

**INTERROGATING MÉTARÉCITS,  
CELEBRATING PETIT RÉCITS: A  
POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVE ON TAYEB  
SALIH'S *SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE  
NORTH* AND ATIQ RAHIMI'S *THE  
PATIENCE STONE***

**BY**

**RANA FAISAL UL ISLAM**



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**RANA FAISAL UL ISLAM**

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## THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM

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**Thesis Title:** Interrogating Métarécits, Celebrating Petit Récits: A Postmodern Perspective on Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* and Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone*

**Submitted by:** Rana Faisal ul Islam

**Registration #:** 1904-MPhil/ELit/F19

Master of Philosophy

Degree name in full

English Literature

Name of Discipline

Dr. Sibghatullah Khan

Name of Research Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Research Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Safeer Awan

Name of Dean (FAH)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Dean (FAH)

Brig. Syed Nadir Ali

Name of DG

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Pro-Rector Academics

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I Rana Faisal ul Islam

Son of Ghulam Muhammad

Registration # 1904-MPhil/ELit/F19

Discipline English Literature

Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Interrogating Métarécits, Celebrating Petit Récits: A Postmodern Perspective on Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* and Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone*** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution in the future.

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## ABSTRACT

**Title: Interrogating Métarécits, Celebrating Petit Récits: A Postmodern Perspective on Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* and Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone***

This research aims to investigate how métarécits (grand narratives) are dismantled in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* and Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone*. For this purpose, I have invoked Jean Francois Lyotard's concept of métarécit and petit récits (mini-narratives). Furthermore, in order to support my scrutiny of the texts, I have employed Linda Hutcheon's theorizing on (postmodern) parody and irony. The primary texts disapprove grand notions that present themselves as legitimate and grounded in truth. Both texts openly display postmodern sensibility by questioning the métarécits of narration, single-story, canonical, progress, heroic west, war, patriarchy, tradition, science, Marxism, history, and the like. The main argument of this research is to show that both texts do away with métarécits by confronting the authenticated and engaging with the conflicting petit récits. Moreover, the selected texts conform to the postmodern concept of fall of métarécits, where progress seems baneful, education a crime, War impish, justice feigned, religion a traitor, female authoritative and men timid. The selected texts seem to decode métarécits by presenting a number of mini-narratives. Since this research is qualitative and descriptive in nature, its research design is interpretive and exploratory. It is likely to be useful in understanding how postmodern criticism challenges the established and canonical patterns of thought and creatively intervenes in the production of knowledge.

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter .....</b>	<b>page</b>
<b>THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>AUTHOR'S DECLARATION .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....</b>	<b>VIII</b>
<b>DEDICATION .....</b>	<b>IX</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 Delimitation.....	15
1.2 Thesis Statement .....	15
1.3 Research Questions .....	16
1.4 Research Plan .....	17
1.5 Significance of Study .....	17
<b>CHAPTER 2 .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Literature Review .....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	18
2.2 Critical Scholarship on Postmodernism .....	18
2.3 Critical Sources Questioning the Grand Narratives .....	23
2.4 Existing Scholarship on Postmodern Parody and Irony.....	29
2.5 Works Already Done on the Selected Texts .....	31
<b>CHAPTER 3 .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>3.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>3.2. Theoretical Framework .....</b>	<b>36</b>
3.2.1. Incredulity towards métarécits.....	36
3.2.2 Petit récits: Challenging Teleology .....	38
3.2.3 Postmodern Parody and Irony .....	40
<b>3.3 Research Methodology.....</b>	<b>44</b>
3.3.1 Research Method .....	44
<b>CHAPTER 4.....</b>	<b>47</b>

<b>“I can’t take it anymore”: A Postmodernist Interrogation of Métarécits in <i>The Patience Stone</i></b> .....	<b>47</b>
4.1 Love as a Métarécit .....	47
4.2 Debunking the Grand Narrative of Honor.....	50
4.3. Playing down Religion .....	51
4.4 Debunking Marxist Preferences .....	55
4.5 Dismantling Familial Conventions.....	56
4.6. Challenging Patriarchy .....	57
4.7. Questioning the Glories of War .....	58
4.8 Fluid Postmodern Boundaries and Protean Meanings .....	60
4.9 Countering the Authentic and the Valid.....	63
<b>CHAPTER 5</b> .....	<b>66</b>
<b>“[s]o was I also a lie”: A Postmodern Analysis of <i>Season of Migration to the North</i></b> .....	<b>66</b>
5.1 Women’s Petit Récits and Patriarchy.....	66
5.2 Interrogating the Institution of Marriage.....	70
5.3 Parodying West .....	71
5.4 Floating Identity .....	75
5.5 Contingence and Uncertainty as Mini Narratives .....	77
5.6 Defying the True and the Original .....	80
<b>Chapter 6</b> .....	<b>82</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>82</b>
6.1 Findings.....	82
6.2 Recommendations for Further Research .....	85
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	<b>87</b>

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## **DEDICATION**

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

This study aims to trace the way *métarécits* (grand narratives) are dismantled in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* and Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* (TPS). Jean-François Lyotard's concept of "incredulity towards *métarécits*" is a touchstone for interrogating stories that assimilate different cultures in order to support western superiority (24). This idea of questioning the *métarécits*, sum-ups the postmodern age and various aspects of postmodernity. Being postmodern texts, Tayeb Salih's *Season* and Atiq Rahimi's *TPS* turn their back toward the canonical "in favor of the contingent and/or the provisional" (Newton 266).

Contrary to the old traditional beliefs, Lyotard presents Postmodernity as the age in which *Métarécits* have become bankrupt. He is of the view that contemporary culture does away with all notions that legitimate themselves as having universal appeal. James Clifford in *The predicament of culture: Twentieth-century ethnography, literature, and art* (1988) also supports Lyotard's idea of *petit récits*, he notes that "There is no master narrative that can reconcile the tragic and comic plots of global cultural history" (Clifford 15). As a result, in a host of revised scholarly discourses, we find a situation in which texts represent the culture clash, assimilation, and sometimes reinvent themselves, and become a confusing collage. Lyotard takes stories and history as a closure to *gapes* and silences. It is the reason why he associates the narrative with teleology. He defines modern as

any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse of this kind making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative," following the logic "that the whole is determinable. (xxiii)

In response to this modern position, Lyotard proposes to distinguish mini narratives from grand narratives by narrating the little stories or histories told by others. Challenging the *métarécits*, he sets "*les petites histoires*" little stories (or local narratives) with their common narrators- prisoners, prostitutes, prisoners, peasant, women, and the like. Lyotard suggests that *paralogy* takes us away from old forms of deriving meaning from reason. He opines that, "Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; Its principle is not the expert's homology, but the inventor's

paralogy” (xxv). Analyzing the notion of knowledge in postmodern society he indicates the end of *métarécits* which according to him, is also a feature of modernity. He leads us to move away from various aspects of modernism like progress, democracy, freedom, and everything modernist spirit embodied. In line with the concept of the end of *métarécits*, we find *Season* and *TPS* maintaining a persistent opposition to universal notions, which is a significant aspect of modernity. Subscribing to this view a female protagonist in *TPS* breaks down the *métarécit* of manhood, family, honor and the like.

Postmodernism, from media to theater, challenges all institutions, conventions, and art forms that find a home for meaning, continuity and, tradition become the target of postmodern parody and irony. Contrary to Jameson and Baudrillard who underestimate the role of parody by introducing it as a productive literary device, Linda Hutcheon takes postmodern parody as an attractive tool to build a connection between classical and contemporary artistic expressions. She notes:

Parody is a perfect postmodern form, in some sense, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies. It also forces a reconsideration of the idea of origin or originality. (251)

Hutcheon believes that postmodern parody and irony take history into account and challenge the totalitarian grand narrative of history. According to Linda Hutcheon, the use of postmodern parody, at the same time, legitimizes and subverts the subject that it parodies. It is self-reflexive in nature and appreciates its content as well as objects to its authenticity. In supporting postmodern parody, she sets down that, “parody is a value-problematizing, de-naturalizing form of acknowledging the history (and through irony, the politics) of representation” (90)

Hence, postmodern parody being “one of the major modes of formal and thematic construction of texts” uses and abuses the matter it parodies (Hutcheon 2). It includes history, but the investigation of the authenticity of history is done in a humorous way as it makes fun of historical events and facts. Hutcheon represents (postmodern) *parody* as “repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity” (6). By using humor, satire, and sarcasm as tools, the validity of the grand- narrative of history is challenged.

