death:

Being a corpse struck her as an unbearable disgrace ... dearly beloved body.

Tamina's future is then glimpsed in the contemplation of her suicide. This is further intervened upon by Mann's intertext on death which recollects a past on a different level. Yet, the intertext is simultaneously futuristic for its pre-empts Tamina's

death.

2.3 ENDINGS

Traditionally, fictional texts have a definite beginning, middle and end. The movement of the text from beginning to end is closely tied to emplotment and the flow of the narrative moves towards closure. It is through such closure that narrative threads are closely pulled together and the end provides a sense of coherence for both narrative and reader. The movement of the narrative towards closure may also be seen in relation to a revelation of the truth. For example, in Pride and Prejudice closure is arrived at through the revelation that Mr Darcy is the 'true gentlemen'; further, once Elizabeth has discovered her 'true self', they are prepared for a happy, fruitful marriage together. Even in a relatively complex work, like Wuthering Heights, that uses various sequences of analepses and dual narratives which challenge the reader into deciding the credibility of the narratives of Nelly Dean and Lockwood, closure is achieved through the intimate linking of Hareton and Catherine (junior). Hence, the 'truth of unity' which escapes Heathcliff and Catherine (senior) is achieved in the younger generation by pushing contradictions to the margins of the work. I return to this notion in the following chapter of my study.

The invocation of truth is, perhaps, seen more literally in a play

like Oedipus the King (Sophocles, 1974), where Oedipus, seeing the suffering of his people (which is) caused by the affliction in Thebes, is determined to seek the truth and the entire plot is structured around this revelation of truth which is invoked at various points in the play. Ignoring Teresias' utterance which is made during the early stages of the play that he (Oedipus) is the 'cursed polluter of this land' (ibid, 135), Oedipus continues to show his determination to 'find the truth', 'to know the truth' and when the truth is revealed (through varying degrees of dramatic irony) and he realizes the irony of his 'escape' from Corinth he deplores 'this truth (which is out) at last', the truth that makes him realize that he is responsible for:

Incestuous sin! Breeding where I
was bred! Father, brother, and son;
bride, wife and mother; confounded
in one monstrous matrimony! All
human frailties in one crime
compounded.

(Ibid:65)

Jefferson (1980:19) argues that with the revelation of the truth, convenient closure is achieved through banishing Oedipus, 'the unclean (who) must not remain in the eye of the day' (Ibid). As a result, the city of Thebes is purged and returned to a state of cleanliness.

The contrast to revelation of the truth may be seen in Waiting for Godot (Beckett, 1952) where neither audience nor character is sure of anything. Rather than invocations of truth, it is uncertainty

that is invoked, and so begins a game that may be seen to literally collapse upon itself. The uncertainty that pervades, is further compounded in the repetitive structure and action of the play. All that 'happens' is that the lone tree bears four or five leaves while Pozzo becomes blind and Lucky mute. In Act II the audience is exposed to a repetition of the lines that 'close' Act I:

Vladimir: Well? Shall we go?
 Estragon: Yes, Let's go.
 [They do not move]
 (Ibid, 93)

The inherent uncertainty of the play is self-consciously highlighted in the uncertain (barely remembered) invocation:

Didi: Hope deferred maketh, the something sick, who said that?
 (and the incongruous reply of Gogo)
 Gogo: (tearing at his boot). Why don't you help me?
 (Ibid, 1952:9)

Postmodern texts further, negate any sense of closure. The notion of a single ending that (obviously) seals the unit is parodied in FLW which offers the reader three (possible) endings and therefore also implies a choice for the reader, thereby implying that neither reader nor text is unified.

Such choice was unheard of during the realist era. [Consider for example, the controversy over Great Expectations (Dickens, orig. publ. 1861). Dickens' publishers, unhappy with his original ending which realises the chasm between Estella and Pip, and keeps them apart at the end, demanded that he rewrite the conclusion, so that it would bring together Pip and Estella so as to appease the

expectations and desires of the readers. Dickens, in what is probably a much merited stance in classic realism rewrote the conclusion, which appeased his publishers. It is, however, a conclusion that, for contemporary readers who are aware of the controversy, continues to be ambiguous:

... the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light, they showed up to me, I saw no shadow of another parting from her.

The reader may choose to see them together although the notion that they will remain apart is evident for the wary reader. This is perhaps a more 'credible' working out of the ashes of Pip's expectations.]

I have argued elsewhere in this chapter that while Modernism does work against the impoverishment of traditional forms of representation, it still attempts to, and manages to, achieve a semblance of unity. This is brought about by the inscription of aesthetic unity, carefully controlled and assisted by narrators who are themselves seeking a unified stance, as will be shown in my discussion of narrators.

Such a recuperation of unity is especially evident in the endings that modernist texts generally provide; endings that close the work. For example in Saul Bellow's Herzog (1964), the protagonist openly admits that some people 'thought he was cracked'. Herzog falls under the spell of writing his letters to write / think

himself out of these cracks. His letters therefore are an effort to,

... explain, to have it out, to justify, to put in perspective, to clarify, to make amends.
(Ibid:8)

While Malcolm Bradbury (1982) may argue that Herzog is 'a tale of two cities', I would like to argue that the 'tale of two cities' may be reducible to Herzog's sense of pastoral peace that he does ultimately achieve. Hence, the fragmentary nature of the cracks he experiences assist him to realize that beneath the fragmentary there exists, what Bradbury terms, 'deeper connections'. For, in Herzog there is closure which is 'found' in the protagonist's knowledge that 'he had done with these letters (and) whatever had come over him during these last months, the spell, really seemed to be passing' (Bellow, 1964:348).

The novel is, therefore, guided by its movement towards closure. At the beginning of the novel, Herzog admits that by admitting to his madness he seeks, by implication, to recover his balance. And this is what he does (perhaps tenuously at first) manage to do 'at the end' of the novel.

In the pastoral haven, therefore, he manages to overcome the cracks of fragmentation; through his letters he find the balance he seeks and the closure of the novel becomes the harbinger of peace and unity within himself:

At this time he had no messages for anyone. Nothing. Not a single word.

(Ibid:348)

In postmodern fiction, however, the undermining of stability also 'informs' the sense of endings. Postmodernism refutes the idea of conclusions simply because such texts in flaunting their textuality also highlight the superficiality of conclusions which only emphasizes mimesis.

'Tied up' to the notion of not ending is also the deliberate attempt to frustrate readers who come to a text with the presupposition that the text will provide a suitable solution to the question, 'what happened ... finally'. In this sense Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49 deliberately flouts the readers' expectation(s) of a 'stable conclusion'. Just when the reader expects a revelation, the text 'stops' and the reader is frustrated as I argue in my discussion of readers in the final chapter of this study.

In a related context the 'story' that Saleem Sinai tells in MC is circuitously delayed and is at serious risk of not even getting to 'where he was born'. Commenting on the use of time in MC and the obvious manner in which it subverts strict (Eurocentric) linearity, Rushdie quoted in The Empire Writes Back (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffany (eds.) 189:183) maintains that MC attempts to 'reproduce' the traditional techniques of Indian oral narrative,

... which goes in great swoops, it goes in spirals or in loops, it every so often reiterates something that happened earlier to remind you, and then takes you off again... it frequently digresses ... can take all kinds of liberties; (and) indulge in any kind of extravagance.

The ending is similarly diffuse. The only 'certainty' about the text is that in 're-writing' the literary and historical map of India, the reader is allowed the opportunity to taste the 'pickles of history'. Any sense of cohesion is broken down by the 'chutnification of narrative'. Conclusions and any sense of a unified future are negated in the narrator's assertion that,

... the cracks are widening, pieces of my body are falling off. Yes, they will trample me underfoot, the number's marching one two three, four hundred million five hundred six, reducing me to specks of voiceless dust, just as, all in good time, they will trample my son who is not my son and his who will not be his, until the thousand and first generation, until a thousand and one midnights have bestowed their terrible gifts and a thousand and one children have died, because it is the privilege and the curse of midnight's children to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirl pool of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in peace.

(Rushdie, 1981:463)

Marguerite Alexander argues that the manner in which postmodern fiction denies and / or withholds telos is a radical break with earlier forms of fiction. Where FLW offers more than a single, closed ending. Pynchon's Crying of Lot 49 takes the reader to the

brink of revelation and then denies that revelation, while Golding's Pincher Martin provides closure on the basis that the entire text be re-read in the light of the closure while the supernatural, so avidly used in MC remains unnaturalized. (See Alexander, 1990:3). This lack of telos in postmodern fiction, therefore, inscribes into its textuality its continued reverberation long after the last page is read.

Kundera in ULB and BLF utilizes what may be termed deviant ordering so as to negate telos. I have argued in other areas of this dissertation that the lack of telos in BLF and ULB may be read in conjunction with the attempt that both texts make to negate the idealized closure that papers over the cracks, (the cracks that the narrator of MC, significantly, sees as ever-widening), hence by negating closure, the closure of history is repudiated.

In BLF (1980), the logical sequence of the 'story' could conveniently have been concluded with Part 6 (The Angels) with the death of Tamina, the heroine for BLF is 'a novel about Tamina, and whenever Tamina is absent, it is a novel for Tamina. But it runs its boundaries and (literally) flows into the Part 7, (ironically named?) The Border, which inscribes overt void-like sex games, misunderstandings, repetition and comic absurdity. It is almost a send-up of history itself. The cap on Gottwald's head which is all that remains of Clementis comes to land (significantly?) on the Passer's coffin after Papa Cleavis decides to 'act as though no hat

had ever existed and he just happened to be standing here.'

The last chapter examines the otherside of the laughter of angels (which is the laughter amidst which Tamina metaphorically dies) in which 'things' lose their meanings: it is a chapter that explores the depthlessness of the void. The metaphor of the void so effectively conjured in both ULB and BLF cancels any telos.

As I have argued in the final section of [**The Postmodern Character**, ULB similarly negates telos through its deviant ordering. While the final section of 'Karenin's Smile' is flooded with a bizzare, melancholic longing for Karenin and while Tomas and Tereza appear to have 'settled down', this section is retrospective and occurs before 'The Grand March' (Part 6). In a catalogue that is ironically reductionist, the reader realizes that any notion of 'lasting happiness' is effectively cancelled.

2.4 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The motivation for this chapter has been predominantly to analyse the astute ways in which postmodern fiction undoes the Grand Narrative of History by positing the notion that the pluralization of history is significant if subsumed, repressed versions of history are to emerge. Further, this chapter analyses how examples of postmodern fiction militate against being subsumed through parodic appropriation and the undermining of imperial discourse.

In keeping with the 'mood' of my study, I myself appropriate structuralist concepts to order my thoughts for the purpose of this dissertation. However, my appropriation also shows the shortcomings of structuralism to deal with postmodern fiction. Since nothing about such fiction is innocent, structuralist concepts / categories have of necessity to be reinvented. I would like to believe that this chapter has managed to achieve a successful reinvention of structuralist categories in order to explicate the diversity of postmodern fiction.

Through the ongoing juxtaposition of the intelligibility of History and the postmodern (fictive) worrying of time, I have emphasized the questions that History has subsumed in order to create order and objectivity. The fractured, fragmented nature of postmodern fiction raises imperative questions:

- 1) Why was History turned into 'poetry'?
- 2) Whose purpose did History's intelligibility serve?

Once again, through this chapter, I return to my stance that postmodern fiction is not apolitical. Further, another thought that needs to be voiced is that postmodern fiction is no longer the fiction of reflection. Rather, such fiction constructs our perceptions and demands that we question rather than (silently) accept.

My following chapter is [**The Postmodern Character**], in which I intend to analyse the shift that postmodern fiction has resulted in for characters. My chapter argues that postmodern characters cannot be mimetically adequate when the texts that they are foregrounded in, negate traditional mimetic representation.

My analysis of character in the following chapter must, consequently, be read within the fragmented nature of postmodern fiction generally. Given the changes that postmodernism has wrought in fiction, I argue that it would be untenable to expect postmodern characters to resemble their unified, intelligible counterparts of classic realism.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POSTMODERN CHARACTER

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I argue that since postmodernism seeks to negate unities and monolithic truths, characters in postmodernism are situated so as to disperse any notion of unity or totality. Characters are, therefore, thrown into being to expose the folly of presenting them as centres of truth and being.

Further, characterization in postmodern fiction also works through co-opting the reader as co-producer of the character. This position may generally be construed as being in opposition to the realist tradition where characters are presented as whole, unified centres of meaning. These totalized meanings may often be traced back to the author. The postmodern, however, seeks to oppose this verticality that (ultimately) places the author at the apex of the work. Such strategies within the realist tradition have been collusive in creating the notion that characters do exist, that they do have meaning. Yet, even within mimesis, such characters always disintegrate outside their textual contexts.

Projections of unity and mimetic adequacy have, further, been

responsible for calling upon readers to make futuristic predictions about the characters outside the text. For example, it is not unusual for students to be asked to pass judgement on how effective the marriage of Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzgerald Darcy in Pride and Prejudice (Jane Austen) would be in the future. Yet, as Docherty (1983:50) maintains the character outside the context always disintegrates.

Through its method of situating character, however, the postmodern opens up a horizontal aspect to the text which allows it to experiment with existing patterns and also to voice concerns of the marginalised and, hence, to negate totalized configurations.

My reliance on Docherty (1983) may be justified since I find his text both a useful and reliable source on character(ization) in postmodern fiction. However, I have managed to balance his views with the perceptions of Aleid Fokemma (1991) in various sections of this study. Further, I have undercut a unitary vision of character in postmodern fiction through my reference to realist fiction and my own overarching analysis of characters in postmodern fiction.

If my arguments appear to oppose the realist and postmodern character, it is because I do not believe that modernism significantly altered the presentation of character. While modernism was 'initiated' as a response to the paucity of realism generally and the 'old stable ego' specifically, it did not greatly

contest character. What modernism effected was the fragmentation of the externals of character while it continued to explore the 'self'. It also did not (generally) question the problems of representation that postmodernism foregrounds. In this respect, Fokemma (1991:68) concurs:

where a realist text concentrates on self knowledge or self-discovery, the modernist text rather probes the nature of identity, the boundaries between self and other, the continuities of an essential self. In Virginia Woolf's fiction, boundaries of ego are eroded, but largely as a function of some great unity in life ... selves or identities of characters are central to the modernist (novel) and the representation of the self is not problematized.

According to Docherty (1983) the postmodern character has moved from a unified self to a highly mobile subject. Such mobility is effected through numerous ploys which are aimed at laying bare the character as the progeny of creative artifice. Some of the strategies utilized by postmodernism include the installation of realist patterns of characterization and subversion, fragmentation, loss of identity, silence, a hesitation to name and a negation of a patri-lineal heritage.

This chapter will look at such strategies and attempt to reveal how the postmodern character through its mobility negates unity and monolithic totality.

3.2 NAMING

Realism works through naming without hesitation. This tendency, may be traced to the notion of stamping authority. Not only are characters named but they are also given a lineage that traces (back) historical lineage, thereby establishing a meaningful sense of unity for such characters. In this regard Docherty (1983:50) says:

The name not only identifies in the sense of naming the character but also in the sense of unifying, integrating, individualizing the various disparate manifestations of the character ... the name confronts us with the prospect of conceptual unity behind the world of bewildering phenomena (my underlining).

Not only are characters named but pain is also taken to map out a lineage for the character. This simultaneously offers a (fixed) interpretation for the character and stamps authorial fiat over the character. In Hardy's Tess of the Durbervilles, John Durbeyfield is made aware of his 'true' lineage by the parson who must first establish his lineage through his status as Parson Tringham, the antiquary of Stagfoot Lane. To John Durbeyfield, the parson says:

Don't you really know, Durbeyfield that you are the lineal representative of the ancient and knightly family of the D'Urbervilles, who derive their descent from Sir Pagan d'Urberville, that reknowned Knight who came from Normandy with William the Conqueror? (Hardy, 1979:45)

Such a disclosure of John Durbeyfield's 'true' lineage is the initiation of the events that ultimately lead to the downfall of Tess. Hence, lineage is transparently established for purpose and the initiation leads to culmination (i.e. Tess' downfall) and final closure in the projection that Angel and Tess' sister Liza - Lu (a spiritualized image of Tess) may seek fulfilment together. This is significantly dealt with in a chapter entitled 'Fulfilment').

Even in the Great Gatsby (Fitzgerald, 1967) projects the story of the narrator Nick Carraway, through the establishment of his lineage evidenced in:

My family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this middle-Western city for three generations. The Carraways are something of a clan, and we have a tradition that we're descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch, but the actual founder of my line was my grandfather's brother, who came here in fifty-one.

(ibid. 6)

For female characters, a specifically patri-lineal heritage is established. For example, in Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Tess at the beginning of the narrative is 'a mere vessel of emotion untinctured by experience'. In the course of the novel she is 'tinctured with experience'; this 'tincture' is directly related to the trap of the patri-lineal heritage that she has mapped out for her.

Postmodernism, however, reveals a hesitancy to name and a hesitancy

to establish (patri) lineal heritage. In ULB and BLE such hesitancy to name may be seen in a proliferation of characters who are called (for example) 'Teresa's mother', 'the butcher's wife', 'the girl with glasses' and 'Tamina's husband'.

Hence as Docherty (1983:XV) says:

(characters) are no longer clearly delineated centres - around which we orient ourselves and our attitudes - they become fragmented or evanescent.

Such nameless characters emphasize the fragmented nature of the text and, further, highlight the notion that the postmodern negates the concept of 'centres of unity'. Characters with names (mere tags) like 'Teresa's mother', and 'the girl with glasses', lay bare the notion that the world is actually a mass of 'bewildering phenomena' and that postmodern fiction seeks to undermine conceptual unity. Further, by naming in this way, authorial fiat is negated.

