

**Representation of ‘History and Violence’ in the Narration of the Postmodern
Novels: Martin Amis’ *Time’s Arrow*, J M Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and Salman
Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*.**



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December 2015

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A Thesis

Submitted to

The Department of English and Humanities

of BRAC University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Masters of Arts in English

December 2015

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I am grateful to Allah for giving me the patience to pursue my Masters Degree and especially giving me the confidence to complete my thesis amidst all obstacles.

I am thankful to my supervisor Professor Rukhsana Rahim Chowdhury for helping and guiding me since I had joined this university till I completed my thesis. I want to thank my teachers in the department: Professor Firdous Azim, Professor Syed Manzoorul Islam, Professor Rifat Mahbub, Professor Riaz Partha Khan, Ms. Mushira Habib and Ms. Shuchi Karim for enlightening me with their knowledge during the course of my learning. My immense gratitude goes to Professor Riaz Partha Khan and Professor Syed Manzoorul Islam for their lectures which were the primary source of my inspiration which motivated me to work on 'history and violence' as the subject of my thesis.

I am also grateful to the Principal of Summerfield International School for allowing me to take few days leave and my dear colleagues for negotiating and substituting my work in the school, and for letting me work on my thesis peacefully.

Finally, I am thankful to my family, my mother, brother and sisters who believe I work hard. My special thanks goes to Untara Rayeesa, Sarah Habib and Kazi Farzana Shoily for helping me brainstorm in the beginning and for giving their intellectual and emotional support whenever I needed it.

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Abstract

A novel cannot narrate time, experience or memory of the past accurately but can reconstruct history and then recount the events of history and violence. The literary devices and narrative techniques used to write history also have to be unusual to depict the past: especially the history which holds memory of war, colonization and destruction. Postmodernism proposes that history cannot be absolutely narrated as the authenticity and referent cannot be relied upon. So a subversive approach in the narrative technique—like non-linear narration, ironic representation, blending of history with fiction and magic-realism—are unconventional and postmodern approaches that can depict the violence and trauma of war, colonization, racism and displacement in writings or novels narrating history. Therefore this dissertation attempts to examine how history and violence are treated and depicted in three different postmodern novels, set in three different geographical contexts. The three novels *Time's Arrow*, *Midnight's Children* and *Disgrace* remarkably depict Nazi holocaust, India's history, tracing 30 years after Independence, and Post-Apartheid condition respectively. This paper will also explore how and why the postmodern techniques such as backward narration, use of magic realism, representation through irony are used in the novels to deconstruct the previous form of narrative techniques and to deal with serious themes and issues like war, colonization, displacement, racism and trauma. Finally the paper will examine and critique the representation of violence through the events in the novels.

Introduction

The postmodern as I have been defining it, is not degeneration into ‘hyperreality’ but a questioning of what reality can mean and how we can come to know it. It is not that representation dominates or effaces the referent, but rather that it now self-consciously acknowledges its existence as representation- that is as interpreting (indeed as creating) its referent, not as offering direct and immediate access to it.

(Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 32)

Postmodernism or Postmodern Literature has brought into question the ‘real’ or the ‘representation’ of any concept, culture, history or any event interpreted by modernism. Postmodernist philosophy does not aim to ‘define’, for it believes that defining or interpreting cannot be precise and is rather impossible. Hence postmodernism challenges ‘forms’, authenticity of different narrations of events and past accepted reality and celebrates the multiple meanings or even the lack of meaning. To understand more of postmodernism, if we look at the literary works of this period, it can be understood how ‘representation’ is played out through humor, irony and deconstruction unlike the modernist principles. The development of postmodern narrative techniques, as understood by scholars, took place after World War II, when modernist ideas were questioned, challenged and revolutionized through postmodern concepts and philosophy.

The purpose of drawing a comparison between modernism and postmodernism here is to understand how ‘representation’ is dealt with within postmodernism and importantly postmodern

novels. Ihab Hassan in his essay “Toward a Concept of Postmodernism” provides schematic differences between the two theories or philosophies: modernism and postmodernism. The dichotomies between the two theories shown by Ihab Hassan in different fields like literary theories, philosophy, political science, and psychoanalysis explains how postmodernism subverts the ideas and philosophies of modernism. In the dichotomies, Hassan discusses postmodern beliefs in Decreation/Deconstruction, Antithesis, Rhetoric, Rhizome/ Surface level understanding of an event or idea, Anti-narrative/*Petite Histoire*, Immanence and Irony, all of which are contrary to modernism. For modernism, unlike postmodernism, celebrates and believes in Creation, Synthesis, Semantics, Root, Narrative/*Grand Histoire*, Transcendence and Metaphysics. Thus it can be observed that postmodern novels represent postmodern ideas using different narrative techniques while deconstructing and subverting previous ideas of modernism, hence representing the real in a new way.

Through the break in form and structural traditions of modernism, postmodernism or postmodern literature seems to represent the ‘history and violence’ employing postmodern narrative techniques to bring out all aspects of representation. Postmodern literature importantly does not emphasize on the ‘meaning’ or ‘message’ to be represented but on the medium and the narrative form used in literary works. Linda Hutcheon states in *The Politics of Postmodernism* that “postmodern world is mediated through representations”. The representation in postmodernism, she further explains, challenges the ‘mimesis assumption of representation’. (30)

The narrative techniques used in postmodern literature can be seen in the contemporary novels. These narrative techniques used to represent the different aspects of postmodern interpretations in the novels are gripping to most readers. A novel cannot narrate time, experience or memory but can only reconstruct the history that is narrated and also has been suppressed, so as to

interpret and represent history that has not been represented. Hence it is an overwhelming task to scrutinize how postmodern narration can recount ‘history and violence’ of the past. Another question that would also arise is by what literary form the brutality of history would be fully represented. How can the violence associated with history be justified in the postmodern novels? Can the represented interpretations be accepted as real or mere analysis? Therefore, this research paper’s objective is to explore how ‘history and violence’ is represented through postmodern narration by referring to three postmodern novels: Martin Amis’ *Times Arrow*, J M Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*.

The narrative techniques used in these postmodern literary works challenge and subvert modern approach and form. Pastiche and parody, intertextuality, temporal distortion, minimalism, maximalism, magic realism, along with historiographic-metafiction are part of the postmodern strategies to represent the real in an unusual manner. Hutcheon remarks, “... gone are the days of Walter Benjamin’s idea of ‘aura’ (of modernism). Postmodernity rejects the notions of ‘originality, authenticity and uniqueness’.” (Hutcheon 33) These are replaced by parody and reappropriation: postmodern narrative techniques. Many postmodern novelists and artists used the postmodern technique of “pastiche and parody” as way to deconstruct the real. Parody is double coded in political terms because it both legitimizes and subverts that which it parodies. (Hutcheon 97). Other techniques like magic realism, which blends the real with fiction, become a way to ‘de-naturalize the natural’. Hutcheon adds that for Jean-Francois Lyotard “postmodernity is characterized by no grand narratives...” (24). Moreover, like Lyotard, Catherine Burgess in her essay “Postmodern Value” explains how postmodernism is skeptic about ‘meta-narratives’ and also that the temporal narration of the ‘real’ is controversial. Hence it explains why postmodernists use temporal distortion, maximalism and intertextuality, irony etc to represent the

postmodern themes which is to break traditions and represent in a new way. It is also notable that Linda Hutcheon has brought in a new term to describe postmodern narrative technique which is historiographic meta-fiction. She defines this term in the following manner: “Narrative representation-fictive and historical- comes under similar subversive scrutiny in the paradoxical post-modern form I would like to call ‘historiographic-metafiction.’ (Hutcheon 14). This research paper will try to explore and examine the narrative techniques and the different subjects looked at in postmodernism through the three selected novels. It will discuss how different narrative techniques and postmodern themes play a role in presenting history in an unusual and unconventional way. The three novels bring out the postmodern idea of irony, narrative techniques like magic realism, temporal distortion and subverting the natural. The self reflexive irony used in postmodern novels shows the involvement of the narrator and writer in the novels. Irony plays a major role in deconstructing the history and blurring boundaries. This paper will also deal with how narration plays with identity and irony in postmodernism.