It can be said that postmodern parody and irony, which according to Hutcheon, is “a discursive strategy operating at the level of language (verbal) or form (musical, visual, textual)” deconstruct the *métarécit* of history (10). It uses historical events to unpack the politics behind the representation of historical facts. In this way, history is itself used and subverted. Hutcheon’s concept of postmodern parody and irony work in *TPS*. The title *TPS* is overburdened with irony. We don’t know whether it is the man who is referred as stone or it represents Afghan women who absorb religious, marital and cultural subjugation like a patient stone. Novel mocks the Great Afghan Hero by subverting traditional war narratives. War hero is presented as a dead stone, who has got severe injuries in a small conflict. Moreover, the protagonist gets married to her fiancé’s picture because he is fighting on the front. The event of marriage ceremony is highly ironical and unveils the unsung harsh realities faced by women and families during war time (which are not presented). Likewise, parody works in *Season*. Salih’s protagonist laments Moorish and oriental deterioration in the nineteenth century. Contrary to Salih’s protagonist, Shakespeare’s Othello is a wise gentleman, who is praised and marries his master’s daughter. But postmodern parody and irony entail “an effective stance toward the past in its paradoxical strategy” subverts the canonical narratives and presents alternative modes (10).

John Stephens and Robyn McCallum define *métarécit* as “a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience” (47). Metanarrative also attempts to provide an explanation for a range of things that are universal, objective in nature and are intended to apply to everyone. In response to the universal overarching notions, *Season* presents a different attitude of the people that does away with the idea of metanarratives. Targeting Britishers, Salih says that on the one hand, they treat them (especially Muslims) like animals. While, on the other hand, they mythologize them. Thus, if someone takes a particular idea and applies it to everyone in the same manner, this kind of imposition of *métarécit* needs to be seen with suspicion and should be replaced with *petit récits*. Jameson writes in the “Foreword” of *The Postmodern Condition*: “the vitality of small narrative units work everywhere locally” and “the older master narratives of legitimation no longer function” (11).

According to the above-mentioned lines from *The Postmodern Condition*, there are different cultures that are dominant and prevalent in the societies and these cultures

acquire a kind of legitimacy through a process of telling and retelling. This telling and retelling of stories and narratives provide legitimacy and meaning to all cultures. In *Season*, Bint Majzoub; an old lady, drinks openly and enjoys late-night parties with her male friends, and speaks openly about her sexual and matrimonial endeavors. Contrary to this, we find a very clear predominance that is being recorded to the western point of view in the narration of the story concerning the Eastern, African, and the Arab world. In Lyotard's conception, this kind of attribution of the status of *métarécit* to the story of Orientalism or European enlightenment becomes quite central to the meaning making process. These stories not only present the past but shape the contemporary age (and its thoughts) as well. Klein summarizes the whole idea by stating that

*Métarécit* is institutionalized, canonical, and legitimizing position of intellectual mastery. It pretends to represent an external object and then pretends not to be a narrative. Local narrative, on the other hand, is told by the subaltern. It is never omniscient. (Klein 282)

Throughout history, it is narrated that authority and agency have nothing to do with women. Whereas, men/males have got natural instincts to rule and exercise their agency on women. Therefore, patriarchy became a *métarécit* but Atiq Rahimi's *TPS* does away with the notions of patriarchy and male agency. Throughout the narrative, it is the female who has got an agency. She takes care of her husband by, "washing his belly, his feet, his genitals" (5). She dismantles the *Métarécit* of traditional norms where man is given an authority.

Rahimi presents the *métarécit* of War and freedom as unreal. The *métarécits* of Religion and Freedom give space to warriors to expand their power and authority. Resultantly, the grand narrative of war and patriarchy are being challenged in the text. The man who is named as 'hero', got injured in a minor fight when some boys were fighting with each other. So, we can say that the grand narrative of war has been replaced by *petit récit* of an ordinary fight and *métarécit* of freedom with power and authority. Lyotard notes that "any consensus on the rules defining a game and the 'moves' playable within it- must be local. In other words, agreed on by its present players and subject to eventual cancellation". (66)

*Métarécits* require a certain kind of faith while this trust becomes an implicit feature in the creation of a number of other stories and cultures. This requirement of

the faith in fastening the métarécit also leads to this story of dominance. Therefore, it is the singular notion and overarching dominant position of the métarécit that Lyotard is arguing against. No one dares to question this métarécit because of having belief in it. If one dares to move away from this dominant story, s/he runs the risk of being labeled as a rebel and an outsider.

Following the contemporary age, in order to present self-reflexivity and intertextuality, the concept of parody “implies another and somewhat different concept of textual appropriation” (Hutcheon 11). It shows that postmodern parody and irony not only depict the difference between the appearance and reality of the things, it doubts and challenges 'the existence' of the things. Incorporating postmodern parody and irony, *Season* uses the 'real' and 'authentic' from the past and abuses it by the amalgamation of fictive in it. In this way, the authenticity and validity of the history and the past, are challenged.

Moreover, it would be instructive to discuss temporal, historical and political relation between the selected fiction. Tayeb Salih's *Season* and Atiq Rahimi's *TPS* share several cultural, political, and historical connections, despite being set in different regions and time periods. One of the key cultural connections between the two novels is the theme of cultural identity and the tensions that arise when the protagonists navigate multiple cultural worlds. In *Season*, Mustafa Saeed returns to Sudan after studying in Europe and struggles to reconcile his Western education with his African heritage. Similarly, in *TPS*, the unnamed woman has to navigate the cultural expectations of her conservative Afghan society while asserting her own agency and expressing her desires for her personal liberty and safety.

The novels also share political connections, particularly in their critiques of oppressive power structures. In *Season*, Salih critiques both British colonialism and Sudanese patriarchy, while in *TPS*, Rahimi critiques the patriarchal society that has led to war and conflict in Afghanistan. Both the texts explore the ways in which power is constructed and maintained, and how the impact of power on individuals and societies figures in the protagonists' lives.

Historically, both the novels are contextualized with colonialism and its aftermath. *Season* is set in the 1960s, a time of political and social upheaval in Sudan

following its independence from British colonialism. *TPS* is set during the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, a time marked by war, violence, and oppression. Both the texts explore the legacy of colonialism and the ongoing struggles for independence and autonomy in their respective contexts.

Despite being set in different regions and time period, *Season* and *TPS* share important cultural, political, and historical connections. Through their explorations of cultural identity, power structures, and their critiques of colonialism, both the novels challenge readers to think critically about their own assumptions and beliefs about the world.

Hence, this study applies Lyotard's concept of "incredulity towards métarécits" and Hutcheon's theorization of irony and parody in order to investigate the selected fiction in the paradigm of postmodernism. *TPS* and *Season* have generally been looked at from the postcolonial perspectives but not examined from the postmodernist angle. Both novels present a new as well as different perspective, against the overarching and unquestionable métarécits, when analyzed from postmodern view. Moreover, both works contribute in developing a counter-Enlightenment and modernist propositions by presenting multiplicity of truths and unreliability.

## 1.1 Delimitation

This study is delimited to Tayeb Salih's novel *Season of Migration to the North* and Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* with an aim of tracing Lyotard's concept of incredulity towards Métarécits. Moreover, I intend to read the selected texts by employing Linda Hutcheon's theorization of parody and irony.

## 1.2 Thesis Statement

Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* and Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* seem to exhibit "Incredulity toward Metanarratives" and imply a preference for petit récits it (Lyotard xxiv). Linda Hutcheon's concepts of parody and irony are likely to be supportive in reading the selected texts.

### 1.3 Research Questions

1. In what ways do the selected texts exhibit postmodern consciousness?
2. How do petit récits challenge totalitarian monoliths in the selected fictions?
3. What are the ways in which postmodern parody and irony play out in the selected narratives?



