ANTI-MIMETIC NARRATIVES: A STUDY OF ALAIN MABANCKOU'S *MEMOIRS OF A PORCUPINE* AND YOKO TAWADA'S *MEMOIRS OF A POLAR BEAR*

BY

SABA ALAM

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES ISLAMABAD

JUNE, 2021

Anti-mimetic Narratives: A Study of Alain Mabanckou's *Memoirs of a Porcupine* and Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*

By

SABA ALAM

M.A, National University of Modern Languages, 2017

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

In **English**

To

FACULTY OF ARTS & HUMANITIES

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, ISLAMABAD

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES FACULTY OF ARTS & HUMANITIES

THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read the following thesis, examined the defense, are satisfied with the overall exam performance, and recommend the thesis to the Faculty of Arts and Humanities for acceptance.

Thesis Title: Anti-mimetic Narratives: A Study of Alain Mabanckou's *Memoirs of a Porcupine* and Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*

Submitted by: Saba Alam   **Registration #:** 1595-Mphil/Lit/-F-18

Master of Philosophy
Degree name in full

English Literature
Name of Discipline

Dr. Rabia Aamir   _____
Name of Research Supervisor   Signature of Research Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Safeer Awan   _____
Name of Dean (FAH)   Signature of Dean (FAH)

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Safeer Awan   _____
Name of Pro-Rector Academics   Signature of Pro-Rector Academics

_____
Date

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, <u>Saba Alam</u>

Daughter of <u>Syed Mehboob Alam</u>

Registration # <u>1595-Mphil/Lit/-F-18</u>

Discipline <u>English Literature</u>

Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do, hereby, declare that the thesis, **Anti-mimetic Narratives: A Study of Alain Mabanckou's *Memoirs of a Porcupine* and Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*,** submitted by me in partial fulfilment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis/dissertation at any stage, even after the award of a degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked.

_____

Signature of Candidate

_____

Name of Candidate

_____

Date

ABSTRACT

Thesis Title: Anti-mimetic Narratives: A Study of Alain Mabanckou's *Memoirs of a Porcupine* and Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*

Unnatural narratology is a recently introduced concept within narrative theory. This research reads two postmodernist animal narratives, *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) and *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016) as anti-mimetic narratives with the theoretical lens of unnatural narratology put forth by Jan Alber. Unnatural or anti-mimetic narratives are defined as narratives which violate mimetic conventions. The purpose of this study is to assert that earlier narrative theories neglect certain possibilities of some unusual and experimental literary and fictional narratives. While discussing the conventional narrative techniques usually used in reading animal narratives, the focus of this study is to bring forth the unnatural narrative techniques used in the selected texts. It also elaborates on how the unnatural narratives extend the cognitive perceptions of the readers within the impossible storyworlds and characters of the selected texts. This study explores elements of unnatural narratology in the selected texts by discussing how the selected texts extend the parameters of natural and conventional form of narratives and by scrutinizing the unnatural dynamics in the selected novels.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincerest thanks to the Almighty Allah without whose blessings this research would not have been possible.

Much thanks to my supervisor Dr. Rabia Aamir who was there to guide me at every step of my research and always answered my queries no matter how insignificant they were. Ma'am you never once made me regret my decision to request you to be my supervisor. Thank you for accepting me.

May Allah bless my parents forever, who have inculcated in me the desire to study, work hard and never to lose faith. I strongly believe that their prayers have removed and will continue to remove several hurdles from my path.

My heartfelt thanks to my husband who has always been there to motivate, support (in every way possible) and encourage me to complete this research.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my beautiful kids, Musfirah and Muhammad.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Narratives have always been a compelling way to share knowledge. Not only they create an engaging experience, they also take a reader or listener to an alternative frame of mind. In this study I have explored two postmodernist fictional animal narratives, *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) and *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016). This literary research explores the significance of unnatural narratology in the broad category of narrative theory. The main purpose of this research is to conduct a detailed analysis of selected postmodernist literary texts as anti-mimetic narratives and to provide an insight about unnatural narratology with the help of this analysis.

The term "narrative" is used to represent story, account, recital, plot etc. It reports the connected events presented in the form of written or spoken words. Different approaches have been taken by the researchers in order to understand and elucidate narratives. As a result of these approaches, narrative theory came into being. In the beginning, the narrative theory was considered only as a branch of literary studies; a theoretical approach to the study of narratives and their structures. However, it has now been extended to different ways the narratives can model social and subjective experiences of people. Narrative theorists mainly study "how people make sense of the world, while also studying how people make sense of stories" (Phelan n.p.). Major trends in the narrative theory focus on the idea that narratives (or stories) are modelled on the real world. Some critics are of the view that the fictional minds and the real minds are not fundamentally different or there is a genetic link between every day storytelling practices and experimental novels etc. (Alber et al. 71). According to the theorists of unnatural narratology, such as Brian Richardson, Jan Alber etc, the emphasis of traditional narrative theories on the assumption that all stories are situated in a setting which can be compared with real life situation neglects the possibilities of reading and understanding some of the unique and experimental literary and fictional narratives. That is why the recently developed concepts of unnatural narratives and unnatural narratology can be helpful to fill this gap in our understanding. The theorists such as Jan Alber, Henrik Skov Nielsen, Brian Richardson, Stefan Iversen, and others argue that investigation of unnaturalness in narratives may shed new light on the

workings of narratives in general (Alber et al. 114). Consequently, these concepts are becoming a subject of increasing interest within narratology.

1.1 About the Selected Novels

The first selected novel, *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) was originally written in French language by African writer Alain Mabanckou in the year 2006. It has been translated by Helen Stevenson into English in 2012. Alain Mabanckou is a French citizen, born in the Republic of Congo in 1966. He is a journalist, novelist, poet, and an academic. He currently teaches at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Most of his works depict the experiences of contemporary Africa and the African diaspora in France. He is known as one of the best and most successful writers in French language and also one of the best African writers in France. The translator, Helen Steveneson, is a piano teacher, writer and translator. She has translated many works of Alain Mabanckou and other writers. The novel *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) is based on an African legend which says that every human being has an animal double. The story is about a boy, Kibandi and his double, a porcupine who becomes his accomplice in murder. Together, they attack neighbours, fellow villagers and people who cross their paths. The novel is actually the confessions of the porcupine who has unwillingly acted out on its master's horrible orders of killing throughout his life. The events and scenarios of the novel seem so impossible that the reader is unable to decipher the logic or sense behind them.

With the aim of giving the reader a clear understanding of the plot of the novel I provide a brief summary of the novel as follows.

The novel begins with the introduction of the narrator who informs the reader that he is an animal, a porcupine. He criticizes man for their so-called intelligence and tells that for years he was a double of a man called Kibandi, who has recently passed away. The narration appears to be the confessions of this porcupine who believes that if he had confessed when his master was alive, he would have been severely punished. The porcupine reveals his age and the fact that he has lived much longer than the normal porcupines who live only for a few months. The porcupine's story introduces the concept of doubles and how they act along with their human masters in the society. According to him he is the harmful double in contrast to the peaceful doubles who live monotonous and dull lives. In the novel, Mabanckou explains the concept of

transmission, which is a process in which a double is created. The harmful doubles are uncommon and therefore their transmission is more complicated. The transmission occurs when a child is made to drink a potion as a part of African tradition. The transmission of a harmful double takes place against the child's wishes and nobody around him comes to know about it, except for his father. And the father does not give much thought to this harmful phenomenon because of his staunch adherence to African tradition.

The porcupine is initially quite happy with his life of a harmful double. However, later on, his master begins using him for his paybacks to different people. According to the porcupine, normally, the doubles die when their human companion dies, yet in the case of the porcupine, surprisingly he lives, even after his master's death. That is when, the porcupine decides to share his life story with the readers. The novel is divided in chapters in which the porcupine shares his story of how he leaves the animal world. He tells how the father of Kibandi makes its destiny entwined with Kibandi (the porcupine's master), how the parents of Kibandi die, and how the porcupine still lives with all his powers.

As the novel is written in the form of a memoir, it does not follow a typical plot sequence of a novel. The porcupine shares the significant characters and events of his life from the beginning till the end. This is the story of a Congolese village of Africa. The porcupine, who is narrating the story, becomes an accomplice of his master in murder. In the beginning, they kill neighbours, fellow villagers and other random people together. However, with time Kibandi begins to rely completely on the porcupine for the killings. Thus, the novel is all about the adventures of the porcupine which he has had experienced with his master. The adventures are penned down by the porcupine in the form of a biography, making the novel more interesting and unique to read.

The second selected text for this research, *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016), the second selected text for this research, is a novel which discusses three generations of polar bears. It is originally written in German language in 2011, by a Japanese writer, Yoko Tawada, who writes both in German and Japanese. Her Novel was translated into English by Susan Bernofsky in 2016. Tawada is currently living in Berlin. She has won numerous literary awards such as Akutagawa Prize, Tanizaki Prize, Noma Literary Prize, National Book Award etc. She was born in Tokyo and went to Germany at the

age of 19. She received her higher education in Germany and settled there in 2006. She started writing in 1987. In the beginning of her career she took the help of German translators to produce German editions of her Japanese works. However, in 2004 she began to use a bilingual approach to her works. Thus, she wrote separate manuscripts in German and Japanese for her 2011 novel, the translation of which, *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016), is the second which has been chosen for this research. The translator of this novel, Bernofsky is an American translator of German language literature. She has also received different prizes for her works of translation. She has won the Warwick Prize for Women in Translation for the selected novel also.

Memoirs of a Polar Bear (2016) has been inspired by a real life orphaned polar bear Knut. The novel consists of three interlocking stories, exploring the relationship between humans and animals. The first part of the book is narrated by the grandmother polar bear, the second by her daughter, and the third part by the son of the daughter. The grandmother accidently writes a bestselling autobiography, the daughter, named Tosca, is born in Canada and takes a job in circus and the son of Tosca is born in a zoo and is raised by a human keeper. Each bear writes a story about their life as a celebrity and the time which they spend in solitude. The novel provides a surreal and fantastic experience to its readers. The unusual narration (the experimental approach of the author) and storyworlds (the unique situations, characters or occurrences inferred by the reader) in the novel, have prompted me to study it through the lens of unnatural narratology.

The novel begins with the narration of the grandmother polar bear who recalls the time when she is just a small baby. She is taken to the circus where Ivan, the trainer, trains her. The bear shares her experiences of training and later life in alternative parts. She also decides to write her autobiography on the suggestion of a friend. She admits that her life changes completely after becoming an author.

The second section of the novel is the story narrated by the writer's daughter Tosca. Tosca's life is shown in a different world than her mother. She is a circus performer. Her narrative is mostly based on her relationship with her trainer Barbara. In this memoir, Tosca writes on behalf of Barbara and reveals the details about their strange connection with each other. Together, the two perform a unique act called "The Kiss of Death" to entertain the circus visitors.

In the third section, Tosca's polar bear son Knut, who is abandoned by his mother, shares his story. Knut is taken care of by a human caretaker called Matthias, in a zoo. This narrative is based on a real polar bear of the Berlin Zoo. The memoir is about Knut's learning experiences, his love for his caretaker, his journey of becoming famous and his life of loneliness after the death of his keeper.

The writers of these two interesting novels have combined the genres of autobiography and fictional animal storytelling in these literary pieces, giving the readers a unique blend of human and animal worlds. Due to the fact that the genre of the selected texts is fictional animal memoir (and the titles of the novels also include the word "memoir"), I have repeatedly referred to the selected texts as novels and as well as memoirs in this report. These postmodernist animal stories not only focus on human-animal relations but also share the dream-like fantasy and factual-based reality with the readers. The strangeness of these novels compelled me to explore them as unnatural narratives. Although, the unnatural narrative theory is applicable to numerous other old and new literary texts, these two recent texts provide relevant as well as favourable content for conducting research in the area of unnatural narratology in postmodernist fictional animal narratives.

1.2 Unnatural Narratives and Unnatural Narratology

Under this heading, the readers will learn in detail about the concept of unnatural in narratives, the idea of unnatural narratives and the study of such type of narratives. In this section, I have elaborated on why the need of unnatural narratology arose? How the narratologists have explained this concept? and how unnatural narrative is understood in comparison to other types of narratives based on mimesis? I have also included two examples of researches conducted on unnatural narrative theory by two theorists, to further explicate the concept and show the readers the significance of unnatural narrative theory in the field of narratology.

In the simplest terms, unnatural narratives are antirealistic (made-up or unreal) narratives which violate mimetic conventions by providing highly improbable or extraordinarily impossible events (Richardson 95). The theorists of unnatural narratives argue that the theoretical models from the time of Aristotle to the Cognitive narratology are essentially inadequate, as these are pronounced with mimetic bias. They explain the mimetic bias in this manner that the focus of these theories has been only on the

assumption that narratives are based on the imitation of the real world. The traditional mimetic centred narrative theories have neglected or ignored an entire literary tradition, going back to, perhaps, Aristophanes to the era of postmodernism and hyper fiction. Below I have elaborated the reasons provided by the theorists for introducing the concept of unnatural narratology.

1.2.1. Why the Need of Unnatural Narratology?

The term narrative has been defined in *A Dictionary of Narratology* as "The representation (as product and process, object and act, structure and structuration) of one or more real or fictive events communicated by one, two, or several (more or less overt) narrators to one, two, or several (more or less overt) narratees" (Prince 58). Likewise, *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences* defines narratives as "accounts of what happened to particular people in particular circumstances and with specific consequences" (Herman 2). Many narratives start with the conversational natural narrative model and hardly ever move away from their parameters. James Phelan has stated that narrative is somebody telling somebody else, on some occasion and for some purposes, that something happened to someone or something. However, these parameters are not followed by unnatural narratives. In unnatural narratives, the narrator may be a series of unsuited or distorted voices instead of a person or person-like entity. Or, the recipient of such narrative may be in multiple forms or contradiction to the narrating voice.

Numerous recent authors have tested the boundaries of a narrative in different manners and their revisions, challenges, and extensions to the foundational concepts of narrative theory need to be appreciated. Thus, to elaborate the need for study of unnatural in narratives, Richardson has studied and explained the problems that exist with the mere mimetic understandings of narration, the difficulties with the theory of character, space, fictional minds, etc., the gaps and the distortions which are present in the narrative theory due to its mimetic biasness, and how unnatural narratology challenges these boundaries of mimetic fiction.

For instance, Fabula and Syuzhet are two distinctive aspects in the standard narrative theory. Fabula is the simple chronological order of events in a story and Syuzhet is the imaginative manner of actual storytelling which involves narration, metaphors, plot complexities, etc. However, in modern and postmodern narratives, the distinction between the two is not possible. For example, Gerard Genette's narrative

theory of the category of order is possible only when "both Fabula and Syuzhet sequences are single and relatively fixed" (Richardson 31). Similarly, the notion of a person-like narrator has become the thing of past. In contemporary fiction the narrators go beyond humanist models of traditional narratology. The narrators now are contradictory, impossible as well as, posthumans. For example, there are narrators like minotaurs, banknotes, corpses and machines etc. In these cases, although a few theorists like Roland Barthes and Marie-Laure Ryan recognize this situation, still they are in minority. The "we" narration, artificial form of narration, "multi-personed" narrative forms, the narrations in which narrators temporarily lose or forgo their omniscience for a certain time-frame are all the examples of those unnatural narrations which cannot be understood and analysed completely by the standard narrative theory. In the same way, if we look at the aspect of time in narratives, the traditional Gerard Genette's model of narrative temporality presumes a setting of a narrative in which the behaviour of time is the same as that of the actual world. Hence, Richardson is of the view that Genette's model of narrative temporality is incapable of comprehending peculiar fictional constructs of time like dual inconsistent chronologies of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, the narratives with backward time flows like Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* (1984), or contradictory story sequences like "The Babysitter" (1969) by Robert Coover.

It may be deduced that characters, events, narrative spaces, epistemological consistency, fictional minds, the overall fictionality of the narrative, and even the readers of all narratives are comprehended on the basis of standard narrative models. Richardson argues that principally mimetic theoretical models are not sufficient to comprehend the vast majority of twentieth century works of literature as these models follow a humanistic and the actual-world-like approach (Richardson 47). He comments that unnatural works create hardest problems for the models of standard narratology. The traditional theories have failed to comprehend the works like Caryl Churchill's *Trap* (1977), Robert Coover's "The Babysitter" (1969), or Kate Atkinson's *Life After Life* (2013) etc. (Richardson 30). Subsequently that unnatural narratology has become one of the most interesting paradigms in narrative theory. It regularly theorizes and observes the aspects of those fictional narratives that transcend the boundaries of conventional realism (Alber et al. 3). It also seeks to challenge the general conceptions of narratives.

1.2.2. Unnatural Narrative Theory Explained by Different Theorists

The concept of unnatural in narratives is fairly a recent one. Though there are many theorists discussing unnatural narratology, in this section I have mentioned the definitions provided by the four most active theorists of unnatural narratology. The originator of unnatural narrative studies is Brian Richardson. He has provided the theoretical model that can incorporate antirealist and anti-mimetic works from the time of Aristotle to the era of postmodernism. The other prominent expositors of unnatural narratology are Jan Alber, Henrik Skov Nielsen, Rudieger Heinz, Stefan Iversen, Maria Makela, Brian McHale and James Phelan. It is significant to note and understand that how the subject of unnatural has been explained by different expositors, therefore, I have stated below the basic stance of prominent theorists of unnatural narratology on the notion of unnatural in narratives.

The idea of unnatural in narratives has been explained by Jan Alber as scenarios or events which are physically, logically or humanly impossible. He discriminates between the unnatural in postmodernism and the conventionalized unnatural. Alber has provided examples of conventionalized unnatural such as speaking animal in beast fables, use of magic in epics, romances, gothic novels etc., the telepathy in omniscient narration, time travel, intentional robots in science fiction etc. (Richardson 98). Likewise, Henrik Skov Nielsen enlightens that unnatural narratives are a subset of fictional narratives which cue the reader to use different interpretational strategies than those used in nonfictional, conversational storytelling scenarios. Such narratives may include physically, logically and humanly impossible scenarios yet they allow the reader to interpret them as reliable and possible (Richardson 98). The unnatural narratologists also discuss the relationship between unnatural and the conventional. The point when unnatural practices become conventions and how such techniques can be made unnatural again, are aspects taken into consideration by the theorists of unnatural narratives.

On the other hand, Stefan Iversen discusses the unnatural in narratives as the conflicts which cannot be easily explained in a story. According to Iversen, the unnatural narratives present the reader with an unresolvable clash or tension such as shown between a bug's mind and a human's mind in Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" (1915). He specifically addresses those phenomena which remain resistant to familiarization. Moreover, he studies the ways in which narratives change

their status, over the course of time, along the natural/unnatural axis (Alber et al.103). Iversen also studies the unnatural aspects on the genre of non-fiction.

In the opinion of Richardson, an unnatural narrative evidently violates conventions of standard narrative forms, particularly the conventions of nonfictional narratives and the fictional narratives that are based on the models of nonfictional narratives. Moreover, such narratives follow fluid and changing conventions, and "produce a defamiliarization of the basic elements of narrative" (Richardson 97). Richardson limits the unnatural to anti-mimetic and defamiliarizing scenarios, events and entities like impossible spaces, reversed casual progressions and such acts of narration which defy the parameters of natural conversational narratives. To further elucidate the concept of unnatural narratives, Richardson has categorized the narratives into three main categories:

- Mimetic Narratives
- Non-mimetic Narratives
- Anti-mimetic Narratives

The concept of unnatural narrative theory can be understood in a clearer manner, if it is explained in comparison to these categories. Henceforth, I have elaborated the idea of mimetic, non-mimetic and anti-mimetic narratives, provided by Richardson in his explication of unnatural narratives.

1.2.3. Mimetic, Anti-mimetic and Non-mimetic Narratives

In one of his books, *Unnatural Narratives: Theory, History and Practice* (2015) Richardson discusses in detail the field of unnatural narrative. While explaining unnatural narrative theory, Richardson has defined the concepts of mimetic, anti-mimetic and non-mimetic as follows:

It is discussed above that all traditional theories are based mimetic models. In simpler words, it is the imitation of the real world. Hence, mimetic narratives are those narratives which try to depict the world of a reader's experience in a recognizable manner. A non-mimetic or non-realist work employs a consistent parallel storyworld and follows established conventions (Richardson 4). Non-mimetic narratives depict a mimesis of the actual world, however, in some cases it also adds supernatural elements such as a fairy tale.

Anti-mimetic narratives, on the other hand, are the narratives which disregard the assumptions of non-fictional narratives, violate the mimetic potentials, disrupt the practices of realism and defy the conventions of established genres. Such texts flaunt their transgressive aspects unlike mimetic texts which try to disguise their artificiality (Richardson 4). In Richardson's opinion, anti-mimetic events and characters, when engaged in a dialectic with mimetic aspects (of a given narrative) become more obvious and compelling.

These concepts can be more easily understood by the following examples provided by Richardson. A mimetic event or scenario is an ordinary man riding a horse and reaching his destination in two to three days. A non-mimetic scenario is a prince riding a winged horse and reaching another location within a few minutes. An anti-mimetic event is a scene of a person mounting on a giant dung beetle going to heaven and requesting his audience not to pass any gas as that can misdirect his mount (Richardson 4). To conclude, Richardson defines unnatural narratives as narratives which contain anti-mimetic events, characters, settings or frames.

An unnatural or anti-mimetic narrative intentionally transgresses from conventional mimetic or non-mimetic conventions. On the contrary, in most cases the writers of mimetic and non-mimetic works make the readers believe that the storyworlds which they have created are generally accurate. Although the idea of anti-mimetic is considerably recent, however, substantial anti-mimetic scenes and events can be found in most periods of literary history. From the era of ancient Greek and Romans through medieval times, Renaissance and 18th Century to the postmodern times, the narratives have anti-mimetic events. However, such scenarios have been either ignored or marginalized by the historians, critics and theorists, as the traditional theories remain constrained within the limits of mimetic practices (Richardson 5). Unnatural narratology attempts to cover these overlooked scenarios.

Theorists of unnatural narratology have also studied unnatural in different types of fictional and non-fictional narratives. Below are the two examples of such studies on unnatural narratology. These examples show the significance of unnatural narrative theory in the study of narratives.

1.2.4. Unnatural in the Realist Fiction

In order to support the argument that unnatural exists in most of the literary genres, I have included the study conducted by Maria Makela on unnatural in the realist fiction. Makela uses her essay "Realism and the Unnatural" (2013) to demonstrate that realist narratives may have more transgressive narrative potential than narrative extremes which avoid the conventions of a narrative or the manifested anti-experiential narratives. Alber, Iversen, Richardson and other cognitive narratologists tend to speak of literary narratives only in terms of sense-making. Makela's approach to unnatural narratology makes the reader not a sense maker rather the one who would want to opt for the implausible and the unknown.