This paper intends to present, in the chosen novels, ‘history and violence’ as narrated using postmodern narrative technique, mainly using temporal distortion, magic realism, historical facts blended with fiction, irony, deconstruction of the idea of truth and fragmentation of the characters’ identity. History, violence and trauma are the themes that connect the three novels I have selected to work on. The paper will look at history in the progression of time. Postmodernism believes that a novel cannot recount the past and memory absolutely but can reconstruct the past. Hence the literary device used to write the history has to be disjunctive or detailed to depict the past for deconstructing the history represented earlier. Along with history one of the common themes in these novels is violence and the trauma of violence which comes up while exploring and portraying the past. All the three novels depict history and trauma in the

particular historical background. Violence seems to be an important element to be examined and understood along with history in contemporary fiction. The violence here is related to physical, psychological, racial, historical and so forth. The novels depict history and the brutality involved in it which brings out the psychological representation of the mind and traumatic expression of the characters. The representation of history and violence in these novels will be looked at through postmodern theories by Linda Hutcheon, Frederick Nietzsche, Cathy Caruth and Ihab Hassan. Another point that this paper will explicate and argue is how violence is presented and interpreted in all the novels in reference to Walter Benjamin's "Critique of violence". Some of the essays and references used in this research paper may not be typically postmodern insights; however they will provide a wider lens to the idea of history, which can then be connected to postmodernism.

In "The End of History in English Historiographic Metafiction" Rosella Mamoli Zorzi states that "Contemporary writers who deal with the rewriting of history are motivated by a need to highlight the gap - which is impossible to fill - between the real past and any representation of it" (114). According to her, postmodern fiction is concerned with expressing the effects of historical events and the consequent traumas. Moreover she elucidates that postmodern historical novels critically revisit the past, mark the effects of historical forces on the lives of individual characters while analyzing the movement of history and the rhythms of ordinary life. Linda Hutcheon entitles literary works which mixes historical and fictive representation as 'historiographic metafiction' in *The Politics of Postmodernism* (33). All the novels used in this paper can be read as historiographic metafiction which comes with a twist in narration, either through use of irony or with subversion of narrative style, which, according to Hutcheon, is a postmodern tradition hence "The form this twist takes may vary from novel to novel..."

(Hutcheon 50) So, postmodern novels like *Time's Arrow*, *Salman Rushdie* and *Disgrace* presents history in an unconventional way which does not disconnect the historical events from the real records or chronicles but questions the conventionality of representation. Trauma and violence are the major connecting forces to be dealt with for understanding history in a different way, especially in postmodern novels. In "Critique of violence" Walter Benjamin defines violence as means which refers to just or unjust end. It questions the use of violence by law and individual. According to Benjamin's analysis "Violence for natural law is not problematic but what if it misused for unjust ends" (Benjamin 237). Hence the subject of the violence presented in the three novels will be analyzed through Benjamin's "Critique of Violence".

This paper is divided into three chapters analyzing each novel. The first chapter will discuss Martin Amis's *Times Arrow* and show how it presents the narration of history in reverse. As the novel narrates war and genocide, the paper will demonstrate how the non-linearity or deconstruction of narration and language can only sustain the trauma of war and violence. In examining the novel's backward narration by the narrator and protagonist Odilo Undervorben, the violence of Nazi holocaust will be explored. In the second chapter, violence and trauma will be looked at in J M Coetzee's *Disgrace*. In this novel, the shift in hierarchy, the blurring of the position of the oppressed and the oppressor and how history has made South Africa suffer after colonization will be presented. Thus the novel will also look at post-colonial elements in this novel but from the eye of the oppressor. Importantly, the violence inflicted by both oppressor and oppressed in this novel will be looked at and analyzed. Finally, in the third chapter, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* will be under discussion exploring the techniques used to blend historical facts and fiction, deconstructing the narrative technique by using magic realism to deal with issues like post-colonialism, displacement, trauma and loss of identity. Postmodernism

proposes that an individual cannot be disassociated from his history or memory. Hence, through the character Saleem Sinai, this chapter will explore the fragmentation of the identity of the character, show how post-colonialism is looked at in postmodern times and how history is represented in this novel.

Chapter 1:

Unwinding the history of Nazi Holocaust and violence in reverse in *Time's Arrow*

Martin Amis's novel *Time's Arrow* provides a reflection of the past or the history with a backward narration of time. Amis's purpose in putting forward a reverse narration is to help him deal with the representation of the brute event of Nazi holocaust in the novel. In this novel, the unnamed narrator and the protagonist's narration blur and subvert the narration of history and time—thus destruction in history turns to creation as time moves backward. The backward narrative technique and theme of the novel has been consciously employed by the writer to help the reader understand the occurrence of violence and brutality in history, especially the event of Nazi genocide. Also, through this subverted narrative technique Amis presents the difficulties in narrating the trauma and cruelty of history which memory does not want to preserve in linear progression as 'history' is complex and brutal. This chapter will look at Martin Amis's novel *Times Arrow* to examine and present the history of holocaust which the author tries to emphasize and grapple with by using a reverse technique of narrating the history. Also it will look at how the novelist Martin Amis, using postmodern literary techniques questions and interprets history which is burdened with violence and trauma.

Time's Arrow is a postmodern novel where the novelist uses 'irony' to represent the brutality of killing Jews in masses. The novel maintains the postmodern tradition of narrating history not in grand narratives but in a plain tone. The narrative styles and themes of modernism are challenged in this novel as there is no aspect of grandeur seen in narrating the usual daily lives of the American people, describing instead the pluralistic culture and different races residing in America. Amis also comments on the daily habits of eating, excreting and of

degraded society, amidst narrating an important event of history. Through the recounting of events in backward by the protagonist and the narrator, it represents the genocide of Second World War. In an ironic way the protagonist Odilo Unverdorben reimagines creating life by healing as he states “It was I, Odilo Undervorben, who personally removed the pellets of Zylon B and entrusted them to the pharmacist in his white coat.” (Amis 121) However in reverse chronology, or in reality, Odilo Unverdorben is the Nazi doctor in Auschwitz and he controlled the poison gas used to kill the Jews in the novel. Hence in reverse the mutilated dead bodies are reshaped and the dead returns to life. The dark irony hidden in the reverse narration reveals the protagonist’s fear of the committed crime which is concealed in his mind, from which he wants to turn away as he cannot accept the horrific past deeds done. The movement of events in the novel *Time’s Arrow* appears as the process of rewinding a film. It is important to note why Martin Amis reflects Holocaust as undone while narrating in reverse. The temporal distortion of time which destabilizes linear time frame makes the plot move in loops. Amis through this subversion of the tradition of linearity enlightens the readers of the notion that a novel cannot recount the experience of time, or cannot remember the experience of history, but can only retell or reconstruct the history. Hence the Holocaust remains undone and peace seems to be restored in the end, in a contradictory way to awe the readers.