## 1.4 Research Plan

This research work includes 6 chapters that are organized in a coherent way.

Chapter 1 gives a detailed introduction of this research thesis. It introduces the background and main argument of this dissertation. It also contains the introduction of theory and primary texts examined in the research project. Moreover, this chapter includes thesis statement, research questions, delimitation and significance of this the study.

Chapter 2 is Literature Review that contextualizes this research with the current scholarship and finds gaps in the existing critical sources.

Chapter 3 introduces the theoretical framework used in this research. This chapter gives an understanding of theories and ideas that are used as theoretical props in order to analyze the primary texts.

By using the theoretical support and methodology, Chapter 4 and 5 contain the critical and textual analysis of the selected fiction. These chapters aim to vindicate the problem statement and answer the research questions posed in the first chapter.

Chapter 6 is the last chapter that concludes this research on the basis of analysis of the selected texts. This chapter also includes recommendations of the researcher for future research.

## 1.5 Significance of Study

The postmodern facets of Tayeb Salih's *Season* and Atiq Rahimi's *TPS* are largely untapped, especially from the theoretical perspective of Lyotard's "Petit Récits" and Linda Hutcheon's "Parody" and "Irony". This study contributes in the existing scholarship by investigating the untapped narrative trajectories of the selected fiction. It motivates the new researchers to deal with the unexplored parameters of the postmodern corpus. This research presents a different perspective and is likely to be useful to understand how postmodern criticism challenges the established canonical set patterns and claims of totalitarian discourses.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

This section consists of review of the available critical scholarship that are closely related to this study. The aim of this literature review is to situate the argument of this investigation in the contemporary scholarship and locate the gaps present in the existing critical sources. Various researches are analyzed to find the links between the problem under analysis and the existing scholarship. A brief literature review of a selection of critical works is in the forthcoming pages. I have divided my literature review thematically under the following sub-headings:

- Critical Scholarship on Postmodernism
- Critical Sources Questioning the Grand Narratives
- Existing Scholarship on Postmodern Parody and Irony
- Works Already Done on the Selected Texts

#### 2.2 Critical Scholarship on Postmodernism

Tim Wood's *Beginning Post-Modernism* (1999), traces the origin and development of postmodernism. He also establishes its relationship with modernism that is its predecessor. According to Woods, the prefix, 'post' suggests that postmodernism is inevitably related with modernism (6). He quotes different definitions of postmodernism i.e., "de-centering of the subject, an incredulity towards métarécits, the replacement of unitary power axes by plurality of power and the collapse of cultural hierarchies" (2). Wood says that the special characteristics of modernism were métarécits, reason, logic, scientific rules, evidence, order, law, science, democracy, enlightenment and objective truth. Modernists believed that human beings are capable of controlling the world by using science, reason and logic. However, this faith in reason and logic failed in the 21st century after the horrible disastrous events like World Wars, Holocaust, Auschwitz gas chambers and Nagasaki atomic bombing. According to Woods, from here an anti-logic and anti-reason philosophy started which Francois Lyotard defined as "an attack on reason" (9). Woods' study is relevant to this project as it provides a thorough and deep understanding of the history and development of

postmodernism. However, this research would not completely rely on Woods' ideas exclusively. My study investigates the postmodern elements especially petit récits, parody and irony in the selected texts that are still unexplored. In his book titled *Jean Francois Lyotard* (2005), Simon Malpas conducts a very useful and thorough analysis of Lyotard's postmodern philosophy that has strongly inspired the fields of humanities, politics and literary studies. Malpas explains Lyotard's main ideas to justify the popularity and significance of his concept: "incredulity towards métarécits" (24). He writes that "Lyotard's analysis of narrative structure, aesthetics and the politics of language make him an important thinker for anybody with an interest in contemporary Literary Studies" (3-4). Malpas starts his analysis with the critical reading of *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) that is one of the most important contributions in the postmodern philosophy. He opines that Lyotard explored the ways in which highly advanced societies treat science, technology, education and research studies. He believes that "the central question of *The Postmodern Condition* is, how the lives and identities of people are constructed by contemporary structures of knowing?" (18). Malpas further opines that Lyotard claims the idea that in future the major countries will not fight for commodities such as gas, oil and coal. Rather, they will fight for knowledge and information. It means that they will seek control over the dominant discourses and histories. Thus, science is not objective in its nature but it is highly discursive and political as it represents the interests of certain powers. Even the mathematical equations are represented in the form of narratives. This study is quite relevant to my study because it provides a deep understanding of Lyotard's theorizing of meta narratives. The main focus of this book revolves around Lyotard's theorizing of metanarratives. While, other major concepts of postmodernism like parody, irony and paranoid reader- seem missing. My research fills this gap by presenting a detailed analysis on some of the major features of postmodernism.

Nooshin Forghani's research article, "A Critical Examination of the Postmodernism Based on Religious and Moral Values Education" (2015), defines postmodernism from a historical perspective. There are certain characteristics that make it very different from the other theories such as it supports relativism and pluralism while rejecting any absolute and grand value. Postmodernism is in contrast with the essentialism. It emphasizes that human identity is not something absolute, rather a socially constructed abstraction and consists of different fragments. It also

rejects all those values that participate in the construction of absolute realities and truths. In this article, the author has used descriptive method and argued about the critical perspectives of postmodernism. They question the very structure of morality as not something absolute and unchangeable. They give preference to individual narratives instead of grand narratives. This research is closely related to my idea as it deconstructs different modern narratives and defines them from the perspective of postmodernism. But the issues discussed in my research are more related to the contemporary society and not the modern age. In this way, my research fills the gap by presenting the postmodern perspective in the contemporary fiction.

Tawfiq Yousef in his research work, “Modernism, Postmodernism, and Metamodernism: A Critique”, discusses the literary theories in which different varieties of modernism and postmodernism have been investigated. This paper argues about two new theories which are postmodernism and post-postmodernism- also known as Metamodernism. In the last century, modernism has given rise to two new theories postmodernism and Metamodernism and has influenced them up to large extent. This modernism has instilled conceptual vocabularies in these two new theories that now easily respond to the critical readings of literature. Furthermore, this paper discusses the major aspects of these literary theories to analyze different historical and philosophical relationship between them. Modernism leads to postmodernism as a new cultural and intellectual system that has challenged all the existing *métarécits*. As Yousef asserts, “When postmodernism began to falter as an intellectual and cultural system, a strong call for a new critical and cultural sensibility began to emerge” (34). It is a school of thought that has gained its popularity after WW-II. It is the word, “postmodernism”- that defines something that incoherent and without any surface. It abandons the idea of sequence and orders to split them into fragmentation. It reveals the sceptic nature of art to explain meaning from a subjective position. This research work is closely related to my research idea as it digs the postmodern theory down which is my theoretical framework. Hence, it leaves a gap that my study aims to fill.

In *Narrative, Religion, and Science* (2002), Stephen Prickett has argued about the narrative structure of the postmodern literature. He explains that narrative does not mean telling a story. Rather, it has its own knowledge that reveals something about the text that is unknown to us in a particular way of understanding the world. This

knowledge must express a totality which exists in competition with another kind of knowledge. He related to the narrative knowledge to scientific knowledge and further explains that they both are in a state of internal equilibrium. As he posits, “contemporary scientific knowledge cuts a poor figure especially if it is to undergo an exteriorization with respect to the ‘knower’ and an alienation from its user” (14). In other words, this objective knowledge of the world will provide a scientific perspective to the ideas of Lyotard and his narrative of subjective view. This research article is closely related to my study as it uses the same framework. But it is much concerned about the narrative structure which as a result leaves a huge gap for my study as I investigate other postmodern elements as well.