In her essay she demonstrates that the roles of the narrator and character are constantly on the verge of collapsing in canonical realist consciousness representation (Makela 151). It is generally considered that a human mind is coherence driven. However, the strange construction of storyworlds in realist literature suggests otherwise. There are some fundamental elements which contradicts this psychological assumption. Furthermore, the metonymic root of realist accounts creates an effect of discrepancy (Makela 153). Hence, the distortion of perception on narrative level constructs a non-holistic world. Alber suggests that a cognitive apperception through psychological or thematic motivation is necessary while Richardson believes that most of the unnaturalness of postmodernism deals with temporality. However, Makela is of the opinion that many works of Tolstoy and Dickens show such incongruent relationship between the succession of words and succession of fictional events along with the entire temporal dimension as a mere metaphor, and that reading Tolstoy and reading postmodern literature is just as unnatural (Makela 158). Hence, the literary tokens of unnaturalness are countless.

Makela has thrown light upon the aspects like disarticulations in perceptions, impossibilities of deriving cognitive perceptions from novelistic representations and inconsistency between motivation and uncertainty. She suggests that the unnatural narratology should shift its focus from the classification of narratives towards offering the counterforce to those narratological trends which are ready to integrate all types of narrative construction under the same framework. Thus, the field of unnatural narratology provides new coordinates for narrative theory at large.

1.2.5. Unnatural in the Hypertext Fiction

Like Maria Makela, Alice Bell has studied the hyper-text fictional narratives in the light of unnatural narratology. Her essay proves the significance of the theory of unnatural narratology in the field of narrative studies.

The theorists of unnatural narrative are specifically interested in extremely implausible and impossible texts with physically or logically contradictory scenarios or events. They gravitate more towards experimental and unique works. Hypertext fiction is also such type of fiction. It is a genre of electronic literature. It is made up of non-sequential and multiple interlinking terms. Bell in her essay "Unnatural Narrative in Hypertext Fiction" (2013) has argued that hypertext fiction provides a distinctive context for unnaturalness in fictional narratives. She has shown in her essay that how the multilinear structure of narratives helps narrative contradiction. She also discusses how fragmented structure of a text allows the unnatural status of a scene to change. Unnatural narratives are the narratives that are inherently fictional because they consist of the scenarios and events which are impossible according to real-world physical and logical laws. Bell discusses both such logical impossibility and physical impossibility in hypertexts. It is revealed in her essay that hypertext adds a digitally specific component to unnatural narrative. A hypertext fiction consists of fragments that are linked in predetermined path of which the reader is mostly unaware. A reader of a hypertext fiction is often ignorant of the forthcoming reading paths. Such a reader is always restricted by the fundamental capacities of the digital medium to hide the upcoming text.

Hypertext inherently supports multilinearity and fragmentation. Therefore, a reader of hypertext experiences diverse events, with different versions and different orders of those events. The very multiplicity of narrative in hypertext causes a form of unnaturalness. Richardson suggests that narrators of hypertext fiction provide a series of narrative possibilities which the reader has to convert into a single story, and problematizes the idea of omniscient as well as third person narration (Bell 188). The ambiguity of a hypertext structure undermines the ontological status of particular parts of the text. Some hypertext fiction narratives can be accepted according to the parameters of real-world knowledge, however some hypertext fiction narratives present numerous unnatural contradictions and ambiguities. For instance, in some hypertext narratives readers are required to draw links between parts of the text which might not

be physically linked. In the same manner, different lexical link configurations in a hypertext result in different reading paths. Hence, such a text can be navigated from different routes. Each reading path may result in a mutually exclusive version of the documented event (Bell 189). As the narrative contradictions cannot be resolved according to the real-world knowledge, these events can be categorized as unnatural.

Thus, Bell states that although hypertext fiction is not unnatural in itself, yet the existence of multilinearity and fragmentation may make it unnatural. In a hypertext fiction, narrative contradictions can parallelly exist. Moreover, the words and connections can be combined to create certain loops. As a result, different readers may experience different narratives. The different reading paths when combine with ambiguous form of references of the text, for example in second person narration, the multilinearity of the narrative is increased. The hypertext structure of the texts allows the unnatural devices found in print to be placed in a digital environment. Therefore, Bell concludes that theorists must be conscious that the digital contexts also permits the application of traditional narrative theory (Bell 197). Additionally, the structural experimentation allowed by hypertexts increases the unnaturalness in digital fiction.

The idea behind this research is to illustrate the significance of more extensive, capacious, and dialectical models in the theoretical understanding of narratives. The information provided above has introduced to the reader the main argument of this research. It has presented to the readers the recent concept of unnatural narratology and the theory of unnatural narrative which provides tools for a comprehensive and robust understanding of unique and innovative aspects in narrative fiction and also has been utilized in this research project. Additionally, in this research, I have selected the two fictional animal narratives to explore them as unnatural narratives. The information shared in this section also sheds light on these selected texts.

1.3 Thesis Statement

The age-old storytelling scenarios, narratology, and characterization of animals, portrayed through unrealistic, physical, logical, and epistemic impossibilities of the actual world, usually accepted as standard animal behaviour in the world of literature is extended by some postmodernist texts in another manner. Novels like *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) and *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016) seem to problematize the normative understanding of the real-world knowledge about animals and portray these animal narratives as anti-mimetic.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How do the narratives of the selected texts extend the parameters of normalized natural and conventional forms of narrative fiction?

2. What are the unnatural dynamics and elements at play in the novels selected for this study?

3. How can the selected narratives be categorized as unnatural narratives?

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To understand the concept of unnatural narratives and unnatural narratology

2. To extend the readers' cognitive perceptions within the novels' impossible storyworlds and characters.

3. To observe and explore the unnatural dynamics, present in the novels.

1.6 Significance and Rationale of the Study

The concept of unnatural narrative and narratology has recently been put forward by the theorists Jan Alber, Brian Richardson, Stefan Iversen, HS Nielsen, and others. These theorists have defined, in detail, the notion of unnatural narrative in their works. In their books, articles and essays, they have explained the unnatural and have also provided the counter arguments to the critics of the unnatural narrative theory with numerous literary examples. However, a very limited number of researches have been conducted with the thorough textual analysis of the fictional texts under this theory. Hence, in order to contribute towards the explication of this theory, the researcher has scrutinised two novels *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) and *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016) as unnatural narratives.

This research is also significant in the sense that the selected texts have been studied from very few other perspectives. Therefore, this study provides a detailed understanding of the postmodernist fictional animal narratives in the light of the framework of unnatural narratology. It not only adds to the existing knowledge of the area of postmodernist animal narratives and its study, but has also made the readers understand a recent narrative theory about which the theorists claim that it encompasses those aspects which have been left out by previous narrative theories.

I am aware of the fact that the theory of unnatural narratology is also applicable on earlier literary texts, however, these two recent texts are more conducive from the perspective of unnatural narratology because of the unique and unusual features. Hence, this research is important as it not only studies recent texts but also a new dimension of narrative theory.

1.7 Delimitation

This research has been conducted on the two novels *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) and *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016). I have limited the investigation to the narratological perspective of the texts. The study has focused on the exploration of the novels as unnatural narratives and the research has been conducted within the boundaries of the ideas and observations included in the theoretical framework and the literature review of the novels.

1.8 Chapter Breakdown/Organization of the Study

1.8.1. Chapter I: Introduction

In this section, I have presented the topic of my research, it's significance in the area of literary research, brief description of the selected texts and my thesis statement. I have also briefly described the concept of unnatural narratology, why it came into being and how it has been defined by different theorists.

1.8.2. Chapter II: Literature Review

In this section, I have reviewed the relevant literature on the theoretical lens of unnatural narratology and the selected texts. The reviewed information shows the gap that exist in this area of literary research.

1.8.3. Chapter III: Research Methodology

In this section, I have elaborated the selected theoretical framework of unnatural narratology by the theorist Jan Alber. I have also explained the supporting lens used for the analysis of the selected texts. Moreover, in this chapter I have explained the research methods that have been used for the analysis.

1.8.4. Chapter IV: Impossible Storyworld and Unnatural Narrative of a Porcupine in *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012)

In this section, I have analysed the narrator, characters, events and scenarios of the first selected novel through the lens of unnatural narratology.

1.8.5. Chapter V: Delving into the Strange Lives of Polar bears: A Study of *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016) as Unnatural Narrative

In this section, I have studied the narratives of three polar bears separately. I have analysed the narrator, the relationships of the characters and the storyworlds shown in the narratives.

1.8.6. Chapter VI: Conclusion: *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016) and *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) as Unnatural Narratives

In this section, I have provided the detailed conclusion of my research. I have also made suggestions for further research in this area of study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review finds out the gaps which exists in the area of narrative study. It reviews the theoretical framework of unnatural narratology and the research that has been conducted in the respective area of narratology. It reviews the counter critique on unnatural narratology by Monika Fludernik and other critics, and the response given to them by the theorists of unnatural narrative theory. It also reviews the relevant literature available on the selected texts *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) and *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016). Since the two novels are almost untapped texts, therefore, the critique on them mainly includes the book reviews written on these books in the newspapers, periodicals or on websites.

2.2 Review of the Relevant Literature

In simplest terms, a narrative is a story and in order to comprehend narratives, narrative theories are employed. According to Fludernik, the methods of narrative theory are inspired by modern linguistics. It tries to trace how sentences turn into narratives or how the narrative emerges as a narrative text. Over all, narrative theory is text-oriented (M. Fludernik 9). The narrative theory also deals with the distinction between lyric, drama and epic. It also focuses on the typological, historical, and thematic aspects related to the sub-genres of narrative such as short story, gothic novel, fable etc. In short, study of narratives aims to analyse the characteristics of a literary text and its aesthetic functions as well as the constitution of meaning in texts. Many narratologists also stress that narratology (as a theory) not only stresses on the what and how of narration, but also provide ideas which are decisive for interpretation of the texts.

It would not be wrong to state that the use of narrative theory has been quite successful in the study of literature. A reason behind this success might be the focus of the theory on the idea that the narratives are modelled on the actual world. However, the question that has arisen among the narratologists is that whether the narrative theories are sufficient to study the narratives of the modern literary world or not. The current narratological projects have divergent tendencies. Such tendencies are

discussed in detail by Monika Fludernik and Greta Olson in their article "Assessing Current Trends in Narratology", published in 2011. According to their observation, on one hand, the classical narratological models are being refined by re-examining their basic concepts and rethinking their original problems whereas, some authors move beyond these classical narratological models. The new narratological frameworks are also being applied to non-literary narratives. Thus, one group of narratologists focuses on reformulating foundational precepts and the other group tries to take narratology outside the disciplinary boundaries of linguistics and literature (Fludernik and Olson 2). In their opinion, both aspects prove to be vital and productive in the current narratological study. This essay of Fludernik and Olson highlights the trends and shifts in the area of narratology. The review of this article helps in understanding the importance and need of new narrative theories which further strengthens the idea presented in my research.

However, some theorists are of the opinion that models of traditional narrative theory are biased towards mimetic works and have certain gaps which are needed to be filled in order to understand and comprehend the recent postmodern narratives as well as some earlier narratives. These theorists believe that it is necessary to move beyond existing narratological concepts to get a clear sense of dynamics of unique narratives. For instance, Henrik Skov Nielsen argues that specific possibilities of some literary and fictional narratives may be neglected because of the emphasis of the narrative theory on only real-world knowledge, thus, creating a gap in the field of narratology for the introduction of unnatural (Nielsen 72). This is the main reason that the theorists of unnatural narratology feel the requirement of the unnatural narrative theory. The same argument is elaborated by Brian Richardson in his work *Unnatural Narrative: Theory, History and Practice* (2015) in which he discusses in detail the limitations of conventional narrative theory. Richardson discusses that how the traditional narrative theory is unable to embrace the texts which reject mimetic conventions and boundaries. For example, fabula and syuzhet are two distinct narratives in standard narrative theory, yet in many avant-garde and postmodern works it is impossible to make this distinction (Richardson 29). Such narratives go far beyond Genette's Category of order and the relation between syuzhet and fabula cannot be established unless the sequences are single and relatively fixed. The examples of these types of narratives include Robert Coover's "The Babysitter" (1969), Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* (1984) etc. According

to Richardson, the models of traditional narrative theory are inadequate to comprehend the twentieth-century narrative practices (Richardson 47). Nearly all theoretically models feature mimetic conceptions for the analysis of characters. By mimetic conceptions it is meant that the fictional characters in a novel, more or less resemble human beings. Similarly, the fictional minds and epistemic transgressions in narratives are mostly ignored by conventional narrative models (Richardson). Hence, the impossible elements of fictional narratives which defy the real-world knowledge, especially in postmodern narratives, need to be addressed by a narrative mode that persists about different epochs, in different manifestations, and unnatural narratology is all about that.

The term "unnatural narrative" has been defined by Fludernik as, "the fabulous, the magical, and the supernatural besides the logically or cognitively impossible" (M. Fludernik 362). In her opinion, unnatural narratology combines two different discourses: "the discourse of fable, romance, before-the-novel narrative; and the discourse of postmodernist anti-illusionism, transgression and metafiction" (M. Fludernik 363). Alternatively, Brian Richardson, defines the same term as one that obviously violates conventions of standard narrative forms, specifically the conventions of oral or written nonfictional narratives and fictional modes like realism that are modelled on nonfictional narratives (Alber et al. 372). Jan Alber has defined the term "unnatural" as the scenarios or events which are physically, logically, or humanly impossible (Alber 80). On the other hand, Stefan Iversen, another narratologist, has linked the concept of the "unnatural" to narratives that present the reader with clashes between the rules governing a storyworld and scenarios or events producing or taking place inside the particular storyworld, clashes that defy easy explanations (Alber et al. 373). Unnatural narratives furthermore follow fluid, changing conventions and create new narratological patterns in each work. Hence, unnatural narratives produce a de-familiarization of the basic elements of narrative, according to Richardson (Alber et al. 374). He limits the unnatural to anti-mimetic and de-familiarizing scenes, events, and spaces which defy the parameters of natural conversational narratives.

However, no theory exists without its criticism. Critics like Monika Fludernik are of the view that in order to comprehend different narratives of events, experiences, and details, we need not go beyond narrative theories for establishing our understandings, Fludernik argues in her article titled, "What is Unnatural about

Unnatural Narratology?" (2012) that the very idea of unnatural has been created in relation to its opposite, "natural" and this has introduced a very sharp contrast to capture the links, connections and deviations of the two phenomena. She also feels that "unnatural narratology" is dependent on the very idea of natural. In short, in her opinion, unnatural narratology reinforces the mimetic instead of escaping it. She has acknowledged that the difference in the opinions among her and the theorists of unnatural narratology is about the approach towards non or anti-mimetic in a narrative in a broad historical perspective. Therefore, in her article, she has provided her own definition of unnatural in unnatural narratology. She also writes that the word unnatural itself has no "loaded meanings" (M. Fludernik 362). Instead, it is equivalent to a variety of meanings that include "the fabulous, the magical, and the supernatural besides the logically or cognitively impossible" (M. Fludernik 362).

Fludernik is of the view that since narratology of eighteenth century was so focused on the realist novel that it tended to neglect or gave comparatively less attention to the fabulous, magical and supernatural. In addition to sharing her opinion, she has also questioned Jan Alber that if finding of non-mimetic interpretations is actually highlighting the unnatural then what is the difference of relation of unnatural and postmodernist reading strategies of metafictional, fabulous etc.? Moreover, does the concept of unnatural simply highlight the postmodernist and fantastic literature both within and on the margins of realism and the mimetic?

Similarly, other critics like Tobias Klauk and Tillman Koppe have also questioned the unnatural narratology in their article "Reassessing Unnatural Narratology: Problems and Prospects" (2013). They complain that the article, "Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models" (2010) conforms to its title's organizational scheme but the text of the article itself does not. These critics have tried to sort through the claims of the issue of unnatural and at the same time check the plausibility of these claims in their essay. They also discuss the general questions regarding the scope and aims of unnatural narratology. The queries of these critics are answered below in the reviewed information on the articles, books and essays written by unnatural narratologists.

The theorists of unnatural narratology responded to Monika Fludernik's observations in the article "What is Unnatural about Unnatural Narratology? A Response to Monika Fludernik" (2012). In the document they have acknowledged that

the idea of "unnatural" is partially inspired by Fludernik's approach towards narratology. They have asserted that the Fludernik's response to the unnatural narratology confirms that unnatural narrative theory is not only timely but also significant in the current narratological landscape. Alber, Iversen, Nielsen, and Richardson have accepted the fact that the unnatural can only be recognized and understood in its relation to the natural. However, for concrete narratives they have preferred to avoid the dichotomous view and have chosen a more dialectical view. According to them, "most narratives can adequately be described in terms of the permanent interaction between the natural on the one hand and the unnatural on the other" (Alber et al. 374). They have clarified their ideologically neutral use of the term unnatural in their response to Fludernik by explaining that their narratological investigations regarding "unnatural" has no connection to the cultural aspects of the word. It has no position on the debate of nature and culture neither does it assign any social practice or behaviour as natural or unnatural (Alber et al. 374).

Unnatural narratologists are also of the view that almost all of the handbooks of narrative theories have a section of "narrative temporalities" and a majority of them emphasize "mimetic" and natural examples and practices (Alber et al. 114). The reason behind this emphasis, according to them, is the use of the model of Gerard Genette and his categories of order, duration, and frequency. Hence, these theorists argue that impossible temporalities of experimental fiction, medieval dream visions, science fiction or postmodernism have been rarely theorized or mentioned in other narrative theories (Alber et al. 114). These theorists also argue that the existing narrative theories offer "a false totality that neglects and excludes an entire literature because it cannot be contained in a mimetic framework" (Alber et al. 374). As already mentioned above, they believe that most definitions of the term "narrative" have an obvious mimetic bias, that these definitions take ordinary realist texts or "natural" narratives as being archetypal manifestations of narrative. Moreover, they also believe that the definitions of "narrative" focus extensively on the idea that the narratives are based on the actual world. Thus, these definitions ignore many interesting elements of narratives.

For example, according to Stefan Iversen, the classical narratological approaches representing consciousness, excel at dealing the minds at intra-mental level. Moreover, the tools of cognitive narratology help in explaining the level of structure and reception, however, these concepts will not save the reader from the unknown

(Iversen 110). The contributions to theory of narrative provided by cognitive narratology throws light on the aspects which make a narrative unnatural yet the unnaturalness of these narratives cannot be fully translated, normalized or recognized by these present ideas of cognitive narratology.

In the same way, in response to Klauk and Koppe's criticism, the same theorists have attempted to restate their positions in clearest possible terms. They have claimed that each of these theorists have a slightly different conception of the unnatural however, practically their applications are complimentary and "involve significant areas of overlap" (Alber et al. 102). In order to prove their points, they have put their respective definitions of unnatural narratology again in their article, "What Really is Unnatural Narratology?" (2013). According to Richardson, an unnatural text is a narrative that contains a number of significant anti-mimetic events. In this article, he provides a clear definition of mimetic, non-mimetic and anti-mimetic. A mimetic fiction narrative is the one which attempts to correspond to experiences of real world, a non-mimetic fiction narrative follows non-realistic conventions, whereas, an anti-mimetic narrative contains events which are impossible in the real world (Alber et al. 102).

As Klauk and Koppe have also shown concern over the methodologies or ways of approaching towards unnatural prescribed by these theorists, the theorists have stated that Klauk and Koppe have repeatedly misconstrued their positions and they both seem unable to conceptualize the unnatural of much of the fiction. They have also claimed that their project of investigating unnatural narratology is diverse and it continues to develop (Alber et al. 113). These pioneers of unnatural narrative theory although are inspired from earlier theorists like Mikhail Bakhtin, Monika Fludernik, David Herman, James Phelan Brian McHale etc. they feel that systematic investigation of the numerous ways in which narrative texts move beyond real-world frames adds something crucial to their understanding of narratology. The unnatural narrative theorists further clarify that they have no intention to replace the existing unified theories of narratives and only intend to supplement them by focusing on the types of narratives that are left out by the dominant theories (Alber et al. 114). Furthermore, they believe that their efforts on unnatural narratology leads them to offer revisions to basic narrative theory concepts.

These reviewed articles not only elaborate the idea of unnatural narratology but also validate the need of unnatural narrative theory. I have reviewed the notion of

narrative, the limitations of traditional narrative theory and its models, the criticism on the theory of unnatural in narratives, and the response on these criticisms.

The theorists of unnatural narratives have inserted numerous examples of literary texts in their essays, articles and books on unnatural narratives and unnatural narratology, however, few texts have been studied under the theoretical framework of unnatural narrative theory by other researchers. A few studies, conducted under this particular framework, have been reviewed for better understanding of the topic under scrutiny.

Mitchell C. Lilly published a thesis on the work of Edgar Allan Poe, in which she defends reading *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838) as an early example of an unnatural narrative. In her work, "Impossible Storyworlds and the (unnatural) Narratives of Arthur Gordon Pym" (2013), she adapts the unnatural narrative theory and legitimizes Poe's novel as a work of unnatural narrative. She argues that the readers of the novel must avoid interpreting the particular text on the basis of their pre-set values of natural narrative, rather, they should orient their cognitive perceptions within the tale's impossible worlds. In her thesis, Lilly discusses anti-mimetic vertigo, narrative frame, storytelling, impossible storyworld and the non-unnatural narrative of *Pym*. Her research defends the reading of Edgar Allan Poe as an early example of an unnatural narrative in American literature. The analysis explains that Poe's novel foregrounds a world like our own with people like ourselves but then the writer unsettles and destabilizes that very world and everything within it. Moreover, the destruction also destroys the perceptions of the readers and shows the violations that go against all that a reader may know as possible. Hence, the narrative merges an otherwise mimetic world with unnatural narrative world. Lilly observes that the violations in *Pym*'s storyworld allows the readers to engage with the physical as well as logical impossibilities existing in the novel. She achieves the goal to propose a new way of reading *Pym* and to establish a new dialogue on the novel as an unnatural narrative fiction.

Similarly, one of the works of Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (1981), is re-read by Laura Bucholz as an unnatural narrative in postcolonial context. Her essay examines how and to what extent the theoretical lens of unnatural narrative potentially alters or enriches our understanding of narrative in postcolonial contexts. Bucholz's analysis not only accentuates the unnaturalness of the narrator but also draws attention

to the unnatural transaction that takes place at certain moments in the novel. She focuses on the unnatural minds, unnatural storyworlds in relation to the postcolonial context. She argues that the concept of unnatural storyworld uses as a referential cognitive device enables the reader to between the world of Rushdie created at an authorial level and the world of Saleem created at the narrator/character level. Finally, she also states that the application of unnatural narratology to Rushdie's work highlights the overlap of postmodern and postcolonial, yet it also provides more "precise tools" to analyse how Rushdie achieves "imperialistic assumptions" in the novel (Buchholz 349).