The novel begins with the protagonist Tod Friendly, who is an old man lying on his death bed surrounded by doctors in the hospital. Next the narration moves backward where he is released from the hospital. It is important to mark that Tod Friendly is friendless and also that his relationship with women is complicated, as with his lover Irene who claims to know his darkest secret which he usually muttered in his sleep. The narrator and the protagonist here are the same person, however their narrations appear disconnected as the narrator seems to be the secondary

consciousness of the protagonist. The narrator expresses “Tod can’t feel, won’t connect, never opens up, always holds something back.” (Amis 52) It is perhaps the history and the memory that Tod Friendly (Odilo Undervorben) holds for which he cannot feel, memory which the narrator seems not to know about or is trying to forget. Eventually the narration moves on, where Tod becomes John Young. Moving further backward, it is revealed that Tod Friendly took up the name of John Young, as he is a war criminal assisted by Nicholas Kreditor. Throughout the novel, he is moving to different places taking up different names. Finally the protagonist’s identity transforms from Hamilton de Souza to his real identity Odilo Unverdorben. The reverse narration finally discloses the identity of the protagonist who is a Nazi doctor, a dealer of Jews in Auschwitz, who also assisted Uncle Pepi in experimenting with dead children. Linda Hutcheon while explicating postmodern practice of ‘denaturalizing the natural’ adds in *The Politics of Postmodernism* that “the history of representation cannot be escaped but it can be both exploited and commented critically through irony and parody.” (Hutcheon 55)

At this point the Jews were being deconcentrated, were being channeled back into the society, and it fell to us to help dismantle and disperse the ghettos, where the light was failing and where the children all looked so old and full of knowledge, and everybody moved much too slowly or too fast. (Amis 140)

We then escorted this group of about thirty souls into a low warehouse littered with primitive sewing machines and spindles and bolts of cloth. Normally, now, one would have to chivy them off into their cellars and outhouses. But these Jews led by the weeping baby, made their solemn way past a series of curtains and blankets suspended from the ceiling and, one by one, backed their way through missing panel in the wall. (Amis 141)

Martin Amis presents the holocaust in reverse which makes the audience reflect on the irony underlying the narration and represents the harsh brutality of the past as we can see in the above quotes from the novel. Like Hutcheon explains about “de-naturalizing” events, Amis’ reverse narrative technique can be marked as an attempt to describe the horrific actions of mutilating and killing, which is difficult to do in a straightforward tone. Thus the deconstruction of traditional narrative technique helps portray the horror of genocide by the Nazis.

Cathy Caruth, in her article “Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History,” proposes that interpreting ‘trauma’ of historical events helps to comprehend history. The memory which creates the trauma does not present the ‘real’, nonetheless it helps to analyze and understand history which cannot be achieved in straightforward narration of facts. She states:

Through the notion of trauma, I will argue, we can understand that a re-thinking of reference is not aimed at eliminating history, but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, of precisely permitting history to arise where immediate understanding may not. (Caruth 182)

Cathy Caruth examines Sigmund Freud’s analysis of history of the Jews in *Moses and Monotheism* to look at the concept of trauma in the shaping of history. Martin Amis’ reverse narration invalidates the actual events of genocide, but it is only much later, or towards the end of the novel that the narration seems to make sense. Caruth detects this delay as a definite ‘latency’ period which is brought about by the human response to a traumatic incident. Since the beginning of *Time’s Arrow* the narrator hints at the trauma which the protagonist is in. The ‘trauma’ is the main reason of the creation of the narrator, as the protagonist undergoes double consciousness. The narrator hints in the very beginning, the secretive crime and the trauma the

protagonist experienced or was going through when he mentions “I sense the heat of fear of shame. Is that what I’m heading toward? And Tod’s fear, when I stop and analyze it, really is frightening.” (8). Also the word ‘Trauma...’ flashes in the narrator’s mind when the protagonist is alone. Moreover Tod’s dream is what is feared by the narrator and Tod himself. The ‘fear’ of disclosing the truth and the horrific dreams dreamt by Tod or Odilo explains his traumatic psychology and it becomes apparent when he admits to Father Duryea that he has sinned. The protagonist’s dream of the babies which the narrator called it as ‘Bomb babies’ refers to his atrocious act of putting Jewish children into ghettos for killing and experimenting with them. It is this memory that haunted Odilo Undervorben. According to Caruth “The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known; but in an inherent latency within the experience itself.” (Caruth 184). Similarly, Linda Hutcheon proposes in *The Politics of Postmodernism* that recounting a totalized history is impossible and asks whether the fragment of the events could represent the real. Events of the past are real representation which is deconstructed in postmodern narration perhaps to make it more intricate which makes it a ‘metahistory of losers and winners,’ (Hutcheon 63) The personal trauma of war criminal Odilo Undervorben reflects the guilt which disturbs and torments him. Amis, through this novel, represents the fact that the narration of such heinous crimes in history cannot be retold totally and in simplistic forms.

Along with history, trauma and memory are both created as the effects of violence. *Time’s Arrow* presents the horrific violence of coldblooded genocide. Here the protagonist works under Uncle Pepi, killing prisoners with injections and phenols and performing other gruesome experiments with human bodies. In the beginning of the novel, doctors mutilate and destroy people’s bodies but in Auschwitz they seem to heal in backward narration. The temporal

distortion of narration is to terrorize and awe readers with the horrific presentation of violence of the past which is impossible to narrate. Appalling examples of violence in reverse can be seen in *Time's Arrow*.

Pulleys, plungers, grates, and vents were the organs of the machine...The patients, still dead were delivered out on a stretchlike apparatus. The air felt thick and warped with the magnetic heat of creation. Thence to the Chamber, where the dead bodies were stacked carefully and in my view, counterintuitively, with babies and children at the base of the pile, then the women and the elderly, and then the men. (Amis 120)

The validity or legality of violence used in history has been a debatable issue amongst historians. Contemporary writers present history in their novels with a twist of fiction, creating historiography metafiction to engage readers into think about history and to interpret historical accounts and violence involved in it. In the context of *Time's Arrow*, while trying to comprehend the legality of violence of the Nazi holocaust, one can look at Walter Benjamin's "Critique of Violence". Benjamin in this essay explains 'violence' as "means to just or unjust end" and a "product of history" if used by positive law. (Benjamin 237). He elaborates further that "violence" has always been "legal" to lawmakers or the state. Positive law as opposed to natural law sees violence as a product of history. (237) He explains that positive law questions the means and asks for the justification of violence. "Positive law demands of all violence a proof of its historic origin, which under certain conditions is declared legal, sanctioned." (238) In brief, we can say that Benjamin expresses violence as 'sanctioned and unsanctioned force' or 'legitimate and illegitimate violence' which is from a philosophical and historical view and, if used by individuals, it poses a threat to the state law. The act of violence of Nazi Holocaust can

be understood through this critique of violence which leaves and sanctions violence or genocide as legal under Adolf Hitler's rule. The justification given of the violence of the genocide was the rise of anti-Semitism because of the stable economic condition of the Jews. The line "Jews empowered to have friendly relations with Aryans" (Amis 156) implies irony. The extermination of the Jews was by violence and force used by the Nazis. Amis in this novel inverts ordinary logic, the relationship between cause and effect. The cause and effect cannot be justified in the novel as the end and means of the violence does not comply but breaks way from the situation.