Amna Saeed and Zain Fatima’s research “An Intertextual Study of Elif Shafak’s *The Forty Rules of Love*” presents fictional representation of history. The writers use Linda Hutcheon’s concept of historiographic metafiction. The researchers dismantle the *métarécit* of history. The research explores the Sufi tradition and Islam as a religion of peace. Amna and Fatima claim that “in fact, Kerra’s marriage to Rumi, a Muslim scholar, testifies the possibility of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence of Muslims with Christians” (Saeed and Fatima 39). They further argue that the novel blends the fictionality and historicity of the text. As the writers note, “it does employ and install the techniques and traditions of history as well as fiction but not without confusing, abusing, subverting and denying such traditions” (Saeed and Fatima 41). They further claim that Shafaq provides an ironic commentary on the concept of traditional history and, by doing this, the postmodern historiographic metafiction shows a self-reflexive and ahistorical nature. Like other studies that I have reviewed so far, Amna Saeed and Zain Fatima’s research is also related to my research because it dismantles the legitimacy of history by mixing history and fiction. Though this investigation focuses on Linda Hutcheon’s concept of Historiographic Metafiction and intertextuality my research fill the gap by presenting the fall of *métarécits* in the postmodern fiction.

Hooti Noorbakhsh and Samaneh Shooshtarian’s article “Postmodernist Reading of Harold Pinter’s *The Homecoming*” presents how postmodern texts challenge the *métarécit* of religion, social values, morality, family life, and the like. None of the characters in the play appears to have any ethical compunctions whatsoever. The hostile

activities of a female character Ruth, surprise the reader. Max claims that his wife is the noble institution, “all the morality they knew ... every single bit of the moral code they live by” ( *The Homecoming* 62), is strikingly against what we examine in the text. There is neither morality nor any sense of value when it comes to Jessie who used to have sex with her husband’s friend. Sam also knows about this shameful act as the whole event took place in the back seat of his car. The first irony comes with the title which takes a strange meaning by the end of the play. Another major irony in the play is that Max’s first assumption about Ruth’s prostitution as he gets to know her better. In the beginning, a reader expects that a son is coming home to spend time with parents and siblings. But gradually we come to know that there is nothing that might be claimed as family. Like this research my investigation also presents such a situation where our assumptions about the upcoming events fail miserably. Though the main argument of this research is about the dismantling of metanarratives, my research fills the gap by presenting multiple postmodern elements.

J. Randall Groves, in his article, “Canon and Grand Narratives in the Philosophy of History”, has discussed different authors from the perspective of cultural history that highlights the importance of narratives, grand narratives and canon. In this examination, he suggests that postmodernism has reached its zenith and now it is in the process of downfall and will certainly face its death very soon. He argues that this conception of grand narratives is a key word for the postmodernism and can also function in a traditional way. This result in the conception of grand narratives claims an organizational structure and can easily provide us traditional grand narratives. In his article, he also discussed the postmodern manifesto of Lyotard as some sort of position that can dominate the grand narratives of the history. He analysed a very subtle perspective in understanding the narratives of the world history and argued about different authors and their new narrative approach in the view of competing *métarécits*. As he asserts, “That there are many competing *métarécits* is not controversial; what may be more controversial is the claim that they can co-exist conceptually” (39). The non-controversial concept can give a relief to these *métarécits* so that they could exist together. This research article is closely related to my studies as it works on the same deconstruction process of grand narratives but using different approach hence leaves a gap for my study. Grove’s research deconstructs history and focuses on cultural elements but my interrogation of *métarécits* fill the gap in postmodern fiction.

### 2.3 Critical Sources Questioning the Grand Narratives

Mushfique Mahmood article “The Inevitable Failure of Meta-narratives in *The God of Small Things*” discusses the collapse of *métarécits* in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*. Writer opines that the disasters in lives of Ammu, Estha, Velutha and Rahel such as Ammu's divorce, Rahel's marriage, Rahel's divorce and relation between Ammu and Velutha, relation between Rahel and Estha can be taken as a “violation of the social codes” (Mahmood). These social codes are the meta-narratives in the society that are challenged in the novel. Mahmood claims that the novel is so much focused on the mini-narratives that even the title, “*The God of Small Things*”, itself has a clear reference to it. Research openly presents the rejection of the *métarécits* of religion, honour and marriage. The novel focuses on the individual events in the lives of the characters than any collective or central story. This research supports my argument in terms of exploring the subversion of *métarécits* in postmodern fiction. However, Mahmood’s concern relies on the collapse on metanarratives but my research presents *petit récits* as an alternate to *métarécits*. Moreover, Hutcheon’s theorizing of postmodern parody and irony makes my research fill the gap.

Gillian Beer, in his research article, “Narrative Swerves: Grand Narratives and the Discipline” has analyzed Lyotard and his interrogation of the grand narratives. He studied deaths of different characters as the grand narrative that gives human beings the pleasure of domination. According to him, grand narratives are in the process of running and they are fighting a hard battle of survival that can explain different stories of the postmodern agencies. In this era of domesticity and desolation perhaps the fabric of modern narratives will collapse finally and then leave the grand narratives of postmodernism in a vulnerable stage that can be ultimately hit by the juncture of *petit récit* as further decentering process. According to Beer, Lyotard is not legalizing his narratives as a functioning political process but rather giving them an expansion that can affect the backwards of the history in a long run. As he posits, “While one effects this expansion backwards, towards an origin, the other extends forward, towards an end” (3). These narratives are not in a stable position rather they are bouncing back and forth with a traditional shape of emancipation. This research article is closely related to my study as it analyses the grand narratives from a postmodern context but leaves a gap for my studies which deals with the theoretical application of this concept.

Bennett and Royle, in *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, analyses the depiction of meta-narrative of war in English literature in both modern and postmodern times. They opine that literature, since its very beginning, celebrated Achilles' courage and bravery and "celebration of war" (272). This behavior continued till the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century when initial postmodernism tendencies posed a challenge to the *métarécit* of war and nationalism. The writers begin by discussing Alfred Lord Tennyson's famous poem, "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854). The poem represents the events of the Crimean War that ended in the death of 400 British soldiers. The authors argue that Tennyson glorifies "the actions of those compatriots who fight and die in war, even in the context of a futile, misguided, suicidal military manoeuvre" (270). After this, Bennett and Royle argue that though the modernist literature glorified war completely, this attitude shifted after the World Wars. To represent this new attitude towards war they refer to Wilfred Owen's poem "Futility". It depicts the misery of war soldiers and shows sympathetic concern for the dead soldiers instead of glorifying their deaths. In this way, the writers represent the significant shift from "the public, nationalistic celebration of military heroism of the nineteenth century" to the depiction of "private sorrow and the futility of war, any war, all war" (272). In this way, this work shows the celebration of the *métarécit* of war and its rejection in the postmodern times and this makes this work very relevant to my project. Though Bennett and Royle support their idea by presenting a modern poem. My research interrogates postmodern texts in order to present relativity and multiplicity.

In "Destabilization of power and control: A postmodernist and Marxist discursive analysis of capitalism in *Makers*" Saba Zaidi, Durdana Rafiq and Mehwish Sahibzada discuss the fictional collapse of modern *métarécits* and the ways in which they are replaced by *petit-recits* or *petit récits*. The researchers argue that Doctorow's novel presents postmodern criticism and rejection of the *métarécit* of capitalism and progress. Using the technique of critical discourse analysis, Saba et al highlight the rejection of grand narrative of capitalism which controls the power structure through various socio-cultural and economic systems. The investigation claims that the fiction also dismantles the *métarécits* of consumerism and entrepreneurship. Writers claim that capitalism "has eaten up the money of the masses from every resource" (118). Moreover, writers claim that it destabilizes and disturbs the individuals as well as the groups in terms of their freedom and job safety. Thus, capitalism creates a very disastrous effect on the



economy and the condition of common masses. This study uses the postmodern ideas to reject the capitalist monopoly and proposes a system of equality and social welfare. Researcher praises the novel for its depiction of the disastrous consequences of capitalist control over the society. They conclude their study, by claiming that the post-cyberpunk fiction, like the novel *Makers* speaks against and delegitimizes the hegemony of métarécits and rejects them by exposing the selfish and cruel materialistic language games. This study is very important in relation with my research as it deals with the rejection of modern narratives. However, this research mainly focuses on cyberpunk fiction and leaves a gap for my investigation.