In another research paper, "Unnatural Narratology and Weird Realism in Jeff VanderMeer's *Annihilation*" (2019), Jon Hegglund discusses the convergences of narratology and ecocritical theory within the realms of postclassical narratology and materialistic ecology. He highlights some narrative features which align with recent trends of ecocritical philosophy. The purpose of the researcher in writing this paper is to extend and critically analyse the foundational principles of unnatural narratology. The ideas on unnatural narratology illustrated in the document might be "adapted to better describe and interpret fictional narratives", specifically narratives related to "geohistorical epoch of Anthropocene" (Hegglund 29). In order to elaborate his point of view Hegglund studies Jeff VanderMeer's novel *Annihilation* (2014). Through the observation of the novel, he proposes that focus of unnatural narratology on anti-mimetic can be used to observe nonanthropomorphic actions from a "weird" materiality. Thus, he offers "weird" as an adaptation of "unnatural" (Hegglund 30). He concludes that the permanent and stable real-world reference demanded by unnatural narratology is in total contrast to the weirdness present in the novel. The author's narrative figuration of "emergent agency" demands from readers to utilize the cognitive processes and separate "figure from background", "narrator from storyworld" and "agent from environment" (Hegglund 42). Thus, Hegglund observes that unnatural narratology in its present scenario is not suited to an eco-narratology which does not accept a transhistorical, unchanging model of physical reality. The review of this paper helped me in better understanding the ideas of narratology, mimesis and materiality. It also helped in understanding the relation of "nature" with "unnatural narratology" and has revealed that how unnatural narratology is more about modes of representation instead of commonly assumed connections between text and the material world.

The idea of unnatural is explored by Dungal Sigurdsson in his comparative study of two famous novels, *Gulliver's Travels* and *Discworld* series written by English authors Jonathan Swift and Terry Pratchett. The study shares various methods of reading unnatural narratives. It highlights that willing suspension of disbelief is significant to for an unnatural reading and both novels under observation contain, aspects, elements or thematic devices that are impossible, implausible or illogical. In the unnatural reading the researcher marks the use of unnatural spaces in both works. In *Gulliver's Travels* there is transition from natural to unnatural space whereas in the *Discworld* there are multiple layers within the non-transitional unnatural space (Sigurdsson 60). Moreover, Sigurdsson studies the narrators in their respective unnatural spaces. In case of *Gulliver's Travels*, the protagonist is reliably unreliable as he does not digress from the interior logic of the space he enters whereas in the case of *Discworld*, the narrator is unreliably unreliable due to being set completely in unnatural spaces (Sigurdsson 61). Hence, the review of this analysis shows the aspects of unnatural spaces and unreliable narrators in unnatural narratology. It reveals that the narratives written in two different eras contain unnatural elements and the theory of unnatural narratology can help the reader in reading these works from a different perspective. These analyses elaborate on how different researchers have contributed towards unnatural narratology, by studying different narratives using unnatural narrative theory. The reviewed researches also reveal that this area of narratology has a lot of scope for further study. Hence, for this dissertation I have employed unnatural narrative theory as its theoretical lens.

For this research, I have also reviewed the researches that have been conducted on the selected novels *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) and *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016). The reviewed material provides an insight to the reader about the plot, characters, themes etc. and, the literature available on these texts.

From the point of view of research, the novel *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) has been analysed from very limited perspectives. However, it has been reviewed by various newspapers and book clubs. To provide the reader a clear understanding of the novel, I have mostly reviewed the book reviews written on the novel.

One researcher examines the representation of animals in the novel *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012). He explores the tensions and convergences between postcolonial and animal studies (Austin and Rokosz-Piejko n.p.). The researcher thematically

investigates the aspects of binary oppositions, the recourse to native cultural knowledge and the representation of marginalized actors in the novel.

Jill Bone of The Bookbag observes that the novel has a hyper-real quality with bizarre myths. The author uses African local superstitious beliefs to emphasize the indigenous craziness of human nature (Bone n.p.). The critic reviews the book as funny and insightful. Whereas another review on the novel, written by Nick DiMartino, describes it as a "rushing, frothing, darkly comic narrative (DiMartino n.p.)". The author draggs the reader into an "alien, unpredictable world" of African folklore where babies come back from dead and palm rats are hostile (DiMartino n.p.). The presence of Congolese magic in the novel provides spare, swift and chilling scenes to the reader. The story is a chronicle of unstopping serial killer, a porcupine. The Porcupine is a young harmful double of a young skinny, intelligent and inquisitive boy. Kibandi. It stays hidden just outside the village and goes to his master at night for special missions. The narrative is a light yet haunting story in which Kibandi and his harmful double, the porcupine, continue to rampage, until he makes one mistake of ignoring a prohibition of African magic. This review reveals that the narrative illustrates a unique scenario as well as a unique narrator. These aspects of the novel are considered in this research from the point of view of unnatural narratology.

David Maine observes that the book is written in a very distinctive style. The only real character in the novel is the Porcupine. All the characters, incidents, events are filtered through the consciousness of the Porcupine. Its consciousness is marked by its animal-ness and undermines the reader's expectations. This observation of Maine supports the basic idea of this research. He also observes that the story of the novels sticks to a "nonstandard, nonlinear form of storytelling" (Maine n.p,). The narrative is a fictional representation of another creature's experience, in which, according to the observation of Maine, disbelief is never entirely suspended. On the other hand, Hadrien Diez writes in his review that the author of *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) brilliantly wraps the vibrant tradition of African folklore in sarcasm. He explains the story as a metaphoric tale which mocks the lasting influence of customs in African society. The acute sense of narration used by the writer raises the question of whether the traditions should be followed in order to avoid responsibilities? The storyline of the novel involves a setting which throws light on ancient African tradition, yet it makes the reader question that whether such traditions still exist in the society? Is it real? Hence,

the events and narrator of the novel are analysed in this research from the point of view of unnatural, which will help the reader in grasping and justifying the setting of the novel.

The other selected novel, *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016) is also studied from different perspectives. However, as it is a considerably recent work, it is also observed from limited viewpoints. Frederike Middlehoff analyses the novel from the perspective of zoopoetics and ecopoetics, assessing the relationships between animals, environment and poetics. He also observes that the novel critically engages with ontological anthropocentricism and environmental issues. It traces the genealogy of polar bear life in captivity and thus not only challenges the treatment of animals in entertainment and public institutions but also creates a ripple in the stereotypical conception of the polar bears (Middlehoff n.p.). He has also concluded that the novel intertwines the issues of environmental justice, human and animal rights, while pointing out the fact that language is incapable of making nonhuman other speak their mind (Middlehoff n.p.).

In a recent study conducted by Elizabeth McNeill, the novel is analysed from the perspective of the writer's reflection on language and metamorphosis of life. In her research paper, McNiell argues that the polar bears in Tawada's novel complicate the predisposition of animal studies in literature, of locating the continuity between human and non-human animals in their shared bodily vulnerability (McNeill 52). In simple words she observes that Tawada uses language for highlighting the shared capacity of human and non-human animals to think and speak. This aspect is traditionally used by the writers to differentiate animals and humans. The researcher suggests that the writer's use of language collapses the border of human and non-human. Her thinking, reading, writing and speaking polar bears articulate a rich theory of language that draws on German tradition of both theories of language and literary animals (McNeill 52). McNeill observes in her study that throughout the novel Tawada highlights that how the "human" act of writing takes place through the body of an animal. Such things prompt readers to think about other uses of animal body in literature. The writer uses intertextuality, narrative slippages between beings and reading and writing polar bears to express that animals are also deserving of tales (McNeill 65). The research conducted by McNeill, although focuses on the use of language in the novel, yet it also helps in understanding this particular research on unnatural narratology, by explaining the

human and non-human aspects present in the novel and prompting a re-evaluation of literary animals.

The author, Yoko Tawada, was also the witness of the real-life Knut of Berlin Zoo. The story of Knut gave her the inspiration to write the novel *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016). However, Sabine Peschel of DW observes that in the novel she not shares the story of Knut but also his ancestors. Peschel writes in her review that the first part of the novel offers more parallel to humans than animals. The second part of the novel is narrated by a human. In this part the tamer of Tosca, daughter of the writer polar bear, recounts her days with Tosca in the circus. The writer bends the narration towards reality by sharing the real-life details of Tosca's capture in Canada and her time spent in the circus. However, the writer soon pulls back into the world of magical realism, where Tosca herself recalls her days with her tamer (Peschel n.p.). The third part is the story of Knut, which is narrated from the perspective of the baby cub. According to Peschel, Tawada narrates more of a human story from the eyes of polar bears. She fills her work with satirical references as well. The novel seems like her dreamworld which makes the readers feel at home from the beginning. In the same manner, the reviewer Shimoda throws light on the basic plot of the novel which is based on three generations of polar bears. She comments that the bears in the novel can be "metaphors for any outsider's existential crisis", however they are much more than metaphors or anthropomorphized animals. These bears show how it means to be human, they are full of wonder and curiosity and their desires are limited by the circumstances (Shimoda n.p.).

Michael Magras of Kenyon Review comments on the novel that its second part, regarding Tosca, is the weakest because a reader has to go through the past of her circus tamer Barbara. The strongest chapter, in his opinion is the one on Knut, whose mother rejected him after his birth. That is why he is raised by an environmental activist. Magras observes that Tawada uses Knut's story to provide "trenchant analysis of capitalism and the environment" (Magras n.p.). Tawada mostly comments on the idea that each one of us is classified into categories and divergence from these categories is not acceptable. Moreover, conformity is the most restrictive notion of this world, as Knut is told by another caretaker that everything that is unnatural is hated by humans.

The novel *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016) is not only brilliant and strange but also hysterical and disturbing. These are the comments of Alexendra Primiani on the

novel written by her in her review published on "Music & Literature". She comments on the translation of the novel done by Susan Bernofsky. Primani writes that it is Tawada's fifth novel which is being translated. *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016) is divided into three sections and each story "reveals layers upon layers of miscommunication" as languages are piled upon one another (Primiani n.p.). The three narrators go through different experiences in life and their experiences expose language as a faulty, or it can be said inefficient tool when it comes to relating to others. The very title of the novel *Memoirs of "a" Polar Bear*, indicates a single story which collects the experiences of three bears to offer an insight to humans on their understanding of individuals around them. The novel proves that the senses of sight, touch and taste are truer than language and verbal communication. Primani clarifies her opinion that each of the section in the novel begins with a momentary disorientation as the reader is not sure who is speaking however, Tawada's use of language, her description, creates such a strong visual, that the reader can trust that what is being represented is real. In the very beginning of each section the writer completely focuses on the sensory origins of the characters to show their basic identities before the reader can distort them. The novel keeps the reader engaged in the struggles of these characters, throughout. The surrealist wit and enigmatic language have been used by Tawada to explore the inefficacy of self-identification (Primiani n.p.). This review of Primani offers an insight to another aspect of the novel which can help the reader in understanding a part of this research. As this research focuses on the elements of unnatural in the novel, the observation on the use of language and the senses of the three bears, along with the description of the characters and their experiences, helps the researcher in analysing the underlying meanings of the writer's language. Thus, this review helps me in conducting the discourse analysis of the text under study.

Eileen Battersby of Irish Times explains the novel *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016) as "dream-like" and "family saga-with-a-difference" (Battersby n.p.). The work of Tawada seems to be very much influenced by the works of Franz Kafka, however it also has traces of Bulgakov and Gogol. The narratives of the three polar bears move between first person voice and third person voice. Moreover, the narrative also moves between animal perspectives and human perspectives. The novel is all conversational being a memoir, yet the subtext of the novel is also political as well as philosophical. Although the novel is full of humour and absurdity, but the writer has not written a

comedy. The middle section of the book is shared between Tosca and her tamer, Barbara. Their bond with each other is touching and their communication is instinctive (Battersby n.p.). In the last section the writer moves towards a more deliberate and meaningful approach. It discusses about the evident artificial existence of the third bear, son of Tosca, Knut, who becomes distressed when he hears about his caretaker's death and starts thinking about his mother's rejection of him and other things in his surroundings. The book is highly intense and depicts a powerful sense of justice of the writer. It gives the readers the message that the most effective way of communicating is engaging with the other being. This review throws light on the dual layers of language used by Tawada to show a merger of animal world and human world. It assists me in understanding the discourse of the novel while exploring the texts as unnatural narratives.

2.3 Conclusion

Reviewing the literary researches on narrative theories, and particularly unnatural narratology, reveals that a limited number of literary texts have been scrutinized under the theoretical lens of unnatural narrative theory. Hence, this literature review shows a gap in the field of analysing postmodernist animal narratives from the perspective of unnatural narratology. Therefore, the reviewed literature attests that the selected texts for this research, *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) and *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016), are more conducive for the analysis through the approach of unnatural narratology.

Furthermore, the information studied in this literature review introduces to the reader the idea of narrative theory and its successful practise till date. It also divulges the need of unnatural narratology and the opinion of different theorists on this theory. This literature review helps in clearly discerning the topic of this research, the level of research work that has been conducted under this framework and the principles of this new unnatural narrative theory. It further throws light on the criticism which the unnatural narrative theory has received and how its expositors have defended their stance on the significance of unnatural narratology.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter approaches the explanation of the methodology and the theoretical framework that has been used in this project. I have used a combination of two research methods, textual analysis and discourse analysis. At this point in the report, it is explained how these methods have been employed to gather information and to deal with the selected texts in presenting this study. This chapter also explicates how the carefully chosen theoretical framework of unnatural narratology holds the support for the argument presented in this work. It also explains the rationale provided by the theoretical outline. Besides, the theoretical basis used in this research has not only provided focus and organization to the study, it has also assisted the reader in exposing the meaning of the ideas used in it.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

In order to explore the unnatural narratology as shown in the selected texts for this study, I have employed the concept of unnatural narratology put forth by Jan Alber, as the main theoretical lens of inquiry. Alber's theorization about unnatural narratology, in his books and articles, *Unnatural Narrative: Impossible Worlds in Fiction and Drama* (2016), "Unnatural Narratives" (2013), "Impossible Storyworlds and What to Do with Them" (2009), and "Unnatural Spaces and Narrative Worlds" (2013) suited well to analyse the modes of unnatural narrative techniques illustrated in the selected novels, *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) and *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016). As a supporting lens, I have also utilized some other theoretical ideas of other theorists, whose many ideas are closely linked with that of Alber, especially, "Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models" (2010), an article co-authored by Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen, and Brian Richardson. This theoretical framework includes the supporting views of these scholars of unnatural narratology in order to provide a concrete and clear understanding of the theoretical lens used in the research and of how the particular lens has helped in exploring the selected texts.

In his book, *Unnatural Narrative: Impossible Worlds of Fiction and Drama* (2016), Jan Alber has shown that physically, logically or humanly impossible ("unnatural") scenarios and events have existed in the storyworlds of novels, short stories and plays throughout the literary history. Such scenarios and events challenge the real-world knowledge of readers. "The unnatural (or impossible) in such narratives is measured against the foil of "natural" (real- world) cognitive frames and scripts that have to do with natural laws, logical principles, and standard human limitations of knowledge and ability" (Alber 15). However, in postmodernist narratives the use of unnatural elements proliferates. In his article, "Unnatural Narrative" (2013), Alber has explicated that unnatural narratives are a subset of fictional narratives. The unnatural or impossible involves natural laws and logical principles along with the standard human limitations of knowledge. The basic criterion set by Alber for identifying unnaturalness is actualizability, which means that whether the represented scenario could exist in the real world or not.

In his study of impossibilities and the process of conventionalization, Alber has divided the term unnatural into two types of impossibilities (Alber 42). First, it denotes impossible elements that have not yet been conventionalized, that is, turned into basic cognitive categories, and therefore still strike the reader as odd and disconcerting. Second, the unnatural also refers to impossibilities that have already been conventionalized, have thus become familiar conventions for narrative representation and are easily accepted as a part of the storyworld. For instance, speaking animals, use of magic, certain romances, gothic novels etc. The theorist has further argued that the constant interplay between balance and imbalance makes the study of the narrative interesting and the unnatural scenarios and events of postmodernist text leads a reader into a state of cognitive disorientation. Thus, the reader tries to restore the cognitive balance by trying to find potential explanations for these phenomena.

The first and foremost unnatural narrator, the **talking animals,** discussed by Jan Alber has been used by the researcher in this study to explore the narrators and characters of the novels. To understand such narrators, the reader has to combine two pre-existing frames to create a new one, which means that the reader is forced to blend the real-world knowledge about human narrators with the knowledge of animals to imagine a physically impossible scenario in which animal serves as a narrator (Alber 62). The animal narratives in postmodernist literature have been anticipated by the

speaking animals in earlier genres. Thus, this unnatural scenario has been conventionalized and converted into a cognitive frame for the reader. Jan Alber has observed that through playful intertextuality postmodern narratives link back to the conventions of animal stories to create a new configuration. Such narratives accentuate that there is "no stable boundary line between humans and animals" (Alber 71). These narratives not only blend the impossible with traditional genres but also move beyond them.

In the same manner, the narrators of the selected text have been analysed in the light of the idea of another type of unnatural narrator the **telepathic first-person narrator or mind reader**, explained by Jan Alber. The transformations of the narrators over the time has been one of the most compelling areas of literary experimentation. The figure of a narrator has gone from the traditional, humanist persona of a real-world storyteller to an increasingly unusual, innovative and extraordinary sources of narrative discourses. The narrators have developed a number of unnatural tendencies. Fictional narratives involve infringement of natural cognitive parameters and endowment of a first-person narrative with such unnatural powers that can be used to read the mind of others (Alber 81). Also, they can be the first-person non-human figures through whose senses a reader perceives the storyworld (Alber et al. 353) or the thought processes of the characters of those storyworlds.

Mind-reading activities, free-indirect discourse, direct thought and the telepathic connections between some of the characters, transcend real-world possibilities as they involve "accurate or successful (i.e. epistemically reliable) representations of internal states and thus go beyond the speculations and hypotheses that we have to rely on in the actual world" (Alber 99)**.** Alber believes that although in most cases of homodiegetic narration, a narration in which the narrator is also a character of the story, the narrator is subjected to the limitations of real-world and does not know what others think or feel, yet such narrators can exist. Moreover, these narrators are unnatural because it is (humanly) impossible to possess the knowledge that they possess. He argues that it is only in fictional contexts that we can gain accurate knowledge of thoughts and feelings of other characters. This knowledge differs qualitatively from the kind of knowledge that can be acquired in the real-world contexts because it is epistemically reliable.

In his book, *Unnatural Narrative: Impossible Worlds of Fiction and Drama* (2016), he has also dealt with the narratives in which **supernatural** exist as an objective feature of the storyworld and the readers have to accept them as a given. The term supernatural represents the forces that "transcend the scientifically visible universe and either belong to the divine sphere or the world of magic" (Alber 105). The concept of supernatural as unnatural has been utilized in this research in exploring the characters and the storyworlds of the novels under analysis.

Furthermore, the storyworlds of the selected texts have also beeen explored through the lens of unnatural storyworlds, provided by Alber. Storyworlds, closely correlate with the evocation of time and space i.e. temporal and spatial parameters. An **unnatural storyworld** contains physical or logical impossibilities that concern the temporal or spatial organization of the represented worlds (Alber et al. 116). A physically impossible storyworld can create unnatural situations that challenge the thinking of a readers about the basic narratological concepts. In the same way, the researcher has also scrutinized the narrative space of the novels. The environment in which the internal characters of the story, move-about and live, has been defined by Manfred Jahn and Sabine Buchholz as Narrative space (Alber 185). In the words of Jan Alber, it is the "where" of the narrative. It is the demarcated space of the signified storyworld which includes objects and entities that are the part of its setting. Alber has considered any space to be unnatural when fictional changes into real-world settings lead to "unnatural constellations" (patterns) resulting in unactualizable geographies, impossible in the real world (Alber 199). Or, in other words, it can be said that **unnatural narrative space** is the spatial distortion in which impossible creation or appearance of objects and changes to the setting are made by the writer (Alber 187). Hence, the ideas of talking animals, first-person telepathic narrator or mind reader, supernatural, unnatural storyworld, and unnatural narrative space are utilized in this study to explore the selected texts.

3.2.1. Reading Strategies

In a collaborated article by Alber, Nielsen, Iversen, and Richardson, the scholars have suggested that one way of dealing with unnatural narratives is to try to approach the unnatural on the basis of pre-existing cognitive frames (Alber et al. 118). The interpretive challenges put up by unnatural narratives can be responded by creating new cognitive parameters by either reshuffling or recombining existing frames and script

(Alber et al. 118)**.** In order to comprehend the notions of unnatural narrators, characters, spaces, and storyworlds mentioned above, I have made use of the reading strategies suggested by the narratologist, Jan Alber. In his essay "Impossible Storyworlds-and What to Do with Them" (2009), Alber has also outlined a cognitive model that describes the ways in which readers can make sense of the unnatural. He has used cognitive narratological work to clarify how some literary texts rely on human mind's fundamental sense-making capabilities and at the same time aggressively challenge these capabilities. Thus, Alber has proposed five reading strategies which can help the reader in naturalizing the unnatural scenarios (Alber 82). A reader can naturalize the unnatural scenarios:

1. By reading the events and scenarios as internal states. For example, some elements can easily be explained as dreams, fantasies or hallucinations.

2. By foregrounding the thematic. For example, in some scenarios the unnaturalness becomes more readable when the reader relates them to their literary knowledge and analyse them from a thematic angle.

3. By seeing the impossible elements as a part of allegories that say something about the world in general rather than specific individuals.

4. By blending scripts. The readers can generate the new frames by blending schemata.

5. Finally, the reader can become engaged in the processes of frame enrichment, meaning the reader can stretch existing frames beyond the real-world possibilities until the boundaries include the strange phenomenon with which the reader is confronted.

These strategies have been explained in detail with examples in order to explicate what the strategies mean and how they can be implemented while reading a text from the perspective of unnatural narratology.

a) Reading Strategy I: Unnatural Elements as Internal States

Alber has taken examples of two works, Caryll Churchill's *Heart's Desire* (1997) and Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* (1991) and has closely inspected them both. At an initial glance they are only physically impossible. When observed in detail these works can be categorized as fantasies. In the case of *Heart's Desire*, as the play keeps returning to its beginning and proceeds, and gradually gives implicit references to make the reader aware of something unnatural. The characters typically do the same thing as

before with a slight variation, the doorbell rings again and again and most surprising people and creatures turn up (Alber 84). Thus, the time does not progress in linear fashion. Alber has suggested that in order to comprehend such scenarios of the play the reader can hypothesize that "some mind is trying to imagine the best of all worlds" (Alber 84) and is so keen on reducing all the undesirable events that he or she destroys the complete scenario. In other words, the play comes as fragmented in front of readers. The obsessive perfectionism of the main character leads to a deficient arrangement of events. The reader can argue that everything happens in the mind of the main character. Hence, the abbreviated sequences and sped-up actions could be read as already familiar scenes.