It has been previously discussed that the non-linear timeline in the novel is one of the postmodern literary techniques used by Amis that subverts the traditional concept of a linear progression of history. Kant applies his idea of a universal history to the whole of humanity, insisting that the rifts between nature and freedom can be overcome by reasoning, and drive mankind in a trajectory of linear progress. In his novel, Amis projects the exact opposite and challenges this notion. Walter Benjamin's thesis on the philosophy of history is effective in critiquing the Kantian model of historicism, the linear progress of mankind and history. Walter Benjamin's work "Theses on the Philosophy of History" critiques the Kantian progress of history, because history is the story of success as well as of catastrophe. Hence he explicates:

The kind of happiness that could arouse envy in us exists only in the air we have breathed, among people we could have talked to, women who could have given themselves to us. In other words, our image of happiness is insolubly bound up with the image of redemption. The same applies to, our view of the past, which is the concern of history. The past carries with the temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is secret agreement between past generation and the present one. (254)

Here Benjamin critiques the concept of history, time and space. As historicism marks the linear progress of culture, politics and state, the progress in historical materialism looks back at the past and then proposes a ‘redemption’ of the past. Therefore we can mark Amis’ question to readers, which is about whether there can be redemption for the protagonist, the Nazi doctor or the whole act of genocide. The novel’s reverse technique comes as a restitutive method for restoring the horrific past. However, demonstrating past trauma and actions cannot be redeemed. It is because the history is the ‘Holocaust’, which is brutal and inhuman. Holocaust reminds of the denial of humanity and presents the extreme and inflated notion of the ‘self’ of the Nazis. The memory flashback of the trauma in a non-linear way provides a disjunction to the past. The distortion of the chronological narration questions the play of time and history. As in a linear narration memory comes straight and gets forgotten, however in a non-linear narration memory comes anew and remains as a scar.

Most of the postmodern writers dealing with history leave a message that representing history, constructing and deconstructing meaning, is difficult. As remarked by Prof. Rosela Mamoli Zorzi in “The End of History in English Historiographic Metafiction”: “Amis uses a retrospective tendency to face a violent and troubled history: asking himself how to represent the evil of the Holocaust, he opts for an escape from the past’s wrongdoing, an attempt at redemption, by depicting the Holocaust in reverse.” (190). She then refers to James Diedrick who had defined the novel *Time’s Arrow* as ‘a poetic undoing of the Holocaust, all the more poignant for the reader’s knowledge that it can never be undone’. (190) In this essay Prof. Zorzi explains how history is presented in fiction, where narration is not of one but with multiple narrations or deconstructed narration, making ‘historiographic metafiction’ a postmodern way of destabilizing the former form. He elaborates this with reference to Martin Amis’ novel *Time’s*

Arrow. He affirms that “The end of history should have already come, but there might be worse in the store. Not only does Amis see himself as representative of those who came soon after the Holocaust and perceived that sense of an indelible shame, but also of that generation who experienced the threat of nuclear annihilation” (Zorzi 195). On the note of historical progression, Prof Zorzi asserts that “History does not proceed, it goes backwards” (Zorzi 196). She believes the Holocaust would be undone only if the course of history could be reversed. The novel’s end shows historical conclusion is inconclusive, which is against the tradition of grand narrative and closure as explained by theorists like Jean-François Lyotard.

Martin Amis, through his novel *Time’s Arrow*, presents that any language cannot sustain the magnitude of genocide. The literary device used to write genocide has to be disjunctive to bring in the fresh memory of genocide and so this novel creates confusion when finally the memory comes alive. In addition to this, the narrator portrays the limit of the narrator and his self-consciousness. Martin Amis presents the Nazi doctor as one who denies his own identity creating a secondary consciousness. Through the character Odilo Unverdorben he portrays a Nazi doctor as a shaky character after perpetuating such atrocities and violence. Frederick Nietzsche in his book *The Will to Power* explains the psychological trauma leading to nihilism. He defines nihilism as when one gets discouraged after not being able to retrieve “meaning” in past events and leads to “....insecurity, the lack of any opportunity to recover and to regain composure—being ashamed in front of oneself, as if one had deceived oneself all too long.” (Nietzsche, 4) This is similar to the protagonist, the Nazi doctor who uses life denying force by creating an alter ego, the narrator to put himself out of normal activities after not being able to bear the weight of trauma. The postmodern turn of fragmenting identity is devised by Amis by creating the Nazi doctor’s consciousness who rethinks and suffers between past, present and

future catastrophic trauma. Martin Amis's novel is about shocking revelations, and so he chose to play out the complex history, experiences, memory and trauma to unfold this plot. Although reverse narration is an illusion that life can be right, it also brings the memory and history afresh and presents the earlier burden, violence and trauma.

Chapter 2:

Depicting violence and trauma in history of the past and in its aftermath in J M Coetzee's *Disgrace*.

The beginning of the post-colonial era in literature had led writers to present the theme of history, especially in the genre of 'novels'. As a contemporary writer John Maxwell Coetzee in his novel *Disgrace* projects the after affects or the Post-Apartheid condition in South Africa. Set in Africa, a few years after the apartheid establishment was overthrown, this novel presents the consequences of racial discrimination. Like most post-colonial novels the binaries of white/black, powerful/powerless, humanistic/animalistic, male power/ female power are constructed to develop the theme of the novel. Thus through the binaries the novel presents the conflict of racial segregation of white and black Africans, the role of gender, sexual abuse, inflicted violence and socio-economic conditions of Africa in Post-Apartheid era. This novel is interwoven with complex themes of post-colonialism as the change of power dynamic shows how the position of oppressed and the oppressor is reversed, or one can say that it blurs the lines of these positions. Most importantly, the novel shows the prevalence of 'violence' in the Post-apartheid Africa. *Disgrace* depicts how that violence transforms the power structure and it helps to present a new Africa after Apartheid. Therefore this chapter is going to discuss how history, violence and are treated in this novel.

Throughout the novel *Disgrace*, violence is shown as a dominant and major theme. The events of rape, abuse and exploitation of relationship, execution of dogs are presented throughout this novel, which appalls the readers. Here, the main character is David Lurie who is a white South African, a fifty-two year old university Professor at Cape Technical University. He is

divorced twice and later after his failed relationships he visits prostitutes and grows affection towards Soraya. Later he stops meeting Soraya as she demands so. Next he eyes his student Melanie Isaac, thirty years younger than him and seems to develop a forced relationship although Melanie does not resist his movements. Later, after Lurie's relationship with his student is disclosed, he is asked to confess his mistake or crime (as the university calls it crime of abuse) or else leave the institution. Next, after the disgraceful trial held by the institution, he moves to Salem, in Eastern Cape, to his daughter Lucy. The major part of violence takes place in this latter part of the novel. Lucy is raped by three African intruders on her farm and Lurie is attacked by them. The scenario of a white forcing on a native turning to a native forcing on a white is specifically ironic. Thus, through violence referred in the past and present, Coetzee presents a new Africa which has a subverted scenario unlike how it was in the Apartheid period—due to the change in the power structure. The juxtaposition of the two rape incidents marks the postmodern subversion of the natural and the present irony in it.

Ihab Hassan decodes an important postmodern aspect in “Toward a Concept of Postmodernism” referring to “indeterminacies” which includes the postmodern features of ‘discontinuity’, ‘pluralism’, ‘randomness’ and ‘deformation’. *Disgrace* can be read in the light of what Hassan marks about postmodernism, that the novel is ‘ambiguous’ and ‘deconstructive’ and represented through ‘irony and rupture’. (Hassan 153). One can perceive *Disgrace* as the novel of decreation, decenterment and detotalization and as ambiguous and rhetorical when understanding the approach presented in it. The novel is narrated through a limited omniscient narrator who has an absolute knowledge of the mind of David Lurie. The writer's aim to choose the limited narrative point of view is to opine that there are limitations to explore the minds of Petrus and Lucy, who have perhaps suffered subjugation and trauma respectively, one as

colonized and other as the colonizer. Moreover the novel leaves the reader with the question of who the protagonist is: Lurie or Lucy or the Africans? Whose story is it: the whites or the Africans? Even though most of the critics have called this novel realist, with its indistinct features and themes the novel clearly seems to blur 'genre' and 'approach' which is a part of postmodern belief of deconstruction and fragmenting for representing the 'unpresentable'; for which the limited omniscient narrator point of view is chosen. Through irony, the novel blurs and yet clearly details the varied themes which Coetzee attempts to depict in this novel.