Christopher J. H Wright, in his book titled, *The Mission of God Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, analyses some memories of his childhood and the missionary conventions of Ireland. According to him theology has greatly impacted his life and his teen age. He had this curiosity of questioning all those narratives that had occupied most part of his mind. He said that all those lectures and narratives which were related to God has been deconstructed and speculated as some kind of freedom after decentring himself from theology. In this book, he shows his dissatisfaction to all those ideas which were implanted in his mind by the missionary. He was not agree with the word mission as he says "It will be immediately clear from my reminiscences above that I am dissatisfied with popular use of the word mission" (29). He says that he does not question all the engagements of Christianity but we should have our own mission as different one like that of God's. In this book, the author has used a postmodern approach by deconstructing the theological narratives of the Bible. This study is closely related to my research as it questions the universal metanarratives especially religion. But the main objective of the study is to interrogate Bible which is a religious book but my study fills the gap by focusing the fictional works.

Dhanya Joy discusses celebration of petit-recits and subversion of métarécits in James Cameron's worldfamous movie, "Titanic" (1997). In her article entitled "Paralogy of Petit Narratives: a Lyotardian Reading of James Cameron's *Titanic*", the writer discusses the rejection of métarécits through petit recits. James Cameron's movie "Titanic" got a lot of appreciation in the entire world for its retelling of the sinking of Titanic. Joy opines that the main characters, Rose and Jack subvert the metanarratives of capitalism, class system and Christianity. She further argues that métarécits organize

specific language games for the sake of legitimacy. Joy claims that Jack, as a “postmodern subject, believes in petit narratives that shape our lives” (31). Joy argues that an important point in the movie is that people from different strata of society intermingle on the ship. Hence, the movie “transgresses the distinction between high art and low art” and reconstructs the past with irony (33). He has explored the Lyotard’s theorizing of the postmodern theory engaged with multiple possibilities of the composed language. Joy finds ways to new epistemology that gives a different reality of life. Writer claims that Titanic is a postmodern movie as it installs and simultaneously subverts the social hierarchies that is evident from the fact that on the one hand there are separate cabins for upper class people where workers are not allowed while on the other hand, a girl falls in love with a poor boy and leaves her extremely rich fiance for him. Both the main characters are very independent in their decision making and thinking and do not require any approval for their decisions from the social authorities. Writer further claims that Titanic, the ship itself is a métarécit. Due to its huge shape, strength and size, it represents the unbeatable glory of the twentieth century science “carrying the title, unsinkable” (33). Later on, the incident of the drowning of Titanic destroys the métarécits of science, reason, logic and technology. This study is helpful for my study because it highlights the theoretical insights of Jean François Lyotard with respect to subversion of metanarratives of science and reason. However, Dhanya Joy’s discussion is limited to the presentation of theory and does not illustrate Lyotard’s philosophy with the help of any literary (textual) examples. In this respect, my study fills the gap by applying Linda Hutcheon and Lyotard’s theoretical principles on postmodern fiction in order to present petit récits.

Syed Javad Habibi’s research explores the rejection of métarécits while using Lyotard’s philosophy. However, the main concern of Javad is to investigate the subversion of métarécit of emancipation. The novel, *Saturday*, highlights the retaliation and criticism that took place against United States’ occupation of Iraq in 2003. Javad says that the novel fictionalizes the highly terrorized life of the protagonist. It reveals a brutal and destructive side of democracy. Javad argues that the novel generates a few important questions against the legitimacy of democracy. Writer claims that the project of democracy is also a métarécit like the project of enlightenment and this métarécit can be seen collapsing in this novel. McEwan’s work presents the amalgamation of fiction and historical events and everything happens in the account of a single day.

Javad opines that one crucial and torturing question that haunts the minds of all characters is reflected when McEvan says, “is this what we really mean by democracy and freedom?” (29). Javed’s study concludes that the discursive narrative of democracy is politically used to get a hegemonic control over the masses and spread terrorism. He argues that McEvan’s *Staurday* is a true representation of the failure of democracy and it clearly shows that it has caused many terrible wars and destruction. Syed’s actual focus is limited to matenarrative of democracy. Moreover, his study is conducted on political issues related to terrorism and war. My investigation presents a different view by questioning the agency and authenticity of métarécits in the selected fiction.

Seán Travers’ article, “Empty Constructs: The Postmodern Haunted House in Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*”, is closely related to my project. This article presents Lyotard’s concept of “incredulity towards métarécit”, incorporated in postmodern fiction to exhibit extreme skepticism towards the grand narratives (24). Dale Bailey notes: “[S]ince Poe first described the *House of Usher* in 1839, the motif of the haunted house has assumed an enduring role in the American tradition” (Bailey 6). From Haunted house to horror fiction we find supernatural elements, specters, and ghosts. This haunted house tale became a sub-genre and contributed to the expression of fears and the like. Seán Travers proposes that the concept of a haunted house in contemporary (American) literature, and specifically in Mark Z Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*, has altered in order to dismantle métarécits. *House of Leaves* becomes disturbingly empty though it is no longer occupied by supernatural forces like ghosts. Catherine Spooner notes, “[the Gothic] simply expresses the void at the heart of modern consumer culture” (155). *House of Leaves* shows resistance against conventional gothic narratives where empty house shows emptiness, nothingness, and nihilism contrary to the old conventions where it symbolized fear and supernatural elements. *TPS* also begins like a conventional romantic novel where a lady waits for her hero to come home. The hero is presented as a warrior. But this hero turns into an indifferent being and does not talk to his lady. Meanwhile, the hero gets severe injuries in a small fight and lies on the bed for the rest of his life. So, this research is very close to my perspective as it also shows incredulity toward the métarécit romantic notions. However, this research is limited in its approach towards the presentation of postmodernist response with a predominant focus on contemporary (American)

literature. My analysis provides more broader perspective of petit récits related to overarching notions considered unquestionable in the entire world.

Mehwish Ali and Hina Naz's article "Incredulity towards Métarécits: A Gender-Based Study of *Sultana's Dream* by Roqeyya Begum" is also related to my research. In this article, it is unveiled that Lyotard's concept of incredulity towards métarécit is incorporated in Begum's work to challenge the grand-structures of patriarchal dominance. Here, women are shown resisting conventional patriarchal oppression by asserting themselves as intelligent beings who are capable of performing traditional male stereotypical roles. They are scientists, rulers, and educationists proving themselves to be the possessors of intellect, reason, and logic. It also shows that patriarchal society is not only dismantled but, matriarchal Society emerges as a powerhouse. The métarécits of conventional gender roles are challenged where men are confined to certain boundaries because of being irrational and barbarous. Here, the traditional treatment of females as irrational and mindless is abhorred by portraying males as females and females as males. Therefore, this research shows that Ruqaiya Sakhawat Hossain in her story, *Sultana's Dream* expresses incredulity towards male-oriented social grand-structures as her protagonist Sultana while walking on the road says, "There was not a single man visible" (1). It shows that the extinction of men has made the female territory virtuous, pious, and sin-free. Furthermore, women are not deprived of property inheritance rights anymore, instead, they are the rulers of their lands. Thus, this research shows dismantling of métarécits of patriarchy, stereotypical conventional gender roles and male-oriented grand-structures of society. Hossain's study prepares a useful background for my research. However, the main focus of this study revolves around (the dismantling of) métarécits of patriarchy and does not present some of the major metanarratives, like war, religion, love and the like. My study aims to fill this gap.

Furthermore, Neil Gaiman's novel *American Gods* challenge the métarécits of love, marriage, loyalty, and reason when Laura; Shadow's wife, indulges in a love affair with her husband's friend. Her husband is completely shattered to know about his wife's affair and considers it utterly impossible. He tries to rationalize the act of his wife, but, finds that things can happen beyond "reasonable rationality". In this way, the grand-structures of marital love, loyalty, and rationality are collapsed. Moreover, the surprised

return of Laura after her death asserts the falsity of the *métarécits* of life and death where the beliefs of, the dead never coming back, become hypothetical assumptions. It devastates Shadow's notions of truth, reality, death, and life. This study is closely related to my research however it does not discuss the elements of postmodern parody and irony. My research aims to fill this gap.