That the butcher's wife in BLE changes from a clumsy, provincial lady to a 'lady fit for a poet' through the power of words reveals the ephemeral nature of the postmodern character. Similarly ephemeral positions are occupied by 'the girl with glasses', 'the lady, who looked like a giraffe and a stork', etc. Their roles are merely functional and no effort is actually made to give them 'body'. 'The girl with glasses' lives under the gaze of Franz and merely signifies a vessel for Franz's sexual appetite while he

lives under the gaze of Sabina. Similarly, the 'lady who looks like a giraffe and a stork' titillates Tomas, the epic womanizer, and subverts the position of control that he has set up with his previous lovers for, 'he had yet to be faced with a woman who was taller than he was ... and fingered his anus'. But while she sets out to subvert his role she is shown up to be merely a linguistic sign on a page, constructed and empowered only through language. This is emphasized, further, through the unusual language she is (very soon) written off with:

... her slightly parted legs in the air, so that they looked like the raised arms of a soldier surrendering to a gun pointed at him.
(Kundera, 1984:206)

Significantly, she becomes to Tomas, 'yet another piece of the world ... yet another strip off the infinite canvas of the universe' (ibid).

Structuralists argue that the status of characters is 'functional'. This indicates that characters assume in Greimas' terms the status of actants rather than personages. Still, characters become subordinated to plot. Such a subordination of character, implies that the emphasis is on plot; the off-shoot is the importance of what characters do; the emphasis is on their function in the plot. Hence, structural analyses situate character in functional terms so as to propel the plot forward. I would, therefore, argue that the paucity of structuralism lies in drawing a direct link between character and propelling the plot forward; postmodernism however,

does not wish to plot or to create intelligible plots. Characters, therefore, are not necessarily harnessed to any action or function. In this instance, postmodern characters like 'the girl with glasses' and 'lady who looked like a giraffe and a stork' are not 'functional' or actantial. (See for more detailed comments in 3.6. below).

Rather, such characters are used to heighten the power of language and to further detract from any mimetic adequacy. Further, my argument against structuralist notions of character resides in the fixed roles that such characters are 'given'. I find these roles and functions reductive and sealed (off) to any reader participation. It is this very fixity and negation of reader participation that postmodern fiction militates against.

Hesitancy to establish authority is, further, revealed in de-individualisation. Hence in ULB and BLF some characters are named (sans surnames) but in order to detract from the unity and centrality that names (traditionally) confer, they are deindividualized.

Eva, whose lineage is evasively dismissed in a single paragraph,

Eva was a lighthearted man-chaser ... she'd
let him do what he wanted and wouldn't make
any demands on him

(Kundera, 1980:50),

is confused with Nora on the basis of 'exactly the same build, the same way of carrying herself and the same beautiful legs'.

Similarly, Hugo is deindividualized through an association with halitosis. 'The sour smell of Hugo's breath', is raised in various contexts and his 'love-making' with Tamina, rather than set up any semblance of unity between them, further draws them apart:

At that moment Tamina was overcome by a wave of revulsion ... before her was the image of that boy's pubic hair. She could smell the sour breath from his mouth.

(Kundera, 1980:114)

Their severing is further emphasized through the conjuring up of the gaze of Tamina's husband. Hence, the disparate quality of their sexual activity is echoed through the gaze of her husband. This is echoed by the disparate concerns of the text itself:

Her husband's image followed her around the room as she turned her face ... it was a giant image of a grotesquely giant husband, ... a husband she had imagined for three years.

(Kundera, 1980:103)

Such 'traits' that are (almost) arbitrarily attributed to characters in postmodern fiction should not be conflated with the use of character 'traits' in both traditional and structuralist forms of character. In this regard, Chatman (1978:126) argues for the conception of character as a 'paradigm of traits'. The virtue of this is expressed in his belief that a 'trait provides the character with a relatively stable abiding personal quality' (ibid). While his argument does concede a change in traits, for example, he argues that a character may exhibit a trait at the beginning of a work which alters due to circumstance later on, I

would argue that Chatman still favours the consistency of character (traits). When changes do occur they are triggered by circumstance. This puts the argument into a formulaic 'cause and effect' mould. Consequently, to attribute 'traits' to characters in my analyses would actually be defeating my purpose. Certainly, such traits (as used by Chatman specifically and Structuralism generally) seem to be explicable; postmodern characters do not necessarily possess 'traits' that are explicable and many of their actions do not propel the 'ends' of the texts, nor are they (necessarily) harnessed to plot.

One of the thoughts I would like to offer in this respect is that rather than subordinating character to plot (as (socio) structuralism does), postmodernism approaches character in terms of the self-conscious écriture that it foregrounds. Characters are the effect of words, as opposed to, characters who are functional and whose roles / purposes are goal-orientated.

3.3 NEGATING PATRI-LINEAL HERITAGE

The traditional practice of situating character and granting female characters a specifically patri-lineal heritage is subverted in the postmodern. Docherty (1983:52) refers to an effective, if extreme, realization of such subversion seen in Bacheleme's, The Dead Father:

We wends are not like other people.
We wends are the fathers of

ourselves ... Wends have no wives, they have only mothers. Each wend impregnates his own mother and thus fathers himself. We are all married to our mothers, in proper legal fashion.

While ULB and BLF are not as extreme, the notion to situate or grant patrilineal heritage is (still) subverted. Tereza's conception is reduced to a single moment of indiscretion. Her father does not heed her mother's warning to, 'be careful, very careful', and since, 'there was no doctor willing to perform an abortion', Tereza is born. Tereza is not named in the tradition of the father (she has no surname). She is instead constructed through the guilt of a mother who throws convention to the wind. Tereza's mother's history is, 'but a single casting off of youth and beauty'. Her lessons to Tereza are equally bizarre:

Tereza can't reconcile herself to the fact
that the human body pisses and farts.
(Kundera, 1984:45)

Tereza's mother subverts the traditional sense of the maternal and any notion of maternal protection is waived. When Tereza locks the bathroom door to keep out her stepfather, her mother's acerbic comment is:

Who do you think you are any way? Do you
think he's going to bite off a piece of your
beauty?

(ibid.)

Tomas similarly negates his paternal duty to his son on the spur of the moment. He reasons that his son is, after all, the product of

nothing but a 'single improvident night' (this is paralleled by Tereza's conception). He is therefore bound not to fight for his son for the sake of any 'paternal sentiment'. With the negation of his paternal responsibility, he turns his entire family against him:

Thus in practically no time he managed to rid himself of wife son, mother and father.
(Kundera, 1984:45)

This rootlessness is, further, emphasized by laying bare the fabrication of character. Characters are made, not born (therefore the denial of lineage). They are born not of the womb but of a stimulating phrase or two or from a basic situation. Consequently, in BLF we are told:

According to my calculations there are two or three new fictional characters baptized on earth every second ... but what can I do? I have to call my characters something don't I? Well, my heroine belongs to me ... I am giving her a name no woman has ever had before: Tamina.
(Kundera, 1980:79)

Such 'arbitrary' situations and laying bare of the characterization process allows the character to be read in various ways and acknowledges that characters are textual functions. Such a strategy further opens characters to change. This change is not evidenced in the typical realist sense where change is related to 'moral development' or a lack thereof. Rather, such change heightens what Docherty (1983) terms the evanescent nature of the

postmodern character who is built up of several bodily parts, and harbours no sense of organic unity:

Looking at herself Tereza wondered what she would look like if her nose grew a millimeter a day. How long would it take before her face began to look like someone else's? ... What was the relationship between Tereza and her body?

(Kundera, 1984:132)

Docherty (1983:82) discusses such evanescence by referring to Sucknick's use of character in Out:

Today I'm Harrold. Two R's. Tomorrow I might be someone else.

While such evanescence detaches the text from any well-structured traditional sense of plot, it further makes a compelling statement about character in the postmodern text. Characters are no longer conceptual unities. Instead, the postmodern situates 'the process of characterization, the continual re-creation of character as a 'becoming' rather than as an essence' (Docherty, 1983:268).

3.4 WORDS

A further strategy that the postmodern effectively utilizes is to reveal characters as the progeny of words. Unlike realism, there is no attempt to deny that characters are made up and through words. With regard to the status of characters, Waugh (1984:92) enhances her stance by referring to John Barth's comment that,

the ... view of characterization is

that we cannot, no matter how hard we try, make real people out of language.

Waugh (*ibid.* 97) also refers to Gass' notion in a similar context:

It seems a country-headed thing to say: that novels (and by implication characters) should be made of words and merely words is a shocking reality.

Postmodernism manipulates this through the exposition that characters are ultimately a seemingly random selection of words. For example in ULB, Tereza is born of six laughable fortuities. Further, readers are informed that,

... characters are not born of women, they are born of a situation, a metaphor ... the characters in my novels are my own unrealized possibilities.

(Kundera, 1984:87)

That characters are not born of women also detracts from any mimetic adequacy that characters may generally purport to have.

Such a strategy also heightens the fictive reference embedded within the postmodern. A similar strategy is utilized in BLE:

According to my calculations there are two or three fictional characters baptized on earth every second.

(Kundera, 1980:87)

This is also emphasized by the mise-en-abyme of Banaka writing a novel. Of the novel writing process he says to Bibi (who is herself writing a novel about, 'how I view the world'):

Think of what goes into a novel, after all. All those different characters. Do you really mean to say you know all there is to know about them? ... novels are the fruit of human illusion.

(Kundera, 1980:89):

Such overt reference to the novel writing process therefore denies that everything about a character will actually be known by the reader. Thus the reader is co-erced into creating his/her own notion, thus dispersing the character/s as it were.

A very literal experiment with words is worked with the butcher's wife (who remains, significantly, unnamed) in BLF. She is turned into a queen through the power of Goethe's words,

... the provincial lady wearing a hat, some large beads and black high-heeled pumps is turned into a perfect woman for a poet:

(Kundera, 1983:147)

Characters are, therefore, fabricated / created through words (seemingly random) and since words create, words can also fragment.

3.5 FRAGMENTATION

That characters in postmodernism are fragmented 'fits in' with the postmodern concern to disperse unity or continuity. Just as the text itself is fragmented, so too characters are fragmented quite often by, ironically, being created through dualities. For example, Tereza in ULB embodies the duality of body and soul and

slowly her dream sequences overtake her so much so that her dream on Petrin Hill may be read as a part of what she actually experiences. Similarly Tamina in BLF embodies the duality of the past and the present and increasingly the silences of the past haunt any sense of peace-so much so that she begins to see the silences as a terror ridden fairy-tale. To live out her present she seeks to embody the past. She has, we are told, 'lost all sense of chronology' (just as the text has).

Fragmentation of character not only challenges unity and centrality but it also uses characters in a way that works against mimetic adequacy where writing a description of character duplicates the character mimetically, but in an inferior way since the writing becomes a poor substitute for the 'real' character. Postmodern writers negate this position in their writings. Perhaps, more importantly, the concern in postmodernism challenges the problems that the mimetic conception of character causes in fiction. In this regard Docherty (1983:xii) says:

Making the character the focus of interest in an unproblematical way suggested by mimetic theory necessarily implies that the uniqueness or singularity of the character will condition our understanding of the fiction in which he or she appears. As a result individuality is valourized .. individual characters are understood in terms of their unity and completeness or self-sufficiency ... the 'meaning' of such characters in the world of fiction remains

stable, once the character has been read or interpreted in his or her singular entirety.

The above notion may be complemented with Belsey's (1980) observation that through negating unity and centrality, postmodernism sets out to undermine those ideological half-truths that masquerade as coherence in the interests of social coherence. Such masquerading obscures half-truths and reconciles contradictions, and literally cements over omissions and gaps so as to create the illusion of coherence and wholeness.

In MC Saleem Sinai is a subject who is as fragmented as Post-Independent India. He is, significantly, born on the 15 August, 1947 at midnight which co-incides with India's independence and it is on and against his body that the history of post-independent India may be read. He attempts to be the all-controlling male narrator who attempts to tell a unitary narrative but he soon finds that the narrative fragments as does his body. He cannot tell a story based on 'what happened-nextism', he offers instead a tale that is a 'chutnification', for as he says,

... here is Padma ... bullying me into the world of the linear narrative, the universe of what happened next: 'At this rate,' Padma complains, 'You'll be two hundred years old before you manage to tell about your birth.'
(Rushdie, 1981:107)

It is significant that it is the female character who urges a linear narrative, while the birth Saleem wishes so urgently to tell

about is equally clouded in a lie. Exchanged at birth, Saleem Sinai is (actually) not the (true) Saleem Sinai.

The narrator's quandary becomes a textual quandary of presenting character(s), for how do you present unified, whole characters when:

Things even people have a way of
leaking into each other ... like
flavours when you cook.
(Rushdie, 1981:38)

His quest to present a unified narrative which breaks down is echoed in his fragmented body. He loses fingers, a patch of hair and his body is as fissured as the story he tells. Neither the character nor the narrative is unified because,

... the world as we know it is not
this ultimately simple configuration
where events are reduced to
accentuate their essential traits
... on the contrary it is a
profusion of entangled events ... if
it appears as profound and totally
meaningful, this is because it began
and continues its secret errors and
phantasms.

(Hutcheon, 1983:162)

So, instead of a unitary tale, Saleem offers Padma his multiplicity, and in so doing decentres not only history and narrative, which are robbed of their historical humanist structures and functions but according to Hutcheon, 'the male subject is not only decentred but is actually splitting' (ibid).

His character is further, fragmented by his special gift to see into other people's minds and so, bits of flotsam from other people's minds float into his and so he exclaims,

... a human being inside himself is anything but whole ... all kinds of everything are jumbled up inside.
(Rushdie, 1981:145)

Hence, it is through Saleem's fragmentation that the fragmentation of post-independent India is echoed. It is through his cracking body that the convenient totalized configurations of history are questioned and exposed as 'a host of errors and phantasms'.

Fragmentation of character is similarly harnessed in ULB and BLF. Many characters parade through the text, all are not significant instead, they are exposed as textually functional; this further detaches the texts from any sense of well-structured plot. Consider the following example of a lady in ULB:

... two unbelievable large pendulous breasts and a behind like enormous sacks ... that had nothing in common with her fine face.
(Kundera, 1984:96)

The lady becomes a vehicle to elaborate upon Tereza's confusion about the duality of body and soul, a duality that soon consumes her every waking moment, while substituting her present with dreams of the past and dreams of what may be.

Similarly, any semblance of unity (in the 'traditional' sense) for Tereza and Tomas is shattered quite early in the novel. Their

death, significantly, under the sign of heaviness is proleptic. Even as we read, therefore, their death overshadows most events in their lives.

3.6 KINETIC CHARACTERS

To further expose the myth of unity and 'being', postmodernism uses kinetic characters. According to Docherty (1983:224),

(... the kinetic character) will be the one who is able to be absent from the text; this character's motivation extends beyond that which is merely necessary for the accomplishment or the design of the plot, and he or she 'moves' in other spheres than the one we are reading.

Kinetic characters 'exist' within the textuality even though they cease to be part of the temporal by being projected through the gaze of characters who are not kinetic.

In ULB, Sabina may be termed a kinetic character. She is perhaps, the only character in ULB who comes close to attaining a semblance of lightness but is haunted by further betrayals. Rather than risk courting future betrayal, she chooses a flight of sorts. She literally transgresses the 'world' of the text. Her presence, henceforth, is paradoxically felt through her absence:

Yes, it was too late, and Sabina knew she would leave Paris, move on, and on again (for) in the mind of a

woman, no place is home, the thought
of an end of all flight is
unbearable.

(Kundera, 1984:124)

Her future 'appearances' are monitored through the 'eye' of Franz who lives under the gaze of Sabina. The very words that create her, therefore, allow her to flee the text. Such a strategy lays bare the strategy that characters are created through words and further emphasizes the paradox of creating presence through absence. Franz even dies under Sabina's gaze:

... Sabina fixed her eyes on him,
unreal Sabina with her grand fate
... Sabine's eyes were still on him.

(Kundera, 1984: 274).

A similar sense of paradoxical character is harnessed through Tamina's husband. He does not become a 'full-bodied' character at the diegetic level in the typical sense. His presence is, instead, felt through Tamina who lives under his gaze. Significantly, our initial introduction to him is achieved through what may be termed total absence: death:

When he died, they asked her whether she wanted him to be buried or cremated ... since she had no home and was afraid she would be forced to carry her husband around for the rest of her life like so much hand luggage, she had his ashes scattered.

(Kundera, 1980:83)

Through the manipulation of time and the use of retrospective sequences his presence in the text grows and the reader gets a

glimpse of the life Tamina and her husband shared. His most 'full presence' is felt in the 'love-scene' between Tamina and Hugo:

Her husband's image followed her around the room as she turned her face. It was a giant husband, a husband much larger than life, yet just what she had imagined for three years.

(Kundera, 1980:109)

Such a technique harnesses various strategies simultaneously: it creates presence in absence; it also stresses the disparate concerns of the text; it further undermines any sense of unity between the lovers, thereby emphasizing that making love is detached from notions of the romantic; instead, it can become underscored by lies and confusion.

Further, presence in absence is to be seen throughout BLF. The narrator informs us that the novel,

... is about Tamina, whenever Tamina is absent, it is a novel for Tamina. She is its main character and main audience and all the other stories are variations on her story and come together in her life as in a mirror.

(Kundera, 1980:165).

Such a technique may be seen to be pre-empted by the writers of the absurd. For example, in Beckett's Waiting for Godot (1952) the entire play is sustained through the absence of GODOT who Vladimir and Estragon wait for. Despite Godot's absence and (ultimate) non-arrival, the play constantly refers to him and so sustains his

presence. The dependence between Gogo and Didi is elaborated to their dependence on Godot:

Estragon : We're not tied?
 Vladimir : Tied?
 Estragon : Ti-ed.
 Vladimir : How do you mean tied.
 Estragon : Down.
 Vladimir : But to whom? By whom?
 Estragon : To your man.
 Vladimir : To Godot? Tied to Godot? What an
 idea! No question of it (Pause) for
 the moment.