In the other novel, *Time's Arrow* (1984), the reader is presented in a physically impossible scenario in which the time's arrow is reversed. The first-person narrator is some kind of a small person who lives inside the central protagonist. The narrator has a distorted perspective on the protagonist's life due to which he permanently misinterprets the situations. Alber suggests that the readers can presume that it is like rewinding a movie (Alber 85). The readers can reconstruct the protagonist's life on the basis of this knowledge.

b) Reading Strategy II: Foregrounding the Thematic

Alber continues to elucidate that all physically impossible scenarios cannot be explained as internal states. However, if a reader sees them as exemplification of themes, instead of reading them as mimetically motivated occurrences, the narratives can become more readable. For instance, Harold Pinter's film script of *The Basement* (1967/1977), can be interpreted in this manner. The story deals with two young men, Stott and Law and a girl called Jane. The question that arises while reading the script is that whether the action takes place in the outside world or in Law's mind. Alber suggests approaching the script by "thematizing or reading events as exemplars of specific themes" (Alber 86). The three character's desire to dominate is the most obvious theme. Hence, their battle of domination can be seen as the reason of physically impossible changes of setting, the unnatural quick alterations in weather, the room's transformations etc.

c) Reading Strategy III: Reading Allegorically

Another strategy to make sense of unnatural, suggested by Jan Alber, is to read the scenarios as parts of allegorical structures (Alber 87). Martin Crimp's play *Attempts on her Life* (1997) has been taken as an example by Alber, in which he observes that the play urges a reader "to accept a physically impossible situation in which the same character splits into multiple versions" (Alber 88). The reader sees disembodied voices and their discourses fragmenting the main character into seventeen diverse versions. Each of the voice represents a member of a powerful societal institution. These voices are not presented as liberating options, rather they force the character into a certain role. Thus, Alber proposes that the play can allegorically by read as a critique on a subjectification and objectification of the self through social discourses.

d) Reading Strategy IV: Blending Scripts

Blending scripts is another strategy advised by Jan Alber to comprehend unnatural narratives, when the impossible scenarios cannot be explained as internal states, or on the basis of a reader's basic literary knowledge. Such a method can be used for reading narrations by animals. The reader has to combine the script frames to picture a physically impossible scenario in which an animal talks to us human readers. Similarly, the method can also be applied on the narratives in which the narrator is dead. The reader needs to stretch his or her cognitive frame of mind and knowledge to imagine a situation in which the narrator continues to interact with the world after its death.

Another unnatural scenario is the omniscient first-person narrator, a character as well as a narrator who knows more than he could if he had been a normal human being (Alber 90). A narrator like this gains access to the thoughts and feelings of others which is a violation of mimetic models, thus creating an impossible scenario. Therefore, the reader can blend the scripts by combining their understanding of real-world limitations of first-person narrator with the knowledge of omniscient narrator in order to explain this impossible scenario.

e) Reading Strategy V: Frame Enrichment

By the term frame enrichment, Alber means to expand the existing frames until the physically and logically impossible scenarios combine the unnatural elements (Alber 91). However, a reader has to go through different cognitive steps to accomplish such frame enrichment.

For example, the play *Blue Kettle* (1997) written by Caryl Churchill portrays a scenario which breaches mimetic models and presents the reader with robot-like characters who lose control over their discourse. By the end of the play the storyworld is slowly finished "by intruding lexemes-and finally phonemes" (Alber 91). These intrusions can be explained as unnatural version of Freudian return of the repressed. The complete breakdown of the narrative can be read as an unnatural result of the interaction between the minds of the characters. Moreover, the intrusions can be explained as the dark side of the characters for the expression of which there is no existing vocabulary. Thus, the strategy of frame enrichment can be used by the reader to understand those unnatural events and storyworlds which cannot be explained as internal states, or by blending scripts or on the basis of the reader's existing knowledge.

In addition to the above explained framework, I have also utilized the supporting lens of the notions shared by Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen and Brian Richardson in their paper "Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models". The article focuses on defining the unnatural and highlighting the notion that narratives are also full of unnatural elements, defying, flaunting, mocking, playing and experimenting with the core assumptions about narrative. In particular, the narratives "may radically deconstruct the anthropomorphic narrator, the traditional human character, and the minds associated with them" or the narratives may go beyond the real-world concepts of time and space, taking the reader to the extreme extent of "conceptual possibilities" (Alber et al. 114). In simpler words, such narratives disturb the existing thought processes of the readers by bringing forth the unfamiliar ideas.

As explained earlier in the report in detail, anti-mimetic narratives have been defined by Brian Richardson as the narratives which violate the parameters of traditional realism, or move beyond the conventions of natural narrative. Such narrative confronts the readers with "differential" temporality. The theorists of unnatural narratology accentuate that "a physically impossible storyworld can create unnatural situations that challenge our thinking about basic narratological concepts" (S. I. Jan Alber 116). The logically impossible storyworld is the surrounding or environment in a narrative which defy the pre-conceived sense of the existing world, or the setting which violate the possible-world semantics.

While explaining unnatural minds, the theorists state that unnatural minds may appear on the level of the story, on the level of narrative discourse or both, meaning, it

may appear in the form of a character, a heterodiegetic narrator or a homodiegetic narrator. Unnatural minds force the reader to construct consciousness that defy the continued-consciousness-frame. Similarly, unnatural acts of narration include expressions/enunciations which are physically, logically, mnemonically and psychologically impossible. Such narrations make the existence of the subject doubtful for the reader. The theorists have suggested the two basic ways to respond to the interpretative challenges posed by unnatural narratives. One way can be to try to approach unnatural by reshuffling and recombining the scripts and frames or second way can be to simply accept the fact that certain narratives move beyond the imaginative real-world situations (Alber et al. 130). These two approaches make it easy for the readers to interpret narratives.

The theoretical framework of unnatural narrative theory as explained above, is used in this study to scrutinize the novels, *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) and *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016) as unnatural narratives. The ideas, definitions, and concepts suggested by Jan Alber in his book and articles has aided in illustrating unnatural elements of these narratives. This theoretical lens also provides the guidelines and strategies for reading and analysing the unnatural in the selected postmodernist animal narratives. The supporting lens of the concepts provided by other theorists has further helped in reflecting the arguments of the discussion and fostering this research in a more profound manner.

3.3 Research Methodology

Being a narrative analysis, this study is a qualitative research. The primary sources of the information include the novels *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012), and *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016). The secondary sources include book reviews on the novels, journal articles, research reports, books, websites etc. The primary sources are used for the analysis, whereas the secondary sources provide well-informed, articulate and rhetorically convincing arguments to support the analysis.

I have used the method of textual analysis as my main method of research analysis. In addition to textual analysis, I have occasionally used the method of discourse analysis. The textual analysis is conducted by the process of interpretation. The method of discourse analysis is subsumed in textual analysis and has assisted me in investigating the ideological dispositions which are evident in the texts and are also

relevant to this research. The text from the primary sources is extracted and analysed through the lens of a theory. The selected theory has facilitated this research by making the observations to efficiently complete this research of exploring the novels, mentioned above, as unnatural narratives.

3.3.1. Textual Analysis

I use the method of textual analysis provided by Catherine Belsey in her essay "Textual Analysis as a Research Method" (2013) as my second research method. She suggests that a researcher must first make a list of questions posed by the text, make provisional answers to those questions, and then read other people's interpretations (Belsey 164). According to Belsey, textual analysis is to be done by understanding the process of interpretation as "the effect of a relation between a reader and a text" (Belsey 166). Apart from the dialogues in the text, the text itself engages with the reader in dialogue. For an objective analysis a free reader's role is a necessity. However, she suggests to adopt critical vocabulary for certain readings which offer specific positions to its addressee. The expanded vocabulary permits the reader to make finer distinctions. The text does not reproduce the meanings at the reader's disposal, rather it always comes from outside and participates in the process of signification, that is interpretation. Thus, the text invokes intertexts (Belsey 168). The textual analysis traces these intertexts in order to differentiate it with the original text or the text in question. It poses the questions which research sets out to answer. If the texts are too puzzling, the other, secondary texts come to reader's help.

In this research I have relied on both the writer's intentions as well as secondary texts for interpretation. The secondary sources help the readers in understanding the texts beyond the information given by the author. I have used the secondary sources, in Belsey's words, "to consider the analogues" so that "what is distinctive about the text emerges as its difference from all the others" (Belsey 164). As a result, as Belsey notes, meanings are multiplied and new things are revealed through an interpretation. Such an interpretation attends to all quotations which make up a text. Moreover, as both the selected texts are first person narratives, I have read the texts in terms of the difference they make instead of limiting them to personal ambiguous subjectivism.

Since the purpose of this study is to explore the selected novels as unnatural narratives, the method of textual analysis is best suited for this research. The textual analysis can be utilized to explore the possible avenues of the text, therefore, Belsey

suggests that a researcher starts with a problem while doing a textual analysis. Hence, in this research I started the analysis by looking into the events, scenarios, storyworlds, and narrators in the texts from the point of view of physically, logically or humanly impossible. The method has further helped me in understanding the unnatural subtleties in the selected texts, and eventually in exploring the novels as anti-mimetic narratives. Finally, this research method assists in grasping the contingence of meanings in the texts. Therefore, the conclusions reached in this project do not bring the selected texts to closures and they remain open to further investigation and interpretations.

3.3.2. Discourse Analysis

I have also selected discourse analysis as my secondary method of analysis. I use this method occasionally in analysing the texts of the selected narratives. According to Gabriel Griffin, discourse analysis is mainly concerned with the investigation of language as it is used by different characters, and therefore, I use her method in analysing some of the dialogues of the characters. However, discourse analysis is largely subsumed under textual analysis, which is my main theoretical method of inquiry.

In her essay "Discourse Analysis", in the anthology *Research Methods for English Studies,* Gabriel Griffin gives two basic components of discourse analysis. First is the investigation of patterns in the language used by a speaker or narrator and the impact this pattern has on the authority status of the speaker or narrator. Second is the investigation of patterns in language used in a conversation (Griffin 93). Hence, discourse analysis explores the links between language use and the socio-cultural practices.

Discourse analysis has different variants such as conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, Interactional sociolinguistics and the ethnography of communication, discursive psychology, critical discourse analysis (CDA), critical linguistics, Bakhtinian research, and Foucauldian research (Griffin 97). Discourse analysis can be carried out on brief texts as well as extensive texts. However, no discourse analysis will ever be complete as it is beyond the scope of a single research project to cover all aspects of a text. Hence, according to Griffin, a researcher needs to utilise the best suited variant of discourse analysis for his research. In this research project, the selected texts, *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) and *Memoirs of a Polar bear* (2016) are animal autobiographies which mainly involve the narration from the

narrators. Thus, I have selected the variant of conversation analysis in order to study the verbal space used by the speaker. The method focuses on the purpose and effects of the language, the cultural rules, values, beliefs and how the language relates to the unnatural context. I have studied the patterns of the language used by the narrators in the selected novels which reflect the unnatural elements and dynamics present in the respective narrations. This method of analysis considers language not as a neutral tool rather it studies all communicative events present in the text. These events constitute a particular way of discussing the unnatural spaces, scenarios, characters etc. existing covertly or overtly in the texts. Hence, such type of analysis helps in getting an insight into the conventions of unnatural narratology present in the selected texts by making interpretations based on the details of the language of the text as well the contextual knowledge.

To sum up, I use textual analysis as my main research method for analysing the selected texts, while occasionally using discourse analysis where suitable. These techniques have helped in reading the selected texts as unnatural narratives, in the most efficient manner.

3.4 Conclusion

In short, I have used a combination of two research methods, discourse analysis and textual analysis in order to investigate the selected texts as unnatural narratives. The theoretical lens of unnatural narrative theory by Jan Alber is used as the main framework, while I have also used the ideas of other theorists of unnatural narratology as supporting lens in this research. Additionally, I have utilized the reading strategies provided by the theorist Jan Alber to further analyse the texts.

CHAPTER 4

IMPOSSIBLE STORYWORLD OF A PORCUPINE IN *MEMOIRS OF A PORCUPINE* (2012)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter of the thesis report aims at scrutinizing an animal narrative that represents the life of an African village in the words of a porcupine. The arguments in the analysis attempt to bring into light how the postmodernist animal narratives encounter the key concepts of the unnatural endeavour put up by the theorists. This study primarily examines the idea of unnatural in the light of natural. It also explores what unnatural narratology has to offer for the analysis of conventional impossible narratives.

According to Jan Alber, the term "natural" denotes the basic forms of knowledge about time, space and human beings. This knowledge of the real world exists in our minds as meaningful structures, and can be called as cognitive frames and scripts (Alber 26). Alber further explains that the natural frames or scripts contain certain types of information. For example, in our mind scripts humans of actual world have the ability to tell stories, whereas other objects do not have the ability to speak, write or tell stories. Similarly, in the actual world time moves forward not backwards, humans cannot transform themselves into somebody else and, the spaces, in which we live, cannot change its shape suddenly. Thus, the cognitive frames and scripts correspond with the real empirical world around us. These frames act as the parameters or boundaries which include the basic features of actual world relating to time, space and abilities etc. According to Ralph Cohen, the concept of transgression presupposes the existence of boundaries (Alber 26) and in this analysis I explores how the novel transgresses these above-mentioned boundaries.

Also, Alber considers these parameters as hypotheses which have not yet been refuted by experience. For instance, technology development may lead to time travel in future, however, so far officially as no person has experienced it, it is assumed as something impossible. Similarly, there are theories about parallel world and mind reading, yet as long as these have not been practically experienced, they are considered

impossible as a valid hypothesis which has not been refuted. Adding further to the notion of natural, Alber correlates natural with realist narrative. A realist narrative is defined by Palmer as "a narrative which appears to provide an accurate, objective, and confident description or authentic impression of reality" (Alber 27). The realist texts reproduce real-world parameters, illustrating human beings going through experiences which can also be experienced by us in the real world. Both natural and the unnatural involve forms of representation, in which the natural is based on the laws and principles of the real-world, whereas, unnatural deals with the impossible.

Conversely, the word conventional means traditional and ordinary; or following the usual practices of the past (Cambridge Dictionary). The term "conventional" in narratives mean the familiar conventions which have become a part of narrative representations. According to Alber, the conventional elements turn into the basic cognitive categories and do not strike to the reader as odd or disconcerting. The conventionalized scenarios or events in a narrative are accepted by the readers as part of the storyworld. The reason behind this acceptance is the repeated exposure of certain elements which become an aspect of the shared communal knowledge.

Although the terms **natural** and **conventional** seem to have same implication, these are two different notions altogether. As explained above, natural is based on real world knowledge, whereas conventional is only traditional or are usual practices which have become the part of our cognitive frames and scripts, and the **unnatural**, as defined by Alber, is the physical or logical impossibilities, sometimes perceived as natural because of their ready acceptance/naturalization by the reader. The conventional narratives can be natural, unnatural or both. Likewise, impossibilities can be conventional as well as unconventional. Thus, the natural is in contrast to unnatural and the unnatural is comprised of two types of impossibilities: conventional and unconventional. For instance, speaking animals in fables is a conventionalized impossibility. Some other examples are the use of magic, speaking objects as narrators, certain satirical exaggerations like in the works of Twain and Swift, and many elements in science fiction narratives etc. The earlier chapters in this research have elaborated these elements in detail.

The purpose of this chapter is to conduct an elaborate study of the novel, *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) and elucidate how it extends the parameters of natural and conventional forms of narrative fiction. The chapter looks over the unnatural

elements at play in the novel and contains the investigations of the patterns in the language used by the narrator in its conversation to the tree. The tree is only mentioned as a listener of the story of porcupine. Thus, the tree is the narratee in the novel. However, the text of this narrative is analysed from the reader's point of view. The analysis uses the reading strategies suggested by the theorist therefore, there is no active role of the narratee in this analysis. In order to comprehend the unnatural dynamics in the text, I have studied the author's intention as well as used my own interpretation. The chapter further includes the explored links of the language with the socio-cultural practices portrayed in the novel. I have studied the discourse used by the narrator in the novel to extract the unnatural elements as defined by Jan Alber and other theorists of unnatural narratology. Furthermore, the script from the novel is extracted and examined for the possible unnatural avenues which are a part of the narrative.

The selected text is a story of a porcupine, who belongs to the animal world of Africa and later on leaves his home and lives with humans. The porcupine's storyworld is comprised of certain unnatural constituents which challenge the thinking of readers about the basic narratological concepts. Below is the detailed scrutiny of the elements of the impossible storyworld of the porcupine. The highlighted elements include the narrator, other characters, relationship depicted between human and animal, unnatural events, strange beliefs and rituals followed by people etc.

4.2 Memoirs of a Porcupine: The Highlighted Unnatural Elements of the Novel

4.2.1. The Eccentric Narrator

A narrator is defined as an agent, the agency or instance which tells or transmits the existents, states or events in a narrative to a narratee (Alber 61). Unnatural narrators can be categorized as "posthuman amalgams" or "conceptual hybrids." Such narrators create and explore various nodes of conceptual impossibilities (Alber 61). In this selected novel, the narrator is a porcupine.

The novel *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) is set in the rural areas of Africa where people have certain strong beliefs and rituals about life and death. The book is a memoir of the porcupine. The porcupine is among the main dramatis personae of this novel. He shares his experiences and narrates the events which give the impression of being beyond the basic human knowledge of the real world. The porcupine gives the

details about himself which tells the reader that he is a real porcupine, "one of those mammals with long sharp quills" (Mabanckou 3). As this novel is narrated by the porcupine himself, the text of the book is considered as the conversation of the porcupine, presenting the impossible aspect of an animal narrating his own life story.

In order to comprehend the narrative in which the narrator is an animal, a porcupine, I have used the reading strategy IV of blending scripts, proposed by Alber, to make sense of the unnatural. According to this strategy, a reader has to stretch his or her cognitive frame of mind and knowledge to imagine an impossible situation in which an animal is telling a story. I have combined the existing framework of knowledge of a human narrator with the existing framework of the knowledge about the capabilities of animals, and created a new cognitive frame of knowledge in which the narrating porcupine is simultaneously a narrator and an animal double, who has a mind of an intellectual and can speak like humans.

The author of *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) demonstrates a fascinating concept of a double. Although the idea of animal double or familiar is touched upon by numerous fictional writers, Mabanckou has succeeded in depicting a world which is not entirely an unnatural world, rather the storyworld of the porcupine is based on the actual African villages. However, the world shown by Mabanckou contains certain strange elements which go beyond the existing mind scripts of readers. Thus, the novel is an amalgamation of real and mythical elements. The porcupine introduces himself as a "double" of the man called Kibandi, while Kibandi is the "initiate" of his double, the porcupine. Also, the porcupine is not a peaceful double but a harmful double who has to follow the occult missions of his master. The porcupine initially lives in the animal world and later on has to leave his world and become a part of the human world as a double. According to Alber, unnatural narrators, like the narrator of this novel, belong to two different conceptual domains at the same time (Alber 61). The porcupine and the human master are also two separate entities living at the same time, connected through an unexplainable bond. Moreover, in the opinion of Alber, animals circulating through societies' segments are to be considered as unnatural and the porcupine in *Memoirs of Porcupine* (2012) belong to a rural African society.

Among other strange things, there is the long life of the porcupine, who informs that he is forty-two years old and still feels young (Mabanckou 4). In the actual world, the average life expectancy of a porcupine is five to six years which can reach up to

maximum ten years. North American porcupines, however, can have the maximum life span of thirty years. Therefore, the life of this porcupine is unusually long, the fact which is also mentioned by him in his narrative. According to the rules of the life and death of an initiate and his double, the porcupine is supposed to die when his initiate dies, "a double normally dies the same day as his master" (Mabanckou 15). However, this does not happen with this animal double and the porcupine lives to narrate his story. Hence in other words, not only the porcupine's age is more than the normal porcupines of the real world, he also out lives his human initiate, refuting the normal happenings of the actual world and the world described by the author in his novel.

As a double, the porcupine eats more than the usual. He reveals, "I was constantly feeding, the more I ate, the hungrier I got" (Mabanckou 9). The porcupine's flamboyance is depicted by the writer as that of humans. He boasts, he swears, he pledges, but unlike humans he puts up his quills or "raise the front right paw and wave it three times" (Mabanckou 10) when making a pledge. The porcupine also has the capability of reading the books and he has been exhibited as a creature who also has a conscience. He also has to decide between loyalty and what he believes is right.

It is obvious to the reader that the conventional element in this narrator is that of an animal who speaks like a human. The idea of speaking animals is a conventional impossibility which has been used in literature since the era of Greeks. Numerous stories have been written in the form of animal narratives and memoirs as well. For example, *Black Beauty* (1877) by Anna Sewell, *White Fang* (2008) by Jack London, *Watership Down* (2018) by Richard Adams etc. In this story the porcupine is sharing his story with a tree in the forest where it now resides. His whole narrative is his speech to a tree. Moreover, the porcupine lives in an animal world with other animals. It is in the beginning though that he talks about different animals of the forest such as sparrows, squirrels, lizards and other porcupines, and the interaction he has had with them. Such scenarios, as are depicted in this narrative, have been used by different writers as mentioned earlier, therefore, are not very unfamiliar to the reader. However, in the actual world a speaking animal continues to be an impossibility.

In the genre of beast narratives, this novel, after establishing the idea of a speaking animal, the narration moves to new vistas of understanding. The narrator porcupine goes beyond the conventions of an animal narrator. According to the plot of the novel, once the porcupine's master Kibandi, as a child, becomes ten years old, the

porcupine is bound to leave his animal world. As we are reminded, "Once it becomes the harmful double of a human being, an animal has to leave its natural milieu" (Mabanckou 34). As a double he has to strictly follow the orders of his master, although he also has his own instincts. He becomes a combination of human and animal as he tells Baobab, the tree, "I was letting my human side get better of my animal nature" (Mabanckou 18). He also has different fears like "fear of drowning" (Mabanckou 21). He sees dreams when he is asleep, he feels anger, remorse, sympathy, and other emotions.

The narrator of this story is also different than typical animals in the way that his mind is controlled by another human, Kibandi. Till the death of his master their bodies and souls remain same. When the time comes to meet his master as a double, the porcupine feels a certain urge to reach to the child immediately. "I had to get to him as fast as possible…. I just had to move forward, walk, advance…" (Mabanckou 37). In the same way, the porcupine gains different qualities of a human from his master. He is able to read books. He is also capable of reading the book for his master, when his master is tired. He can also underline some passages with his quills. The porcupine mentions in his memoir, "I was a good reader, I would read for him when he was tired" (Mabanckou 10). The porcupine has a strong mind, clear emotions and ability to comprehend things. His narrative shows his own particular style. He listens and comprehends things like an intellectual human being. Yet, his life is a mere shadow in Kibandi's life, while Mabanckou implies in this novel that a double, in principle, may have as his own mind, yet the porcupine confesses, "I was just an underling, a shadow in Kibandi's life" (Mabanckou 126). The porcupine is a subordinate of Kibandi and despite his own mind conscience, he can never disobey his master. Along with all these characteristics the Porcupine is also a serial killer. He kills on the orders of his master. He uses his quills to carry out the missions which his master assigns him.