## 2.4 Existing Scholarship on Postmodern Parody and Irony

David McCracken's *Chuck Palahniuk, Parodist: Postmodern Irony in Six Transgressive Novels*, presents the parodies of the most celebrated works. All these parodies are incorporated with reference to the (postmodern) concept of parody and irony where they substantiate as well as subvert the targeted texts. David McCracken in the first chapter, "Chuck Palahniuk and Postmodern Parody" quotes the definition of parody from a book, *A Handbook to Literature* that was published in 1980 which defines parody as

a composition burlesquing or imitating another, usually serious, piece of work. It is designed to ridicule in nonsensical fashion, or to criticize by brilliant treatment, an original piece of work by another author. (5)

While the 12th edition of the same book, published in 2012, defines parody as “A composition imitating another usually serious--piece. It is designed to ridicule a work or its style or author” (6). Whereas, in the contemporary age, parody is synonymous with 'pastiche', 'montage', and 'collage' where postmodern intertextuality makes it substantiates as well as subverts its targeted texts. This change shows the radical shift from the meaning of modern parody to postmodern parody which can be explicitly observed in Chuck Palahniuk's parody of American Popular culture where intertextuality, pastiche, and collage produce postmodern consciousness in his work. He criticizes the depthless superficiality and shallowness of contemporary American culture and shows incredulity towards the literary *métarécits* of the past. He deforms the historical events of the past and integrates fictional details in them to provide an amalgam of both as historiographical metafiction.

Additionally, David McCracken in *Haunted* a parody of Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, by using comedy, blends history with fiction and reality to produce

historiographical metafiction. While in *Tell-All* he presents a parody of Hollywood's golden age of gossip journalism by using the names of the most famous celebrities of gossip journalism and deprives them of the power that they traditionally had in their real lives. Therefore, David McCracken's use of historiographical metafiction along with postmodern pastiche, parody and *irony* grounds his analysis in a similar paradigm to my research work. However, my research is not merely focused historiographical metafiction but it investigates the selected texts by incorporating Lyotard's idea of *métarécits* and *petit récits* that is a gap this study aims to fill.

Tamás Bényei's work, "Ironic Parody or Parodistic Irony? Irony, Parody, Postmodernism and the Novel", explores the extremely confusing aspects of Postmodernism where the distinction between parody and irony is blurred. This research shows that it is impossible to separate parody from *irony* and vice versa. As in Borges's *Death and the Compass* and Eco's *The Name of the Rose* the narrative patterns of the classical detective stories are employed only to better emphasize its subsequent radical deviations from it. In these postmodern contemporary narrations, parodies with ironical overtones or, conversely, ironies that are parodying other texts are used to distort them. Therefore, the postmodern dilemma of separating parody from irony is addressed in Tamás Bényei's work. Postmodernism supports what it rejects and it challenges what it supports. Moreover, it uses and abuses a single thing at the same time. Therefore, irony and parody are embedded in postmodern consciousness. Tamás Bényei's work provides a useful background for my investigation in terms of dismantling what is considered canonical. However, Bényei's study does not deal with the themes of religion, Love, Patriarchy and Marxism the Partition with postmodern debate of dismantling metanarratives. My research aims to fill this gap.

Loredana Di Martino's article, "From Pirandello's Humour to Eco's Double Coding: Ethics and Irony in Modernist and Postmodernist Italian Fiction", addressed the critical debate about the relationship of reality and literature in the postmodern era. It shows that historical reality is distorted to incorporate it in postmodern literature. Thus, an ironic representation of reality is found in the postmodern works of Pirandello and Eco. Hence, Hutcheon's historiographical metafiction along with Lyotard's incredulity towards *métarécits* of reality, truth, history, and epistemology are embedded in the postmodern consciousness of contemporary Italian Fiction. Martino's study is

close to my study as it counters metanarratives and as a result come up with multiplicity of cultures and local ideas. However, the research is limited in its presentation of *petit récits* because the focus of study is Italian fiction. My study fills this gap by exploring various *métarécits*.

## 2.5 Works Already Done on the Selected Texts

There are multiple citations available (other than the area of postmodernism) on the primary texts. That is why I have written a separate section that deals with works already done on my primary texts. In this section, I have tried to make a selection of critical works that fall within the neighboring areas of my study, or are, at least, close to my concerns. That serves to spot the research gaps.

Nisha Thomji Varghese and Dr. R. Saravana Selvan's article portrays the journey of an Afghan woman from being silenced to becoming the silencer. This research explores the protagonist's transformation from a fractured self to emancipated womanhood. Researchers examine how the protagonist's journey highlights the gender inequalities and cultural constraints that Afghan women face and the ways in which they navigate these constraints. The novel's protagonist is an unnamed Afghan woman who is restricted to the four walls of her house, and her only companion is her comatose husband. As the woman tends to her husband, she begins to reflect on her life, and in doing so, she discovers her voice and identity. Research highlights gender inequalities and cultural constraints that Afghan women face. The woman's journey towards emancipation is depicted through her interactions with other women. She learns from the stories of other women, and she begins to understand the ways in which they have navigated the constraints placed on them. The protagonist's transformation is also depicted through her relationship with her comatose husband. As she tends to him, she begins to see him as a person and not just as a husband. She reflects on their relationship, and she realizes the ways in which she has been complicit in her own oppression. She also recognizes the ways in which her husband has been oppressed by the cultural constraints placed on him.

While the article effectively explores the journey of the protagonist in *The Patience Stone* and the themes of gender inequality and cultural constraints, it does not address the concept of mini-narratives in the context of postmodernism. Mini-narratives are a crucial aspect of postmodernism, which refers to the fragmented nature of

narratives in contemporary society. In the context of *TPS*, my research explores mini-narratives as a way to understand the fragmented nature of the protagonist's journey towards emancipation. The protagonist's experiences and interactions with other women can be viewed as mini-narratives that contribute to her larger narrative of self-discovery and empowerment.

The research article "A Subaltern Has Spoken? Self-(Re)Orientalism in Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone*" by Wajid Riaz and Dr. Nighat Ahmad explores the themes of self-orientalism and subalternity in Atiq Rahimi's novel *TPS*. The article discusses how the novel portrays the experiences of subaltern women in Afghanistan, and how these experiences are mediated by both orientalist and self-orientalist discourses. Riaz and Ahmad argue that Rahimi's novel engages in a form of self-orientalism, which involves the internalization and reinforcement of orientalist stereotypes and discourses by members of the subaltern group. The article suggests that this self-orientalism is a product of the complex power relations and historical legacies that shape the experiences of Afghan women. Through a close analysis of the novel, the authors highlight the ways in which the protagonist's narration reinforces and challenges orientalist and self-orientalist discourses. They argue that the novel ultimately offers a nuanced and complex portrayal of subaltern women's experiences, one that neither romanticizes nor demonizes them, but rather recognizes their agency and resilience in the face of oppressive conditions. But a potential gap in the research with respect to postmodern concepts of parody and mini-narratives could be the lack of discussion around how the novel uses these literary techniques to subvert dominant discourses and power structures. While the article discusses how the novel portrays the experiences of subaltern women in Afghanistan and engages with orientalist and self-orientalist discourses, it does not specifically address how the novel uses parody and mini-narratives to subvert these discourses and power structures. This could be a potential gap in the research that my study addresses.

In "The Empire Renarrated: *Season of Migration to the North* and the Reinvention of the Present" Saree S Makdisi explores the ways in which Tayeb Salih's novel *Season* subverts and reinvents the dominant narrative of colonialism and imperialism. Makdisi argues that the novel's complex narrative structure and themes challenge the Eurocentric discourse of colonialism and imperialism and create a new narrative that



reimagines the present. Makdisi begins by examining the novel's narrative structure, which he describes as "a labyrinth of storytelling." The novel is told through the perspective of two characters, the narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed, who each tell their own stories. Makdisi argues that Mustafa's character disrupts the traditional narrative of the colonial subject as a passive victim of imperial power. Instead, Mustafa is a complex and multifaceted character who challenges both the colonial order and traditional gender roles. Makdisi also notes that the novel challenges the Eurocentric idea of progress and modernity, which is often associated with colonialism and imperialism. Finally, Makdisi argues that the novel creates a new narrative that reimagines the present. By challenging the dominant discourse of colonialism and imperialism, the novel creates a new narrative that imagines a future beyond colonialism. This new narrative is not a rejection of the past but a reimagining of it that recognizes the agency of colonized peoples. While Saree S Makdisi's research effectively explores the subversion of dominant narratives in Tayeb Salih's novel, it does not address the postmodern concept of the fall of metanarratives. By exploring the fall of metanarratives in the novel, my study analyze how the novel deconstructs the dominant narratives of colonialism and imperialism and challenges their legitimacy. Moreover, such an analysis could provide a more nuanced understanding of the novel's critique of dominant narratives and its relevance to contemporary postmodern discourse.