According to Linda Hutcheon "...like postmodernism, the postcolonial suffers a multitude of definitions, some actually involving the postmodern" (Hutcheon 175). But also referring to Edward Said she explains how postmodernism had an effect on reading and representing postcolonial discourse. She refers to Edward Said that representation of the "Other" is prevalent in Modern works and now the "grand recites" takes a turn as there is disruptive articulation of the subaltern. This projects what *Disgrace* does in some respect, presenting the new Africa through irony, parody and reflexivity used as a rhetorical device, used plainly to denaturalize the natural (Hutcheon 174). Although the African character like Petrus (who worked in Lucy's farm) or even the three rapists' voices are silenced, through this silence it leaves the readers with the question of what and how the past was and how Africa will be in the coming years of the Post-Apartheid period. Rosela Mamoli Zorzi in "The End of History in English Historiographic Metafiction" explains:

Postmodern writers are concerned with the problem of the construction of a critical history; self-reflexivity is a fundamental feature of all postmodern historical novels as they ponder on the production and the reception of histories.

The metafictional self-reflexivity invites us to wonder about our knowledge of the past and the ways we have achieved such knowledge. (117)

Here, in this novel, Coetzee employs self-reflexivity to understand the past and present of the history. Hence, as the knowledge of the past is limited or impossible to present in some respect, as a result to represent the present condition of Africa becomes complex.

Disgrace hints at history of crime in South Africa and represents Post-Apartheid violation as its consequence. It shows how colonization contaminates and ruins everything even after its end. This novel signifies that one cannot escape from the spawn of violence which is present in race, gender and class relation. Violence of every kind-physical, psychological, racial, historical and so forth is present in this novel. In the beginning when David forces Melanie “She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes. She lets him lay her out on the bed and undress her: she even helps him, raising her arms and then her hips.” (Coetzee 25) David Lurie does not take it as a rape as he states “Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core.” (Coetzee 25). But even after understanding that he was exploiting her he did not stop. Here patriarchy and class division plays a major role, where Melanie fails to resist and gives up. Along with colonial subjugation, the elements of class, race, patriarchy and economical power function together in this event of abuse against Melanie. David Lurie is a metaphor of position and authority as he forces his will over a passive powerless woman, or the younger girl, who can be seen as a passive colonizer. Thus Melanie Isaac is touched in a profound contamination which is evil.

Likewise, David Lurie’s daughter Lucy is raped and abused by three African intruders one of them being Pollux who is Petur’s brother-in-law. Violence is more prominent in this incident and other violence the intruders commit are they kill Lucy’s dogs and sets Lurie on fire.

The incident of Lucy's rape and attack on Lurie is marked as highly racist by many critics. Coetzee has certainly devised this event of rape and abuse on purpose to ironically represent the aftermath of inhuman racial segregation. J. M. Coetzee seems to intentionally leave to the readers to decide that whether Pollux is inherently a violent person or is his violence a product of examples given to him by the society he lives in or whether it is both. Frantz Fanon in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* in the section "On Violence" advocates violence to be used for decolonization. He suggests that as the colonizer dominated the natives through violence similarly violence should be used to take away the colonizers position for decolonization. In context to what Frantz Fanon has said about the method of decolonization we can read the actions of the Africans in *Disgrace* as a way to settle their position in their native land Africa. Through rape as violence, the intruders try to show their powerful position after the abolishment of Apartheid. Also they confirm how they can easily invade a white's personal property and land. This act of violence can be examined in regard to what Fanon states:

The gaze that the colonized subject casts at the colonist's sector is a look of lust, a look of envy. Dreams of possession. Every type of possession: of sitting at the colonist's table and sleeping in his bed, preferably with his wife. The colonized man is an envious man. The colonist is aware of this as he catches the furtive glance, and constantly on his guard realizes bitterly that: "They want to take our place." And it's true there is not one colonized subject who at least once a day does not dream of taking the place of the colonist. (Fanon 5)

Fanon clearly justifies this desire of the colonized as "The colonized's sector is a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light" (Fanon 6). The intruders use violence as a

means to assert their own power and place in the society which the apartheid system disregarded and left them in a relegated condition.

In order to figure out the intensity of violence in *Disgrace* it is important to look at the portrayal of characters like Pollux and also the other two intruders which is made limited to assess by Coetzee. Lucy when discussing about the rape incident states: ‘They spur each other on. That’s probably why they do it together. Like dogs in a pack.’..... ‘And the third one was there to learn.’ (Coetzee 159). According to David Lurie, Lucy would not have talked about them in a degrading manner if they had been white and believes they came to enslave him. But for Lucy it was “Not slavery. Subjection. Subjugation.” (Coetzee 159) Lucy also describes how the rape seemed to be so personal and she could feel the rapists’ personal hatred towards her. It is important to mark why Coetzee supports and projects such racist, stereotypical African characters through this incident. Through this representation a clear definition of good and evil or bad is created; where in this case the white becomes the good one and the Africans the evil. Frederick Nietzsche in *On the Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic* in his first essay: ‘Good and Evil’, ‘Good and Bad’ discusses that the idea of ‘good’ was created to represent the powerful and ‘bad’ or ‘evil’ for the powerless. He also argues that the concept of evil arose to represent the man of “ressentiment” who belongs to the slave morality with emotions of hatred, envy and other negative emotions due to being powerless. Thus the powerless and weak created the concept of evil to take revenge against their oppressors, according to Nietzsche. Nietzsche states:

One should ask *who* is actually evil in the sense of the morality of *ressentiment*.

The stern reply is: *precisely* ‘good’ person of the other morality, the noble, powerful, dominating one, but re-touched, re-interpreted and reviewed through the poisonous eye of *ressentiment*. Here there is one point we would be the last to

deny: anyone who came to know these ‘good men’ as enemies came to know nothing but ‘evil enemies’ (Nietzsche 22-23)

The reason for creating the binary of good and evil by Coetzee looks similar to the postmodern approach of using postmodern parody. Linda Hutcheon in *The Politics of Postmodernism* in discussing “Politics of Parody” explains how double-coded parody is used in novels to legitimize and also subvert history which is represented through irony. Similarly, here the representation of the morality of evil and good is ironically legitimized. But also subverted by presenting paradoxically the consequence of colonization and subjugation which was the reason of Lucy’s rape and thus in this way the morality of evil and good is created. In addition he does so by creating a comparison between Lucy’s rape and Melanie’s abuse. It is clear that society or in this case the colonized society has created a division of good and evil. Sexual violation on Lucy reflects the space that was violated. Solidarity was broken in Lucy’s and Lurie’s life after the incident. Lucy’s house felt ‘violated and alien’ (Coetzee 113) Hence Post-Apartheid violation shows history and presence of crime in South Africa.

To further discuss it, it is significant to evaluate the violence as abuse which was inflicted by David Lurie on Melanie. David Lurie was charged on the basis of “Article 3 deals with victimization or harassment on grounds of race, ethnic group, religion, gender sexual preference, or physical disability..... Article 3.1 addresses victimization or harassment of students by teachers.” (Coetzee 39) Through Lurie, Coetzee parodies and represents that similar violence and abuse which was committed but it was approached in a subtle way as the offender was a dignified ‘white’ professor. The narrator expresses “He does not feel nervous. On the contrary, he feels quite sure of himself. His heart beats evenly, he has slept well. Vanity, he thinks the dangerous vanity of the gambler; vanity and self-righteousness. He is going into this in the

wrong spirit. But he does not care.” (Coetzee 47) Lurie, even after the disgraceful trial he does not accept his guilt or crime and reviews it as just an “impulse he could not resist” (Coetzee 53). The comparison of the two events of violence makes it ambiguous to judge violence against the background of racial tension. According to Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*