(Beckett, 1952:63)

This is, further, echoed in the apparent stasis of the play and the desire to continue to wait (what else is there?):

Vladimir : Well? Shall we go?
 Estragon : Yes, let's go.

(They do NOT move)

(Beckett, 1952:89)

Should Godot have arrived, in this instance, the arrival would have signalled the end of the play. Godot's absence, therefore, sustains the playing out (literally) of Waiting for Godot.

Such drama also echoes the rootlessness of characters who are merely 'thrown into being'. Deprived of any sense of traditional direction, they must play out their roles, balanced by antics to contend with cosmic ironies. (Fokemma, 1991:88) cites Charles Glicksburg who concurs in this respect. Commenting on the works of Beckett he maintains that such works portray 'man' as an absence, a self stripped off ontological truth, devoid of an essence.

I do not, however, wish to suggest that postmodern characters play out set roles as indicated by the functional and actantial models of Vladimir Propp and A.J. Greimas respectively. In this instance Vladimir Propp, a Russian naratologist maintains through his study of Russian Folktales that characters in such tales may be reduced to 'spheres of action' through which their performance may be characterized. Propp identifies seven goal roles:

1. villain
2. the dispatcher
3. the hero
4. the false hero
5. the sought for person
6. the donor
7. the helper.

A.J. Greimas, working within a structuralist mode is obviously influenced by Propp's analysis of Russian folktales. Greimas utilizes the terms actants and acteurs to describe characters.

Whereas actants are general qualities, acteurs are invested with specific qualities in a specific narrative. Consequently, acteurs are numerous while the number of actants have been reduced to six in Greimas' model (1966):

Sender ---- object ---- receiver

helper ---- subject ---- opponent.

(Rimmon-Kenan, 1983:35)

The characters in postmodern fiction, generally, and in Waiting for Godot, specifically, cannot be 'explained away' through the harnessing of such a neat model. Structuralist and traditional models, consequently, are inadequate to describe postmodern characters. Certainly, the reductive quality of the models suggested by Propp and Greimas and (also) the causal-logical sentiments of Claude Bremond do not suffice; since postmodern characters cannot be contained by neat categories. In the case of Waiting for Godot specifically, the play is plotless, formless and provocatively repetitive. The characters cannot be subordinated to plot since Waiting for Godot has no plot in the conventional (structuralist) sense. In this regard, Fokemma's comments give me added leverage:

It is not clear how a study of actants can shed any light on the construction and identification of character in the text, as it appears that the characters (or actors) in a given narrative should be identified

and analysed before an actantial scheme can be produced. Both the concepts of actant or actor do little ... to facilitate recognizing a description, trait, a (suggested) psychological essence and a name as conventionally constituting character.

(Fokemma, 1991:88)

Models like those proposed by Greimas and the Claude - Bremond are also inadequate for postmodernism because they pay no attention to the deferral that postmodernism foregrounds.

3.7 ROMANCE

Traditionally in realist fiction, the plot is geared towards a fulfilment of desire. Hence plots work towards the,

finding and winning of the beloved (while) the element of physical attraction is absorbed into a more broadly defined 'rightness': the fittingness of the beloved in social and moral terms.

(Alexander, 1990:130)

This, for example, may be seen in the novels of Jane Austen. For example, in Pride and Prejudice Elizabeth Bennet must overcome obstacles in the form of social class, infatuation and hard-headedness before she finds the object of her desire (Darcy), while Darcy must, himself, overcome his prejudice and pride before succumbing to the Elizabeth who is finally 'unveiled'. Hence, in the course of the novel, the hero / heroine must overcome obstacles in order to reach the object of desire. Such attainment is closely

underpinned by moral development which leads to a tying up of loose ends. The reward for moral development is seen to be the attainment of desire. The development of the hero / heroine's progression is upward. Effective foil characters are used to emphasize such development. For example, in Pride and Prejudice, Lady Catherine, despite being born a lady is shown to be lacking in social graces. Lady Catherine's snobbishness and Elizabeth's reward for moral development are simultaneously shown (off) in a letter from Mr Bennet to Collins:

Dear Sir
 I must trouble you once more for congratulations. Elizabeth will soon be the wife of Mr Darcey. Console Lady Catherine as well as you can. But, if I were you, I would stand by the nephew. He has more to offer
 Yours sincerely, &C
 (Austen, 1982:296)

It is also made apparent, through an unreliable omniscient narrator, that Elizabeth Darcy is more of a lady than Lady Catherine can ever hope to be:

Lady Catherine was extremely indignant on the marriage of her nephew and (....) she sent him (a letter) so very abusive especially of Elizabeth that for some time all intercourse was at an end. But at length, by Elizabeth's persuasion, (Darcy) was prevailed upon to overlook the offence and seek a reconciliation.
 (Austen, 1982: 300)

Finally, the alignment of the Darcys to the Gardiners shows that

the reward for moral development is contained in, 'the singularity and uniqueness of those individuals who are meant for each other' (Alexander, 1990).

Even in Wuthering Heights (Brontë, 1978) which uses relatively diverse narrative structures and dual narrators, the plot of the narrative may ultimately be reducible to the attainment of desire.

Both Heathcliff and Catherine destroy themselves because they are not married to the desired other. Heathcliff's perversion and lust for revenge testify to this. His impassioned pleas on the night of Catherine's death expose this:

'Catherine Earnshaw ... haunt me ..
Oh! God! it's unutterable! I cannot
live without my life. I cannot live
without my soul ...' (Heathcliff)
dashed his head against the knotted
tree trunk; and, lifting up his
eyes, howled, not like a man but
like a savage beast.
(Brontë, 1978:130)

His subsequent degeneration and misanthropy emphasize this:

In all England, I (Lockwood) do not
believe that I could have fixed on a
situation so completely from the
stir of society. A perfect
misanthropist's heaven: and Mr
Heathcliff and I are such a suitable
pair to divide the desolation
between us.
(Brontë, 1978:9)

Catherine herself wastes away because she marries not Heathcliff, who is obviously the partner uniquely suitable for her, but Edgar.

And while mistakes of mismatching are repeated through the generations, (e.g. Isabella and Heathcliff and Catherine junior and Linton junior), the balance is finally restored in the relationship of Catherine and Hareton. In this regard, Catherine Belsey (1980:78) makes a significant comment:

Ultimately, harmony has been re-established through the re-distribution of the signifiers that had earlier been thrown into disarray ... the movement of classical realist narrative towards closure ensures the re-instatement of order, sometimes a new order, sometimes the old restored, but always intelligible.

Milan Kundera's ULB and BLF are both sexually explicit and deny any projection of finding the suitable, desirable 'individual'. Marguerite Alexander argues in Flights from Realism (1990:64):

What principally distinguishes non-realist Fiction which foregrounds the sexual impulse is not its descriptive explicitness, but its willingness to allow the fulfilment of desire to be an end in itself, rather than part of a broader social process. Desire is free-floating, released from social norms. This in turn undermines the romantic ideal of the 'one and only' who is uniquely right, and allows for the part played by the imagination in transposing someone into the one.

In ULB the idea that there can be the one and only is negated through both Tomas and Sabina. Tomas, paradoxically, in a semblance of a search for the one, must see visions of the one in

the numerous women he beds. While he concedes that Tereza has entered her voice into his poetic memory which (he claims) distinguishes her from other women he becomes involved with, it is clear that he is still consumed with discovering 'the one-millionth part' that makes a woman dissimilar to others of her sex. His pursuits are put into context by the narrator who distinguishes between the epic and the lyrical lover. Tomas is the epic.

But who is Sabina? If Tereza has entered Tomas' poetic memory, why is it that Sabina is kept on as a type of permanent mistress? Through the use of a delayed narrative technique, Sabina's presence is kept throughout the text, even after she has technically transgressed the text at the diegetic level, as I have already argued in the second chapter of this study.

The text, through using explicit sexuality and numerous sexual partners for its foremost male character, seems to closely question the viability of seeking out or even conquering the unique, one and only partner. With the negation of the unified character comes a negation of the unique, one and only partner.

Finding the partner is also related, in a sense, to finding truth. There are no universal truths and when finding the final signifier for desire implies death, how viable is the one, unique, right, partner who may be construed as the ultimate goal of desire?

Tomas wishes to enlighten himself through his sexuality with numerous women. His flight from heaviness is not to be tied down. Yet, his liaisons make him paradoxically heavier, and heavier and his commands of, 'Strip!' to his sexual partners take on an air of monotony. It is, therefore, almost a relief when the woman who looks like a stork and a giraffe turns on him and asks him to strip. Heavy with Tereza, heavier with his numerous women, any notion of the traditional 'coming together' through consummation is negated.

Sexuality may also be seen to border on the exaggerated, grotesque and ridiculous. For example, BLE 'closes' with a chapter that recounts very little but vapid sexuality in which making love is scrutinized, examined and criticized. Such evocation of senseless futility is seen in Barbara's admonition,

... get him to invite you home if
you want him all to yourself, this
is a party,
(Kundera, 1983:224)

and the bald man's comment that,

Barbara will call us together and
tell us what we did right and ...
wrong ... praising the diligent and
scolding the shiftless.
(Ibid)

This futility or 'slitting through' of the romance behind making love is echoed in the narrator's comment that,

... the others listened with interest, their naked genitals staring dully, sadly, listlessly at the yellow sand.

(Kundera, 1980:228)

Any sense of unity or truth in a lasting relationship is negated through (sexual) relationships that are 'held together' by lies and the provocation of deliberate misunderstandings. For example in The French Lieutenant's Woman which foregrounds stereotypes of realist fiction, Sarah Woodruff confides in Charles what he has heard and what others have speculated about. She claims to be the French Lieutenant's Woman and the dynamic of the story rests on this, yet we find that she is not. She manipulates Charles and while Charles is made to believe that he seduces her, it is Sarah, the arch - manipulator who seduces him. While she appears surprised at his visit, we know that she has in fact prepared meticulously:

The green merino shawl was around her shoulders, but could not hide the fact that she was in a long-sleeved nightgown. Her hair was loose and fell over her shoulders ... (she had) never before fully revealed (the) richness of that hair ... (it was) ravishing and alive when the firelight touched it.

(Fowles, 1977:301)

Finally, when their relationship is consummated, Charles realizes that he 'had forced a virgin' and, that there 'was no sprained ankle'.

Set up as the woman who will save the dilettante Charles, she

herself is trapped within the 'whore-virgin' complex. In this instance Waugh (1984:126) cites Simone du Beauvoir:

Now feared by the male, now desired or even demanded, the virgin would seem to represent the most consummate form of feminine mystery: she is therefore its most disturbing and at the same time its most fascinating aspect.

Lies thwart any sense of unitariness. In ULB Tomas must lie to attempt to convince Tereza that she is the only one. Yet 'two years had elapsed since she discovered, he was untruthful, and things had gone worse'.

Tomas, despite claiming to love Tereza (in his own way) cannot give up his numerous 'erotic friendships'. The narrator claims that Tomas was in a bind because,

... in his mistresses eyes, he bore the stigma of his love for Tereza, in Tereza's eyes, the stigma of his exploits with the mistresses.
(Kundera, 1984:23)

The lies to Tereza continue; this further compounds her mind/body duality.

Similarly Franz and Sabina cannot reach the laudable land of 'happily-ever after' even though Franz may desire just this. Their relationship (based on the 'desired other') is doomed from the outset. 'The Dictionary of Misunderstood Words' and 'The Dictionary of Misunderstood Words - continued' reveals their

inability to understand the world through using a commonly understood language. The metafictional 'ability' of the dictionary entries also function, in a sense, to reveal the inherent breakdown between Tomas and Tereza.

Through the dictionary entries, Franz and Sabina's incompatibility with language is broadened to their incompatibility within the relationship. Their lack of compatibility and inability to understand a common language is extended to their inability to understand the same body language. On their last night together, Sabina makes wild love to him because she sees before her the freedom of being without Franz (who lives in lies and enjoys it). Franz on the other hand, misconstrues Sabina's love-making, for 'a clear show of joy, her passion, her consent, her desire to live with him forever'.

And while they gallop off into the distance of their desires, (parodying fairy tales of knights and white horses) their desires are not the same, in fact their desires continue the misunderstood context of their relationship:

Franz was riding Sabina and had
betrayed his wife; Sabina was riding
Franz and had betrayed Franz.
(Kundera, 1984:117)

Such lies coupled with a voyeuristic tendency breaks down the unitariness, even the sanctity of 'making love'. For example the three-way love-making of Marketa, Eva and Mirek, gains tension from the voyeuristic quality that it is imbued with: Marketa's jealousy

and (sometimes) unwilling participation is further, fuelled by the secret that Mirek and Eva share, (Marketa is deliberately sought out by Eva to bring a semblance of peace to the relationship of Mirek and Marketa), and the secret that Eva and Marketa share (to meet at a pre-arranged date without Mirek).

This voyeuristic quality that fuels sexuality is also experienced in ULB in repetitive sequences of Tereza's dreams which are influenced by a letter Tomas writes to Sabina:

I want to make love to you in my studio. It will be like a stage surrounded by people. The audience won't be able to take their eyes off us.

(Kundera, 1984:62)

The voyeuristic is emphasized by Tereza's desire for Tomas to,

take her along, (to) take her with him when he went to see his mistresses, I'll undress them for you, give them a bath, bring them to you ... she would whisper as they lay together.

(Kundera, 1984:62)

Such sexual brashness and negation of the 'unitariness' of couples coming together socially and sexually appears to negate the commonly held notion that characters have unique, distinguishable, irreplaceable qualities. They do not. As Saleem in MC observes:

Things, even (characters) have a way of leaking into each other like flavours when you cook.

(Rushdie, 1981:38)

In this respect Catherine Belsey (1980:123) maintains:

Ideology obscures the conditions of existence by presenting partial truths. It is a set of omissions, gaps rather than lies, smoothing over contradictions ... and masquerading as coherence.

Postmodernism challenges this by destabilizing notions of coherence and unity.

3.8 INSTALLING REALISM AND THEN SUBVERTING

Whilst I have argued that postmodernism offers plurality, contradictions and ex-centric ways to read character, it still installs realism and then subverts. This 'fits in' with the postmodern strategy of installing the very issues it seeks to subvert. Hence, the postmodern through installing seemingly realist characters at the diegetic level, subverts them at the metadiegetic level by exploring the (inherent) limitations of classic realism.

For example, FLW is written in a style that resembles a historical novel in the Victorian tradition. It uses characters who are apparently realistically sketched. In addition, the opening chapters describe the setting of Lyme Regis in close detail reminiscent of realism.

A semblance of closure is also hinted at during the early chapters.

Charles and Ernestina are a couple seeking togetherness, while Sarah Woodruff, the mysterious other is sketched as the typically Victorian forbidden woman. Yet, typical closure is averted through the possible endings the novel offers, the use of an unreliable narrator and the 'exposure' of Sarah as the trickster figure. The irony is, further, compounded through the ostracizing of Charles from the society, because he seduces Sarah (a victim). Yet, it is Sarah who seduces Charles. Consequently, the very premises that the novel rests on (Historical and Victorian) become problematized in the novel.

The novel also raises the question of reader-freedom. To what extent is the reader beguiled by the narrator and Sarah Woodruff? In this regard Marguerite Alexander (1990:132) says,

... what is on the surface a disclaimer of power may be read as an exercise of power.

Similarly, Saleem Sinai, foregrounded as a realist character, patrilineal heritage intact, and the teller of a unitary tale, soon reveals that he is as fragmented as the parchment that his grandfather, Dr Aziz initially views his grandmother through:

(He is) guided by the memory of a large white bedsheet with a roughly circular hole some seven inches in diameter cut into the centre, clutching at the dream of that holey, mutilated square of linen, which is my talisman.

(Rushdie, 1981:9)

Saleem's exertions to tell the story of his birth are tinged with irony. Saleem Sinai, exchanged at birth is not the real son of Ahmed and Amina Sinai. He is a foundling whose 'real' father is (ironically) the Englishman Methwold; his mother is Vanitha, the wife of the street-entertainer, Wee-Willie Winkie. The 'true' son of Ahmed and Amina is Shiva, a midnight's child who squanders his gift on violation and destruction.

The characters in both ULB and BLF may perhaps be read as realistic characters at the diegetic level. However, the fragmentary, ex-centric quality of their lives and the use of metadiegetic strategies that reveal them as the progeny of words, as I argue in the earlier stages of this chapter, detract from notions of realism.

Therefore, while the final section, 'Karenin's Smile', is flooded with an almost bizarre melancholy mostly derived from the angst that Tomas and Tereza feel over parting with Karenin and while the relationship of Tomas and Tereza appears to have 'settled down', their final discussion is a retrospective sequence that occurs before Part Six (The Grand March).

Part Six consequently, cancels any notion of enduring happiness. In a catalogue that is, ironically, reductionist we are informed:

What remains of the dying population
of Cambodia? One large photograph

of an American actress holding an Asian child in her arms.

What remains of Tomas?

An inscription reading: HE WANTED
THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH.

What remains of Beethoven?

A frown ... ' Es muss sein'

What remains of Franz?

An inscription reading, 'A RETURN
AFTER LONG WANDERINGS'

Hence, by manipulative ordering of the narrative sequences, any sense of traditional lasting happiness is negated.

3.9 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this chapter, I have illustrated the ways in which postmodern characters make a decided shift away from mimetically adequate characters. This chapter has also shown the variety in postmodern characterization through the use of my own categories / types. This was, however, not an effort to systematize, but rather an attempt to order my own thoughts for the purposes of this dissertation. Since notions of character cannot be divorced from the mood of postmodernism generally, I have shown why traditional and structural means of dealing with postmodern characters are ineffectual. Perhaps a further aspect to be borne in mind is that in many modes of critique of character, textual constraints have either been marginally considered or ignored completely in an effort to recuperate characters as transparent. This may also explain why in traditional forms of characterization, the border

between characters and people is a fine line which is (un)consciously crossed.