Jan Alber explicates that if animals can speak, they (as narrators/characters) can also foreground certain topics or themes. For instance, they can mock humans, they can expose the brutal treatment of animals by humans, or they can "conceptualize the relationship between humans and nonhumans in terms of continuity" (Alber 69). In addition, narratives have gradually moved from the idea of using animals as showing human concerns towards sharing their own experiences. Some narratives have moved further forward to show reciprocal relationship between humans and animals. In the

words of Alber, this is a blend of human and animals, which may involve varying degrees of animal-ness. In some narratives the two may coexist in a state of equilibrium. This selected text depicts such an equilibrium in which the animal (the porcupine) and the human (master Kibandi) coexist as one, sharing minds and souls. They are connected with each other by a hidden force which shows the animal narrator with the qualities of human and vice versa. Not only the narrator goes beyond the conventional traits of a human narrator but he also has additional qualities which are not present in the real animals of this world.

4.2.2. Master Kibandi

The porcupine's narrative also describes his master's unusual features and capabilities. For instance, his master has very sharp teeth, "his incisors, sharper than those of an ordinary human" (Mabanckou 73), which he uses to grind roots. At the time, when he and his mother leave the village after the death of Papa Kibandi and go to another village he becomes an apprentice carpenter to an old man. Strangely, he masters carpentry quickly. The porcupine tells, "young Kibandi managed to make ties, the laterals, the ridgepoles, the cross ridges, the boarding, the beams for the ridge, croup and semi-croup, which was not within the grasp of your average apprentice" (Mabanckou 74). Furthermore, Master Kibandi has never been to school yet when he first receives a book, he is able to read it without any difficulty. These elements present in the character of the Master Kibandi are logically impossible and violate the parameters of traditional realism. The character of Kibandi has not been formatted as completely supernatural, in contrast to the porcupine. The master has gained his power to control the porcupine by following the rituals of dark magic taught to him by his father. The character of the master is not explained in detail despite having the major role in the life of the porcupine. Therefore, I have only been able to extract a few characteristics of the master. His disposition can be explained as a character which is more stylized rather than naturalistic and is a combination of "fantasy and morality" (Alber 147). The author exaggerates the real-world coordinates with a specific purpose in mind, creating an unusual scenario for the reader. In other words, the character of Master Kibandi is not an impossible character, as it has a mimetic basis. However, he has certain impossible features inculcated in him by the author which are in violation of the traditional realism.

4.2.3. The Unusual Relationship between an Animal and a Human

The relationship between the porcupine and his master is also peculiar in the manner that the animal explains himself as his master's "third eye," "third nostril" and "third ear" (Mabanckou 4). He states that whatever Kibandi is unable to see, smell or hear the porcupine transmits to him in his dreams. This relationship is peculiar because it is not possible physically, or logically, even by human beings to share information through dreams. Nevertheless, the porcupine is able to take orders from his master in his dreams. Below I have elaborated the different aspects of the unusual relationship between the porcupine and his master.

a) Process of Initiation of the Porcupine and Kibandi

The relationship between the porcupine and Kibandi begins at the time of "initiation" (Mabanckou 51). The narrator of the story recounts a process of initiation which occurs as unfamiliar to a reader's cognitive frame of knowledge. The porcupine informs the reader that his master remembers his time of initiation throughout his life, "visions of initiation haunted him" (Mabanckou 51). The author portrays the experience of the master of the porcupine through his eyes. The process begins when the boy is ten years old. The father of the porcupine's master, Papa Kibandi, takes him to the forest one night. The little boy sees a man who looks exactly like his father lying beside his mother, so that when she wakes up, she does not find her husband gone. The child, Kibandi is surprised but his father silences him. Papa Kibandi takes junior Kibandi to the forest and starts digging. From under the earth he takes out an object wrapped in a piece of cloth. Inside the clothe there is "a gourd and an aluminium cup" (Mabanckou 53). Papa Kibandi shakes the fruit many times and adds a liquid called "*Mayamvumbi*" into it. He then first tastes it himself and then makes the boy drink it. Little Kibandi begins to feel dizzy. The potion burns his throat and he get to have a glimpse of his other self which is created after drinking of the potion. This process of initiation, shared by the porcupine, begins his life as a harmful double.

The reading strategy of foregrounding the thematic of a narrative, shared by Alber, has helped me in understanding this unnatural event in the narrative. Hence, I foreground the theme of supernatural in order to make sense of this process of initiation. This process undermines our natural cognition of the world. It is an unusual scenario which does not happen commonly in the world in which we live. Similarly, this major

event of initiation by Papa Kibandi in the narrative of the porcupine may be seen as supernatural happening carried out by following some magical rituals.

b) Two Bodies, One Mind

The master Kibandi, as a child would also appear to the porcupine in his dreams. Moreover, the porcupine also feels his master's vibration inside him. This feeling is explained by the porcupine as "only known to animals predisposed to fuse with a human being" (Mabanckou 36). Thus, the relationship between the double and his master is established by the author as a fusion. Their lives become one. The porcupine confesses, "his life was in my paws" (Mabanckou 37). He also says, "I was him, and he was me" (Mabanckou 37). As the story progresses, a strong reciprocal human/animal relationship develops. In the process, two different input spaces (features of humans and features of animals) are blended, creating varying degrees of animal-ness. Either of the input space can predominate or both can coexist in the state of equilibrium in a literary text. In this novel, the blend occurs as a fusion of minds and souls. However, a fusion of animal and a human is something which is not only physically impossible but also logically impossible. Furthermore, this concept of blending human and animal not only defies the conventions of the established genres but also disrupts the practices of realism and violates the mimetic potentials.

Additionally, the porcupine learns to read through the information his master shares with him through his mind. He speaks to the tree, "I too began to pick out letters among the thoughts passing through mind" (Mabanckou 81). Gradually, he picks up complete words and soon begins to recite what his master could read. However, having the same mind, the porcupine does not have to put much effort as he confesses, "I didn't need to read them all, my master would do that for me" (Mabanckou 82). The author also violates the realistic principles of autonomy of a single human mind by strangely interpolating the thoughts of one character into the mind of another without any possible naturalistic explanation.

Although the porcupine's conscience tries to take hold of him at times, but he remains helpless and cannot go against his master's decision. He says, "my master's anger was now my anger……, and I lost the sense that the creature before me was just an poor innocent thing" (Mabanckou 117). Hence, the porcupine, being an animal double, has his own instincts but he is bound to follow the orders of his master. When he is sent on a mission, his emotions are same as that of his master. "it was as though I

was gripped by the same anger, the same frustration, the same bitterness, the same jealousy as my master" (Mabanckou 126). The narrative of the porcupine thus, reveals that although the master and the double have their separate bodies, yet they share one mind and soul. In explanatory terms, the narrative has associated the impossible blends, with certain generic conventions, resulting in the creation of an unnatural narrative space which defies the law of noncontradiction (a principle of scientific inquiry, reasoning and communication that we cannot do without (Gottilieb n.p.)). The character-narrators, who know significantly more than they could if they were normal human beings living under similar constraints of the real-world, have existed in the world of literature, however, such narrators are unnatural because its humanly impossible to possess such knowledge. In this case, not only the character-narrator is an animal, it also possesses the knowledge of what goes on in the mind and life of his master as he knows about his own. The porcupine and his master are seemingly diverse and partly mutually exclusive. These coexisting characters perturb traditional typologies and urge the reader to reconsider his or her understanding of a conventional character/narrator.

4.2.4. Unnatural Deaths

Certain other events in this novel are also beyond basic human understanding of the real-world. For instance, the appearance of Papa Kibandi, the father of porcupine's master, changes into unhuman-like before his death. According to the porcupine, his condition becomes more like animal than human, "it was as though with age Papa Kibandi was returning to the animal state" (Mabanckou 56). By the word "returning", the porcupine implies that the man is an animal before, then becomes a human and then near the time of his end becomes an animal again. This notion is totally against the laws of the human nature. As a matter of fact, a human is born like a human and dies like a human. However, in the case of Papa Kibandi, when his end is near, he becomes more like a rat, his animal double. "the old man developed long sharp teeth, particularly at front, tough grey hairs sprouted from his ears and straggled down to his jaw" (Mabanckou 56). His animal double, the rat, is killed by the villagers and Papa Kibandi also dies. His corpse has been described as that of a dead animal, "its staring eyes flipped back in its head, the tongue, a dark indigo blue, lolling towards the right ear" (Mabanckou 69). Moreover, naturally it takes a human body to rot after a few hours, but Papa Kibandi's body begins to rot immediately after his death.

Similarly, another odd thing happens at the time of death of Mama Kibandi, mother of porcupine's master. First, the dying body causes a smell in the room for thirty days and thirty nights. The smell goes away only when the lady passes away. Then, the news of her death is revealed to Kibandi in a strange manner. A flock of sheep, as thin as skeleton, appears from nowhere and gathers around the workshop of Kibandi, "covered the courtyard in diarrhoeal excrement" (Mabanckou 84), they go in a single line towards the river. The oldest sheep lets out a cry as though it is being slaughtered and Kibandi rushes inside to find her mother dead. The whole incident of arrival of sheep, acting strangely and leaving, strikes as very peculiar to the reader. Jan Alber has classified such supernatural forces as the unnatural, as these forces transcends the scientifically visible universe (Alber 102). These events tend to highlight the forces which belong to the divine sphere or the world of magic.

Deaths Carried Out by the Porcupine

The porcupine is used by his master to carry out his bad deeds. On his orders the porcupine kills people. Although the porcupine uses his quills to kill people, yet there are certain elements in the procedure of murder which shows that this porcupine is not an ordinary porcupine. For example, the porcupine can aim his quills to the exact spot where he wants to hit. His quills are not shot randomly. When the person is dead, the porcupine uses his incisors to remove it and then he licks the wound which he inflicts on his prey. Strangely, the wound disappears leaving no mark on the body of the dead. The porcupine confesses, "I licked the blood till no trace of my act remained, I saw the little hole close again" (Mabanckou 111). Sometimes the porcupine aims for the back of the neck, sometimes the face and sometimes the head. Hence, his manner of killing is yet another odd part of this narrative. By nature, porcupines kill only in their self- defence. Their quills cause pain and are also difficult to remove. Their quills can hurt and cause infection which eventually can cause the death. Thus, the murders carried out by the porcupine clearly defy the law of nature. Not only the porcupine works on the orders of someone else, it also kills in his own particular style. Both of these things do not happen in the actual world.

4.2.5. The Bizarre Rituals and Beliefs

a) Peaceful double and Harmful double

According to the belief system of this village, on which the text is based, "Peaceful doubles" are born the same day as the child (Mabanckou 6). The language used by the author makes the reader assume that the presence of doubles is a common and acceptable thing among the people of the villages in which the porcupine and his master's family live. The porcupine tells that the peaceful doubles watch their masters grow with them and are never visible to them unless extremely necessary. For instance, if someone puts a "jinx" on the master, the peaceful double protects its master. The casual use of the term "jinx" shows that jinxes or magic is something which is common in the society where the porcupine lives. Reflecting this information, it may be observed that these elements are not as common or easily accepted in the real-world as compared to the world shown in the narrative of the porcupine.

Peaceful doubles are also animals like harmful doubles, with a perfect sense of smell. They follow every move of their master till the day they die. The porcupine shares the process of "transmission" of "power" of a peaceful double, which takes place at the time of the birth of a child. The power is transmitted by the grandfather who takes permission from the ancestors, takes the baby away and do strange things like spitting on it, licking it, shaking it, tossing in the air and then catching it back. Meanwhile, the spirit of the peaceful double leaves the body of the grandfather and enters the child. The child is termed as the initiate who grows to become a good person. The person dedicates himself to be generous towards people, helping towards lame and blind persons, respectful to others and later on passes on his powers to the next generation like his ancestors (Mabanckou 6). The whole ritual of transmission of power and having an animal double, who is there to help the person in becoming a good person and keep him away from evil and illness, is unusual and unique. It strikes as odd and strange, as these types of beliefs and rites are not seen around generally in the real world. This concept showed by the writer in this novel transgresses the boundaries of natural as well as traditional forms of animal narratives.

The harmful doubles, on the other hand, are not transmitted at the time of the birth. It is a complicated and tightly regulated procedure which occurs when the child is ten years old. In this method an initiatory drink called "*Mayamvumbi*" is drunk by the initiate on regular basis. The porcupine compares the two doubles and reveals that

transmission of a peaceful double is encouraged by the parents whereas the transmission of harmful double takes place against the child's wishes (Mabanckou 7). The animals which become the harmful double have to leave their animal world once the transmission has occurred. While explaining the birth and life of doubles, the porcupine includes the vocabulary such as "scariest kind of double,…animal incarnation,…spirit,….jinx,…and… initiate" proving that the village in which the story is set is a world of magic and mystery. The father of Porcupine's master, Papa Kibandi also has a double, which is a rat, "the rat with the big tail, flattened back ears, and hooked paws was his father's double" (Mabanckou 56). Papa Kibandi's double is also a harmful double, who carries out his evil missions.

b) Conviction in ghosts, reincarnation, souls etc.

The narrator informs the reader that the "inhabitants of Sekepembe say that ghosts can think too" (Mabanckou 16). These words of the writer through the tongue of the narrator confirm that the residents of the village, Sekepembe, strongly believe in ghosts; that the ghosts come back to haunt the living and can wander around the village. This faith among the people is not an unusual belief as a lot of people in this world believe in ghosts and spirits and the presence of ghosts in actual world is common. Nevertheless, the phenomenon that the spirits of the dead stay on earth and wander around is not proven scientifically. The ghosts in this narrative are explained as doing things which can only be done by humans. For instance, they announce their deaths in the villages, sit in bars, settle their debts, even order a glass of wine and yet cannot be seen (Mabanckou 16). Moreover, as the porcupine states that for him there is no proof of the existence of ghosts in the village but villagers fully believe in them.

The people of the village also believe in reincarnation, and in the case of "doubles", animal incarnation as well. The porcupine states, "the humans of whom we become the animal incarnation…" (Mabanckou 7). Thus, the porcupine, being the part of the storyworld in which reincarnation is accepted, also believes in it strongly. At the time of his master's death, he is worried about his own reincarnation as another animal or insect. He questions himself, "what if I'm reincarnated as an earthworm" (Mabanckou 22). The villagers are also convinced that a storm lantern must be placed by the tomb of the dead otherwise the dead "may go walking over the bodies of other dead souls" (Mabanckou 19). They religiously follow these beliefs in their day to day life.

The narrator of this narrative further mentions that Papa Kibandi had been blamed for many disappearances in the village. Once he is blamed for eating his own niece. His niece apparently dies by drowning; however, Papa Kibandi's sister insists that she was eaten by Papa Kibandi. While describing what "eating" means, the porcupine explains that he is talking about ending someone's life "by means imperceptible to those who deny existence of a parallel world" (Mabanckou 60). Thus, the language of text shows that the writer illustrates another unnatural belief among the people, that is the belief in "the parallel world" and when such people kill someone, it is called "eating" rather than killing or murdering. By specifically using the word "eating" the writer shows that people of the village refer to killing by some sources other than normal, like magic or animal double.

The novel, *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012), also includes dark magic and sorcery. One of the incidents involve a sorcerer, called Tembe-Essouka. The porcupine says, "it seems the local leaders revere his knowledge of the dark arts (Mabanckou 61)." This statement not only depicts the elements of magic, sorcery or dark art, but also explains the faith, people of the village have in him. Accordingly, this proves the strong belief of villagers in magic. Similarly, an event called "the trial of the silver bracelet" is also conducted by the sorcerer, in order to find out the killer of the niece of Papa Kibandi. The ritual involves whispering occult phrases to the sorcerer and four witnesses. The smoke created by the sorcerer fills the room and make the people cough and splutter. The sorcerer places a pot filled with palm oil on fire. Then he throws a silver bracelet in the oil and lets it boil. After sometime he takes out the bracelet without burning himself at all. Then, he puts it back and Papa Kibandi's sister and Papa Kibandi take it out respectively. Tembe-Essouka keeps chanting something on his beads in his hand and with the help of this ritual the sorcerer tells the name of the killer to the aunt of little Kibnadi. However, it is shown that Papa Kibandi fools the sorcerer by making him see another person not Papa Kibandi. He is able to do that by putting a palm nut in his rectum which he excretes later on. This whole bizarre ceremony demonstrates the custom of magic in the village where the porcupine and his master live.

The theory of "defamiliarization" defined by Viktor Shklovsky also proves to be vital in understanding these unnatural elements of the porcupine's storyworld. The concept of defamiliarization refers to the literary device in which a language is used in such a manner that ordinary and familiar objects are made to look different (Mambrol).

The theorists of unnatural narratology observe how a narrative transgresses the natural, conventional or mimetic moulds, hence in a way such narratives make the familiar seem strange. These narratives are made strange, or it can be said that these narratives play within the strange and unconventional storyworld, and estrange from recreating the natural, real, or logical. The novel *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) makes the reader see beyond the normal and conventional ways of sense making. Alber has explained in his book *Impossible Worlds in Fiction and Drama* (2016) that unnatural scenarios "deviate from real-world frames and urge us to stretch our sense-making strategies to the limits of human cognition" (Alber 32). Likewise, the elements included in the porcupine's narrative urges the readers to stretch their sense-making strategies to the limit.

c) Corpses Picking out Criminals

The porcupine, while sharing the details of his life, also shares another strange ritual that the villagers carry out whenever someone dies. The villagers believe that nobody dies a natural death and only the dead can tell who has caused his or her death. Thus, the villagers ask the corpses through a procedure in which four men carry the coffin, and a sorcerer "picks up a piece of wood, knocks three times on the casket" (Mabanckou 94) and asks the dead body to tell them who has eaten it. The sorcerer not only commands the corpse, but also tells it that whoever has caused its death the villagers would make that person pay for his acts. The corpse begins to move and make the men, who are carrying the casket, dance from left to right. The narrator tells the details about those who carry the coffin such as when the corpse start to move "they no longer feel the weight of the corpse" (Mabanckou 94). Also, sometimes the casket drags them to the bushes and brings them back at a very high speed and they walk on thorns, shards and stones, but they do not feel a thing and they are not harmed. They are thrown into water but they do not drown. They are passed through bush fires but they do not get burned. And the corpse then takes the coffin to the guilty person's home. The ritual is practised with great caution. The author has also mentioned that the corpses might also have a say in this regard. For instance, the porcupine articulates, "a few corpses refused to go along with the ritual" (Mabanckou 97). This is yet another event shared by the narrator which challenges the thinking of readers. This scenario depicts the impossible actions of an object (a corpse). The corpses in action is a highly "unactualizable" event in the real-world.

It is known to many readers that dark magic exists in this world, however, only a limited number of people have experienced it. The above described event along with other such scenarios can be categorized as unnatural because not only these events transgress from conventional mimetic narratives (that are entirely based on the real world), they also transcend the scientifically visible universe. Stefan Iversen states that unnatural narratives act according to other logics than those that we consider to be normal, prototypical, or natural (Lilly 15). The author, Mabanckou, opts for a storyworld which is based on the actual African village. However, he inculcates certain elements and scenarios in the narrative which are logically impossible in the actual world.

The storyworld of this porcupine is not depicted as an accurate or perfect world of its own, rather "supernatural" exists as an objective feature of this storyworld. The supernatural in this text go beyond the commonly known norms of dark magic. Thus, a strange world is created in a realist piece of narrative. Maria Makela, in her essay on unnatural in realist fiction, claims that the distortion of perception on narrative level creates a non-holistic world (Makela) which has been shown in this narrative of the porcupine.

The bizarre rituals and beliefs followed by the villagers can also be examined using the reading strategy of frame enrichment by Alber. I have expanded the existing frame of knowledge about the village life and the usual strong belief in superstitions by the villagers. In my opinion, the cognitive steps involved in this process can be the usual superstitions among people, belief in dark magic, belief that spirits of the dead people roaming around etc. By expanding these existing frames, I have been able to comprehend the unnatural scenarios highlighted above. The breakdown of the part of the narrative which studies the strange beliefs of the people, by using the strategy of frame enrichment results in understanding the events and scenarios as supernatural. If a reader expands his frame of knowledge of natural to supernatural, he can understand the narrative of the porcupine in a clearer manner.

4.2.6. Parallel World and the Other self

The writer in this novel also incorporates the idea of animal double and the other self. Besides, the novel also contains the subtle indication of parallel world as described by the porcupine. Papa Kibandi has "the other self". Whenever Papa Kibandi disappears around midnight, his wife never realises his absence because she always finds his other

self lying in the bed by her side (Mabanckou 56). Similarly, when the young Kibandi is initiated, he also sees his "the other self". Father Kibandi reveals to his son, "I can be myself and my *other self*, you'll soon understand" (Mabanckou 51). The other self is at the command of his father. The father warns little Kibandi, "if you escape, I'll send the other me after you" (Mabanckou 51). The other self of a person is born at the time of initiation. When little Kibandi drinks the potion *Mayamvumbi*, he sees a child who looks just like him, his other self.

The other self of young Kibandi spends most of his time trailing the porcupine. Although they never interact with each other, the porcupine is followed and protected by the other self for years until the porcupine is called by his master. It prepares the porcupine for his future with the master. It informs the porcupine about all the happenings in his master's life, "the other self kept nothing from me" (Mabanckou 77). The physical appearance of the other self is also explained as a strange being, "Kibandi's other self had no mouth, no nose either, just eyes, ears and a long chin" (Mabanckou 55). **The image of the other self always scared him.**

The other self is also capable of giving messages to the porcupine from the master. For instance, when it is time for the porcupine to join his master and leave his animal world, the other self comes and tell him that his master and his mother are leaving their native village and the porcupine is supposed to go to them. At one point in time the porcupine knows that the other self has a message for him by observing his strange behaviour. "I heard his footsteps, running everywhere, rustling in the undergrowth, plunging into the river, vanishing one moment, popping up again half an hour later" (Mabanckou 89). These actions described by the narrator helps in creating a clear image of the other self. It is a solid creature, which is proved by the porcupine's statement, "I stumbled over his (Master Kibandi's) other self, stretched out on the ground" (Mabanckou 89). The description of the other self illustrates an outlandish creature which is neither a ghost nor a spirit.

Like the readers of the story, it is also a point of question for the porcupine that how the other self of his master eats as he has no mouth and he has never seen him eating. However, he assumes that either his master eats for him or he uses any other hole of his body to feed himself. He says, "or that the other self must eat by means of a different orifice" (Mabanckou 76). Again, the strangeness of the other self is elucidated by the author. The other self is always there, and never absent. After the death of the

mother of Kibandi, the other self begins to visit the porcupine "more and more often" (Mabanckou 86). The other self always has his back towards the porcupine and the porcupine is able to sense when it appears as "a sad, lost looking shape" (Mabanckou 86). According to the porcupine, the other self's need to be fed is fulfilled by master Kibandi by "eating" people. By the end of his narrative the porcupine also says that he has never seen any normal creature that hungry. Until the other self is fed, it keeps fidgeting and turning around before lying as still as a corpse.