The colonist is not content with physically limiting the space of the colonized, i.e., with the help of his agents of law and order. As if to illustrate the totalitarian nature of colonial exploitation, the colonist turns the colonized into a kind of quintessence of evil. Colonized society is not merely portrayed as a society without values. The colonist is not content with stating that the colonized world has lost its values or worse never possessed any. The “native” is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. He is dare we say it, the enemy of values. In other words absolute evil. (6)

David Lurie believes that South Africa had or has a history where the Africans raped the white women. As per Lurie “It happens every day, every hour, every minute, he tells himself, in every quarter of the country. Count yourself lucky to have escaped with your life. Count yourself lucky not to be prisoner in the car at this moment, speeding away, or at the bottom of a donga with a bullet in your head. Count Lucy lucky too. Above all Lucy.” (Coetzee 98) The same thought of a colonialist as stated by Fanon is presented by Coetzee through Lurie’s reaction to the violent incident. Now, the question that rises up through the examination of violence is what is Coetzee trying to demonstrate? Is it that he represents South Africa and its people through *Disgrace* as a colonized may project? Or is it that he wants to exhibit something beyond this, about what the colonization or Apartheid has done to South Africa? Moreover it is important to analyze the

reactions to the violence in both cases which marks the reverse in the position of the oppressed and the oppressor's. Walter Benjamin in the "Critique of Violence" emphasizes that "laws seems violence in the hands of individual as a danger undermining the legal system" (239). Benjamin here explains that the monopoly of violence threatens law or the power as violence is exercised by the powerful and when used by an individual is threatening. In the history of South Africa the Apartheid system was created and the 'legal end' was met with the 'subordination of citizens' and the 'general conscription'. Apartheid of racial segregation created a law-preserving scenario which in truth was made to keep the place of the powerful unharmed. The fact that the three intruders could exercise violence against Lucy and Lurie who are white makes them the powerful ones who can oppress and break the law. The change of power structure clearly is brought out through this incident. After Lucy is raped, Lurie becomes the colonized character where he cannot disclose the crime and has to be silent. It is thus ironic how Lurie's stubborn silence and refusal to cooperate with the university's ethics and code or to accept the guilt and shame also remains as he has to be silent for his daughter, as a similar crime was attempted on her.

J.M. Coetzee in *Disgrace* illustrates dystopia and dysfunctional South African society. He also shows how poverty creates violence and destroyed peace even after the eradication of the Apartheid system. The female characters in this novel, especially Lucy and Melanie are portrayed as weak and caring. However Lurie embodying the patriarchy in the beginning cannot resist the intruders. Lurie like the women characters submits in the hand of the violent Africans. After the revelation of Lucy's rape the narrator comments:

The events of yesterday have shocked him to the depths. The trembling, the weakness are only the first and most superficial signs of that shock. He has a sense that, inside him, a vital organ has been bruised, abused- perhaps even his

heart. For the first time he has a taste of what it will be like to be an old man, tired to the bone, without hopes, without desires, indifferent to the future. (107)

It is ironic how even with guns and dogs, which were used to keep away the Africans, were of no use. The novel in some way proposes decolonization and so the different languages used by Lurie seem to be alienated later as most of them spoke Xhosa in Salem. The narrator comments “He speaks Italian, he speaks French, but Italian and French will not save him here in darkest Africa.” (Coetzee 95) Also language seems a barrier to understanding Petrus’ story and through this Lurie understands that “English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa” (Coetzee 117). With this Coetzee perhaps mark the inability to present any history totally. Moreover Lucy is reluctant to disclose the truth as she says “You tell what happened to you, I tell what happened to me, she repeats.” (Coetzee 99) “Because the police are not going to save you, not any more, you can be sure.” (Coetzee 100) Lucy’s secret was seen as Lurie’s disgrace. Later Lucy and Lurie find themselves as only whites in their neighborhood. Lurie is even astonished when Melanie’s boyfriend says ““Stay with your own kind.”” (194)

Following the event of Lucy’s rape they find Pollux, the younger rapist in Petrus’ house but Lucy refuses to charge him. According to Lucy as Pollux is Petrus’ brother-in-law, if they unveiled him as the rapist she would not be safe. Hence, after knowing she is pregnant, Lucy decides to offer Petrus to marry and take over the charge of her territory. The change of position of Petrus and Lurie is contrasted significantly. Petrus in the beginning describes himself thus: ‘I am the gardener and the dog-man.’ He reflects for a moment. ‘The dog-man’...” (Coetzee 64). But later he states “I am not anymore the dog man” (Coetzee 129). Lurie finds her rape and violence as redemption of past wrong doings as she resists the violence and bears the trauma. Lurie asks her “Is it some form of private salvation you are trying to work out? Do you hope you

can expiate the crimes of the past by suffering in present?” (Coetzee 112). Lucy finds it important to seek help and protection from Petrus and finally she is left with nothing “No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity... ‘Like a dog’” (205). David Lurie on the other hand from such highly dignified position of a professor is put down to a disgraceful position as after his forceful affair with his students he is scandalized. He even goes to meet Melanie Isaac’s family as a weak character to receive forgiveness. His apology signifies his realization of the futility of European art he was teaching and the opera he was working on, in South Africa. In the beginning he feels that working for animal welfare “sounds like someone trying to make reparation for past misdeeds” (Coetzee 77) but later he gets on doctoring dogs and exterminating them through euthanasia sterilization. David Lurie in *Disgrace* is forced to re-examine the boundaries between animal and human life and, thus, to react differently to suffering and other forms of life around him.

According to Zorzi, “Postmodernism entails a return to history, not a positive and simple return, but a critical one, questioning the entire notion of historical knowledge. History is not discredited, yet its modes and meanings are diversified. Postmodernism forces us to review and reconsider our idea of what history is, exploring the cultural presumptions on which any account of history is founded.” (Zorzi 114) Similar to what Zorzi says about going back to history, Coetzee returns to the past while representing the present as consequences of the past history. It is important to scrutinize how the protagonist or Lucy is redeemed and at what cost? The disgrace is suffered by whom? Ironically disgrace falls upon both Lurie and Lucy is traumatized forever as if violence was inflicted on her as an act of redemption for the past. Moreover the novel portrays that along with post-colonialism elements of race, trauma, violence has to be explored to understand history. He also shows the cyclic nature of trauma and history.

Significantly the novel is written in present tense as if it was narrated while narrating it. The novel is ended in an uncertain manner, in confusion and proposing that the events of the past are to be repeated and the tragedy of history will remain.

Chapter 3:

Examining the blend of the factual and the fiction to trace India's history and violence in *Midnight's Children*.

Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* is an Indian novel in English which accounts for and draws the outline of India's history from the time of India's struggle for Independence to the aftermath of India's Independence. It eventually marks India's partition with Pakistan and divisions within, and also recounts the Indo-China and Indo-Pakistan war. In this novel, historical events of national and transnational nature are narrated by the protagonist Saleem Sinai. However he is an unreliable narrator because he narrates history blending facts and fiction, using postmodern techniques of magic-realism, meta-fiction and historiography. The novel is written in a humorous tone yet it is satirical. Importantly the language of the novel is blended with English and Urdu words, which presents the novel as the chutnification of the English language and history. History of the nation seems to coincide with the private life of the protagonist Saleem Sinai. Saleem Sinai finds it important and feels desperate to narrate his story to Padma, who is a skeptical listener, before his body crumbles. The desperation implies the need to create an identity which is fragmented like his body and the memory of history which he wants to narrate.