Structuralist models also fail to deal with characterization in postmodern fiction because (as I have argued in this Chapter) they are reductive and plot-oriented. In a statement that attempts to show the shift in status of the postmodern character Fokemma (1991:182) argues that,

... (the) Postmodern character is, in a general sense caught up, in power relations. Constructed by history, its own paranoid beliefs, other narratives, or Foucauldian discourse, its autonomy is endangered or lost.

Since both traditional and structuralist categories of characterization do ultimately argue for the autonomy of the character, they are inadequate when it comes to dealing with postmodern characters. Postmodern characters, are of necessity, not plot-bound or goal-oriented. As I have argued, postmodern fiction does not present a story of adventure (with characters propelling the action forward) rather we are presented with the adventure of a story (wherein characters do not necessarily propel action or plot forward).

The inscription of characters is thus tenuous and this is utilized on a further strategy of destabilizing traditional modes of representation.

My following chapter, *Postmodern Narrators*, explores the ways in which narrators in postmodern fiction destabilize the diegetic world even further. Unlike their 'counterparts' in traditional narratives, narrators in postmodern fiction may be termed 'schizophrenic' and unreliable. Rather than fulfil the conventional relationship of faith and trust between reader and narrator, narrators in postmodern fiction lie and overtly testify to their own unreliability, as I argue in my following chapter. Robber Grillet (cited in Anderson, 1980) maintains, 'there are no innocent narratives'. Postmodern fiction through its narrators flagrantly ab/uses the notion that there are indeed no innocent narratives. If there were, it is suggested, this was only the consequence of contrivance.

The subversion of the relationship between narrator and reader has had numerous ramifications for both the world of fiction and readerly expectations, as I proceed to argue in the final chapter of this study.

CHAPTER 4

POSTMODERN NARRATORS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I argue that the status of narrators has altered considerably in postmodern fiction. In this respect, I wish to contend that in contrast to the coherent, consistent, innocent 'stories' that narrators in realist fiction tell, postmodern fiction offers stories that foreground what Jefferson (1980) terms invraisemblance. Further, postmodern narrators may also be seen as marginal, peripheral subjects who by attempting to tell, seek to 're-embodiment' themselves within the discourse(s) of power. Such narrators may also be seen to ironize and parody consistent, classic realist narrators who generally offer narratives in good faith. Jefferson (1980) concurring with Robbe-Grillet maintains that postmodern fiction has a new kind of narrator,

... he is no longer just a man describing the things he sees, but he is also the person who invents the things around him and who sees the things he invents. From the moment that these narrator - heroes begin to look the least bit like 'characters' they immediately become liars, schizophrenics or victims of

hallucinations.
(Ibid.:113)

While I agree to an extent, in the sense that such narrators do not necessarily afford 'innocent' narratives, it is important to also add to Robbe-Grillet's statement by exploring the relationship between discourses of power embedded in language and the manner in which such narrators, while articulating themselves through the language of power, are also caught up in the ambiguous position of negating those very discourses of power. To me, therefore, unreliability and the games narrators play are directed at subverting the very power through which they are inscribed. It is this slipping tenuousness that allows the narrator to tell without creating another master-narrative. In so doing, postmodern discourses seek to demonstrate that:

Discursive formations are not hermetically sealed, they overlap and intersperse in ways that may be fruitfully and reflexively utilized. It is, after all, at the point of intersection with other discourses that any discourse becomes determined.
(Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (eds.), 1989:168)

Such narrators also tend to demonstrate that the margin can utilize the centre to tell from and yet not become that centre.

Perhaps one of the reasons that postmodern narrators appear to be 'schizophrenic' or the victims of hallucinations is that in refusing to offer innocent narratives they foreground their unreliability and so disprove the institutionalized notions of intelligibility and coherence.

Arguing around the contentious issue of the reliability of narrators, Yacobi (1981:120) maintains,

... there can be little doubt about the importance of reliability in the narrator (specifically) and in literature as a whole. It arises with respect of every speaking and reflecting participant in literary communication ... its resolution determines not only our views of the speaker alone but also the reality evoked and the norms implied in and through the message.

Yacobi comments on keywords like 'resolution', 'reality-evoked', 'norms', and 'message'. It is obvious from her deliberations that resolution is significant if the reader is not going to be led astray; in other words, such an argument supports the idea that readers should receive a coherent message of 'reality evoked' in the work of fiction.

Postmodern fiction does not work towards providing 'resolution', 'norms' or 'a message'. I would, therefore, argue that in postmodern fiction unreliability (and by implication negation of resolution) is tantamount to providing 'tenuous energy'. As I argue in my chapter on [Postmodernism and the Reader], by denying resolution, the reader is robbed of a sense of intelligibility.

Further, by robbing the reader of a fixed position to read from and by the evocation of worlds other than those that are mimetically and opaquely presented, the reader is seduced into believing in worlds other than those that 'exist'. In this

respect Mc Hale (1987:33) comments that:

The essential trope of fiction is hypothesis, provisional supposition, a technique that requires suspension of belief as well as of disbelief.

By inscribing such concepts of provisionality, postmodern fiction destabilizes certitude by flirting with worlds of 'other', aporia and tenuousness.

Consequently, while I would like to use Yacobi's concept of unreliable narrators, I believe that postmodern fiction deliberately flaunts such unreliability (and its inherent problems). Further, since postmodernism questions intelligibility, coherence and the manner in which the message has been totalized by creating a (false) evocation of reality, the core of Yacobi's argument seems questionable within postmodern fiction.

4.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NARRATION AND FOCALIZATION

Any discussion of narration will be ineffective without a discussion of focalization. Essentially, the dynamic between narration and focalization may be seen in the distinction between 'WHO SEES' and 'WHO TELLS'.

In this respect, it is important to note that Yacobi's argument on unreliable narrators is in fact thrown into question because she fails to consider the concept of focalization.

Genette (1980) has observed that most theoretical studies of perspective are inadequate in the sense that they display a confusion between two concepts, that of MODE and VOICE. Essentially translated, this means that most theoretical studies of perspective do not seem to be aware that the question:

Who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective?;

differs from:

Who is the narrator?

(ibid:186)

In short, many theoretical studies on perspective (e.g. Stanzel (1971); Booth (1961)) are insufficient because they do not distinguish between:

'Who sees?' and 'Who speaks?'.

Genette (1980) himself touches upon the confusion when he points out that,

... most theoretical works on the subject (perspective) ... suffer in my opinion from an unfortunate confusion between what I call mood and voice, that is, between the question who is the character and whose point of view orients the perspective of the narrative
(Genette, 1980:186)

Focalization is particularly important in the sense that it deals with perception which according to Bal (1983:100) is a 'psychological process strongly dependent on the position of the

perceiving body'. Since striving for objectivity in perception is virtually impossible it is an important strategy for postmodernism. It may, significantly, also be seen as a means of exploiting single perceptions of incidents. In postmodern fiction, this is seen in incidents wherein various characters focalize on the same incident.

Bal, further, argues that most studies are flawed in the sense that they do not distinguish 'the vision through which elements are presented from the identity of the voice that is verbalising that vision, yet, it is possible in fiction for one character / narrator to express the vision of another' (ibid).

What the narrator tells (of) combined with what the focalizer sees may create a different perspective for the reader. Bal, in this context argues that:

Focalization belongs in the story ... between the linguistic text and fabula. Because the definition of focalization refers to a relationship, the subject and object of focalization, must be studied separately. (The focalizer) is the point from which the elements are viewed. That point can lie with the character or outside it.
(1983:105)

While I agree with Bal's contention, I do not, however, see the virtue of studying narration and focalization separately. What I wish to explore is the way in which they are 'merged' in the narrative situation and the manner in which cleverly harnessing both focalization and narration can seduce the reader into

believing in worlds other than those that are.

Perhaps, I should mention at this point, that while I am conversant with the (Structuralist) contributions of Genette (1980), Bal (1983) and Rimmon-Kenan (1986) to both the categories of narration and focalization and while I do utilize such categories, my personal analyses of the processes of narration and focalization are offered in this chapter. My personal motivation for such a stance may be seen in the following substantiation: While I find the contributions of Genette, (who initially 'coined' the term), Bal and Rimmon-Kenan helpful to distinguish the structural categories of narrators and focalizers, I do not find them (entirely) adequate for my purposes of analysing postmodern fiction. As I have argued in the two preceding chapters of this dissertation, structural categories have of necessity to be appropriated and reinvented when utilized to analyse postmodern fiction.

One of the main drawbacks that a structural analysis of postmodern fiction presents is the way in which it keeps the processes of narration and focalization separate. In postmodern fiction, my personal stance is that quite often the processes of focalization and narration cannot be kept separate.

4.3 SUBSUMING DIFFERENCE

In postmodern fiction a strategy that also heightens tenuousness is the lack of clear-cut distinctions between traditional

omniscient and first person narration. Traditionally, omniscient narration implies a mode of narration wherein the narrator has freedom of motion throughout both the narrative and the thoughts of the characters. Irrespective of whether they are intrusive or unintrusive (omniscient) narrators, they still distinguish themselves through their knowledge of more than the characters know. Technically such narration is also intended to create more distance between the reader and the diegetic world.

On the other hand, first-person narration may technically 'manifest' itself in two forms: the narrator may be a 'silent' witness to the events s/he tells off or s/he may be a character in the diegetic world, hence influencing the degree of reliability that the text may afford.

In classical fiction it is invariably simpler to distinguish between the types of narrators used. Moreover, since classic realism is itself rooted in an overt desire to 'seal the unit' by denying contradictions, narrators in fiction of this nature are central to easing the tension within the diegetic world, allowing for a movement towards telos. Furthermore, the distinction between omniscient and first person narration in classical realism is generally (more) easily discernible to the reader.

4.3.1 SUBSUMING DIFFERENCE: A 'CONTEMPORARY' EXAMPLE

Contemporary fiction does not however, allow for such easily

discernible narrators (or focalizers).

An intriguing example of masking both the narrator and by implication the primary focalizer is evident in Morrison's The Bluest Eye (1994, Orig. published, 1970) which begins with an initially unidentified narrator who tells of an orderly family life, almost certainly occidental. Obviously transcribed from a children's reader that begins its onslaught to 'other' blacks quite early on, the paragraph repeated twice becomes increasingly illegible and distant through its mode of presentation. This implies the problems that African-American students have with 'seeing' themselves in the picture that the first paragraph so eloquently narrates:

Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane live in the green-and-white house. They are very happy. See Jane. She has a red dress. She wants to play. Who will play with Jane? See the cat. It goes meow-meow. Come and play. Come play with Jane. The kitten will not play. See mother. Mother is very nice. Mother, will you play with Jane? Mother laughs. Mother, laugh. See Father. He is big and strong. Father, will you play with Jane? Father is smiling. Smile, Father, smile. See the dog. Bow wow goes the dog. Do you want to play with Jane? See the dog run. Run, dog, run. Look, look. Here comes a friend. The friend will play with Jane. They will play a good game. Play, Jane, play.

Here is the house it is green and white it has a red door it is very pretty here is the family mother father dick and jane live in the green-and-white house they are very happy see jane she has a red dress she wants to play who will play with jane see the cat it goes meow-meow come and play come play with jane the kitten will not play see mother mother is very nice will you play with jane mother laughs laugh mother laugh see father he is big and strong father will you play with jane father is smiling smile father smile see the dog bowwow goes the dog do you want to play do you want to play with jane see the dog run run dog look look here comes a friend the friend will play with jane they will play a good game play jane play.

Even when the reader does enter the diegetic world, it is not easy to distinguish who the narrator is. The disjointed logic of the first sentences does point to the focalizer being a child:

Quiet as its kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941. We thought at the time that it was because Pecola was having her father's baby that the marigolds did not grow.

(ibid:3)

Yet, it is also obvious that the narrative is retrospective, the child has grown into an adult and looks back upon the fall of 1941 when 'the seeds shrivelled and died; her baby too'. In retrospect, no longer innocent, the narrator can comment:

We had dropped our seeds in our own little plot of black dirt just as Pecola's father had dropped his seeds in his own plot

of black dirt. Our innocence and
 faith were not more productive
 that his lust or despair.
 (ibid.)

But who is the narrator?

The narrator, is only made known on page 7 of the novel: this,
 too, is done indirectly:

My mother's voice drones on. She
 is not talking to me. She is
 talking to the puke, but she is
 calling it my name: Claudia.
 (ibid:7)

However, the mode of narration slips (almost) surreptitiously
 from the first person narrator (who is herself a character in the
 diegetic world) to omniscient narration in,

... the easiest to do would be to
 build a case out of her foot.
 That is what she herself did ...
 (it) explained for her many
 things that would have been
 otherwise incomprehensible ...
 why she never felt at home
 anymore, or that she belonged any
 place.

(ibid:87)

This omniscience is interspersed with Pauline Breedlove's
 narrative directed (primarily) at filling in the gaps for the
 reader through the portrayal of events that are focalized by her
 in her language (unfiltered through any mediation). The early
 romanticism (in the relationship between herself and Cholly) is
 evident in:

When I first seed Cholly, ... it was like all the bits of color ... when all us children went berry picking ... Cholly was thin then, with real light eyes. He used to whistle, and when I heard him, shivers come on my skin.
(ibid:90)

But, being both the narrator and focalizer of her own story, we see events through her eyes and the pain of the disintegration is made even more painful through her charting of its downfall evidenced by the reader in stages, (in which time is deliberately speeded up). These stages are evidenced from the romanticism (evidenced above) to the level:

Me and Cholly was getting along good then,
to the painful:
Cholly commenced to getting meaner and meaner and wanted to fight me.
(ibid:92)

Against this, is played out her alienation from the white community and her problems with her employer who refuses to pay her until she (Polly) leaves her husband. After haggling in vain, Polly asserts:

When I got outside, I felt pains in my crotch, I had held my legs together so tight trying to make that woman understand.
(ibid:94)

Ultimately, her entrapment is viewed through their sexual encounters which are focalized by Pauline:

Most times he's thrashing away inside me before I'm woke; and through when I am ... only thing I miss is that rainbow. But like

I say, I don't recollect it much
anymore ...

(ibid:102)

What I find interesting about character-bound focalization, of this nature is the invariable impact that it has upon the reader. While reading about the relationship (and its disintegration) through the eyes of Pauline Breedlove, the reader's sympathies are with her; we read against Cholly for the pain he puts her through. Yet, when Cholly focalizes (on) his story, our sympathies waver. Cholly is lost, from the time he is four days old, it transpires, when 'his mother wrapped him in two blankets and one newspaper and placed him on a junk heap by the railroad' (ibid).

Cholly's focalization is provided, significantly, in a garbled chapter entitled: 'SEEFATHERHEISBIGANDSTRONGFATHERWILLYOUPLAYWITHJANEFATHERISSMILINGSMILEFATHERSMILE'. It is only upon reading his pain that the sympathies of the reader begin to sway. Upon seeing the white men (during their adolescent love-making) Cholly tries to 'kneel, stand and get his pants up all in one motion', only to be told by one of the white men to continue making love to Darlene,

'I said get on wid it. And make
it good nigger'

(Ibid)

Amidst the derision of the whites, Cholly looks at Darlene, and

'the sweet taste of muscadine (turned) into rotten fetid bile' (ibid). The incident / sentence becomes, in many ways the swan song of his life.

Because the sympathies of the reader waver, we tend to judge Cholly a little less harshly. This results in a dramatic shift of position. While the focalization of the character is narrow, the reader is in an advantaged position: s/he has the ability to collate the different versions of the characters' visions.

The 'power' of the reader is further given credence by Mieke Bal's observation with regard to Henry James' Novel, What Maisie Knew. Of this novel Bal comments:

In Henry James: What Maisie Knew, the focalization lies almost entirely with Maisie, a little girl who does not understand much about the problematic relations going on around her. Consequently, the reader is shown the events through the limited vision of the girl, and only gradually realizes what is going on. But the reader is not a little girl. S/he does more with the information s/he receives than Maisie does, ... The difference between the childish vision of the events and the interpretation that the adult reader gives them determines the novel's special effect.

Therefore, it may be asserted that the manner in which a subject is presented is arguably more important than that which is presented.

The Bluest Eye is told through different narrators and focalizers which it both intersperses and fuses but still leaves asunder. It is a narrative that, through its lack of reconciliation attempts to mirror the bizarre story it tells: The story of Pecola Breedlove, an African-American (in the 1940s) whose desire is to possess the Bluest Eye of the title. Indeed, the yearning is so strong that it overshadows the incestuous relationship between Cholly and Pecola Breedlove.

4.4 POSTMODERN NARRATORS AND FOCALIZERS

In postmodern fiction the nature of narrators has altered, since they break the very ontological boundaries that inscribe them.

Perhaps one of the reasons postmodern narrators may be termed 'schizophrenic' is that they are not easily distinguished as omniscient or first person narrators. Postmodern narrators instead, appear to share characteristics of both omniscience and first person narrators, who are themselves characters in the diegetic world. The lack of clear-cut delineation colludes with multiple focalization to destabilize readers even further. In this respect, my readings of the ways in which Kundera's texts affect readers, explicate my arguments further in my final chapter.

In FLW, the narrator who begins to tell a seemingly solid story appears also to be solidly omniscient. For the duration of the

first twelve chapters, the narrator appears to be typically all-knowing. Chapter 13, however, subverts any belief in this traditional form of narration. To the final two questions that conclude chapter 12:

Who is Sarah?

From which shadows does she come?

The narrator in Chapter 13 answers (in contrast to omniscient narrators):

I do not know.