To study this narrative, I have taken into consideration the immediate surroundings of the events as well as the general socio-geographical environment. In addition to this, I have also observed the story space, that is, the space relevant to the plot mapped by the actions and thoughts of the characters (Alber 187). In the world of porcupine, the sorcerers, and people like Papa Kibandi, have an ability to create immediate changes in the setting through their will or some powerful spell. Alber explains such aspects as the external materialization of internal states (Alber 196). In numerous postmodern narratives as well as romances and fantasies such fusion of interiority and exteriority takes place. In the novel, Papa Kibandi, master Kibandi and the sorcerer, Tembe-Essouka can cause immediate change in the outer world. For instance, Papa Kibandi makes the sorcerer see the face of another person by putting a palm nut in his rectum and Master Kibandi makes the corpse point to someone else by doing the same thing as Papa Kibandi. The possibility of happening of such types of events exists in the fictional world, but does not exist in the actual world. These events force the reader to extend his or her imagination to go beyond the frame of limited knowledge regarding magic. Moreover, such type of events seems closer to fantasy fiction than the realist fiction. The proclivity of the narrative towards fantastic elements of magic instead of the actual happenings of this world depict this novel as an apt specimen of unnatural narrative.

4.3 Conclusion

Animal narratives are among the oldest and most popular narrative genres which continue to be a prominent choice by the writers in contemporary literature. Animals have appeared in literary texts in different ways. Conventionally, the use of animal characters has been simple and straightforward such as speaking animals, or animals as allegorically representing human types, attributes etc. The main purpose of simple depiction of animal characters has been to impart moral lessons to the readers. Such

narratives have served the purpose of enhancing readability and comprehensibility of the world. These straightforward narratives have never problematized the literary rhetorical devices. On the contrary, this research deals with the unusual representation of animals in postmodern animal narratives, such as in the novel, *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012). The animal account *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) foregrounds the continuity between the human world and the animal world. The narrative relates back to the well-known generic convention of speaking animals of animal fables and creates a new configuration that not only unites the function of this impossible blend of humans and animals but also goes beyond them. This novel also blurs the boundary between humans and animals and contest the "assumptions of mentalistic and moralistic difference" (Alber 71) between humans and animals. Thus, the detailed scrutiny of the events and scenarios of this novel demonstrates the book as no ordinary narrative. The author merges an otherwise mimetic storyworld with the unnatural logics, characters and storytelling, creating a unique story reading experience.

The presence of certain elements in the narrative of the porcupine can put this novel also in the category of supernatural narrative. According to Tzvetan Todorov, a narrative may be categorized as "supernatural" in three ways. First, "seemingly supernatural elements are explained as dreams or fantasies" (Alber 105). Second, the text forces a reader to hesitate between natural and supernatural explanation of the events described. And third, the reader may accept supernatural as a given (Alber 105). In the third scenario, "new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena" (Alber 106). Alber believes that fantastic or supernatural is unnatural because it leads to an alternation between fascination and the human urge to comprehend. On the basis of this notion, I have understood that the narrative of the porcupine falls under the third category in which supernatural exists as an objective feature of the storyworld. This novel is endowed with properties and action capacities (such as the power to initiate a double, or making a corpse active) that are denied to the persons of the world around us. However, supernatural comes under the unnatural which is already transformed into a basic cognitive frame. Supernatural exists in various genres and many people still believe that magic is literally possible (as in the village of Sekepembe). On the other hand, for people who have rationalist scientific and practically minded worldview, supernatural creatures have always been impossible. The unnatural characters of postmodernism are anticipated as figures which display

impossibilities. In this scenario, the manifestation of unnatural is explained by the generic convention of supernatural. Hence, the character of the porcupine and its relationship with his master, the following of rituals by the people of the village etc. can also be categorized as unnatural.

The comprehensive study of narratives conveys the layers of hidden, subtle and/or obscure messages. In the same manner, the major benefit of construing this novel from the perspective of narratology is that it allows the reader/researcher to enhance the understanding of the different levels of the story. By digging deeper into the novel, I have comprehended the overall meaning of the story. Reading the novel, which is loaded with the oddities, from the perspective of unnatural narratology, shows the uniqueness of the novel. The reading strategies suggested by Alber further facilitated in making sense of the novel's creative scenes as unnatural scenarios reconceptualizing the experience of real-world.

As a conclusion, it may be said that the narrative of the porcupine is an unnatural narrative. The elements involved in the novel are the strange animal narrator, his master who follows magical rituals, a unique relationship between the animal and the human, the idea of animal double, parallel world, the other self, the strange rituals regarding ghosts and spirits by the people of the village etc. This narrative of the porcupine is the radical rejection of the basic conventional conversational natural narrative which has a, fairly, straight forward story moving in a straightforward direction. It is the story of a porcupine who is an animal double of a human. The author of the novel inculcates numerous supernatural and mythical elements in the story. The characters are also unique with different powers. The storyworld depicts the unusual rituals and traditions followed by people of the African village. The strange features and powers of the narrator, the porcupine, eludes the current intellectual and emotional setup of animals in the world of literature. With respect to the main character/narrator, the author accepts the constraints of the character of the porcupine for some parts but also exercises the right to deviate from these constraints under certain conditions for most part of the narrative. The author designates numerous qualities to the narrator which are impossible in the actual world. Moreover, these qualities further go beyond the usual animal traits given by authors to animals, traditionally, in animal narratives.

CHAPTER 5

DELVING INTO THE STRANGE LIVES OF POLAR BEARS: A STUDY OF *MEMOIRS OF A POLAR BEAR* (2016) AS AN UNNATURAL NARRATIVE

5.1 Introduction

This section of the thesis provides an evaluation of the twenty-first century postmodernist novel in which the author shows a philosophical interest in the animals as living subjects. The literary animal subject in the novel is progressively interpreted by using the ideas put forth by narratologists who view the non-human animal as more than just symbols in a narrative. The novel under scrutiny engages with the animal through a unique language of description of experience. Though my main theoretical lens is Jan Alber's idea of unnatural narratology, for this chapter, I have also followed Jacques Derrida's recognition of shift in perception of the animals as "figure" or "allegory" to a "literal" or "real" animal. Derrida emphasises the similarities between humans and non-human animals and challenge the traditional claims which gives a distinctive status to humans (Derrida and Wills 368-419). The text of the novel invites the reader to look into the new perspectives on the forms and functions of language in animal narratives. Moreover, the analysis below takes the reader to the pleasures of virtual travels of the imagined lives of three polar bears of three different generations.

This chapter scrutinizes the narratives of the polar bears of three generations as unnatural narratives. In this segment of the research, I have investigated how the respective narratives move beyond the natural boundaries of a traditional narrative. The chapter also studies those aspects of the novel which are impossible according to the laws of physical world, accepted principles of logic, or typical human confines of knowledge or ability. In the novel, the three narratives are divided into three parts, each in a different scenario than the other. Therefore, I have opted for a separate analysis for each narrative.

5.2 The Incredible Storyworld of a Polar Bear

According to David Herman, the term storyworld refers to a "global mental representations", which enable interpreters to frame inferences about situations, characters and occurrences (Herman 72-73). These situations, characters, or occurrences are either clearly mentioned or are implied by a narrative or discourse. In simple words, storyworlds are a cognitive referent world constructed by a recipient through his or her experience of a narrative text. Thus, storyworlds are mental models which help the recipient in comprehending a narrative. The projected world may resemble the actual world, yet they can confront the reader with physically and logically impossible scenarios and events (Alber et al. 115). Unnatural storyworld is a category of storyworld which confronts the reader with a bizarre storyworld; a world which is governed by the principles that has very little to do with the world around us.

The title of the section of the novel, under investigation, is "The Grandmother: An Evolutionary Theory." It is a narrative of a female polar bear who is a writer. There are two levels of narrative in this part of the novel. First is the narrative in which she shares her journey of life, and second is the autobiography she is writing during her journey. Thus, in this novella, there is a narrative within a narrative, that is an autobiography inside an autobiography. I explore both the narratives simultaneously in this research. In order to explore the text as an unnatural narrative, I analyse two aspects in the polar bear's narrative. One aspect is the animal side of the character/narrator and the other aspect is the human side of the character/narrator. Additionally, I observe the situations, characters and occurrences in the text to analyse the strange storyworld of the bear.

5.2.1. Bearish Qualities of the Polar Bear

The narrator introduces herself as a baby being trained by a man to stand on two legs. With struggle and practice she learns to stand on two legs. Throughout her narrative the bear shares many of her reflexes which reveal that physically she is one hundred percent a bear, in fact a polar bear. She tells the readers, repeatedly about her bearish aspects. She shows her reflexes, such as that of raising her "paw-hand" (Tawada 5), tells how in her childhood other children called her "snout face" behind her back (Tawada 7), and shares her love of "ice-cold water" (Tawada 10). Her eating requirements are also typically bear like. Her love for salmon is expressed as follows, "I quickly devoured the entire supply of salmon" (Tawada 41). She likes fish and meat

and never wants to become a vegetarian (Tawada 55). Similarly, she describes her appearance as, "My round, soft upper body is encased in sumptuous white fur" (Tawada 5). She also has the strength of a polar bear. Once, in her preschool she throws a child over his shoulder and he flies through the air. She confesses "I threw him over my shoulder…, I didn't mean him any harm, but given my powerful built, he went flying through the air" (Tawada 7). She never gets sick. Moreover, she has a strong sense of smell. She writes about herself, "with smells, I'm not so easily fooled" (Tawada 28). She cannot cry. She tells the Sea Lion, "You know perfectly well that it is part of my physical constitution to be incapable of tears" (Tawada 27). These physical aspects of her character communicate to the reader that she is the breed of a polar bear. However, the further traits of her character create a different picture of the character in minds of the reader.

5.2.2. Human Qualities of the Polar Bear

In the beginning of the story, it is shown that the bear is standing in a hotel room. She says, "I stand at the window of my hotel room" (Tawada 4). It is further shown that she is a participant in a congress meeting that day, which comes as a strange thing for the reader because attending parties, conferences, or meetings are things which are generally related to humans. Thus, the text unravels the image of a bear belonging to a world that is not typically of a polar bear. For instance, she says, "The springs creak beneath my weight as I sit on the hotel sofa" (Tawada 5). She does not hunt like usual polar bears. She does not live in the Arctic circle of North Pole on ice, rather she lives in a city. A reader is certain that this narrator is a polar bear, except, the description provided by the bear about her life and surroundings show that it is a world which is based on the human world instead of an animal's world. As a child, she studies in a preschool. She attends official dinners (Tawada 9). She has a desk where she does her writing activity. She lives in an apartment and drinks vodka. She claims herself as a shining star of her circus. However, she has given up her "stage career" to spend her time at "paralyzingly boring conferences" (Tawada 14). She falls in love with South American style of dancing and as a result she is no longer able to perform acrobatics of any sort. Consequently, she is declared unfit for circus as a performer. The bear is assigned a desk job in the circus's administrative offices. In her office job, she looks after the preparations for foreign tours, publicity, advertisements for job openings and other usual paperwork. Her duties also include to "look after the official guests of the

circus, and take part in business luncheons and dinners" (Tawada 16). She also participates in panel discussions and formal receptions.

The bear also reveals all the emotions like nostalgia, excitement, happiness, anger, regret etc. which are commonly associated with humans. She enjoys natural beauty and finds peace in it. Apparently, the bear is able to communicate with the humans and also wears clothes like them. At one place she mentions, "It was a mistake to have taken off all my clothes because of the heat" (Tawada 21). She reads books, magazines and newspapers. She has an intellectual mind just like an intellectual human being of the real world. She also knows how to ride tricycle as well as bicycle. The polar bear travels on a plane with her own luggage, learns to use ATM, and goes to supermarket for shopping. She watches movies, goes out for a walk, longs for an ice-cold land and can also swim in icy water. Thus, keeping intact her bearish characteristics, this bear lives a life of a human being.

5.2.3. Features of the Storyworld of the Polar Bear

The world in which this polar bear resides is different than its natural habitat. It is a world of humans. The bear is trained in a circus and entertains audiences on daily basis. However, when the bear falls in love with South American style of dancing her knees get into bad shape and she is declared unfit for dancing. The bear shares that in other circumstances she would have been shot to death. However, she gets lucky and gets a "desk job in the circus's administrative offices" (Tawada 14). Hence, it is shown in the novel that although, animals are treated in the typical manner, such as that in our real world, yet at the same time, the humans and animals live together in this storyworld. Furthermore, the animals are a part of all those activities which are commonly done by human beings. In simple words, in this section of the novel animals and humans are shown as almost identical entities. In this storyworld, the animals take part in conferences with humans. They discuss together the issues such as, "The Significance of Bicycles in the National Economy" (Tawada 5). The animals are an integral part of official dinners, meetings, receptions etc of any organization. They also go to schools with humans, where they also face discrimination on the basis of their looks. For instance, the bear is called "snout face" (Tawada 7) and "snow baby" (Tawada 8) in her school. The animals in this world also go to parks and other recreational places. As mentioned earlier above, the bear goes through all emotions which are usually felt by humans. Thus, it may be deduced that in this storyworld the

animals have sentiments and emotional experiences which are usually a part of human lives. The animals also eat and drink like humans. In the world in which this polar bear lives, it is also shown that humans rent out apartments to animals and there is nothing unusual about it. They also talk with each other like normal human beings talk with each other. They also share drinks and food, as well as advice. The conversation of the polar bear with her apartment's concierge reveals that animals are easily accepted in the human world and are treated no differently than how other humans are treated. In fact, the superintendent advises the bear "to keep a journal" (Tawada 13), and to "write an autobiography" (Tawada 14). The animals can read, write, watch movies in theatres, receive letters and telegrams, and be ordered to participate in panel discussions.

During her experience of writing an autobiography, she meets an editor of a literary journal, who is a "Sea Lion" (Tawada 17). According to her, the sea lion was also once in love with her, when she was a performer at the circus, "But he already knew that nature had made our bodies incompatible" (Tawada 17). The Sea Lion works in a firm called "North Star Publishing" (Tawada 18). The excerpts of the autobiography of the bear published by the Sea Lion make the polar bear a famous writer. People start to recognize her, ask her for autograph or a picture with her. According to her narrative, she is not approached by animals but humans. For example, she writes, "A man wearing glasses came up to me…", "Another man, overhearing this, came to join us…" and "A woman who appeared to be his wife sidled up to him, smiling at me…" (Tawada 23). Hence, she clearly mentions her interaction with humans.

The storyworld also depicts issues which are commonly experienced by humans in the real world. For example, the Sea Lion publishes her autobiography without her consent. He also gives her story a title of his own. Her written work is translated into different languages, again without her permission. At the same time, in West Germany there is an on-going protest movement against the exploitation of circus animals. The journalists choose the autobiography of the polar bear "as proof of the Socialist abuse of animals" (Tawada 34). Eventually, due to the political pressures, the publication of her autobiography is discontinued. She shares with readers, "The entire literary establishment had decided to give me the cold shoulder" (Tawada 35). Her statement shows her experiences as an author. Hence, in her storyworld, an animal, who is also a writer, faces the scenarios which are usually experienced by human beings, such as being avoided by people in her surroundings.

Soon, because of the circumstances in Russia, where the polar bear lives, she is sent into exile to West Germany. She states in her narrative, "Suddenly I grasped my situation. Someone had devised this escape for me, to save me from a danger I hadn't known existed" (Tawada 38). At one point in the bear's narrative, the writer also highlights this notion that she is a part of an ethnic minority in Russia. Thus, the character of the Polar bear is typically of an animal, however, in this storyworld she is considered as a part of the human population. She is not portrayed as a minority in the animal world, but a minority in human world. The bear questions herself, "Was my clan part of an ethnic minority?" (Tawada 39). In the same manner, her experiences in exile, are just like humans. She is asked to continue writing her autobiography, but she suffers from a writer's block. She goes to bookshops and buys other autobiographies and magazines. The bear also has a political insight, and she wants to emigrate to Canada. She chooses Canada because it is a cold area, and she longs for cold environment. In her exile, she feels she is imprisoned and therefore she wants to leave.

The polar bear's observation of humans is also shown in her narrative in which she compares animals with humans. For instance, in supermarket she finds make-up items as peculiar and unnecessary. She finds the products such as tissue paper, paper plates, notebooks with animal pictures etc as strange. She comments on the products she sees in the supermarket, "The animal world is not without its culinary oddities. But this is nothing compared to the curiosities beloved by human beings" (Tawada 46). The bear also learns languages other than her mother-tongue. According to her narrative, in her storyworld, animals can not only travel, but they also have the right to emigrate to another country and live in the other country as its national, as the bear does in this story. These are the features of the world which the polar bear has devised in front of the reader. It is not a typical fictional storyworld based on the actual world, rather it is an exaggerated scenario which strikes as a unique world to the reader.

5.2.4. Analysis

Fictional narratives, whether based on natural mental models or unnatural mental models, are always invented. All types of fiction are, thus, imaginary. This text under scrutiny also comes under the category of a fictional narrative. However, the narrator, the characters, and the storyworld in this story are different than the usual narrators, characters and storyworlds of a story. In this narrative of the polar bear, the animal is impossibly positioned as a fully articulate narrator. As a matter of fact, it is

not in the nature of animals to engage in activities which are usually associated with human beings, hence, the image of such an animal remains recurrently attention-catching. In order to understand the animal narrators a reader is to combine two pre-existing frames and create a new one (Alber 62). Therefore, I have used the reading strategy IV of blending scripts, provided by Jan Alber in order to analyse this aspect of the narrative. I have blended the real-world knowledge about human narrators with the knowledge of animals to create an image of a physically impossible scenario in which in which an animal is the narrator of the story.

As mentioned above, the narrator of this story is a not only a polar bear but an author who writes her own life history. She has a body of an animal, but she acts like humans. Her behaviour and actions are recognizably like human beings and her thoughts and emotions are linked to the qualities of a polar bear's conduct. In other words, albeit a great degree of *animal-ness* in her discourse, her thoughts at the level of discourse are constrained by the Polar bears' mental and linguistic capacities. These constraints are observed in the above given textual references extracted from her narrative. For example, she does not know her mother tongue. She speaks Russian, and she learns German, yet as an animal she does not know which language her mother spoke. Her narrative implies that as an animal she does not understand the notion of a mother tongue. Similarly, her eating preferences are like bears. Her understanding of cosmetics usage by humans is also limited to a bear's mental capacity.

According to the theorists of unnatural narratology, it is in the nature of the unnatural narratives to be unusually unusual. Such narratives portray elements and scenarios which appear as unfamiliar to the reader. Therefore, a reader is to make efforts in order to comprehend such types of narratives. The reading strategies provided by Alber serves this purpose of helping the reader in making sense of the unnatural. Using these strategies, I have found out that this particular narrative shared by the polar bear serves numerous objectives. Her narrative throws light on the plight of animals who are taken away from their natural habitat and are cruelly trained to entertain people. Her story also expresses how many things function wrongly in the human world. Her commentary on the conference proceedings and the behaviour of the people during conferences may actually be considered as a satirical explanation of this world. Her discourse throughout the narrative focuses on nonhuman experiences in a human world and it also mocks human follies. For example, the behaviour of people and the

behaviour of agencies towards authors, the cruelty shown by humans towards animals, the norms of publishing sector and the attitude of literary world etc. The most important feature of this bear's narrative is the deconstruction of the binary opposition between human and nonhuman animals. The polar bear's narrative radically deconstructs distinction between humans and beasts. It connects the world of a polar bear with the world of a writer.

In today's world, it is a standard literary knowledge that in beast stories animals can talk. Therefore, the speaking polar bear is not an unconventional image for the researcher and reader. Similarly, the cruelty against animals is also highlighted through numerous animal narratives. These narratives convey the message that what are animals like and how humans should behave towards animals. Conventionally, the ancient beast fables are used for giving moral lessons and eighteenth- century novels serve the purpose of giving lessons on animal treatment (Alber 66-67). Many animal narratives discuss the lives of animals in this hostile world. However, this postmodernist narrative goes beyond the idea of using animal narrative for purely human concerns and animal experiences. It moves forward towards a reciprocal relationship between humans and animals. This narrative involves a blend of two input spaces, human features, and animal features, which coexist in the state of equilibrium. Alber writes in his book *Impossible Worlds in Fiction and Drama* (2016) that in typical animal narratives, humans are commonly represented in terms of one particular feature that is usually associated with animals and that feature is then typically ridiculed (Alber 70). On the contrary, the anthropomorphic projection in this novel, focuses on both animals and humans. The animal is represented in terms of features that we usually associate with humans, which is in direct contradiction to conventional animal narratives. This part of the novel correlates with a high degree of *animal-ness* and shows a fusion of conventional and postmodern uses of speaking animals. The world of nonhumans, the actual habitat of the polar bears, their habits and needs are shown only in the thoughts and desires of the polar bear. Her storyworld represents the relationship between experiences of humans and animals in terms of continuity. It foregrounds the continuity between human world and animal world, thus, blurring the boundary between both species.

In this study, I have also attempted to explain the entity of the polar bear in the light of the unnatural narratology. In his explication of unnatural, Alber explains anti-

realist figures as artificial entities and imagined human beings (Alber 105). The polar bear in this story can be described as an artificial entity (because it is created by the author and does not exist in the actual world) and an imagined human being (because the bear acts as a human being and the researcher unintentionally puts it in the form of human figure). The character/narrator built up by the author of this novel celebrates the *animal-ness* of the polar bear. The bear can be described as a *bear-human* figure. Thus, the bear appears to the reader as an unsettling creature which talks, walks, dresses, eats and writes like humans. In addition, the character of the polar bear can also be approached allegorically. Using the reading strategy III, proposed by Alber, I have attempted to scrutinize the bear as an abstract or a concept. She represents a new form of *animal-ness*. Her narrative categorically critiques the objectification of animals (for example, her life spent in circus). The narrative also voices the situation of human rights activists, minorities, expatriates, writers etc. These representations force the character into certain roles. The impossible character of the bear plays the role of a circus performer, an office worker, an author of her own autobiography, an exile, an immigrant, a wife and a mother.

Hence, the polar bear having both the qualities of an animal and human is used by the writer as a satirical critique on humans. In addition, the narrative can be studied as an allegory or a satirical critique on the political and cultural customs of the postmodern world, just like the famous work of Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*. *Gulliver's Travels*, written in 18th Century, was used by Swift to criticizes the political situation of England at that time. The novel was also projected as a satire on the royal court of King George I. In the same manner, the experiences of the polar bear as a writer and her observations in the places like conference halls, press conferences, supermarkets, and other public places, are may be categorized as a part of satirical critique. The narrator's judgment on the behaviour of the literary world towards a well-known author also exemplifies sarcasm. Moreover, her judgment on the matters related to human rights, minorities, mother-tongue and immigration etc also depict sarcasm on this human world. Alber denotes satirical exaggeration as unnatural (Alber 144). This narrative can also be seen as a satirical exaggeration.