"The Post-Modern Character of the Post-Colonial Novel: A Reading of *Season of Migration to the North*" by Mohammed Abu Bakr Abdel-Raziq explores the postmodern elements in *Season*. The article argues that the novel defies traditional colonial narratives and presents a postmodern perspective on the postcolonial condition. The author contextualizes the novel as a postcolonial work that is critical of the colonial legacy in Sudan. The novel's portrayal of Mustafa Sa'eed, a Sudanese man who has had relationships with European women, challenges traditional notions of identity and cultural authenticity. Raziq argues that the novel critiques the colonialist assumption that colonized people are inferior and need to be "civilized" by European colonial powers. Abdel-Raziq then explores the postmodern elements in the novel, particularly its narrative structure and use of intertextuality. The novel is non-linear and employs multiple perspectives to challenge the traditional colonial narrative that presents colonized people as passive victims of imperial power. He notes that the novel's use of intertextuality, specifically its reference to Shakespeare's "Othello,"

challenges the notion of a stable authorial voice and questions the authority of traditional colonial narratives.

Abdel-Raziq is of the view that the novel's use of irony and humor is a postmodern technique that critiques the grand narratives of colonialism and imperialism. The author notes that the novel presents a complex and nuanced portrayal of the colonized people, challenging the simplistic and stereotypical representations of colonial subjects in traditional colonial narratives. The article effectively argues that the novel presents a postmodern perspective on the postcolonial condition, highlighting the complexity and agency of colonized people and challenging the grand narratives of colonialism and imperialism. One potential gap in this study is the lack of discussion on the postmodern concept of local narratives or provisional narratives. While the article effectively explores the postmodern elements in the novel, it does not address the potential significance of mini narratives in challenging grand narratives of colonialism and imperialism. By incorporating a detailed discussion on the role and use of local narratives in the novel's challenge to grand narratives, my study offers a more comprehensive understanding of the postmodern elements in the novel. The next section discusses literature that deals with postmodern concept of parody and irony.

The literature review in the foregoing pages shows that numerous researchers have analyzed Lyotard's concept of incredulity toward métarécits of progress, religion, science, patriarchy, tradition, truth, logic, reason, and epistemology. In this literature review you may find different books, doctoral dissertations, critical studies and research articles which are quite related to my primary sources. Moreover, Linda Hutcheon's concept of postmodern parody and irony in multiple pieces of research is also explored while tracing postmodernism in contemporary literary corpus. While during this review, I have tapped scarcity in the existing scholarship on Tayeb Salih's *Season* and Atiq Rahimi's *TPS*. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the postmodern consciousness in the untapped narrative trajectories of these two novels. The Study with respect to Lyotard and Hutcheon's concept of metanarratives, postmodern irony and parody is missing to a large extent in *Season* and *TPS*. In addition to tapping gaps in the existing scholarship, this review allows for admissible theoretical framework and research methodology which expounds crucial philosophy of the preferred theorists.

This review of critical scholarship has helped me determine my theoretical framework and research methodology that I have discussed in detail in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an introduction and rationale of theoretical framework and Research Methodology of this research project. This study is qualitative in nature and it uses interpretive and exploratory design. I have divided this chapter in two sections. Section one (I) deals with the theorizing of Francois Lyotard and Linda Hutcheon which I invoke as lenses to examine the primary texts. This section also develops a rationale of using my theoretical support that helps me analyze primary texts. The second section (II) of this chapter explains research methodology used for this investigation.

#### ( I )

#### 3.2. Theoretical Framework

Under the umbrella term of postmodernism, this research employs the theoretical positions of Jean Francois Lyotard, Linda Hutcheon and Fredric Jameson. In order to investigate the primary texts in the analysis section, I explain my theoretical props one by one in the following pages.

##### 3.2.1. Incredulity towards *métarécits*

In this section, I develop a rationale for Jean Francois Lyotard's argument as it supports my scrutiny of the primary texts. Postmodernism is defined as celebrating "incredulity towards *métarécits*" by Jean-François Lyotard (1979) in his seminal work *The Postmodern Condition*. He notes:

Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. (xxiv)

He is of the view that the contemporary age looks for "delegitimation of the universally accepted truths such as technological progress, consensus, religion, patriarchy and imperialism" (37). It defines the essence of the contemporary society that it "falls less within the province of a Newtonian anthropology" (xxiv). Contrary to the old traditional beliefs, he verdicts Postmodernity as the age in which *métarécits* have become bankrupt. He takes *métarécits* as totalizing stories of history and the goal of the

societies that legitimize cultures and knowledge. Lyotard (1979) is of the view that contemporary culture does away with all notion that legitimate themselves as having universal appeal. The concept of challenging *métarécits* provides rationale for the investigation of primary texts. Lyotard's theorizing of *petit récits* in response to *métarécits* is supportive in the analysis of primary texts because both the texts tend to dismantle the overarching truths and look for multiplicity. Fredric Jameson (1979), in his "Foreword" to *The Postmodern Conditions*, supports Lyotard's idea of postmodern conditions which Ernest Mandel (1975) asserts as "third stage of capitalism beyond classical or market capitalism", which is strikingly different or a kind of break from the old set patterns (240).

why postmodernism celebrates "incredulity towards *métarécits*", becomes the core question in order to clarify our view of *petit récits* (Lyotard 24). It is a fact that we see some portion of each and every idea, theory, belief, or concept and that leads us to see the master idea. Lyotard is skeptical about subjective realistic epistemologies which are presented objectively (that lies outside) in order to make them accurate, universal and trustworthy. He is of the view that we no longer believe "in political or historical teleology, or in the great "subjects" of history - the nation-state, the proletariat, the party, the West" (Lyotard xii). Going against the great subjects of history provides ground for my research because being postmodern fiction both the selected texts are not concerned about resolution or closure. So, this idea helps analyze *TPS* and *Season* because both the novels present unreliability in enlightenment and modern thoughts. The problem begins when a connotative worldview is reproduced by denotative argument in order to legitimize it. And with the passage of time this subjective representation takes the agency of objective view by reproduction. Lyotard is against any kind of totalizing tradition and it is why he disapproves Habermas's vision for the idea of consensus. Fredric Jameson, in "Foreword" to *The Postmodern Condition*, notes: "[ I ]n the given circumstances the proposed norms are 'right,' is here explicitly rejected by Lyotard as the unacceptable remnant of a "totalizing" philosophical tradition" (Lyotard X).

Lyotard is against any kind of consensus because it becomes a narrative. For him if a group of people develops a consensus on an idea, then it must be suspected with doubt because "such consensus does violence to the heterogeneity" (xxv).

### 3.2.2 Petit récits: Challenging Teleology

This section presents a very simple solution to the legitimacy of métarécits. Lyotard is of the view that a Narrative must remain political and it must avoid a single, universal and logical resolution in favor of “small narrative units at work everywhere locally” (xi). We know that multiplicity and plurality are at the heart of Postmodernism and is a driving force behind the idea of petit récits. The concept of petit recits (small narratives) strengthen the idea of multiplicity and difference which is supportive in the analysis section in order to present a new perspective which is usually hidden inside métarécits. Lyotard, in rejecting métarécits, favors

petit récits, stories that explain small practices, local events rather than large-scale universal or global concepts. Postmodern petit récits are always situational, provisional, contingent and temporary making no claim to universality, truth, reason or stability. (34)

One of the issues with Lyotard’s argument in *The Postmodern Condition* is narrative because it presents “an imaginary resolution” (xix). If it is the case then narrative is also teleological which means that it is directed towards a purpose and becomes a métarécit that clashes with the postmodern thought. Lyotard says that scientific knowledge does away with totality because it comes in conflict with or adds something to the already existing knowledge. That is why scientific knowledge should be claimed as a narrative. In line with this concept both *TPS* and *Season* do away with closure or any type of resolution. So, avoiding modern teleological purpose of the narrative is supportive in the investigation of primary texts that question reliability and certainty.