It is at this point that the ironic parodying nature of both narrator and text become obvious. The chapter, consequently, is both illusion-breaking and characteristic of what Genette terms metalepsis which results in, 'a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds in which one tells and the world one tells of' (1980:236). The intent is obviously manifold: by utilizing an omniscient narrator and the subsequent subversion of such a strategy, FLW simultaneously (ab) uses and ironises the 'all-knowing' characteristic of omniscient narration. Such a shift also loosens the (traditional) boundaries in the worlds of narrators, characters and readers.

Further, the narrator's reliability is thrown into question. From the outset, Ernestina's presentation hints at an almost sycophantic dependence upon Charles while Sarah, the 'mysterious other', is offered a positive bias throughout the text. Sarah's advantage is hinted at in:

(Sarah's) was not a pretty face like Ernestina's. It was not a beautiful face by any period's standard or taste. But it was an unforgettable face:

(Fowles, 1978:13)

This sentiment (above) is contrasted to the comment that Ernestina has the 'favoured, feminine look (which was) demure obedient, shy' (ibid.). The attention to her demure, sycophantic obedience (to both Charles and her father) is aggravated during the latter stages of the text.

In addition to this, by utilizing character-bound focalization in addition to a collusive narrator, Ernestina is belittled, thus leaving the unwary reader convinced that she deserves her fate, and is (certainly) unworthy of Charles' love and / or hand in marriage. When confronted with Charles' decision not to marry her, it is Ernestina's shortcomings, through the character-bound focalization of Charles, that are emphasized. Through the use of such focalization, Charles has the advantage over Ernestina; hence, Charles' betrayal is overlooked.

This bears out Bal's (1983:104) comment with regard to such focalization:

If the focalizer co-incides with the character, that character will have a technical advantage over the other characters. The reader watches with the character's eyes and will, in principle, be inclined to the vision presented by that character.

This is clearly borne out in FLW in the following extracts of character-bound focalization which (obviously) favour Charles.

In the extracts cited below, it is clearly Charles who is the focalizer; it is through his eyes that the reader perceives Ernestina, detrimentally. Through the collusion of the narrator the negative perception of Ernestina is exacerbated. It is Ernestina that the (unwary) reader sees as not worthy of Charles' love; further, it is Ernestina who must suffer the humiliation of 'discovering that hers is (only) the catatonia of convention'. Thus, Ernestina is written off as the lady of her times. She is guileless and unworthy of Charles. This is further given credence through Charles' character-bound focalization:

(Charles) caught sight of himself in a mirror; and the man in the mirror. Charles in another world, seemed the true self. The one in the room was ... an imposter; and had always been, in his relations with Ernestina, an imposter, an observed other.

(Fowles, 1978:331)

Hence, to follow Charles' focalization is to see that Charles has ultimately done the right thing: by betraying Ernestina, he has found his 'true self'. The reader is coerced to believe this and to downplay the trauma of Ernestina's response which (after all) is hysterical and the 'catatonia of convention'. Ernestina is the one who spits out the vitriolic,

'My father will drag ... both your names through the mire. You will be spurned and detested by

all who know you. You will be
hounded out of England, you will
be

(ibid)

Charles, by contrast, is essentially let off the hook because he focalizes. Ernestina's swooning is merely conventional catatonia and Charles is even forbidden by Mary's eyes to watch any further. His response is to accept (Mary's) 'candid judgement' and 'forbidding' gaze (!!) . It is evident that through character-bound focalization, the reader's sympathy is coerced. However, not all readers are prepared to indulge Charles' perception. Further, I find it very interesting that while this encounter affects Ernestina so gravely, she should not be given a chance to focalize. Perhaps, this extends the game with the reader so as to seduce him / her into worlds that are (not).

Kundera's ULB and BLF, are similarly concerned with the use of diverse narrators and focalizers. Such a technique compounds the wavering tremulousness of the texts and also allows for the deconstruction of conventional, more stable ways of telling and perceiving.

4.5 TRANSGRESSING BOUNDARIES

In ULB, for example, the narrator introduces himself in the first person:

I have been thinking of Tomas for
many years. But only in the
light of these reflections did I

see him clearly. I saw him standing at the flat and looking across the courtyard at opposite walls, not knowing what to do.

(Kundera, 1984:6)

After this, the narrative slips (almost surreptitiously) into the conventions of omniscient narration. Further, from Chapter 3 up until the latter portion of Chapter 10, the readers are told through (omniscient) narratorial mediation; while the narrator tells about the lives of the characters, he is also partisan to sharing his world with the reader:

When I was small and would leaf through the Old Testament retold for children and illustrated by Gustave Dore, I saw the Lord God standing on a cloud. He was an old man with eyes, nose, and a long beard, and I would say to myself that if He had a mouth, He had to eat.

(ibid)

In this instance the narrator shares his world with the reader while the focalizer is the narrator as a child.

A similar situation of the narrator's world(s) being shared with the reader is evident in BLF:

During the last ten years of his life, my father gradually lost the power of speech ... Things (for him) lost their names and merged into a single, undifferentiated reality ... I was the only one who by talking to him could ... transform that nameless entity into the world of clearly named entities.

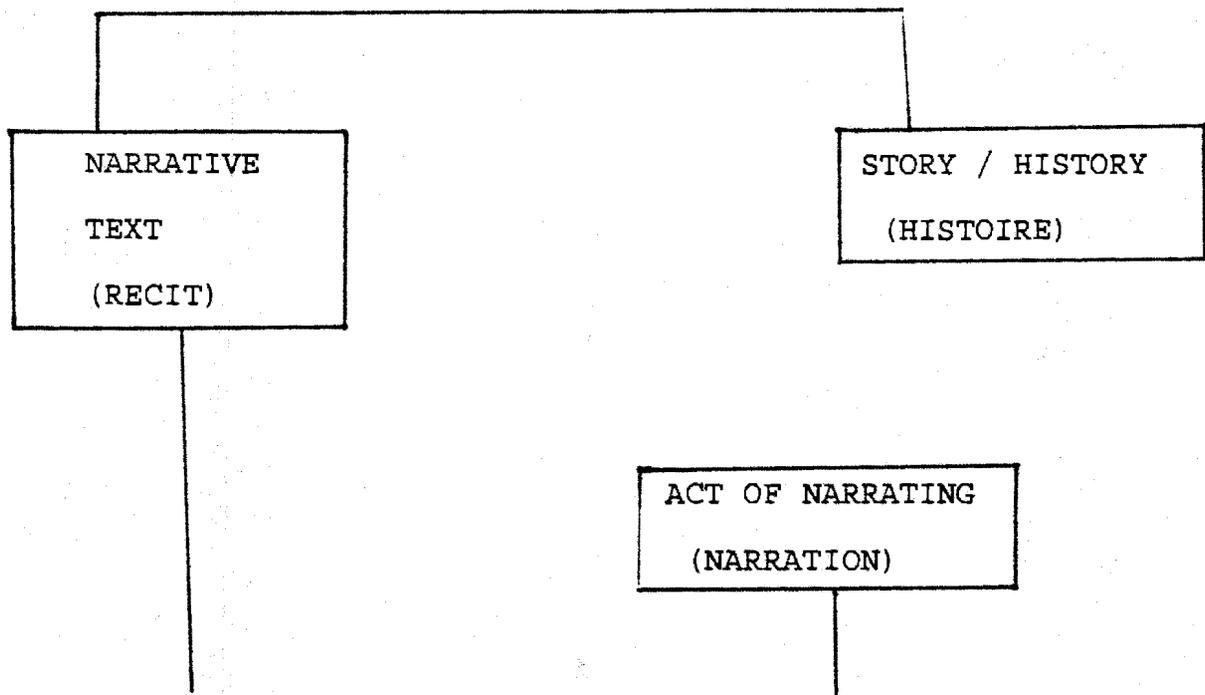
(ibid:160)

The reminiscence surfaces again when he thinks of Tamina:

I understand the remorse Tamina felt. When my father died, I had a bad case of it too. I couldn't forgive myself for asking him so little, for knowing, so little about him, for losing him.
(ibid: 164).

The interludes of his own mediation reflected at the diegetic level are used to fracture the narrative at various levels, hence the narrative text does not deal with plotting alone, or the narration of *fabula*. The Formalists (breaking away from the 'genetic fallacy') in the 1920's saw the need to look at elements of both *fabula* and *sjuzet*. Genette (1980) took this a step further by drawing the distinctions amongst *histoire*, *recit* and narration.

Briefly explained, the Formalists saw the aesthetic in literature and as such, saw beyond FABULA (i.e. story) by concentrating on SJUZET (i.e. the ARTISTIC STRUCTURE responsible for transforming the *fabula* to *sjuzet*). Genette's elaboration may be illustrated as:



(Representation from Grabē, 1989:147)

However, I wish to argue the act of narrating may further be seen not only as being limited to who tells but should consider the perception of who sees as well.

I, therefore, wish to contend that the acts of telling and seeing colour what is related; in this regard who is telling is just as important as who is seeing. While, the technique of utilizing a 'tenuous' narrator together with various focalizers, fractures the narrative, it also realizes the altered status of the reader in postmodernism. Readers of postmodern texts, as I argue extensively in **Postmodernism and the Reader**, can no longer afford to be tacit consumers of the text. They are instead co-erced to be 're-generative'.

The foregoing arguments, allow me to return to my earlier stance that structural analyses have to be reinvented for the analyses of postmodern fiction. In this context, Genette maintains that there can be no narrativity unless a story is told:

As narrative it lives by its
relationship to the story that it
recounts, as discourse, it lives
by its relationship to the
narrating that utters it.
(1980:29)

However, as I have argued in various contexts in the course of this study, postmodern fiction favours the signifier (i.e. the production / laying bare of the 'story') rather than the signified (i.e. the substance of the story). Grābe (1989:149)

lends credibility to my stance through her argument that,

... in postmodern fiction narrativity is exploited ... in that these texts reject the traditional conception of story as a 'representation' of reality and expressly stress the artificial or fabricated character of the process of writing.

By the self-conscious status endowed upon both narrators and focalizers, the postmodern text foregrounds the adventure of the story rather than the (classic realist / conventional) story of adventure. In distinguishing between the 'adventure of the story' and the 'the story of the adventure', it is obvious that Gräbe (1989) concurs with Jefferson (1980).

The relationship between telling and seeing is adventurously explored in both ULB and BLF. For example in ULB the difference in our perception (as readers) between Tereza and Sabina is, to a large degree, determined by various aspects of telling and seeing in the novel. My contention is that the narrator does not necessarily tell in good faith. His telling is slanted (positively) towards Sabina. The off-shoot is that Tereza is negatively presented, she is weak-willed, suffers from a mind-body duality and is, in many ways, an extension of her mother's (negative) traits. We are snidely told that Tereza's mother (at least) has the temerity to cast off her first husband and live with her second (swindler) husband. Tereza, in contrast, is presented as a burden to Tomas. This is paralleled effectively to

the burden of the suitcase she carries for when 'she (tells) him her suitcase was at the station, he immediately (realizes) that the suitcase (contains) her life, and she had left it at the station only until she could offer it to him' (Kundera, 1984:9).

This motif of 'burden' dogs Tereza throughout the novel. It is significant in this context that she is tied to Tomas (while she does leave him, this is short-lived, and, despite his wanting her back, he is ambivalent and stays with her provided he can continue his status as epic lover). As my readings have shown in *Postmodernism and Time*, when Tomas does admit to having been happy, it is technically after their deaths have already been tolled. Even so, against Tomas' admission (however belated) we read Tereza's focalization of Tomas (at this point) as callous,

... she recalled the scene she had witnessed when he had been repairing the pick-up and looked so old. She had reached her goal; she had always wanted him to be old.

(Ibid:313).

In contrast, Sabina is offered an interesting, much lighter presentation. Indeed, she is so light that she literally transgresses both the 'heaviness' implied in the novel and the very diegetic level that grants her such a positive presentation; this makes her even lighter to the reader.

Hence, Sabina transcends burden and heaviness unlike Tereza who is dogged by it. By subverting the fidelity that Tereza feels

for Tomas and upholding Tomas and, by implication, Sabina as epic lovers, Tereza is further, apprehended in the novel. Sabina, on the other hand, leaves the diegetic world and is thereafter seen through the eyes of other characters, specifically Franz. This further, enhances her positive lightness,

... whenever he published an article in a scholarly journal, all he could think about was what Sabina would think about it ... (Franz nourished the cult of Sabina.)

(ibid. 274)

Through the tenuousness of presence through absence, Sabina is heavy enough to be focalized upon and 'resurrected' through the perception of various characters, yet light enough to transgress the diegetic boundary of ULB. This adds credibility to my arguments that deal with the character of Sabina in the previous chapter of this study.

The lightness with which Sabina construes her betrayals and affairs is starkly contrasted with the way in which Tamina perceives of a single infidelity with the engineer:

She would stay ... (only) long enough to see what it was like to reach the very border of infidelity. She would push her body up to the border, let it stand there for a moment ... and then when the engineer, tried to put his arm around her, she would say, ... 'It wasn't my choice.'

(Ibid:152)

Even after the episode, the reason for the engineer's seeking her

out specifically continues to haunt her:

Why did he fail to come ...
Tereza could think of nothing but
the possibility that the engineer
had been sent by the secret
police. Now that self-styled
engineer would testify that she
had slept with him and demanded
to be paid! They would threaten
to blow it up - into a scandal
unless she agreed to report on
people who got drunk in her bar.

(Ibid:164)

This morbidity of Tereza's may be contrasted to the way in which
Sabina dismisses Franz:

That night (Sabina) made love to
him with greater frenzy than ever
before, aroused by the arousal
that it was the last time ... She
sensed an expanse of freedom
before her, and the boundlessness
of it excited her ... Sabina was
riding Franz and had betrayed
Franz.

(Ibid: 116-7)

Unwary readers, therefore, because of the effective manner in
which both focalization and narration are harnessed tend to read
against Tereza, while celebrating Sabina's lightness. Even
Tereza is wont to comment after her meeting with Sabina,

(that) she felt a rush of
admiration for Sabina and because
Sabina treated her as a friend it
... quickly turned to
friendship. (!!)

(ibid:64)

What is perhaps, more intriguing about utilizing and

foregrounding different focalizers is that the reader is allowed to get different versions of the same incident. This enables such texts to deny totality and unison by highlighting different perceptions of the same incident. As I argue in the final chapter of this study, this impacts on readers who are no longer recipients of a unitary vision.

For example the end of the relationship between Franz and Sabina is construed differently by Franz and Sabina. The beginning of Franz's quest to live in truth, (which results after his confession of deception to his wife), is cleverly contrasted to Sabina's fear so that his quest for truth becomes Sabina's reason to leave the relationship. Sabina's focalization in this regard, leads the reader to realize that,

... once her love had been
publicized, it would gain weight,
become a burden. Sabina
(cringes) at the very thought.
(Ibid:115)

Subsequently, when Sabina makes frenzied love to him because it is their last night together, she 'senses an expanse of freedom before her', 'and the boundlessness of it (excites) her, while Franz sobbed as he lay of top of her, he was certain he understood: Sabina had been quiet ... but this was her answer ... She had made a clear show of ... desire to live with him forever' (ibid:117).

Similarly, the manipulation of narration and focalization may be clearly seen in BLF. In Part 5 ('Litost') the 'chapter' entitled

'The Poets' provides interesting shifts in the levels of narration and focalization:

The student waited for Voltaire in front of the Writers' Club, and the two of them went upstairs together. As soon as they passed through the cloakroom into the vestibule, they heard an exuberant din. Voltaire opened the door to the dining room, and before the student's eyes was his country's poetry sitting around a large table.

I watch them from a distance of two thousand kilometers. It is now the autumn of 1977. For eight years my country has been drowsing in the sweet, strong embrace of the Russian empire, Voltaire has been thrown out of the university, and my books are banned from all public libraries, locked away in the cellars of the state. I held out a few years and then got into my car and drove as far west as I could, to the Breton town of Rennes, where the very first day I found an apartment on the top floor of the tallest high-rise. When the sun woke me the next morning, I realized that its large picture windows faced east, toward Prague.

Now I watch them from my tower, but the distance is too great. Fortunately the tear in my eye magnifies like the lens of a telescope and brings their faces closer. Now I can make out the great poet, the undisputed center of attention. Although he is certainly more than seventy, his face is still handsome, his eyes wise and lively. His crutches are leaning up against the table next to him.

I see them against the night lights of Prague the way it was

fifteen years ago, before their books had been locked away in the cellars of the state, when they could all have a happy, raucous time together around a large table laden with bottles. I like them all and wouldn't feel right picking random names for them from the telephone book. If I do to hide their faces behind the masks of assumed names, I might as well make them a gift of it, a decoration, an honor.

(Kundera, 1980:128)

The opening paragraph employs the conventionally determined markers of omniscient narration : 'the student ... was his, country's poetry sitting around a table'.

The section that follows provides a shift from omniscience to an apparent first-person mode of narration evidenced in the pronoun markers, (I, my). However, this 'first person' mode negates typical narrowness because it is provocatively (?) coupled with his ability to 'watch them from a distance of two thousand kilometres ... Fortunately, the tear in my eye magnifies like a lens of a telescope and brings their faces clear.' This 'telescopic vision' allows him to see 'Prague the way it was fifteen years ago'.

This does raise an interesting aspect. Technically, first-person narration may indeed be hampered. In this regard, Jefferson gives credence to her arguments by quoting Norman Friedman's discussion of first-person narration.

The natural consequence of this narrative frame is that the witness has no more than ordinary

access to the mental states of others; its distinguishing characteristic, then, is that the author has surrendered his omniscience altogether regarding all the other characters, involved and has chosen to allow only his witness to tell the reader only what he as observer may legitimately discover. The reader has available to him only the thoughts, feelings and perceptions of the witness-narrator. He therefore views the story from what may be called the wandering periphery.

(Jefferson, 1980:120)

While Friedman's suggestions do emphasize the problems with conventional first person narratives, his discussion seems to overlook the impact that the (shifting) focalizations of characters can actually accomplish.