The unique narrator/character perturbs the traditional typologies and urges the reader to reconsider our understanding of conventional human and animal characters. In the words of Alber, the polar bear's character has transformed the traditional animal

subject into an artificial fusion of different characteristics. The impossible character can neither be categorized as standard "flat…. or round…. [nor as] static…. or dynamic," rather it is a hyperround and excessively captivating character (Alber 143). The narrative of the polar bear, therefore, can be categorized as unnatural because the character and its storyworld display impossibilities. The narrator of this story falls under the category of such character/narrator, which is physically impossible in the real world. Moreover, the narrative goes beyond the conventional traits of animal fiction. The narrative creates a storyworld which is hard to imagine for the reader in the actual world scenario. It not only violates the mimetic potentials (of humans and animals) but also defies the conventions of established genres, making it an anti-mimetic narrative.

5.3 The Impossible Connection between a Polar Bear and her Trainer

The second section of the novel is titled as "The Kiss of Death," based on a performance in a circus. The performance is carried out by a polar bear and her trainer. This narrative is actually written by Tosca, the polar bear, on behalf of her trainer, Barbara. In this narrative she writes a biography of Barbara and herself. The narrative reveals a strange relationship between the two. They can read each other's thoughts. Moreover, the bear and the trainer can communicate with each other without actually speaking. Many a times they both can talk to each other in their dreams. The trainer, Barbara, reveals that Tosca has inherited her abilities like standing on two feet, from her mother. She realizes her unusual relationship with Tosca when one day she sees a light filled around herself and everything is blinded and Barbara enters a realm where, "in darkness, the grammars of many languages lost their color, they melted and combined, then froze solid again…..I sat on the same iceberg as Tosca and understood every word she said to me" (Tawada 98). Tosca tells Barbara that she wants to know everything about her, and she is able to understand every word. Tosca asks Barbara about her fears and in their minds, Barbara shares her fears with Tosca. Barbara exclaims, "I laid my head in Tosca's lap and sobbed" (Tawada 100). However, she explains later that presumably her communication with Tosca had been in her dreams. Barbara and Tosca practice different stunts which they are supposed to perform on stage. Tosca looks deep into her eyes from time to time. Her gesture makes Barbara realize, "it wasn't just in my imagination that we'd spoken: we really were entering a sphere situated halfway between the animal and human worlds" (Tawada 102). This description shows the deeper level of their unique relationship.

Not only the trainer can communicate with Tosca and share her experiences with Tosca in her dreams, but she is also able to read Tosca's thoughts. "I could read her thoughts; they were as clear as if they'd been written in soft pencil on drawing paper" (Tawada 104). By reading her mind, Barbara is able to picture Tosca's suffering. Both of them find comfort with each other. Their manner of communication provides them a chance to soothe their minds. They understand each other quite well which makes them good friends, who long for each other's company. To make matters more complicated, the narrator reveals that during day they are unable to speak with each other because they lack a common language. Hence, they can only talk in their dreams. Tosca tells Barbara that her mother wrote an autobiography. Barbara promises Tosca that she will write her biography. Their silent relationship becomes so strong that when Barbara's husband acts rudely with her, Tosca gets angry, "Tosca growled threateningly" (Tawada 133). At one point in the narrative, Barbara apologizes to Tosca that she has been only talking about herself instead of writing Tosca's biography. The bear replies that first Barbara should translate her own story into written characters, then her soul will be cleaned to make space for a bear. The trainer asks Tosca, "Are you planning to come inside me?" and the bear replies, "Yes" (Tawada 138). Thus, the writer portrays the depth of the relationship between the two, where their souls and voices becomes one. Both of them placate each other. For instance, when Barbara asks Tosca, in their minds, that why she feels so lonely; Tosca comforts her by saying, "You aren't alone. I'm here." (Tawada 141). However, no one except the trainer herself believes that she can speak with a bear. Barbara reveals that in her past she was also able to converse to a dog of her boyfriend. With Tosca, Barbara not only converses in dreams, but they also rehearse their circus performance in their shared dreams. "We rehearsed in our shared dream" (Tawada 158). After their successful performance, they also go on foreign tours together.

By the end of this part of the novel, Tosca shares with the readers, "In the time since our first kiss, her human soul had passed bit by bit into my bear body" (Tawada 163). The strange existing connection between the two makes Tosca explain the characteristics of the human soul of her trainer. She writes that a human soul is less romantic and primarily made up of languages. Thus, the narrative of Tosca depicts an exceptional relationship that exists between a polar bear and her trainer.

5.3.1. Analysis

The aforementioned examples of the text extracted from the novel, *Memoirs of a Polar bear* (2016), need to be understood at three levels as a fictional narrative. The story is written by a human author, who has created a character (an animal) who is writing the story from the point of view of her trainer (a human). Hence, the narrative is written as a first-person narration by an animal author. The narrative written by the bear is narrated by a homodiegetic narrator, a narrator who is also the character in the story. In this memoir, the narrator is the circus trainer, Barbara. Barbara shares her story of life with the readers, which also includes her communication with a polar bear in dreams. Tosca and Barbara go down in each other's memory lanes through their dreams. They converse and read each other's thoughts. Their connection in dreams builds up a strong relationship between them which helps them in performing a unique and risky circus performance which is called "The Kiss of Death." In this case, not only the narrator has the ability to read the thoughts of the bear, but the bear also has the power to read the mind of her trainer. Therefore, I have taken under scrutiny both aspects of unnaturalness of the narrative.

In "The Kiss of Death," an animal is impossibly positioned as a fully articulate narrator, who has the ability to speak as well as write. This trait of speaking or telling stories has always been associated with human beings. Therefore, the image of an animal doing things like humans is attention-catching, although this image is constantly used by writers since ancient times. Again, as done in previous narratives, in this research, I have attempted to blend the real-world knowledge regarding humans with the knowledge of animals. In order to imagine a physically impossible scenario I have activated and combined two pre-existing frames of knowledge and have created a new unique one. This narrative written by a polar bear illustrates an unnatural scenario of an animal which not only speaks but also writes. The animal author of this narrative, thus, lies under an anti-mimetic category which forces the readers to extend their imagination and go beyond the boundaries of the actual world.

It is argued by many narratologists that homodiegetic narrators are bound by human limitations. According to them, such narrators cannot transcend this anthropomorphic frame. For instance, Dorrit Cohn states that first-person narrators are depicted as human beings with human limitations. Thus, they are unable to perceive what goes on in the minds of their fellow beings. Therefore, Alber concludes that the

fictional reality of a homodiegetic narrator determines as well as is determined by "his imitation of real-world discourse" (Alber 80). Monika Fludernik further explains that the combination of an unfocused narrative (zero focalization) with homodiegetic narrative is not possible. The reason is that such a combination creates a violation of real-life parameters. The first-person narrator as a person is limited to his or her perception or knowledge and cannot move from one character's mind to another unless there is an infringement of these natural parameters (Alber 81). According to Alber, fictional narratives can easily violate the natural cognitive parameters. It can endow a first-person narrator with unnatural powers which can enable the person to read other people's minds. Jonathan Culler calls such cases, in which a person can read other people's minds, as forms of telepathic transmissions (Alber 81). The supposed remote transmission of information from one person to another without using any known human sensory channels or physical interaction is called as telepathy. According to Cambridge dictionary, it is the ability to know what is in someone else's mind. It also means to communicate with someone mentally, without using words or other physical signals (Cambridge Dictionary). The telepathic communication which takes place while one is dreaming is called dream telepathy (Krippner and Fracasso 4). However, there is no scientific evidence which proves that dream telepathy is a real phenomenon.

Conventional narratives present the exchange of exclusive mental impressions between human or non-human figures. The dream telepathy in this narrative comes under unnatural literary telepathy because it distinctly strays from conventional practices. In this narrative, the narrator is able to communicate in dreams and the narrative refuses any supernatural explanation of this act of dream telepathy between the bear and her trainer. The character who is also the narrator (an animal) reports in a realist narrative the mental impressions from the mind of the other character (a human) to whose thoughts she cannot have had access. In addition to this, the human is also able to read the mind of the bear in their shared dreams. Thus, the narrative is an anti-mimetic telepathic narrative which involves mind seeing relationship between an animal and a human.

Henrik Skov Nielsen has elucidated unnatural narratives as those narratives which are psychologically impossible or implausible in real-world storytelling scenarios, however, these narratives also allow the readers to interpret them as reliable or possible by changing their interpretational strategies (Richardson 98). The narrative

of Tosca is interpreted in the same manner. The idea of telepathy is a commonly known phenomenon in this world. There are also people who falsely claim that they can make people talk to their pet animals through telepathy. Hence, by using different reading strategies the reader can find the narrative as believable to some extent. The narrative does not provide any supernatural evidence to support the telepathy between human and animal. Therefore, on the basis of the principle that interpretations must be judged by how they optimize relevance and understanding the reader can choose to assume that the narrator has the ability to speak to a human in dreams.

The access of the characters to the minds of each other is a possibility which exceeds the real-world expectations. The scenes in which Barbara is able to see the memory of Tosca and those in which Tosca is able to see the past experiences of Barbara, are indeed scenarios of unnatural phenomenon. These passages of the text demonstrate a form of telepathy. The narrative makes no pretence of being confined to the minds, the space, or the time of the characters. Both the characters can see each other's thoughts and memories, in dreams, regardless of their capabilities as animal and human. Both characters are conventionally able to accurately describe the minds of each other. In other words, this postmodernist narrative of the polar bear confronts the readers with the instances of expanded consciousness of the characters. The estrangement, of this telepathic narrative, from the possible world has created an uncanny effect.

I have stretched my cognitive frames of real-world possibilities and blend human, animal, and certain rare features in order to make sense of the narrative. The unique aspect of this narrative is that it cannot be simply read as a science-fiction narrative or a supernatural narrative. It amalgamates the conventions of animal narrative with fantastic elements as well as realistic elements making it more complex to understand. It is a natural curiosity among humans to know about the thoughts of others. In this scenario, the author makes the narrative more interesting by delving into the mind of an animal. Thus, the story narrated by Tosca is a literary masterpiece of impossible instance of mind reading which moves beyond the convention of telepathic narratives to an avant-garde animal dream telepathic narrative.

5.4 The Polar Bear of a Zoo

The title of the third and the last part of the novel is "Memories of the North Pole." This narrative begins with the third person pronoun which makes it confusing for the reader to understand whether or not this narrative is a memoir. However, when the bear meets the sun bear in the zoo, he is made aware that one should use "I" for himself. The sun bear mocks him, "You call yourself Knut? A bear speaking in the third person?" (Tawada 208). Henceforward, he observes that the people around him use the pronoun 'I' for themselves and he also starts using the pronoun 'I.'

In this narrative Knut, the polar bear of the zoo, shares his experience from when he opened his eyes for the first time. He is born in a zoo. His mother had left him; therefore, he is brought up by a human caretaker called Matthias. He tries to come out of his crate and learns that there is a place called "outside." He is curious to know what lies outside the walls of his crate (Tawada 171). The narrative shows his gradual learning about the world, which involves his caretaker, his friend, weighing machine etc. Knut's narrative shows his understanding of the world as an animal. He looks at the weighing machine and finds it boring. "It was plastic-white, smooth, and boring" (Tawada 172). Knut learns names of the people and things by listening and observing. He learns that Christian is a "Doctor" (Tawada 176). He learns that the visitors who come and ask questions and light flashbulbs are called journalists. Initially he comprehends that the name of the first visitor is journalist, "Soon Knut understood that there were many journalists; while both Matthias and Christian were unique" (Tawada 177). Similarly, he learns that all birds are referred to as birds "even though the only thing they had in common was wings" (Tawada 180). He also becomes familiar with the notions of "family" (Tawada 181), "absence" (Tawada 185), "Homo Sapiens" (Tawada 173), "debut" (Tawada 192), "boredom" (Tawada 185), "remorse" (Tawada 195), "recreation" (Tawada 207) etc. Knut also learns English alphabets and swimming. Gradually he also learns to read newspapers. When he reads about his mother that she had rejected him, he searches for clues in other newspaper articles for more information regarding his mother. As Knut grows up, he is more curious about his life and ancestors. When he realizes that Matthias, his caretaker, does not look at all like him, he gets more inquisitive about how he "came into human hands" (Tawada 223). Knut is smart enough to understand that he is raised by a "Homo sapiens" and this does not happen usually.

Knut observes the difference between his body and the body of his caretakers. He tells the readers his thought, "So both men belonged to a species with elongated fingers" (Tawada 172). He sees other similarities and differences between the two men. He also takes notice of their actions, such as who stays and plays with him and who doesn't, and he is also interested their clothes. He scrutinizes the faces of both men. He writes," Compared to Christian's freshness, Matthias's skin and hair looked dehydrated" (Tawada 175). When Knut gets the permission to walk outside his cage, he observes his own appearance in comparison to other animals and humans. He feels out of place "dressed in white from head to" (Tawada 203). He starts rolling on the ground to bring some colors on his body. He makes acquaintance of new species every morning on his walk in the zoo. He is able to talk to other animals and learn about them. It is during these walks that Knut learns that "speaking of oneself in the third person meant on was a baby" (Tawada 209). His narrative also reveals that he has his own imagination with which he compares the things he looks at. For instance, he has imaginations about a mouse and also wants to befriend it when he meets one.

Knut has a strong sense of smell and sense of hearing. His sense of hearing is alert even when he is sleeping. His observation of sounds around him is quite interesting. He understands that the music (sounds of daily routine) around him "had already begun before his birth, would not cease when he was dead" (Tawada 178). He recognizes several sequences of notes that are repeated around him daily. Any sound which is repeated often enough Knut is able to remember its sequence. He is also able to "distinguish Matthias's footsteps from those of everyone else" (Tawada 178). He hears so many avian voices from outside that he begins to think that the world outside must be teeming with birds. Listening satisfies him immensely. He writes, "The heard world was so commodious, so rich in colors, that the seen world has no match for it" (Tawada 181). He does not like the church bells on Sunday. He finds it intolerable. On the other hand, he intently listens to all the sounds of the night. Knut reveals that he understands the voices of the animals. For instance, "Once, Knut had the pleasure of hearing a series of lectures on the subject of darkness by Dr. Owl" (Tawada 183). He understands the way of life of other animals and forms his opinions about them. These voices inspire him. He does not fear other animals, rather he has built up a respect for them. He listens to the laments of a monkey and learns "the cruelty of animals who live in packs" (Tawada 183). The different combinations of sounds which he hears every

night appears magical to him. However, "The crowd's raucous cheers grated on his nerves; its thunderous roars gave him an earache" (Tawada 202). He does not like the noise made by people when they visit zoo. The noise from people disturbs him. Their cheers hurt his ears.

Knut's story gives readers the hints that he is different than other polar bears. He is intelligent and perceptive. Matthias tells him that he has read in a book that the eyes of a polar bear are like a mirror. They are empty. However, he does not think that Knut's eyes are like mirrors. He says, "But your eyes aren't empty mirrors-you reflect human beings" (Tawada 187). Christian also discovers that Knut can also read the minds of others even before the person is conscious of his own intention. Knut can read thoughts faster than the other person can perceive it himself (Tawada 187). Knut also watches boxing or wrestling on television. He likes soap operas as well. Soccer bores him. He watches dramas, remembers the scenes from it and is also deeply affected by it. When he watches a disturbing scene, he feels like "wailing" (Tawada 188). He is able to relate the scenarios shown on the TV drama with his own life. He thinks, "What would he do if Matthias one day said that he could no longer come to see him?" (Tawada 188). However, Knut believes he is able to feel all those emotions only because Matthias feels them. It is not possible for him to watch TV alone, because he feels only through Matthias's body. Knut has a strong affection for his caretaker Matthias. For a very long time, he believes that Matthias is his mother. He is also worried that the milk which he drinks comes from Matthias and that is why Matthias is becoming weaker day by day. Whenever Matthias leaves him, Knut becomes restless. When he is grown up and Matthias leaves him for longer hours, he just wants him to come back, "Matthias's absence pierced him painfully" (Tawada 184). In his narrative, Knut also reveals that Matthias has the power to understand what bears are thinking. When he accidently hurts Matthias while playing, he is "scared to death" (Tawada 224). When Matthias stops coming to see Knut, Knut misses him terribly. He loses all desire to entertain visitors. As long as Matthias is with him, he doesn't "feel the urge to probe the secret" (Tawada 226) of his birth. He gives Knut the feeling that he could never be abandoned. He finds the news of the death of Matthias by reading the newspaper. The idea that he is never going to see him ever again struck Knut as a shock. He writes, "This "maybe" is what human beings call hope. My "maybe" was dead" (Tawada 230). His narrative depicts his sentiments on losing hope.

In his dreams, he sees a white world with "miniature flakes floating", "white icy ground" and "blue water showed through beneath the ice crust" (Tawada 170). Another strange thing in Knut's narrative is that he sees his ancestors, most likely his grandmother, in his dreams. He sees snowfields and talk to his grandmother, whom he has never seen. In the dreams, his grandmother makes him nervous. She is worried that Knut has no talent except "cuteness". Knut writes, "No knowledge, no ability, no art. You can't even ride a bicycle. All you have to recommend you is your cuteness" (Tawada 194). However, when Knut begins his shows, he is intelligent enough "to manipulate the audience's excitement level" (Tawada 202) to avoid getting an earache. He realizes that his movements cause the audience's joyful exclamations. He allows the enthusiasm of the crowd to increase slowly and just before the climax he lets the enthusiasm to sink again. In this manner, Knut is able to postpone the shrieks of delight from people. Knut immensely enjoys his power of manipulating the excitement of his audience.

Knut also displays his frustration in his narrative on seeing toys, keychains, mugs, t-shirts, sweaters etc. His toy clones are all called Knut. He wants "to shout at the top of his lungs" (Tawada 233) that he is the only one real Knut but he knows that no one is listening. Knut's sentimentality is exhibited in the last part of his narrative. He is sad and wants freedom. He tries to calm himself. His "organ of cognition" gets overheated that it hurts him. He tries to cover his head and breathe quietly. When Knut is invited by the mayor to a private reception, he goes on a limousine with his old acquaintance, Maurice. He feels fresh when he goes out. He goes on an elevator. The voices of people buzz around his brain like a swarm of bees. Knut toasts and drinks with the mayor and other people at the reception. At the reception he feels nostalgic. He remembers how he used to be a star. He longs to be a star again. In the reception, he meets Michael. Knut later reveals that when he reads in the paper that Michael is dead, Michael stops coming to see him. Knut talks to Michael and his meetings comfort him. The end of his narrative renders his euphoric experience of watching snowflakes. "The snow was spaceship, it lifted me up and flew off as fast as it could in the direction of the skull-the cranium of our earth" (Tawada 252). He feels light, relaxed and free.

Knut's narrative is filled with wisdom, emotions, observations, dreams, sensitivities, sufferings, and the harsh realities of this world. The researcher has

scrutinized the unusual elements which are a part of this bizarre memoir of Knut, a polar bear brought up in a zoo.

5.4.1. Analysis

Like earlier narratives in this section of the research, this narrative is also narrated by a polar bear. His name is Knut and he lives in a zoo. He is the son of Tosca the second polar bear of this novel. By this point, in my research it is an established knowledge that an animal narrator comes under an impossible scenario in a narrative. In this narrative, the narrator animal is shown as a typical animal who is brought up in a zoo, unlike his mother and grandmother in the previous two sections. However, if we observe the narrative, it reveals certain attributes of this bear Knut, which are not so typical of animals. The character/narrator is a blend of two pre-existing frames which not only speaks, but also acts as humans who go on tours, writes, communicate with humans, and evolves with time. The Knut's narrative shows his evolution from his birth onwards. In the beginning he does not use the word "I" for himself. He calls himself "Knut," which makes the reader think that this narrative is most probably a third-person narrative. However, the reader comes to know that it is Knut who is telling us his story when he starts using "I" for himself on the suggestion of a zoo fellow (another animal). Knut has sophisticated mental capacities as proven in above textual references. His true animal-ness is not disturbed by the writer. Yet, throughout his discourse the researcher comes across such thought provoking and emotional elements which can make the reader ponder over and question the nature of the polar bear.

In this narrative, I observe that the narrator's thoughts, at the level of discourse, are human, which is in contrast to his actions and behaviour with his caretaker, journalists and other people at the zoo. In his storyworld, the bear is constrained by his mental and linguistic capacities. His affection for his trainer and his sentiments at his death are shown as the thoughts of a human being, however, from his actions in the story does not reveal it to the audience of his storyworld. As Alber mentions in his study of unnatural narratives, some narratives use unnatural elements to serve different purposes, in this study, I observe that the writer uses Knut's voice to bring attention of the world to multiple issues. The narrative of Knut reveals a tender cross-specie relationship. It addresses the issue of exploitation of animals by humans. It also discusses the insensitive behaviour of humans in losing interest in someone whom they have made a sensation for the world. The narrative of Knut also talks about the

responsibility of humans in creating the environmental crisis which has threatened the survival of polar bears on this planet. It mocks human follies by showing the contrast in the thoughts of the animal and the actions and gestures of the humans (for example, journalists).

By using the elements mentioned above, the narrative radically deconstructs the distinctions between humans and beasts. It connects the world of a polar bear (who is born in a zoo and nursed by a human) with the world of a human. This connection signifies the relationship between the animal and human experiences in continuousness. Although, the author of this novel has chosen a traditional approach of animal narrators, the postmodern elements inculcated by her has made me explore this story as an unnatural narrative. In a traditional animal narrative, the animals are used to represent human faults. They are animals in context but human in speech and actions. In the previous sections of this research a similar approach has been followed by Tawada. However, in this narrative, the author manages to keep intact the animal-ness of the polar bear. The element of animal-ness predominates the element of human-ness in this narrative. The author uses other non-traditional elements such as intellect, emotions, ability to write and telepathy, to create a picture of a unique character/narrator. Knut's character is used by the author to speak about the lives of animals in a world dominated by thoughtless humans. I have, once again, used the reading strategy of blending scripts in order to analyse the memoir of the polar bear called Knut.

The narrative discourse of Knut is studied as his conversation to the reader. It accentuates that there is no stable boundary between humans and animals. His relationship with Michael shows another strange ability of the bear. Apparently, according to the newspaper Michael is dead, yet he comes and visit Knut and talks with him. When Knut mentions that he has read in the newspaper about Michael's death, Michael's visits stop. There are two ways to understand this aspect of Knut's narrative according to Alber. Either everything about Michael only exists in the mind of Knut and it is not real. He is sad and upset on the death of Matthias, he and his trainer, find consolation in talking to Michael, another polar bear. Or this scenario can be read as a supernatural element in which the dead comes to talk to Knut. The scenario of a dead human speaking to an alive human happens in numerous stories. Such scenario has become an existing frame of knowledge because of it repetition in gothic novels. However, the scenario of a dead animal's spirit coming to speak with another animal

occurs as more bizarre to a reader. Thus, I have observed that Knut's narrative about his experiences has an exaggerated set of events and scenarios which go past the basic knowledge of the real world. The above-mentioned elements of dream conversations, telepathy and human intellect disregards the practices of realism and also to some extent defy the conventions of established genres, by moving beyond the literary conventions.