Salman Rushdie follows the postmodern assumption of 'representation' as Linda Hutcheon explains in "The Politics of Postmodernism" that the act of 'representation duplicates'. (30) Along with symbolically representing history in juxtaposition to his narration of his life, the narrator Saleem Sinai chooses to narrate reappropriating the truth by adding fiction. With the distorted memory of the protagonist, Rushdie shows how history cannot be narrated totally with

authentic facts. Hutcheon explains that in postmodernism this challenge of ‘de-totalizing’ the history is confronted by postmodern parody. Hutcheon explicates that Salman Rushdie in *Midnight’s Children* adopted ‘indigenous-Indian models of history’ instead of ‘western imperialistic-modes’. She elaborates further that historiographic meta-fictive process is acted upon by “anti totalizing the totalized image which is the chutnification of history.” (Hutcheon 60) Saleem Sinai referring to how he earns his living by making and selling ‘chutneys’, states:

And my chutneys and kasaundies are, after all, connected to my nocturnal scribblings- by day amongst the pickle-vats by nights within these sheets, I spend my time at the great work of preserving. Memory as well as fruit, is being save from the corruption of the clocks. (Rushdie 44)

Here, according to Hutcheon, Saleem signifies that in writing history and making chutneys, in both the processes, there is “inevitable distortions”. (Hutcheon 60). Hence through these lines Saleem clearly explains that like the fruits and the memory of history are preserved but in the process of remaking it, it gets distorted with time. Moreover it is signified that ‘chutney’ adds flavor to food and life and ‘fiction’ in history.

Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* is influenced by novels of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Gunter Grass’ *Tin Drum*. Like these novels Rushdie incorporated facts and fantastical elements to produce India’s historical account in a unique way. In this novel, language and words used are appropriated: English words are used in unusual ways. Sometimes English words look translated from Urdu, also words and sometimes Urdu phrases are not even translated. Few examples are ‘*nakkoo*’, ‘sub kuch tick-tak’, ‘*whatsitsname*’, ‘Teen Batti’ and there are more all throughout the novel. The novel

encompasses the history of India's struggle with colonialism to achieve independence, India's partition and latter wars with China and Pakistan. Moreover the novel stretches geographically from Kashmir to Agra, Bombay, then from Karachi to Dacca and finally back to Bombay. In *Midnight's Children*, the narrator or the protagonist Saleem Sinai is the one among the 1001 'midnight's children' who were born on 15th August 1957 at midnight between 12-1 am. As recounted by Saleem Sinai, they held special powers, and Saleem was invested with the power of getting into others' thoughts. The novel begins with Saleem Sinai narrating about his grandfather Adam Aziz's story to Padma. Significantly Saleem's story is narrated in the background of India's history as if he tells the history of India and his family together. In the end the family splits apart as his family members die tragically, except uncle Mustapha with whom he does not want live.

Saleem's narration of his private life's events goes parallel to India's history. This novel is post-colonial fiction with elements of postmodernism. In the very beginning, Rushdie hints Saleem's connection to history to the readers as Saleem says, "I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country." (Rushdie 3). Saleem tells Padma that he was born on 15th August 1957. Then,

Newspaper celebrated me; politicians ratified my position. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: 'Dear Baby Saleem, My belated congratulations on the happy accident of your moment of your birth! You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in sense, the mirror of our own.' (Rushdie 167)

The tint of unrealistic narration of Saleem draws the attention of the readers that the history of India would mirror his identity and his narration. This identity of Saleem is fragmented, hybridized, alienated, displaced and tragic like post-colonial India. Thus the birth of the child becomes metaphoric when juxtaposed with the birth of the nation. Few examples of these instances are when World War ends, Naseem, his grandmother develops a longed-for headache, also on the day when Uncle Hanif and Aunt Pia's movie is released Mahatma Gandhi is killed. So, Saleem states "Such historical coincidences have littered, and perhaps befouled, my family's existence in the world." (Rushdie 28)

Narration of history is intricate as narration relies on the referent. Many postmodern critics and theorists like Linda Hutcheon question the authenticity of history as they believe that the narration of history is a mimesis representation. On this Hutcheon adds that a plot having narrative structure gives a totalizing representation but that integrates multiple and scattered events into one unified story. Thus this creates suspicious narrations and contradictory response towards the plot. (Hutcheon 30) Hence postmodern novelists writing historiographic metafiction will narrate their version of story. This idea is similar to what Saleem asserts is that "What's real and what's true aren't necessarily the same." (Rushdie 103) Moreover, Salman Rushdie in "Imaginary Homelands" refers to his idea of narration and reality by quoting from *Midnight's Children* that

Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems –but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible. Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost

presses against the screen. Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion itself is reality...(229)

Here Salman Rushdie uses the metaphor of movements towards the screen as narrator's movement of the narration through time towards the present. The more it nears the contemporary events it loses 'deep perspective' and becomes partial. According to Rushdie one cannot narrate the "whole picture" as in the process of interpreting it loses perspective and thus to fill up the gap one adds his own version of reality. On this Rushdie comments that in *Midnight's Children* the memory is represented as he wants according to his version of truth and states that "I tried to make it imaginatively true as I could, but imaginatively truth is simultaneously honourable and suspect..." (10), referring to the added fiction with the true historical events.

Salman Rushdie's blending of historical facts with fiction resembles the act of 'de-naturalizing' events and history. Linda Hutcheon elucidates that although historical documents present most of the true historical accounts but the historians fill rest of the gaps with fictional writing. Hence the historical document does not remain transparent means to past event. She proposes that historians are readers of fragmentary documents and they fill gaps by creating ordering structures themselves (Hutcheon 83) Likewise, Salman Rushdie in "Imaginary Homelands" remarks that an author urges to reclaim history but provides his version of history by adding up his memory. Like the historians, to reclaim the lost history precisely is difficult. So he states that "create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, India's of the mind." because the fragmented memory gives a "sense of loss" and hints at the risk that the narration is deemed to be mutated. (Rushdie 10) According to Linda Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction highlights the relationship between fiction and writing of history. The narrative structure-historiographic metafiction often problematizes the historical

knowledge or truth. In *Midnight's Children* before Saleem is born RamRam Seth prophesizes that "Spittoons will brain him-doctors will drain him-jungle will claim him-wizards reclaim him! Soldiers will try him! Soldiers will try him-tyrants will fry him!" (Rushdie 115). Born in the special night on the day of India's Independence Saleem is given the special power of telepathy. He could hear voices around him "Telepathy, then; the inner monologues of all the so called teeming millions, of masses, of masses and classes, jostled for space within my head." (Rushdie 232) Moreover, once Saleem claims to hear about the Five-Year –Plan from Nehru. These instances of inclusion of superstitions and magic like the "umbilical cord hung in pickle jar", the magical sundarban, the witches and more instances presented throughout the novel question the authenticity of history and reality that Saleem narrates.

Violence resonates in the narration of history by Saleem. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the murder of Tai, Oskar, Mian Abdullah and other riots and movements which occurred before and after independence is significant. Saleem in his childhood dreams of a Widow sitting on a high chair. The Widow's hair is said to be having a centre-parting, it is green on the left and on the right black, and she calls the special midnight's children to hunt them down. The premonition refers to Indira Gandhi's ordered violence to sterilize Midnight's children to take away their special power. (Rushdie 588) Salman Rushdie puts forward history of 1957 when Indira Gandhi declared the State of Emergency after she was found guilty of electoral mal practice and was pressured by her opponents to step down as prime minister. The Emergency marks a critical period in the history of independent India. What is more important in his story is the experience of midnight's children being forcibly sterilized. The midnight's children are referred and recounted in this event by Rushdie rather than the people of India, which happened in reality, in the process of subversion of real history. It is an experience that is still remembered by many