Further, as I have argued elsewhere in this chapter, the staid, conventional distinctions between first person and omniscient narration are no longer easily discernible. In this context, Rushdie's MC which utilizes Saleem Sinai as the first-person 'witness-narrator' transgresses the narrowness associated with such narration by endowing Saleem with extra-sensory powers which is the (remarkable) gift of his being a midnight's child.

Such a strategy facilitates a dual purpose: Saleem Sinai is allowed the parochial quality of being a narrator of his own tale; the lack of reliability that such telling invariably leads to is also emphasized. More importantly, his telepathic powers allow him to transcend his status as a narrator-witness and in this capacity he is granted qualities traditionally associated

with omniscience. It may be argued that through his telepathic powers he 'sees' even further than conventional omniscience.

It is this invraisemblance that allows postmodern texts to transgress conventional boundaries. In order to transgress the restrictions of first person narration the narrator in BLF utilizes his gift of the 'telescopic lens' that allows him the powers that narrator witnesses are not allowed. The levels of narration are also compounded by (various) characters being allowed space for their own narratives in which they 'tell' that which they 'see'. There is, in other words, no mediation by an external narrator. This is evident in Petrarch's Story, in the following extract:

"The most unbelievable thing happened to me a week ago. My wife had just taken a bath. She was wearing a red negligee and had let down her long golden hair. She looked beautiful. At ten past nine there was a ring at the door. I opened it and saw a girl pressing up against the wall. I recognized her right away. Once a week I go to a girls' school that has a poetry club. The girls are all secretly in love with me ..."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Lermontov."

"It didn't happen quite the way Petrarch told it, of course," said Boccaccio, interrupting again, "but I do believe it happened. The girl was a hysteric, and any normal man in his place would have long since given her a healthy slap or two. Idolizers poets have always been prime booty for hysterics.

Hysterics know that idolizers will never slap them. Idolizers are helpless when faced with a woman because they've never left their mothers' shadows. They see an envoy from their mothers in every woman and immediately give in. Their mothers' skirts hang over them like the firmament." He liked this last sentence so much he tried a few variations on it. "See that expanse up there over your heads, all you poets? Well, that's no sky, it's your mothers' enormous skirts. You all live under your mothers' skirts?"

(Kundera, 1984:128-135)

However, Petrarch's story is thrown into question by Lermontov who says:

It didn't happen quite the way Petrarch told it, of course, ... but I do believe it happened.'

He then proceeds to give his version of events on the night in question.

Such diverse strategies of narration and a deliberate foregrounding of narrators with their own perceptions extends the plurality of postmodern fiction to all levels of the text.

Another interesting facet of focalization is the hold that it exerts over the reader. The focalizers within the narrative can and do focalize on dreams, fantasies and other figments of their imagination. This emphasizes the role of the reader in

postmodern fiction: the onus is on the reader to distinguish between that which does exist within the world of the narrative and that which is merely imagined. This is not always easy, especially within the diffuse world of postmodernism. This is seen with regard to Tamina's imagining the incident on Petrin Hill. The reader has to read up until the end of Tereza's 'experience' upon Petrin Hill, before s/he realizes that the experience is a figment of her imagination. Such a strategy forces the reader to distinguish between that which is and is not. Further, utilizing focalization in this manner also has implications for the way in which time is used in the novel. In this instance, Tereza's dream reminds the reader (retrospectively) of the deaths of Tomas of Tereza mentioned proleptically through a letter to Sabina (from Tomas' son). As I argue in the second chapter of this study, this mention together with others of a similar type in the text anticipate that Tereza will die at the hands of Tomas.

Enthralled with the self-reflexivity of telling about the fiction of fiction such texts attempt to illustrate the diversity of fiction that manages (somehow) to tell the story while telling about it.

In addition, perhaps more politically astutely, such narratives allow Otherness to surface and to be just as significant as those novels considered more (conventionally) mainstream. By interrogating and inscribing Otherness, texts such as these become inscriptions of histories that have hitherto been

forgotten and/or suppressed.

4.6 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In concluding this chapter, I wish to draw attention to the overarching link between this chapter and the chapter that initiates this dissertation (**Postmodernism and History**). I have argued throughout this chapter that the 'nature' of postmodern narrators has significantly altered. That they are schizophrenic, liars and overtly unreliable deliberately parodies the (significantly effaced) objective, infallible narrator of history who, we have been made to believe, tells in good faith. As I have argued, in various contexts of this study, their show of good faith with regard to marginalized groups has not been a priority.

I have also analysed the ways in which the rigid distinctions between first and third person narrators have broken down in postmodern fiction. This, together with the merging and/or blurring of the traditional roles of focalization and narrators has led to a further explication of the notion that postmodern fiction emphasizes the adventure of the story (telling). Further, perhaps more importantly, such blurring and merging of 'traditional' roles deconstructs polarities. The consequence is the positing of a seamlessness that is not constrained by contexts.

Since such narratives use narrators who are themselves uncertain,

this implies numerous alternatives for the reader and also questions both the status of 'traditional' narrators and the tales they tell. The blurring of the once rigid roles of narrators and focalizers impacts on the reliability of the fictional world with numerous consequences for the readers of such fiction. My arguments in this chapter also highlight the ways in which structural 'categories' have of necessity to be reinvented for analyses of postmodern fiction.

My next chapter, deals with the status of the reader in postmodern fiction. By analysing the shifts in the status in readers from realism to modernism through to postmodernism, my study details the dramatic transformation that postmodern fiction spells for readers.

CHAPTER FIVE

POSTMODERNISM AND THE READER

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter argues that readers of postmodern fiction are actively involved in reconstituting and regenerating the world of fiction. Postmodern fiction demands a reader who is attuned to its writerly status. Further, postmodern fiction denies intelligibility or coherence; instead, such works of fiction lay bare their own artistic creation and the processes involved therein. With the Barthesian Death of the Author, has come the birth of the Reader, and postmodern fiction foregrounds the space of the reader in fiction; the reader by definition has to be aware of his/her own collusion in the world of fiction.

Rather than offer cohesion and intelligibility, postmodern fiction, further, deliberately destabilizes readers through extended language games and seduction into worlds that are (not). By flaunting the creative collusion of both writer and reader, postmodern fiction transgresses ontological boundaries as readers are drawn into the diegetic world. Readers are also shaken by the text's inability to provide any credibility. For example, narrators and characters are often fragmented and uncertain. Rather than tell of the diegetic world to the Reader, they seek

to tell to themselves. Quite often they erase what they have said, or alter significant details in the text. This tremulous nature of the fictional world obviously impacts upon the reader.

My arguments in this chapter, further, 'plot' the shift in the status of the Reader from CLASSIC-REALISM to MODERNISM through to POSTMODERNISM.

While critics may snidely comment that postmodern writings are all surface and 'all carpet', I believe that even they cannot doubt the dramatic impact that postmodern fiction has upon its readers. Readers are no longer tacit consumers, instead there is a demand upon them to actively participate in the creative process. Further, by collapsing the rigid boundaries of the fictional world and by admitting elements of other texts and works of fiction, an implicit comment on the fluid mobility of the postmodern is made. The authorial has been effaced, it is the reader who is challenged to realize the status of the text as a node within a network of discourses and to hold these traces within a single field of vision (if at all possible). The consequence is that the reader is 'directed' towards plural recuperation. The reader is further denied a solid, intelligible point of reference; instead, s/he has to become a participant in the multifarious levels of discourse that have come to be seen as 'characteristic' of the 'role' of the reader in postmodern fiction.

5.2 THE STATUS OF THE READER IN FICTION

While it is relatively easy to concede that it is the reader of the (postmodern) text who actualizes the text; it is not as easy to understand how the reader actualizes the postmodern text. Hutcheon (1980:139) maintains that in postmodern fiction, 'the reader is close to what Gerald Prince called a 'narratee', and Gerald Genette, a 'narrataire' ... meaning by it the receiver of the text at the level of enunciation'. The reader in a postmodern text is therefore an implicit function in the text. William Gass (cited in Hutcheon 1980:140) has maintained that in the beginning there is the word; this word may be created into a world by the receiver of the text. It is further evident that the reader of any fiction is an active, mediating presence. I would, however, postulate that the reader of the postmodern text has to 'realize' that the text is established through his/her response and reconstituted through his/her active participation so that meaning is (re)generated. While Hutcheon (1980) may contend 'that all texts are to some extent scriptible, that is, produced, rather than consumed by the reader', it is pertinent to realize that the reader in a postmodern text must realize the full-extent to which the text is 'scriptible', consequently s/he has to 'acknowledge' his/her collusion in both the creation of fiction and the self-consciousness of the text.

5.2.1 THE STATUS OF THE READER: REALISM VERSUS POSTMODERNISM

If one regards Realism as the classic mode of fiction, then one

has to concede that its foundation has been built on the firm belief of a commonly experienced, objectively existing world of history; a world of history that could be represented and resolved merely by finding the right words and by subordinating both event and voice to the god-like omniscience of the author who ultimately controlled the text. The classic realist text may be construed as a 'sealed unit' which arrests contradiction and wandering. In this regard Belsey (1980) maintains that by virtue of its structure which ultimately moves towards closure and cohesiveness, the classic realist text cannot deal with contradictions. In citing Machery, Belsey (1980:82) concurs that even when there are contradictions, these 'exist in the margins of the text, because they have been unable to achieve the coherence that is the project of classic realism'.

Fiction, in a given period, reflects the crises inherent in a particular society. In the earlier part of this century, authors were plagued by self-doubt which may be attributed to the dissatisfaction with and the breakdown in traditional values. This loss of belief came to be reflected in modernist texts by authors such as Virginia Woolf [To the Lighthouse (1927)] and James Joyce [Ulysses 1922)]. Modernist novels of this nature heralded the first overt emergence, in the novel, of a sense of fictitiousness. Yet, while modernism may have been 'preoccupied with highlighting the means of representation, the disruption of narrative, contradiction and fragmentation in subjectivity and identity', this should not detract from the modernist principle that underpinned most projects: REALITY IS KNOWABLE. It is

(also) a penetrable reality, both culturally and intellectually. (See Boyne and Raltansi (eds.) 1990:7).

According to Lodge (1981:6), the work of James, Conrad, Joyce, and, in his own idiosyncratic way, Lawrence, is that the effort to capture reality in narrative fiction, 'pursued with a certain degree of intensity brings the writer out on the other side of realism ... the writer's prose style ... is so highly and lovingly polished that it ceases to be transparent but calls attention to itself by the brilliant reflections glancing from its surfaces.' Obviously, Lodge seems to think that Modernism is not as deserving as (what he terms) anti-modernism because, modernism does not regard literature as 'the communication of a reality that exists prior to and independent of the act of communication.' (Ibid)

A similar disparaging sentiment accompanies his comment on FLW, when he (Lodge) says that no one will ever know what Fowles meant or which of his three ending is the most plausible. What Lodge obviously overlooks is that part of the postmodern 'project' has been not only to destabilize the 'centre' but also to destabilize, provoke and challenge its readers by offering plurality rather than teleological endings. Postmodern readers are expected to be part of the game of (re) generating other meanings. Nothing in the postmodern can be 'known' because the 'all-knowable' is what postmodernism militates against. Hence, by virtue of its 'structure' postmodernism denies the reader a 'comfortable' position to read from. This is done primarily

through laying bare the fictionality of the writing process, the reading process and by dwelling on the inadequacy of representation. Readers of postmodern texts can, therefore, no longer afford to be consumers. I would therefore argue that postmodern fiction demands readers who are receptive to the challenge(s) that the text opens up for them.

By setting up tenuous ontological boundaries, the author in postmodern fiction defies the fictive ontological boundary and reaches out to the diegetic level of character(s), and to the level of readers. Hence, Italo Calvino reaches out to his readers by inviting them to read his book, to relax, to concentrate and to 'let the world fade in around you'. Yet, the tension is set up early in the text. While the reader is invited to sit back, relax and to 'stretch (his/her) legs', the reader is constantly reminded that this is fiction, that s/he cannot get lost in the world of fiction. From the outset the fictionality is laid bare:

The novel begins in a railway station, a locomotive huffs, steam from the piston covers the opening of the chapter, a cloud of smoke hides part of the first paragraph ... the pages of the book are clouded like the windows of an old train.

(Calvino, 1979:15)

Such a stance contradicts the position of stability that classic realism (generally) offers its readers. In this regard Belsey (1980:82) concurs when she maintains that,

... (classic realism) offers the reader a position from which, the text is intelligible and easily grasped ... the reader is invited to join in the process where intelligence is conveyed to him (by the author). Authors of such fiction are therefore at the apex of the situation.

That the author is at the apex is evident in the work of Jane Austen, for example. In concurring with Wayne Booth, Belsey (1980:85) maintains that in Emma 'Jane Austen' creates the impression that she is all-knowing and we, (the readers) 'are privileged to watch' as Emma climbs from a considerably lower platform to join the exalted company of Knightley. By implication, therefore, only those readers who are wise and perceptive enough belong on that platform with 'Austen', Knightley and Emma.

Similarly, 'Austen' comes to Pride and Prejudice with the attitude that she needs to learn nothing. The journey of her characters (and readers) is to achieve moral development by fighting against the pride and prejudice that fuels the novel. Further, by aligning Elizabeth and Darcy to the Gardiners, the comment on the Benett/Darcy relationship is complete. The result is the delivery of the typical 'sealed' unit, that arrests wandering or duplicity. Readers, reading within this tradition, are themselves called upon to celebrate such a 'unified ending' that establishes a truth and the unity of all meanings that ultimately converge in the author. There is, therefore, a reward for moral worth and development.

The reward for worth is, further, compounded in the characterization of Mrs Bennet, who is of nervous constitution and bent upon the (mostly mercenary) task of marrying off her daughters. By aligning Lydia closely to Mrs Bennet, Lydia's fate, in a sense, is sealed. The readers are made to believe that Lydia and the lying Wickham deserve each other and their lack of material wealth and status. To Lydia's pleading note,

it is a great comfort to have you so rich ... I am sure Wickham would like a place at court very much ... any place would do at about three or four hundred a year ... do not speak to Mr Darcy, if you had rather not,
(Austen, 1982: 299)

Elizabeth (puts) 'an end to every entreaty and expectation of the kind.' (Ibid)

The reward for moral growth and exemplary behaviour is also expanded through Kitty, who 'away from the influence of Lydia, spent the chief of her time, with her two elder sisters ... in society so superior ... her improvement was great.' (ibid).

The reward for moral development is evident in texts of this nature. Such projections provide a sense of 'intelligibility' for the reader and show very clear-cut distinctions between the moral and the immoral and the consequences thereof. And while Mrs Bennett may continue to be 'invariably silly', her reward is two daughters who are well-married and highly connected.

5.2.2 THE STATUS OF THE READER: MODERNISM VERSUS POST-MODERNISM

What of the reader and modernism? While modernism does see a movement away from realism, (many modernist writers believed that realism had become impoverished), it did still attempt to recuperate a certain harmony within art itself. In this context, Bradbury and Mc Farlane (eds) maintain that modernism constitutes an experimental era,

where artistic consciousness could become more intuitive, more poetic, art could now fulfil itself and create significant harmony not in the universe but within itself.

(1976:406)

For example, Mrs Ramsay, in To The Lighthouse says:

'... there is a coherence in things, a stability.'

(Woolf, 1977:84)

In this sense, modernist writers aimed to assert a harmony that exists within art itself; their contention is that it is through art that chaos is ordered. In this instance, the lighthouse itself, in To The Lighthouse may be seen as a symbol of unity. It draws things together, subsumes differences, and balances polarities. The lighthouse rises above the chaos and becomes the symbol for the harmony that art effects upon the chaos.

Similarly, although The Waves fragments liberal humanist notions of character and temporal space and while readers have to read against traditional notions of temporality, The Waves does

ultimately find a sense of order and resolution. In this respect, Bernard, finally says:

How to sum up. Now to explain to you the meaning of my life ... I distrust neat designs of life that are drawn upon half sheets of note paper ... I seek some design more in accordance with those moments of humiliation and triumph that come now and then undeniably.

(Woolf, 1978:204)

More pertinently, perhaps, 'the waves (do break) on the shore' fulfilling the natural pattern / design of things.

I do not wish to negate the effect that the polyvalency of modernist texts generally has upon the reader. I also agree that modernism transcends traditional realism in terms of the demands it places upon its readers. While readers of modernism are urged to 'see' that 'nothing is simply one thing', that what is actually 'there' is not always easily distinguishable from that which is illustrated, the reader is still able to recuperate the work. Consequently, I would argue that while modernist fiction does challenge the reader, it does not generally transgress ontological boundaries and ultimately provides the reader with a relatively secure position of intelligibility to read from.

Further, it is worth mentioning that in many instances modernist fiction seeks unity within itself and pursues within and through its fictive context a kind of joyous artistic freedom, free from the constraints of impoverished, material realism.

A great deal of modernism was motivated by the need to transcend the impoverishment of realism, therefore, modernist writing is more about seeking patterns within itself and tends to be more intuitively 'authorial'. In this capacity, it does not really create a very demanding space for the reader. Consequently, while

the modern novel has become the novel of fine consciousness, (and while) it escapes the conventions of fact-giving and story-telling ... (and while) it is the freer novel, this freedom does not extend to the reader as postmodernism does. In this context, it may be argued that modernism is 'self-manifesting'; it constitutes a total universe and sustains itself within the completeness of its own vision. (Bradbury and McFarlane, 1976:409).

5.2.3 THE STATUS OF THE READER IN POSTMODERNISM.

The stance of intelligibility and reward is contradicted in the postmodern, essentially because postmodernism deconstructs clear-cut differences between the good and evil and posits, instead, plurality which allows the reader 'a multiplicity of coexisting, even competing, interpretations, opinions or approaches' (Easthope, 1988:196).