Knut sees dreams of those things which he has not experienced. He sees North Pole in his dreams. Furthermore, he speaks to his ancestor (his grandmother) in his dreams. This is another strange happening in this narrative because it is not possible for an animal to see dreams of people which he has never met before. The author displays this trait of humans in an animal. Similarly, Knut speaks to Michael who actually does not exist. Michael is either a spirit of a polar bear, or he is an imagination of Knut's mind. Like humans, when Knut has no one to talk to, he has created an imaginary figure of Michael with whom he shares things. On the other hand, there is a possibility that Michael actually exists and he comes to talk to Knut as a spirit. However, when Knut reads in a newspaper that Michael is dead, he stops coming to see Knut. This part of the narrative can be read as an element of supernatural happenings in Knut's life. The scenario of animal seeing such dreams and speaking to spirits of other animals makes the reader stretch his imagination to a level of exaggeration. These events are impossible in two ways. First, it is the story narrated and experienced by an animal. Second, the scenario is not possible in the actual world. These two aspects disrupt the practices of realism. Moreover, the narrative flaunts these transgressive elements. As Richardson writes, the anti-mimetic events when are engaged in a conflict with mimetic effects become more compelling. Same is the case with this narrative. Knut's memoir is in a dialectic with the real scenarios of the world. Hence, the polar bear's narrative is explored as an unnatural narrative with certain anti-mimetic events and frames. This narrative cannot be completely put under the category of an anti-mimetic narrative because it also depicts the mimesis of an actual world. However, it has numerous unnatural events and scenarios which intentionally transgress the conventional mimetic and non-mimetic conventions. Knut's mind is a presented consciousness that in its functions or insights disrupts the rules governing the possible world it is part of. It is a mind of an animal which has been portrayed by the author as that of a human.

5.5 Conclusion

The three diverse narratives belong to three different generations of polar bear. These stories of different generations illustrate the evolution of animals under discussion in the novels. The storyworld of these polar bears also evolve from generation to generation. The storyworld of the grandmother polar bear is a complete fictional setting whereas, the storyworld of Knut (the bear of third generation) is based on a realistic setting. The first-generation grandmother bear portrays a bear with many human traits. She works in an office like humans do and she faces the circumstances such as exile, just as humans in the actual world face. She can read and write and has an important position in the society as a writer. On the other hand, her daughter, Tosca, is a circus performer. She performs in plays. She is not shown as directly speaking to the humans like her grandmother, but she has a unique ability to communicate with her trainer in dreams. In complete contrast to these two bears, the son of Tosca, Knut is born in a zoo. His life is depicted as the life of an animal humans see in the real world. He is born and brought up in the Berlin Zoo, where he becomes famous. He performs with his caretaker, to entertain the visitors of the zoo. However, Knut's narrative also reveals his intellect which is no less than that of human beings.

After a thorough analysis of these three narratives, it may be concluded that the narrative of the grandmother polar bear and her daughter Tosca can be categorized as wholly unnatural narratives. However, the narrative of the polar bear Knut is a conventional fantastic fictional narrative with a few anti-mimetic elements. I have come to this conclusion on the basis of the observation that the former two narratives have a large number of unnatural events and scenarios as compared to the number of unnatural events and scenarios in the narrative of Knut. Moreover, the characters of Grandmother bear and Tosca are more unnatural than the character of Knut. The common factor among all three narratives which prompted me to explore these narratives as unnatural narratives, is that these all are the narrations by animals. These narratives defy the parameters of natural conversational narratives. These conversations are the memoirs of animals who have shared their life experiences with the readers. The ability of humans shown in the characters of animal is a conventional impossibility which cannot exist in the actual world. This analysis studies that how the three characters/narrators of these memoirs depart from the mimetic code of character narration. In the first memoir, the anti-mimetic code of character narration is dominant, the grandmother bear

is not at all like the polar bears which are generally known to us. In the second memoir both anti-mimetic and mimetic code exist almost equally as the character of Tosca is shown to have lesser qualities as that of her grandmother and having bear qualities like the real polar bears. And in the third narrative, the mimetic code of the character narration is dominant, because the polar bear Knut is more like the bear which is commonly known to us.

In other words, Yoko Tawada's novel is fraught with three unnatural narratives. In her novel, I have come across antirealist figures moving in unnatural storyworlds, characters in unusual temporalities (dreams), and impossible storytelling scenarios. The narration in these narratives is also considered as unnatural because the texts set forth something which is completely impossible in real life. The context of the above analysed narratives also problematizes the boundary of the text. It has blurred the distinction between what is linguistically represented (the language of the bears), the 'textual' and what is inferred or imagined (the scenarios and events), the 'contextual.' The novel presents a challenge to the reader in differentiating between the contextual information of the fictional world and the real world. Furthermore, the ways in which the reader draws upon the context in their understanding of the narrative (in other words narrative interpretation) is also a challenging task for the reader. These narratives of the polar bear oppose the basic aspect of narrative which can be explained by the theoretical models based on realist parameters. These stories do not mimetically reproduce the world as we know it, rather it has brought in front of us bizarre storyworlds with bizarre characters.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: *MEMOIRS OF A PORCUPINE* (2012) AND *MEMOIRS OF A POLAR BEAR* (2016) AS UNNATURAL NARRATIVES

Narratology not only examines narratives but also studies its structure and the ways in which it affects the human perception. It is among the most important approaches to analyse fiction. The study of narratives began with the text-oriented (structuralist) approach. However, during the past few years, the progress in narrative theory has been intense. With the development in narrative studies, and increasing variety of texts, it has been established by some narratologists that classical narratological models are unable to accommodate certain impossible and experimental narratives. Therefore, the recent progress in narratology attempts to address such shortcomings. These days narratologists have a grown interest in unusual, experimental ways of story-telling in prose fiction. This interest led to the beginning of a new branch of narratological investigation, that is, unnatural narratology. The recent focus on the unnatural narratology has emerged out of the amalgamation of 'postmodern narratology' and the 'cognitive turn' in narratology. Postmodernist narratives are linked to the earlier traditional narratives through the unnatural approaches. Unnatural narratology offers methodology which highlights the ways in which strange, innovative, and unique narratives, challenge mimetic understandings of narratives and also the results of existence of such narratives in the general conception of what a narrative is and what it does.

To conclude, this research comprised of the introduction to the notion of narratives, narratology, and a recently developed theory of unnatural narratology. It progressed to the reviewed information regarding its topic, anti-mimetic narratives. It further included the observations made by me on the chosen literary texts. The introduction discussed briefly about the plotline of the selected novels, how the idea of unnatural narratology came into being? Why is it significant in the field of narratology and how it is represented in realist fiction and hypertext fiction? I opted for the idea of unnatural narratology as explicated by the theorist Jan Alber as the best suited lens to

conduct this research. Henceforth, a part of the report shared, in detail, his ideas as well as his reading strategies, which provided a huge help in understanding the selected texts. This research report also included the relevant literature reviewed for this study. The literature for this study was reviewed from two aspects. Firstly, it reviewed literature related to the field of unnatural narratology and secondly, it focused on the selected novels. The literature review also threw light on the aspects such as the criticism done by different theorists such as Monika Fludernik and Klauk and Koppe on the notion of unnatural in narratology. The reviewed information helped in understanding different characteristics regarding the unnatural narrative theory and the gap which existed in this area of narrative studies. The rest of the report consisted of the investigations I carried out, which resulted in the following conclusion:

The selected novels were scrutinized from an approach which is just becoming popular in the field of narrative study. This study not only introduced this recent concept of unnatural in narrative theory, but also provided the specifics which will help the readers and fellow researchers in getting a better understanding of the concept. The theoretical lens of the ideas put up by Alber, along with the supporting lens of other theorists of unnatural narratology, facilitated me in contributing towards the field of unnatural narratology.

My first research question was how the narratives extend the parameters of natural and conventional narratives? My analysis resulted in the observation that the selected narratives are not written in a straightforward manner. Moreover, the authors of both selected novels used the convention of speaking animals and extended it to an entirely new level. The convention of speaking animals from the beast fables was now used for purposes other than simple moralistic storytelling. These selected narratives combined different degrees of *animal-ness* and *human-ness*, along with supernatural and telepathic elements. The result of such combination was extremely heterogenous scenarios in the selected texts. In other words, the selected fictional memoirs of animals for this study created new generic configurations in literary world. This thesis catered in detail the various other traditional and untraditional aspects presented in the selected novels. It included the observations on the characters, the settings of the novels, the storyworlds created by the authors, the events which took place in these storyworlds, the language used by the narrators, the supernatural aspects, the elements which had mimetic biasness, and the subtle messages underlined in the novels. I endeavoured to

take in loop all those aspects which helped in achieving the desired objectives of this dissertation. This thesis delivered a new angle to study those types of narratives which exaggerate the conventional narrative techniques.

My second research question was what were the unnatural elements and dynamics present in the selected texts? The unnatural dynamics present in the selected texts were thoroughly explored under the framework of unnatural narratology provided by Alber. The first novel *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2012) was based on supernatural elements and African myths. It threw light on the strange rituals followed by the people of African village. The novel highlighted impossible characters, events as scenarios such as a speaking porcupine, idea of animal double, speaking corpses, human controlling the mind of animal etc. The narrator of this story was an animal double who lived a very long life, unlike the porcupines in actual world. He had a large appetite and was controlled by his human master whom he could never disobey. The master and the porcupine also shared their souls. As his double, the porcupine learnt certain qualities of humans such as reading. I studied the character of the porcupine as a blend of human and animal (discussed on pages 45-49 of this research). The master of the porcupine also gained unusual qualities and powers like that of an animal (page 49). However, the text of the novel focused more on the porcupine, therefore the character of the master could not be studied in detail. The process of initiation (drinking of potion and creation of animal double) resulting in one mind for two bodies, was another strange event in this memoir (page 50-52). Furthermore, the events like death of Papa Kibandi, deaths carried out by the porcupine, and the death of Mama Kibandi all took place in an unusual manner (page 52-54). The memoir of the porcupine also threw light on the bizarre rituals and beliefs followed religiously by the villagers. The villagers strongly believed in reincarnation, ghosts, souls of the dead roaming around etc (page 54-58). This narrative of the porcupine consisted of a large number of events which could be characterised as supernatural elements. The unnatural in this narrative was studied by foregrounding the theme of supernatural, which helped me in understanding the impossibilities shown the novel.

On the other hand, the second one *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016) comprised of three separate narratives. This novel also followed the most traditional genre of beast fables. However, it exaggerated the idea of speaking animals to a more complex narrative. The novel not only depicted the characters having both human and animal

qualities but also touched upon certain other impossible elements of dream telepathy, speaking with spirits etc. These three narratives in the novel problematized the normative understanding of the traditional literary knowledge and real-world knowledge about animals. In the first part, the focus of the research was the unique features of the bear and the impossible storyworld of the bear in which animals lived with humans like humans in the actual world. The polar bear walked, talked and ate like humans. The grandmother polar bear had the capability to work in office and she also successfully wrote an autobiography. The storyworld treated her as an animal and as a human figure at the same time. She was treated as a celebrity writer and a minority (page 69-73). In the second part of the novel, the memoir was more focused on the telepathic relationship between the polar bear and her human trainer. In this section, they both were able to communicate with each other in their dreams. I scrutinized how their relationship is logically impossible (page 75-77). In the third part of the novel, I also observed certain unnatural elements. The thoughts of the polar bear were revealed to the reader like the thought patterns of humans (page 82-84). The traditional approach of beast fable was used by the writer to mock the human follies and their insensitivity.

My third research question was how can the selected narratives be categorized as unnatural narratives? The first novel *Memoirs of the Porcupine* consists of animal narrator, bizzare events, supernatural elements and unusual storyworld. These observations led to the conclusion that this novel can be categorized as an unnatural narrative. In the case of second novel, *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*, the first and second part of the novel created a unique storyworld in which humans and animals lived together and animals were treated in the same manner as minorities are treated in actual world. After the detailed study of these aspects, it may be concluded that the first two sections of the novel are unnatural narratives with anti-mimetic characters and events, whereas the third section can be considered as an exaggerated mimetic narrative, based on fantasy, with certain impossible elements. This analysis also resulted in the inference that the second selected text have extended the boundaries of natural and conventional forms of narrative fiction.

After the complete textual and discourse analysis of both the novels, I came to the conclusion that both novels served as examples of unnatural narratives. Both novels called for the absurd necessity for perceptual and emotional familiarization by the reader in his attempts to understand fundamental alterity. The fictionality and textuality,

of both texts, together were able to "elicit perceptual, experiential, and interpretive strategies that defy the laws of "everyday experience," whether "verbal or embodied" (Makela and Polvinen n.p.).

The thorough analysis of the novels through the lens of unnatural narratology provided an exciting new example of studying narrative transgressions. In a nutshell, this study will help the reader in extending the reader's cognitive perceptions within the impossible storyworld and characters of the selected novel. The detailed examination of the novels further allowed me to explore the larger implications of the text. These novels can be analysed from numerous other perspectives. For instance, both texts can be approached as postmodernist narratives and posthuman narratives. As both novels are the works of translation into English from other languages, they can be the subject of translational and interpretational studies. The novel *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2016) can also be studied from different point of views, such as ecological perspective, cruelty on animals by humans, telepathic narrative, and satire on humans etc. Moreover, the narratives of the polar bears can also be studied by using the theoretical framework of "becoming animal" by Gilles Deluze and Felix Guattari, which will help in better understanding the narratives of the bears.

WORKS CITED

Alber, Jan and Brian Richardson Henrik Skov Nielsen. "Unnatural Voices, Minds and Narration." *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*. Ed. Allison Gibbons, Brian McHale Joe Bray. Routledge, n.d. 351-367. 12 September 2019.

Alber, Jan. "Impossible Storyworlds - and What to Do with Them." *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 1 (2009): 79-96. PDF. 6 September 2019.

—. *Unnatural Narrative-Impossible Worlds in Fiction and Drama*. Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska, 2016. PDF.

—. "Unnatural Narratives." *The Living Handbook of Narratology* (2013). Web.

—. *Unnatural Narratives: Impossible Worlds in Fiction and Drama*. University of Nebraska Press, 2016. PDF. September 2019.

Alber, Jan. "Unnatural Spaces and Narrative Worlds." Jan Alber, Henrik Skov Nielsen, Brian Richardson. *A Poetics of Unnatural Narrative*. Ed. Henrik Skov Nielsen, Brian Richardson Jan Alber. The Ohio State University Press, 2013. 45-66. PDF. 6 September 2019.

Alber, Jan, et al. "Introduction." *A Poetics of Unnatural Narratives*. Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2013. 1-16. PDF.

—. "Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models." *NARRATIVE* (2010): 113-135. PDF.

Austin, Patrycyja and Elzbieta Rokosz-Piejko. "A very Fretful Porpentine: Writing the Animal in Alain Mabanckou's Memoirs of a Porcupine." *Re-imagining the Limits of the Humans*. Ed. Elzbieta Rokosz-Piejko Patrycyja Austin. n.d. n.p. Web. 18 September 2019.

Battersby, Eileen. "Memoirs of a Polar Bear review: an animal for remembering." *The Irish Times* 25 February 2017. Web.

Bell, Alice. "Unnatural Narrative in Hypertext Fiction." *The Poetics of Unnatural Narrative*. Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2013. 185-198. PDF.

Belsey, Catherine. "Textual Analysis as a Research Method." Griffin, Gabriele. *Research Methods for English Studies*. Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2013. 157-174. Print.

Bone, Jill. "Memoirs of a Porcupine by Alain Mabanckou." 23 March 2018. *The Bookbag.* Web. 2 March 2020. <http://www.thebookbag.co.uk/reviews/index.php?title=Memoirs_of_a_Porcupine_by_Alain_Mabanckou>.

Buchholz, Laura. "Unnatural Narrative in Postcolonial Contexts:Re-reading Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children ." *Journal of Narrative Theory* (2012): 332-351. Pdf.

"Cambridge Dictionary." *Cambridge Advanced Learners's Dictionary and Thesaurus*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Derrida, Jacques and David Wills. "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)." *Critical Inquiry* 28.2 (2002): 369-418. PDF. June 2021.

—. "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)." *Critical Inquiry* 28.2 (2002): 369-418. PDF. June 2021.

DiMartino, Nick. "Review: Memoirs of a Porcupine." *Shelf Awarness* 5 April 2012. Web.

Fludernik, Monica and Greta Olson. "Assessing Current Trends in Narratology." *Current Trends in Narratology* (2011): 1-33. PDF.

Fludernik, Monika. n.d.

—. *An Introduction to Narratology*. London: Routledge, 2009. ebook.

—. "How Natural is "Unnatural Narratology"; or, What is Natural about Unnatural Narratology?" *NARRATIVE* (2012): 357-370. PDF.

—. "How Natural Is "Unnatural Narratology"; or, What Is Unnatural about Unnatural Narratology?" *Narrative* 20.3 (2012): 357-370. PDF. September 2019.

—. *Towards a Natural Narratology*. London: Routledge, 1996. PDF.

Gottilieb, Paula. "Aristotle on Non-contradiction." 2 February 2007. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Web. 3 August 2020.

Greta Olson, Monika Fludernik. "Assessing Current Trends in Narratology." *De Gruyter* (2011): 1-33.

Griffin, Gabriele. "Discourse Analysis." Griffin, Gabriele. *Research Methods for English Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013. 91-110. Print.

Hegglund, Jon. "Unnatural Narratology and Weird Realism in Jeff VanderMeer's Annihilation." *Environment and Narrative : New Directions in Econarratology* (2019): 27- 44.

Herman, David. *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences*. Chicago: CSLI Publications, 2003. Web.

Herman, David. "Narrative Ways of Worldmaking." *Narratology in the Age of Cross-disciplinary Narrative Research*. Ed. Sandra Heinen and Roy Sommer. Berlin: De Grutyer, 2009. 71-87. Web.

—. *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative (Frontiers of Narrative)*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. Web.

—. *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative (Frontiers of Narrative)*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. Web.

Iversen, Stefan. "Unnatural Minds." *A Poetics of Unnatural Narratives*. Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2013. 94-112. PDF.

James, Erin. *The Storyworld Accord : Econarratology and Postcolonial Narratives*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2015. PDF.

Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen, Brian Richardson. "What is Unnatural about Unnatural Narratology?: A Response to Monika Fludernik." *Narrative* 20 (2012): 371-382. PDF. 5 September 2019.

—. "What Really is Unnatural Narratology?" *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 5 (2013): 101-118. PDF. 16 September 2019.

Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov, Nielsen, Brian Richardson. "Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models." *Narrative* 18.2 (2010): 113-136. PDF. 6 September 2019.

Krippner, Stanley and Cheryl Fracasso. "Dreams, Telepathy, and Various States of Consciousness." *NeuroQuantology* 9.1 (2011): 4. Web. 12 10 2020.

Lilly, Mitchell C. "Impossible Storyworlds and the (Unnatural) Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym." MA Thesis. Marshall University, 2013. PDF. September 2019.

Mabanckou, Alain. *Memoirs of a Porcupine*. Soft Skull Press, 2012. Print.

Magras, Michael. "On Memoirs of a Polar Bear by Yoko Tawada." *Kenyon Review* N/A N/A N/A. Web.

Maine, David. "A Challenging Story that Usurps Convention: Memoirs of a Porcupine ." 22 July 2012. *popMATTERS.* Web. 2 March 2020.

Makela, Maria and Marja Polvinen. "Narration and Focalization : A Cognitivist and an Unnaturalist, Made Strange." *Poetics Today* (2018): 495-521. PDF.

Makela, Maria. "Realism and the Unnatural." *A Poetics of Unnatural Narrative*. Ohio: The Ohio State University Press , 2013. 142-164. PDF.

Mambrol, Nasrullah. "Defamiliarization." 17 March 2016. *Literary Theory and Criticism.* Web. 4 August 2020.

McNeill, Elizabeth. "Writing and Reading (with) Polar Bears in Yoko Tawada's Etuden im Schnee." *The German Quarterly A Journal of the American Association of Teachers of German* (2019): 51-67. PDF. 12 February 2020.

Middlehoff, Frederike. "(Not) Speaking for Animals and the Environment: Zoopoetics and Ecopoetics in Yoko Tawada's Memoirs of a Polar Bear." *Text, Animals, Environments : Zoopoetics and Ecopoetics*. Berlin, 2019. 339-354. PDF. 17 September 2019.

Nielsen, Henrik Skov. "Unnatural Narratology, Impersonal Voices, Real Authors, and Non-Communicative Narration." Alber, Jan and Rudiger Heinz. *Unnatural Narratives - Unnatural Narratology*. Ed. Rudiger Heinz Jan Alber. Berlin/Boston: De Grutyer, 2011. Google Books. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110229042/html>.

Nurgiyantoro, Burhan. *Teori Pengkajian Sastra*. Gadjah Mada University Press, 2007.

Peschel, Sabine. "Yoko Tawada: 'Memoirs of a Polar Bear'." *DW* 8 October 2018. Web.

Phelan, Jim. *What is Narrative Theory?* n.d. The Ohio State University. 8 September 2019. <https://projectnarrative.osu.edu/about/what-is-narrative-theory>.

Primiani, Alexendra. "Yoko Tawada's Memoirs of a Polar Bear." *Music & Literature* 1 November 2016. Web.

Prince, Gerald. *A Dictionary of Narratology*. University of Nebraska Press, 2003. Web.

Richardson, Brian. *Unnatural Narratives: Theory, History and Practice*. The Ohio State University Press, 2015. PDF.

—. "Unnatural Narratology : Basic Concepts and Recent Work." *DIEGESIS* (2012): 95-103. PDF.

—. "Unnatural Narratology : Basic Concepts and Recent Work." *DIEGESIS* (2012): 95-103. PDF.

Shimoda, Todd. ""Memoirs of a Polar Bear" by Yoko Tawada." *Asian Book of Reviews* 12 May 2017. Web.

Sigurdsson, Atli Dungal. ""Let me Deal so Candidly with the Reader" A Study of the Unnatural Spaces and Narrators of Gulliver's Travels and the Discworld." Master's Thesis in English Literature. 2016. PDF.

Tawada, Yoko. *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*. Trans. Susan Bernofsky. New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2016. Print.

Terms, Literary. *Litrerary Terms*. n.d. Web. 10 September 2019. <https://literaryterms.net/narrative/>.

Tobias Klauk, Tilmann Köppe. "Reassessing Unnatural Narratology: Problems and Prospects ." *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* (2013): 77-100.

University, The Ohio State. *Project Narrative*. n.d. Web. 18 January 2021.

W.Clayton, Edward. *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. n.d. Web. 22 November 2018.