Indians today as forced sterilization was performed in the name of family planning, under Indira Gandhi's rule. This event of violence committed by Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi remains unknown to a lot of people. Walter Benjamin in "Critique of violence" comments that "...how power transferred from the privileged to the privileged, how mass of the producers will change their masters." (246) Benjamin proposes that law remains on the hands of the privileged and the violence inflicted by them is means of law preserving and law making. As Saleem comments "But she had white hair on the side and black part on the other; the Emergency too, had a white part-public, visible, documented, a matter for historians.- and a black part which being secret macabre untold, must be matter for us." (Rushdie 588) Rushdie points out to the historical fact and evident which was destroyed from the history of India. This event forces the reader to understand the aftermath of Independence. As Joseph D Costa a radical socialist in the novel asserts that "This independence is for the rich only: the poor are being made to kill each other like flies. In Punjab, in Bengal, Riots riots, poor against poor. It's in the wind." (Rushdie 139) Rushdie here places the post-colonial condition that partition and divisions within India led to. Also he posits the fact that independence did not liberate people but moved them to another era where the people would be dominated under the privileged and powerful. "Widow's son arranged for his civic-beautification and vasectomy programmes to carry out a diversionary manoeuvre. Yes, of course it was all planned that way; and (if I may say so) most efficiently." (Rushdie 603) "They are doing nasbandi-sterilization is being performed!" (Rushdie 600) These above violent statements depict the violence of force sterilization induced to impose law making rule by the state as it holds power. The violence that occurs remains largely unacknowledged in the public consciousness. Rushdie ultimately uses it to criticize the instability of knowledge and

“truths” by making his character, Saleem, aware of what has been hidden from the public’s consciousness.

The violence inflicted upon the narrator Saleem leads to his traumatic representation of his version of reality which is fragmented. The trauma of losing his family and also identity makes his memory fissured like his body “And memory-my new, all knowing memory which encompasses most of the lives of mother, father, grandfather and everyone else” (116) However his memory in form of narration involves everyone but distorts narration. In his narration once Saleem confuses Mahatma Gandhi’s death year. After making the error he shows its insignificance to correct it, for Saleem argues “I have racked my brains, my memory refuses, stubbornly, to alter the sequence of events. This is worrying. I don’t know what’s going wrong.” (Rushdie 38) and marks the forgetfulness and his distorted historical truth. Saleem, as a witness to history feels burdened and feels the urge to narrate it even though the narration is distorted. Eugene Arv in “Writing Trauma: Magical Realism and the Traumatic Imagination” puts forward the idea of how magic realism helps in bringing out the trauma of violence. They explain

As a textual representation of the unspeakable, magical realism gives traumatic events an expression that traditional realism failed to accomplish, seemingly because the magical realist writing mode and the traumatized subject share the same ontological ground: they both belong to a reality that is constantly escaping witnessing through telling. Establishing a theoretical link between magical realist writing and trauma requires an interdisciplinary conceptual tool; the term that we propose, traumatic imagination,” (5-6)

The traumatic imagination helps to represent the ‘unpresentable’ according to the analysts.

“Through magical realist writing, the traumatic imagination transfers to narrative memory events that have been precluded from narrativization by trauma.” (Arv 6) So it gives the language to capture the events of trauma, which cannot be narrated consciously. The violence adopted during the State of Emergency was left out of India’s official history which was burdened with trauma and it is silenced in history. The violence inflicted on Saleem and the midnight’s children also serves to examine the very process of the construction of history and to create meanings from the memories by magic realism. According to Saleem Sinai, Widow’s true intention for declaring the Emergency was to eliminate the midnight’s children. Thus, in order to ensure that what happened to him is remembered and passed on to his son, who has to “preserve” his experience, and represent it in such a way that it can survive the Widow’s manipulation of history. In this way, Rushdie’s representation of the Emergency through the eyes of Saleem ensures that the memories of the critical event continue to be acknowledged by his readers.

The novel ends with destruction and violence subverting the modern idea of grand narratives of historical events. The novel clearly ends in violence and massacres. In addition Saleem also narrates about India and its people in a local level- like the clash between cultures, religions and their lifestyles. This novel signifies fragmentation-of the identity of Saleem Sinai and also the history of India. Alienation is another dominant theme in the novel. Deprivation of family and identity makes Saleem Sinai a fragmented and an alienated character. Saleem comments “Sometimes legends make reality, become more useful than the facts.” (Rushdie 57) His identity is distorted as he is the illegitimate son of Wee Willie Winkie and Vanity. Padma is shocked to hear he is an Anglo- Indian. He accepts the fact that he is a Muslim, a Hindu, a Christian, man-dog, “Snotnose, Stainface, Sniffer, Baldy, Piece-of-the-Moon. Whatever do you

mean-not my own?” (158) Salman Rushdie parodies his life with history. “The union and ‘passive’ and ‘metaphorical’ encompasses all socio-political trends and events which, merely by existing affected me metaphorically ...all the moments at which national events had a direct bearing upon my life and myself. (331) As he moves to different places his displacements mark tragedies and violence. The dynamic relationship between his self and the collective life of the nation suggests that the private and public episodes influence one another. The influencing factors of the nation on the individual Saleem, is ironical. Salman Rushdie in “Imaginary Homelands” states that history is individualized as one sees the world in broken mirrors. Rushdie makes Saleem suspect his narration. “his mistakes are the mistakes of a fallible memory compounded by quirks of character and a circumstance, and his vision is fragmentary. (Rushdie 10) Thus the individual fragments make meaning as fragmentation makes trivial things seem like symbols. (Rushdie 11)

Therefore, Salman Rushdie in this novel with reference to the “Snake and ladder game” shows fragmented India- nation progressing and regressing. He is fragmented too as he migrates to different places and loses and makes a new identity. He does not get to live with his biological parents; even the place Mumbai where he spends his childhood gets alienated, he feels so when he returns from Uncle Hanif’s house more evidently after returning from Pakistan. Dismemberment of identity, internal diaspora, uprootedness –destruction of family are the dominant themes in this novel. Hence in his continued search of the past, Saleem’s childhood is lost too. Therefore he presents to Padma history which he deems true and real.

Conclusion

As discussed in the beginning, this research paper looked at three postmodern novels- Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, J. M Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Martin Amis's *Times' Arrow*. This paper particularly looked at how history and violence are narrated in postmodern texts as contextualized within each novel's narrated history in the particular geographical setting. The questions that were asked in the beginning are how history and violence could be narrated for the reason that it involves violence and trauma. It also enquired whether the representation of historical events would be real or fictional, and how then would it be a historical representation. This paper mainly focused on how serious issues like war, colonization and racism are represented mostly in the contemporary postmodern novels. After looking at Linda Hutcheon's *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Ihab Hassan's "Toward a Concept of Postmodernity" and Rosella Mamoli Zorzi's "The End of History in English Historiographic Metafiction" a clear idea was provided about what postmodernism is, what the techniques of postmodernism are and how it is different from other forms. Through the different theories the questions were answered. Postmodernism adopts different techniques like irony, parody, non-linearity which makes postmodern texts different from the conventions and thus can deal with brute matter of war and violence. Moreover novels depicting history narrates appropriated truth as postmodernism proposes this type of writing as 'historiographic-metafiction', where facts and fiction is blended. Through exploration of Salman Rushdie's novel it was understood that magic-realism, fragmentation, plurality, identity crises and different interpenetrations employed by the writer aided in narrating the history of Independent India as it cannot be narrated absolutely. The other novel *Disgrace* shows involvement of self-reflexivity in the writing for understanding the past

and the subversion of themes in the novel was important to portray violence in the Post-Apartheid era. Finally *Time's Arrow* which deals with the important event of history, the holocaust, reverse narration could only help the writer Martin Amis to present such atrocious violence used by the Nazis.

Finally, the paper looked at how violence could be justified in these different contexts. Walter Benjamin's "Critique of Violence" and "Theses on the Philosophy of History" facilitated an understanding of the concept of history on social, political as well as philosophical levels. The morality of violence was judged in context of Nietzsche's "Genealogy of Morality" and Benjamin's "Critique of Violence". In all contexts violence seemed to be a force against the individual or group to enforce law, power or preserve or make law.

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