Reward, further, is not always forthcoming for either readers or narrators themselves. In Pynchon's, The Crying of Lot 49, there is no reward for exemplary readership. In fact, readers find that they are (deliberately?) confused, teased and finally the knowledge of Lot 49 is withheld. Oedipa attends the auction and

is confronted by,

... the men inside the auction room (who) wore black mohair and had pale cruel faces.
(Pynchon, 1968:126)

The reader who expects a revelation or, at least, a semblance of reconciliation is provocatively denied because the novel abruptly ends before Lot 49 is 'cried'. This type of postmodern novel deliberately flouts closure because according to Alexander (1990:111),

closure completes the experience of the novel for the reader, but The Crying of Lot 49, continues to reverberate, leaving open in the world around us, the possibility of another mode of meaning behind the obvious.

Readers of such fiction are, therefore, coerced into reading 'another mode of meaning behind the obvious'. This would therefore, flout the obvious meanings and obvious conclusions (almost) inherent in realism.

Similarly, Rushdie's MC withholds final sensibility and has a narrator who is not only flawed but openly admits to this. Saleem says:

Look at me, I'm tearing myself apart can't even agree with myself ... talking arguing like a mad fellow, cracking up, memory going, yes, memory plunging into chasms and being swallowed by the dark, only fragments remain; none of it makes sense anymore.
(Rushdie, 1982:422).

When the narrator testifies to his own fallibility, fragmentation and loss of memory, what is the reader to believe? But the tension for such reading, that negates ultimate recuperation, is set up during the initial stages of the text through the use of the perforated sheet. The metaphor of perforation, thus, extends throughout the novel and the process of reading as I have illustrated in the first two chapters of this study.

Such contradiction and lack of recuperation is generally negated in classic Realism. Even a text like Wuthering Heights which offers relatively diverse narrative structures and dual narrators and where the reader is offered some space for interpretation, still signals structural closure. While Heathcliff and Catherine are denied the classic 'coming together' through marriage, the signifiers still settle with the union of Catherine (junior) and Hareton. Such movement towards closure is structurally aided by the vast knowledge of Nelly Dean. The novel propels her as a responsible narrator; yet, the extent of her intimate knowledge is at times dubious. However, she never wavers in her confidence even though it is obvious to more discerning readers that she colours events through her own emotions. For example, she believes that Catherine (senior) is wilful and spoilt, so she leaves her to rant and rave. To Catherine, she scathingly says,

'Why, Ma'am, the master has no idea of your being deranged ... and of course he (Linton) does not fear that you will let yourself die of hunger.'
(Brontë, 1978:100)

And yet, a few days later when she does let Linton know that

Catherine is ill (under duress that Catherine may well be 'demented'), she resorts to lies to cover herself. She says,

'She's fretting here, she would admit none of us till this evening ... but it is nothing'

To which Linton responds,

'It's nothing is it, Nelly Dean? You shall account more clearly for keeping me ignorant of this.' And he took his wife in his arms, and looked at her with anguish.
(Ibid)

In such fiction, therefore, readers are implicated in reading towards structural closure. Even when events are harrowing, the reader is not unusually perturbed since, 'the world evoked, in such fiction, its patterns of cause and effect, of social relationships and moral values, largely confirm the patterns of the world we seem to know' (Belsey, 1980:51). In contrast, postmodern texts deliberately destabilize their readers. Contradictions, lies and uncertainties become part of the text; they are not pushed to the margins of the text (as in Realism).

5.3 LANGUAGE AND DEFAMILIARIZATION

Sometimes the language used in postmodern texts work deliberately to disorientate the reader through its unusual quality. In ULB, the reader is confronted with:

Her soul lost its onlooker's quality ... It had retreated deep into the body again, to the farthest gut, waiting desperately for someone to call it out.
(Kundera, 1984:157).

A similar instance is evidenced in,

Her soul trembled in her body,
her naked body. She still felt
on her arms the touch of paper.

(Ibid)

While in BLF,

... the body was taking pleasure
in the absence of the soul which,
imagining, nothing and
remembering nothing had quietly
left the room.

(Kundera, 1980:114)

This deliberate, self-conscious diction may be attributed to the Russian Formalist concept of defamiliarization (ostranenie). Since the reader's response to language has become automated, it becomes essential to deliberately use unusual language which demands the attention of the reader. In this regard, Victor Shklovsky says:

The purpose of art is to impart
the sensation of things as they
are perceived, and not as they
are known. The technique of art
is to make objects 'unfamiliar'
... to increase the difficulty
and length of perception, because
the process of perception is an
aesthetic end in itself and must
be prolonged. Art is a way of
experiencing the artfulness of an
object.

(Lemon & Reis, 1965:92)

In this context I would like to offer that ostranenie, since it relies on the perception of the reader, may be seen to have anticipated Reception Aesthetics. The 'link' between Formalism and Reception Aesthetics can further be explicated through Wolfgang Iser's contention,

... (that) rather than merely
reinforce our given perceptions,

the valuable work of literature violates or transgresses the normative ways of seeing it and so teaches us new codes of understanding.

(Tompkins (ed), 1980:65)

Such 'violation or transgression of normative ways' ensures that the postmodernism arrests closure; readers are always pitting their 'readerly experience' of language against the 'writerly experience' of language. Readers are therefore, constantly involved in the production of new meanings. In this context, Mc Hale (1983:36) comments that:

Art participates in broader social change through its audience: to change the way one reads or perceives may be the first step towards changing the way one thinks and acts. An acknowledgement of the power of language is also an acknowledgement of the power for ideological manipulation of the wielder of that language.

The power of language appropriates the reader in a deliberate, yet, paradoxical manner. Nowhere in fiction has the role of the reader encompassed so much of responsibility or been fraught with so many points of oscillating tensions. 'The reader is,' in the words of Murray Krieger, 'both trapped in the looking glass and led through it' (quoted in Mc Hale, 1983:153).

The reader has to acknowledge the fictionality of the universe s/he is involved in, while s/he is simultaneously aware that the fiction demands responses comparable in intensity to 'real-life' experiences. This is done by harnessing other worlds and still managing, at certain points, to naturalize specific elements of

the text so that the reader is not (entirely) alienated.

That the reader is simultaneously trapped in the looking glass and (yet) led through it, is borne out in Barth's Lost in The Funhouse:

At this rate our hero, at this rate our protagonist will remain in the Funhouse forever. Narrative ordinarily consists of alternating dramatization and summarization. One symptom of nervous tension, paradoxically, is repeated in violent yawning; neither Peter nor Magda nor Uncle Karl nor Mother reacted in this way.

(Barth, 1968:75).

Before long it becomes obvious to the reader that the story, deliberately, does not consist of 'ordinary' narrative, for this is not an ordinary story. The structure of Lost in the Funhouse is circuitous and long drawn out. Further, unusual comparisons are effected:

He supposed in a husky tone that his foot had gone to sleep. Her teeth flashed. 'Pins and needles?' It was the honeysuckle on the lattice. Imagine being stung there? How long is this going to take?

(ibid. 80)

Here, the 'pins and needles' Ambrose has is 'extended' to the stinging of bees who are drawn by the honeysuckle on the lattice. The structure is complicated and almost exhibitionist. The last question in the quotation harnesses the reader in two ways: it becomes obvious that this narrative can not be represented by 'a

diagram called Freitag's Triangle (or even ... a variant of that diagram.' The question also appears to predict a reader response of frustration at the lack of traditional representation.

Since the representation of language is problematic in postmodernism, the issues of representation are 'addressed' through foregrounding it in various (problematic) ways. For example the futility of language is highlighted in BLF in the 'section' that deals with the inherent dangers of graphomaniac societies:

The invention of printing originally promoted mutual understanding. In the era of graphomania the writing of books has the opposite effect: everyone surrounds himself with his own writings ... cutting off all voices from without.

(Kundera, 1980:22).

Further, in BLF the narrator's father loses his power of speech and expresses his,

... infinite astonishment of knowing everything and being able to say nothing. Things lost their names and merged into a single undifferentiated reality. I was the only one who by talking to him could temporarily transform that nameless infinity into the world of clearly named entities.

(ibid.160).

The language, that he uses to write his text also disintegrates. This, coupled with his lapses of memory, leads to the production of a text that no-one could understand, 'it was made up of words

that did not exist' (ibid).

A similar foregrounding of the problems inherent in the representation of language is apparent in 'The Dictionary of Misunderstood Words'. Both Franz and Sabina talk at cross-purposes because 'no words were precise, their meanings were obliterated.' While the destabilizing effect of such language is obvious, it is, further, important because it leads to plural recuperation. The postmodern text may therefore be seen to effect multifarious responses from its readers.

5.4 SEDUCTION OF THE READER

Postmodernism may also deliberately mislead its readers into believing in that which is not necessarily 'true'. The postmodern text is not a given. Readers are urged to read for clues and to then piece these clues together (if they can piece them together). In this sense, the postmodern novel may be likened to a detective novel where readers are co-erced into reading for clues and (often) stumble over false leads. However, 'traditional' detective novels are formulaic and the inter-play between text and reader does lead to recuperation. The reader of such fiction is (ultimately) able to know who the murderer / criminal is, and can say with certainty: 'X is the murderer/criminal'. Postmodern fiction, however, deliberately misleads readers into believing in the 'wrong' clues and/or deliberately withholds ultimate recuperation or meaning.

An interesting example is provided by Pynchon in The Crying of Lot 49 which parodies a Raymond Chandler detective novel. However, Chandler does provide adequate recuperation for his novels, whereas Pynchon deliberately frustrates any recuperation. After being told that, 'Loren Passerine, the finest auctioneer in the West, will be crying tonight', Oedipa is not sure what she would do when the bidder reveals himself. The expectation of the reader is built up through:

... She (Oedipa) was not sure what she'd do when the bidder revealed himself. She had only some vague idea about causing a scene violent enough to bring the cops into it and find out who the man really was. She stood in the patch of sun ... wondering if she'd go through with it.

(Pynchon, 1965:126)

As it turns out Oedipa 'does go through with it' but revelation is withheld by the abrupt 'end' of the novel.

A strategy of this nature deliberately deconstructs any notion of faith between readers and narrators. I do not wish to suggest that this strategy is solely a postmodern technique. Precursors may be traced to Austen and Dickens. For example, in Pride and Prejudice, the narrator colludes in coercing the reader to believe that Wickham has been mistreated by Darcy. Elizabeth Bennett, obviously misguided by Wickham's suave appearance and superficial charm, believes him almost immediately. The result is that both Elizabeth and the unsuspecting reader read against Darcy. However, the misleading clue is a ploy which is structurally and thematically controlled. It ultimately leads

to the growth of both Darcy and Elizabeth. It is this growth that leads to their happy marriage and the closure of the text.

Similarly, in Great Expectations (Dickens, 1974), Pip's benefactor is a deliberately clouded issue. Both Pip and the readers, are led to believe that it is Mrs Havisham who is the mysterious benefactor. The revelation that it is Magwitch who is the benefactor, does have an ironic twist to it. However, I would argue, that the issue of Pip's benefactor is a relatively marginal issue, with the contradictions underplayed.

In postmodern fiction, however, the play with the reader is foregrounded and part of reading a postmodern text is to be a 'willing' participant in the 'game' of being seduced into alternative worlds and alternative 'realities'. For example, in FLW the seduction of the reader is foregrounded and becomes an integral dynamic of the text. The unsuspecting reader is coerced into believing that Charles seduces Sarah. The play amongst reader, narrator and character is a powerful energy, cleverly manipulated until the explosive consummation. The relations in the text may be attached to the polarity between seduction and betrayal. Sarah seduces Charles and then betrays him. The novel coerces the seduction of the reader into reading (and believing) the 'story' and then subsequently betrays him / her through offering no sense of security.

The 'consummation with Sarah' is played out through Charles' night with the prostitute. But rather than the electricity

present in the scene with Sarah, the scene with the prostitute is long-drawn out and uncomfortable for which Charles, needs a gin and tonic to 'dull his senses'. The stilted quality is compounded by the first wave of nausea and the attempt to respond:

'Would you like me to sit on your knees, sir?'

'Yes ... please do.'

(Fowles, 1978:273)

The narrator says:

His hand did not wander lower than her waist ... she made no advances after that first leading of his hand; she was his passive victim.

(ibid.)

And before the consummation, upon the knowledge that her name is Sarah (too) he is racked by nausea and 'twisting sideways he began to vomit into the pillow, beside her shocked, flung-back head' (ibid.274).

The two chapters that the long-drawn out scene with the prostitute cover may be seen to fuel the expectancy of the consummation between Sarah and Charles where Sarah Woodruff is to be the passive victim that 'Sarah the Prostitute' is. The reader who believes that Sarah Woodruff is seduced by Charles is himself / herself seduced by the effective manipulation of the narrator. Sarah Woodruff, is not the 'French Lieutenant's Woman', Sarah Woodruff is a virgin.

In contrast to the long-drawn out events with the prostitute that do not lead to consummation, the consummation between Sarah and

Charles is sudden and explosive. Contrasted to the plodding, discomfort of the scene with the prostitute, the scene with Sarah is feverish with Charles undressing 'wildly, tearing off his clothes as if someone was drowning and he was on the bank ... Precisely ninety seconds had passed since he had left her to look into the bedroom' (Fowles, 1978:304). The specific reference to 'precisely ninety seconds' is strange, almost misplaced, in a novel that appears to have very little respect for traditional forms of temporal representation.

The realization that he had forced a virgin, hits both him and the reader 'like a thunderbolt'. Both the reader and Charles have been seduced by carefully plotted coercion, into believing in something that is not! Sarah is a 'construction of Charles' perception. He has thus far seen only that which he wants to. In this respect Alexander concurs with my observation in her analysis of Lolita (Nabokov, 1963):

There she was with her ... rope-veined narrow hands and her gooseflesh white arms ... and her unkempt armpits there she was (my Lolita) ... I loved her more than anything I had imagined on earth.
(1990:68)

The need to subvert traditional notions of reader intelligibility are similarly displayed in both ULB and BLF. For example, after a relationship fraught with tension, misgiving and numerous affairs, the reader is given to understand that Tereza and Tomas do manage to reconcile their relationship. Amidst Tereza's 'revelation' that she had been 'cunning' and that 'her weakness

was aggressive and kept forcing Tomas to capitulate until eventually he lost his strength and was transformed into the rabbit in her arms'. And Tomas's assertion that he has been happy and that 'missions are stupid. I have no mission .. It's terrific relief to realize you're free, free of all missions' (Kundera, 1984:313), the reader may be seduced into believing that even though they are experiencing an odd happiness and an odd sadness, they are at the 'last station and ... together'.

Yet, this part, 'Karenin's Smile', is haunted by their death which occurs in the section entitled 'Words Misunderstood'. Therefore, any notion of lasting happiness is cancelled by their death, significantly under the sign of weight:

Tomas' son informed her (Sabina) of the death of Tomas and Tereza ... their pick up had crashed and hurtled down a steep incline. Their bodies had been crushed to a pulp. The police determined later that the brakes were in disastrous condition.

(Kundera, 1984:123).

Despite the bizarre manner of their death, the announcement is unemotional, and has the feel of an official document. Sabina, significantly 'could not get over the news; the last link to her past had been broken' (Ibid). Their death is, therefore, shrouded through the mediation of a letter and Sabina's (slightly) skewed response.

Destabilizing a 'harmonious' position to read from is also evident in BLE. Had the book been even marginally 'traditional',

the tendency would have been to 'end' the textuality in the section entitled, 'The Angels' where the character for whom the text has been written dies, metaphorically, amidst the laughter of Angels. However, the following chapter, 'The Border', explores misunderstandings between and amongst characters, overt sexuality and controversies, all 'overwritten' by an ambivalence which is expressed through,

... on and on the man talked.
 The others listened with
 interest, their naked genitals
 staring dully, sadly, listlessly
 at the yellow sand.
 (Kundera, 1980:228).

The image of the border keeps recurring to the narrator (and reader) because traditional ontological boundaries have been transgressed.

Such deliberate destabilization leads Alexander (1990:65) to perceptively comment that:

The reader is on constantly shifting ground, the victim, not only of endless games with language and narrative, but of profound ... disorientation. (They) are repeatedly forced to review whatever moral preconceptions and judgements they take to reading the novel; and the result is not so much a clear shift in attitude as an enforced acknowledgement of the complexity which ... certainties fail to accommodate.

5.5 MISE-EN-ABYME

Another strategy that postmodernism utilizes is that of mise-en-abyme. While this strategy, essentially, is one of self-reflexivity, it ensures that the reader is always reminded of the fictional status of the novel.

Mise-en-abyme may be termed one of the most potent of the narrative strategies which is utilized in the postmodern text to foreground the ontological dimension of recursive structures. McHale (1987:124) maintains that the term, initially adapted by Gide, has developed and become sophisticated. A 'true' mise-en-abyme is characterized on the basis of three criteria:

1. It is a nested or embedded narrative that occupies a narrative level inferior to that of the primary or diegetic narrative world;
2. The nested representation often resembles something at the level of the primary diegetic world;
3. The resemblance constitutes a salient or continuous aspect of the primary world so that one may conclude that the nested representation reproduces or duplicates the primary representation.

In short, mise-en-abyme contains its own commentary on, or criticism of the narrative text. Postmodern writing exploits the narrative strategy of mise-en-abyme 'because it is another form of short-circuit, another disruption of the 'logic' of narrative

hierarchy, (which is) every bit as disquieting as a character stepping across the ontological threshold to a different narrative level' (Mc Hale, 1987:125).

The effect of mise-en-abyme as narrative strategy 'aims to rob events of their solidity' (ibid). In both ULB and BLF mise-en-abyme is used to transgress narrative boundaries and to comment on the 'text as text'. The consequence is that the reader is (always) aware of the fictitious nature of the text. The reader may be interrogated and be made aware of the folly of being subsumed by the 'themes' of the text. Should the reader be subsumed, s/he is rudely interrupted. For example, in FLW, it is only in Chapter 13 that the artifice is finally exposed. Up until this point, the reader is made to believe that the text employs conventional realist (Victorian) techniques to tell the story by using an omniscient narrator.

Chapter Twelve ends with the following questions:

'Who is Sarah?
Out of what shadows does she
come?'

To which the narrator, in Chapter Thirteen, responds:

I do not know (who Sarah is).
This story I am telling is all
imagination. These characters I
create never existed outside my
own mind ... perhaps it is only a
game.

(Fowles, 1978:85)

The admission that the narrator 'does not know' and that the text

is (openly) the result of a fabrication and (but) a game, does make readers sit up and take notice, as I have argued, in related contexts, in this study.

Readers, therefore, become implicated and partisan to the 'game-playing' in the text. Similarly, in the exchange between Bibi and Banaka, the artifice of the text is crucially embedded. Banaka the novelist who has nothing but scorn for those who read his books says:

Novels are the fruit of human illusion ... think of what goes into a novel, all those different characters. Do you really mean to say you know all there is to know about them, how they look, think, dress? What kind of backgrounds they come from?
(Kundera, 1980:89)

Such a statement negates the 'age-old' concept that the novelist stands 'next to God' and must, therefore, have all the answers for the text and its production. This strategy may also be seen as an attempt to allow readers to fill in the gaps; this allows the reader to read against totality. It is evident that novels are based upon sustained 'lies' and game-playing with the reader.

Banaka's comment, that we can give accounts only of 'ourselves' draws together the reason for Tamina's popularity for she appeared to be keen, if not eager, to listen without talking about herself; it, further, explicates the quest for 'life' which is seen in the desire to conquer the ears of others. This also links the comments made on graphomania. Yet, graphomania

exacerbates isolation for 'while everyone wants to make himself into the universe of the word ... we are in an age of universal deafness and lack of understanding' (Kundera, 1980:106).

In the 'Dictionary of Misunderstood Words' music is offered as the 'anti-word'. In a novel that is itself, paradoxically, created through words. The embedding, in the particular context, functions as a comment on the text itself, almost as a concept of (textual) erasure:

... no words were precise, their meanings were obliterated.

... what he yearned for was music to engulf the pain, the futility, the vanity of words. Music was the negation of sentences, music was the antiword.

(Kundera, 1984:94)

Similar echoes are heard in BLF:

The words became more and more cumbersome, they were like hunks of tough, gristly meat.

(Kundera, 1980:113)

In the light of music being offered as the 'anti-word' it is significant that in conversations between the narrator and his father, the father should know everything (about music) but no words while the narrator knows nothing (about music) but a lot of words.

When words claim their own futility, pain and unintelligibility, then can readers attribute (complete) meaning to the text? Part of the vanity of words is to lay bare the artifice of the world. Words on a collision course reflect their awareness of their

artifice. The 'self-expressed' futility of the word may well reflect the futility of the world and also expresses the elusiveness of the very words that readers use to define themselves. If words can be obliterated, then what of definitions? This elusiveness may be surmised in the exchange between the narrator and his father:

He kept trying to tell me something ... but the words were completely unintelligible ... I didn't understand him (and) he looked at me in amazement.
(Kundera, 1980:161)

Words on a collision course?

Worlds on a collision course?

Significantly, in the embedded text, 'A Short Dictionary of Misunderstood Words', 'A Short Dictionary of Misunderstood Words' (Contd) and 'A Short Dictionary of Misunderstood Words' (Concluded), the inability to 'tie' words to singular meanings is highlighted. It is also significant that the 'Dictionary of Misunderstood Words' is broken up into three sections and is sustained for twenty eight pages in a section which is itself entitled 'Worlds Misunderstood'. Such strategies self-consciously challenge the reader. Eventually, when it appears as though Sabina and Franz agree that the beauty of New York is (merely) 'Beauty by Mistake' the reader is once again surprised. To the narratorial, 'Didn't they agree on anything?' The tacit reply is,

'No, there is a difference. Sabina was very much attracted to the alien quality of New York's

beauty. Franz found it
 intriguing but frightening; it
 made him homesick for Europe.'
 (Kundera, 1984:96)

The narratorial reply (above) flouts reader expectation that, perhaps, finally Franz and Sabina agree. But through the comment that they do not, the reader is 'reprimanded' for reading superficially and with preconceptions. The postmodern text expects a more creative, regenerative reader. Through the use of such techniques, the postmodern text undercuts the notion that 'culture is perishing in reproduction, mindlessly, as victims of affluent societies contribute to the sheets of paper covered with words which, pile up in archives' (Kundera, 1980:25).

Refined reading strategies are therefore called for. Apart from this, however, I do not think that texts like Kundera's ULB and BLF can actually be 'appreciated' if their historical context is isolated. As I argue, particularly in the first two chapters of this study, my contention is that such diverse meanings also highlight the unilateral, monolithic and sequential manner in which history has been written and the way in which the various interpretations of history have been systematically destroyed.

5.6 READER AS CHARACTER?

Fokemma (1991) concurs with Docherty (1983) that the 'real character' in postmodern fiction is not to be located within the text but in the psyche of the reader that is probed. The anti-mimetic stance of postmodernism demands that the reader 're-enact' him/her self continuously. Thus, 'the reader is the only

character left, at play in the production of fiction'. This emphasises the notion that postmodern fiction creates space for readers to play out their fantasies. This activity may be likened to 'filling in the gaps' (Tompkins, (ed) 1980:55). However, while both realist and modernist texts, obviously require their readers to fill in the gaps, the challenge that has come to bear upon postmodern readers is far greater. While Fokemma (1991) does concede this challenge, she argues that such a contention, (influenced by Barthes' distinction between 'lisible' and 'illisible' texts), which has come to be seen as the prerogative of the postmodern is not as revolutionary as it appears to be. She claims that the fragmented nature of such texts causes the reader to merely exchange one set of values for another because

... the reader exchanges the ideology of the unified self for a new belief in the fragmented self.

(Fokemma, 1991:209)

According to her argument, therefore, the 'liberal belief in texts still holds sway'.

I would disagree; Fokemma seems to work on the supposition that classic realism and its subsequent readerly intelligibility are easily substituted by the fragmented, more open text. This need not necessarily be the case. The easy substitution Fokemma iterates is made more complex through the postmodern ambiguity that both foregrounds and subverts classic realism. As she herself maintains:

Postmodern(ism) ... appears to hover between representation and presentation.

(ibid)

To me, postmodern fiction denies a secure reading position through various measures of displacement that allow both text and reader to transcend traditional positions. I would further argue that since the reader is a construct of the text, the fragmented nature of postmodernism impacts on the reader who is deliberately denied any single point of recuperation as there is none.

5.7 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

While readers in postmodern fiction are seduced into the world of fiction, they are also constantly reminded through self-reflexivity and the 'laying bare' of the text that this is 'merely' fiction.

In this instance, I expect that apologists for realist fiction would argue that realist fiction also seduces its readers into the world of fiction. My response would be that my focus is on the diversity and extent of the 'actualization' and regeneration that postmodern fiction creates for its readers; the constraints of closure negate this type of actualization in realist fiction.

The alternatives that postmodern fiction offer create space for other versions of interpretation. This militates against readers being lured into receiving the interpretation.

That postmodern fiction challenges its readers to participate in the world of fiction, further shifts ontological boundaries. This, I would venture to suggest, is in contrast to the role of the reader in modernism. Modernism, through its insistence on the autonomy of the artistic and its distinction between high and mass culture, distances the reader from the work of fiction. This is unlike postmodernism which breaks the boundaries between high and mass culture.

CONCLUSION

I undertake the 'pulling together of the narrative threads' of this dissertation with the full awareness of the anomaly that such a stance must provoke within the context of a study that has been initiated through the tenuousness of the postmodern. Nonetheless, I feel that I should offer a few perspectives on the 'situatedness' of my own contribution within postmodern fiction. My concluding thoughts could be read as a moment of 'sustained rupture'.

Throughout my reading, I have encountered a plethora of texts detailing the postmodern mood; in addition, I have found numerous texts that offer analyses of postmodern fictions. While I have found them all very useful for my purposes, I was still perturbed by the lack of any sustained analyses of postmodern narrative strategies in fiction. My personal feeling is that it is, perhaps, less taxing to identify a few idiosyncratic strategies of a specific writer, while a sustained analysis that seeks to merge a theoretical analysis with fictional eclecticism does require a more concerted effort. My study seeks to 'fill this gap' and to provide a sustained analysis of Kundera's ULB and BLE. In seeking to provide such an analysis, I also provide intertextual readings throughout, since my readings of Kundera are guided by my awareness that textual analyses grow out of a network of intertextual relations. Through this stance I also

negate the canonization of Kundera.

Further, this dissertation has from the outset been motivated primarily by my endeavour to see postmodern fiction as embodying the eclecticism of 'serious' elements as opposed to 'mere' word games. While my study concedes the games, I have simultaneously shown that the game of the aesthetic is underpinned by a serious dark(er) side. The overt games of sex and laughter, in this context, may be seen as a challenge to hierarchical structures that seek to constrain and contain. Consequently, it would be naïve to believe that postmodernism is merely the commodification of the aesthetic. It is also worth remembering that (sometimes) the pain of the experience of alienation, suppression and exploitation is too great to be told, and can only be entered under the guise of fictions.

I would like to link this to my readings which have illustrated that the postmodern, contrary to cynical criticism, does not revel in its fictionality. I have, instead, provided readings in various contexts to suggest that a sizeable proportion of postmodern fiction does indeed constitute a political act. The pluralization of discourse and the dismantling of metanarratives into many tiny little narratives significantly contributes towards allowing the marginal, thus far subsumed within dominant discourses, to surface. I have provided a diverse range of readings that seek to 'reveal' how History has been made intelligible by silencing and distorting. Leitch (1983:124) maintains that, 'historical research necessarily sets borders

around textual dissemination and simplifies critical reading.' My dissertation demonstrates the ways in which postmodern fiction undermines this. Through my study, I have provided an insight into the ways in which both history and fictional discourse share common points of contact. The awareness that history does ultimately emplot through the use of language and ideological complicity has been (deliberately?) evaded by historiography. Postmodern fiction by its eclectic nature deconstructs the ontological boundaries between history and fiction. Further, through its negation of any oppositional space, postmodern fiction relativizes the mastery of history and acknowledges, instead, the seamlessness between world and fiction. As Hutcheon (Brooker (ed.) 1992:229) maintains:

The political effect of (the postmodern) therefore lies in the double action by which it inscribes and intervenes in a given discursive order.

The challenge that postmodern fiction has effected against history, has led anti-postmodernists to bewail the loss of a sense of history. It depends on your definition of history. As my readings and theoretical stance suggest,

... historiographic metafiction is written today in the context of a serious contemporary interrogating of the nature of representation in historiography. There has been much interest recently in narrative - its forms, its functions, its powers and its limitations - in many fields, but especially in history.

(Brooker, 1992:232).

My study, in the interrogation it offers between history and fiction, seeks to intensify such 'sites' of struggle within (postmodern) narrative fiction.

My study also 'textualizes' the demise of the elitist autonomy of modernism. Through its concerted effort to strive for autonomy and through its refusal to confront 'the nightmare of history', the modernist project may well be seen as an aestheticized 'throw-back' to the age of Enlightenment and Reason. In dismantling the Grand Narrative, postmodernism has significantly contributed towards the breaking down of the boundaries between high and mass culture.

An integral aspect of postmodern fiction has been the shift in the status of the reader. As I argue throughout my study, the status of the reader has altered significantly, perhaps even dramatically. Readers are confronted by fiction that negates closure and traditional forms of readership that revolve around consumption. The diffuseness of postmodern fiction denies any (total) form of recuperation. My readings of ULB and BLF offer a perspective into the way(s) (postmodern) fiction may be read. I do not claim any form of authority: I merely 'enter' the narration bringing to it my own 'flow of tattered history'. As a reader, I myself continue to be fascinated by the silences and absences that underpin ULB, BLF and the other examples of postmodern fiction that my study deals with; it is these absences and silences that 'allow' for tenuous acts of interpretation.

Further, postmodern fiction militates against 'transparent' interpretation, hence emphasizing the network of deferral that such texts are situated within. In this instance, an example of silence that remains 'unexplained' may be seen in Foe (Coetzee, 1988) where Friday who is constituted in and through silence does not speak. While Friday's silence does not lend itself to being 'interpreted' within cultural paradigms, it is undoubted that the 'slow stream' that flows up through Friday's body is powerful. As Marshall (1992:79) argues, the stream that flows up through Friday's body does not come in the form of words meant to represent his experience. Friday through his silence resists analysis and comforting closure for,

... (we) are no longer in the position of power in which we provide interpretations based on (our) own ideological, cultural, historical contexts and desires. To hear Friday's silence is to resist the closure of ultimate interpretation for the sake of possible other stories.
(ibid.)

Consequently, I may have 'read' the silences but I am aware of the potential of such silences to reverberate beyond the confines of the text(ual). I would also argue that the diffuse nature of the readings and analyses that I offer of postmodern fiction throughout this study repudiate David Lodge's naïve claim that reading much of postmodern fiction is 'just like carpet' (1977:43). In a world racked by a lack of certitude and spiralling inchoation, I think that it is facetious to expect the world of (postmodern) fiction to be comforting. As I argue

throughout this study, in related contexts, postmodern fiction self-consciously 'fills the air with uncertainty, the uncertainty that (realist and modernist) fiction usually dissipates' (ibid: 226).

Postmodern fiction also harnesses contemporary theoretical 'positions' to regenerate the fictional wor(l)d while simultaneously commenting on the political in a parodic and manipulative manner. While the postmodern does admit elements of Otherness into its diegetic world, I have not at any point intimated that postmodern fiction resolves contradictions or provides solutions. Essentially, the world of fiction is contradiction-bound, it will always be since this reflects the contradiction(s) in language generally and the inability of language to represent transparently. As Marshall (1992:178) maintains:

Postmodern (fiction) is about everything that shows up in the detritus and the brilliance and everyday of now. It's about those threads that we trace and trace. But not to a conclusion (and) ... never to innocent knowledge ... never to pure insight.

Postmodern fiction through its capriciousness defers, subverts and challenges that we suspect and question the very centres and discursive practices that define us. By interrogating postmodern fiction, I seek to 'situate' my own study within this network of (endless) deferral ...

While my study must provoke questions regarding the relationship between postmodernism and feminism and postmodernism and postcolonialism, I find that dealing with them is outside the scope of my study. Certainly some critics of postmodernism see postmodernism as the master-narrative it claims to subvert. Both Feminism and Postcolonialism harbour a dubiousness about the postmodern claim to create space for the expression of Otherness.

I would like to offer a few, brief comments in this regard. Certain forms of feminism claim that it is almost incredible that just as women were reclaiming historical space and exploring their subjectivity, postmodernism (and poststructuralism) problematized 'subjecthood' and its representation. Such forms of feminism view postmodernism with a great deal of suspicion. My personal feeling is that feminism should appropriate from postmodernism. Certainly, the very History that postmodernism questions, is the history that has sought to relegate feminist and female discourse to the margins. Further, feminists can appropriate narrative space in very much the same way postmodernism has done so as tell the Female stories that have been subsumed by patriarchal discourse.

In this context, Morrison's Beloved may be seen as a postmodern text that recuperates space for a Black female slave story. By transgressing narrative time frames, (as I have argued in the second chapter of this study), drawing upon the spirit world and literally embodying it, the pastpresentfuture 'structure' of the text destroys the linearity of HISTORY. The complex 'rememory'

that Beloved provokes, recuperates while raising more questions.

By utilizing the intertextuality of silences, citations, references to a history of absent women and traumatized language, Beloved uses the very absences of history to create space.

Consequently, I would argue that the way in which postmodernism can be appropriated for feminism should not be undermined. That Feminism already defines itself as anti-essential since women undergo various forms of oppression is, to me, an acknowledgement of the pluralism that post-modernism has come to 'define' itself through. In this context Fraser and Nicholson ((eds) 1990:35) argue eloquently for the diversity and pluralism that feminism can recuperate from postmodernism:

This (would be) a practice made up of a patchwork of overlapping alliances, not one circumscribable by an essential definition ... such inquiry would be the theoretical counterpart of a broader, richer, more complex and multi-layered feminist solidarity which is essential for overcoming the oppression of women in its 'endless variety and monotonous similarity'.

Similarly, certain postcolonial theorists and writers have viewed postmodernism as a master-narrative of the West which seeks to totalize the discourse of the Other. Yet, I do not see either postmodernism or postcolonialism as hermetically sealed. By its very definition, postcolonialism, in a literary / fictive context, feeds off the dialectic of Western hegemonic practice(s)

and the subversion and (re)appropriation thereof. Consequently, it may be argued that postcolonialism is itself 'implicated'. Any residual notion of return to 'precolonial reality' that postcolonialism may harbour is, therefore mythical. In this regard, Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin ((eds) 1990:195) maintain that:

Postcolonial culture is inevitably a hybridized phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the 'grafted' European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology... Such construction or reconstruction only occurs as a dynamic interaction between European systems and 'peripheral' subversions of them ... It is not possible to return to ... an absolute pre-colonial cultural purity.

Consequently, I would suggest that postcolonialism accept its mutual bond with postmodernism. In this context, the concern of postmodern theorists and writers to dismantle Western metaphysics, the assumed notions about language and textuality and the construction of 'socio-textual relations' is echoed in postcolonial texts. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin ((eds), 1989:165) maintain:

The concern of (both) these discourses are therefore increasingly interactive and mutually, influential.

Since they are mutually dependent, I would argue that neither postmodernism nor postcolonialism should be seen as an attempt

to set up metanarratives that seek to legitimize monolithic truths or a single discourse.

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