One of the issues that Lyotard deals with in *The Postmodern Condition* is consensus. Knowledge about certain matters is the result of conformity between knowledge and custom. The acceptance of something good, bad, beautiful and true is possible only if it is acceptable by the knowers (or members of the society). So, this consensus between people in distinguishing truth, lie, justice and injustice are the result of dominant culture in a society. As a result, we can say that narratives that rule a society “are told, on the one hand, to define its criteria of competence and, on the other, to evaluate according to those criteria what is performed or can be performed within it” (20). Moreover, the narratives abide by the rules of transmission. The storyteller presents his story as a real one because he has heard it from someone else. If we accept

this view, the one who listens to this story also gets the agency to present it as a valid narrative and becomes the narrator. Such kind of rules cannot be generalized in narrating a story but this simple example gives insight into the traditional knowledge. So, by employing postmodern lens, this telling and retelling of story seems highly skeptical. Since the characters in my selected texts are socially and culturally unconventional, they do not possess qualities that are acceptable for everyone. They do not abide by the given rules related to the dominant cultures. In this postmodern age what works for you is provisional truth. So, consensus on any issue or rule becomes highly skeptical.

Lyotard rejects the authenticity of science and scientific knowledge. He opines that scientific statement that verifies itself by presenting proofs can be dismantled by the new statements and in this way, it again presents itself as lawful and valid (though not for a long period). In simple words we can say that “A statement of science gains no validity” because, every new scientific research rejects the previous version of it (26). The irony lies at the heart of this concept like how can we say that scientific knowledge is unquestionable and valid when “it is never secure from falsification” (26). It gets acceptance only by rejecting the previous one and again gets rejected by the new researchers and the process goes on. Even the scientific truths presented by Newton have been rejected by the contemporary researchers. Then there arises a question about the validity of scientific knowledge like how can we trust a narrative when it refers to previous version as its proof and then rejects it. When relevant knowledge is untrustworthy then it is unjust to consider the narrative right on the basis of scientific knowledge. The unreliability and uncertainty of scientific facts strengthens my investigation which dismantles all universal notions of the authentic and valid. I follow that if science and scientific facts come into consideration in this postmodern age, questioning the social structures and conventions should not be questionable.

Throughout history, narratives define what is right and wrong in a society. They are always unquestionable because they are considered what they are and they do what they do. Repressive feature of narrative comes into consideration in the postmodern narratives. By employing Lyotard’s theorizing, narrative seems lacking argumentation or proof. The concept of postmodern parody and irony also rejects the authenticity of

métarécits. The next section presents Linda Hutcheon's theorizing of postmodern parody and irony.

### 3.2.3 Postmodern Parody and Irony

In this section, I develop a rationale for Linda Hutcheon's argument as it supports my examination of the primary texts. She defines parody as a "form of repetition with ironic critical distance, marking difference rather than similarity" (xii). Postmodern parody helps us understand and observe the sources and roots from which the later narratives emerge. As well as the later works contribute in defining and interpreting the previous narratives. The concept of parody conforms to the Lyotard's view that postmodern world is suffering from lack of faith. This disbelief does not stop at religion but goes beyond all aspects of life from social, cultural norms to logic and science. As a reader we are in the position to interpret and perceive the hidden relation and dual nature among texts. Reader as well as writer play an active role in order to make the parody happen. Linda Hutcheon's theorizing of postmodern parody and irony also supports the argument regarding petit recits. Postmodern

In line with this thought, the analysis of *TPS* and *Season* presents a different view. So, one of the key points which must be mentioned here is that parody exists in the mind of the beholder and s/he receives messages from the background knowledge, cultural context and experience. But having different cultural and social context in not the hurdle in interpreting parody. Linda Hutcheon writes:

It is clear, then, that parody can be deemed suspect for all kinds of reasons: for being too ideologically shifty or, on the contrary, for being too direct a threat, to the ownership of intellectual or creative property. (xiv)

Parody threatens creative originality and capitalist notions of ownership. Parody, by copying and reproducing the former texts destroyed those notions of originality as a result dismantles the métarécit of originality and ownership. It is the feature of parody that it activates vision of the past and the reader is supposed to focus and follow the recollection of past knowledge and experience. We can't separate parody and irony though both play their own part. The main difference between parody and irony lies in their nature where we find irony independent as compared to parody which is parasitic though both share some basic features. As Hutcheon notes, "Parody has been called



parasitic and derivative. It is one mode of coming to terms with the texts of that rich and intimidating legacy of the past (4). The idea of challenging originality and ownership supports me in reading the primary texts as it is in sync with the postmodern perspective of the fall of *métarécits*. The analysis of both sections dismantles the overarching phenomenon of the original and universal.

It is through the medium of parody that we can refine the understanding about the present and past texts. The objective of postmodern parody unlike the traditional parody is not mere ridicule and imitation but to get a much clearer understanding of the issue. By employing the concept of parody, we come up with different views. So, parody can be seen as one of the best technologies defying copyright laws and the concept of coherent and continuity. It is the pure postmodern feature though we know that parody and irony are not new features and are incorporated in modernism as well. They became the distinguished features of postmodernism because they completely abide by the concept of unreliability and difference. Both parody and irony work together but keep a critical distance. Hutcheon notes, “two voices neither merge nor cancel each other out; they work together, while remaining distinct in their defining difference” (xiv)

The main difference between irony and parody lies in their nature where we find irony independent, contrary to this parody is parasitic. Postmodern parody is far more different than the traditional parody which sticks itself to mere ridicule and laugh. Here an important question comes to our mind that how do we identify parody. So, the simple answer to this question is that parody exists in the mind of the reader who has got knowledge with experience, wide reading and cultural contexts. Though both irony and parody share double-voice nature. In postmodern art, we find parody on the level of plot structure, in the form of trans contextualization and in the inversion of language and actions of characters. Moreover, It would be wrong if we pollute the concept of parody by taking it as equal to satire. Satire always works for morality and has a revolutionary intention but postmodern parody has nothing to do with morality and order.

Postmodern irony and parody played a vital role in the creation of new ideas and illusions. Postmodernism believes in intertextuality and we think that most of the novels and other literary genres are rooted in specific historical and time space. So,

postmodern parody helps us in defining past works. Postmodern parody makes it possible for us to analyze and measure different texts with their old and new versions. It is the distinguished feature of postmodern parody that it not only allows a single text as its target but it can have multiple one (become pastiche) unlike the traditional parody which counters a specific text. Stephen in *The Worlds of John Wick* defines postmodern parody as

a form of indirect as well as double-voiced discourse, but it is not parasitic in any way. In transmuting or remodeling previous texts, it points to the differential but mutual dependence of parody and parodied texts. (219)

Parody contest humanist assumptions of authority, uniqueness, real, single, universal and capitalist assumptions of property and ownership. Moreover its 'double-voice' attitude deconstructs the modernist assumptions of closure and artistic autonomy. Sometimes the objective behind the postmodern parody seems respectful. Traditional parody was nostalgic and it usually presented itself as having wit and ridicule but postmodern parody does not ridicule past art rather it helps in identifying how present ideological situation is derived. Postmodern parody as having a double voice is highly encouraging in the analysis of the primary texts because it does away the idea of mere ridicule. In response to ridicule postmodern parody looks for difference. It neither means that past forms are useless nor it disrespects the past presentations but uses irony to show that we can have multiple or different significances and to show that we are separate from the past and history:

Parody changes with the culture; its forms, its relations to its "targets," and its intentions are not going to be the same in North America today as they were in eighteenth-century England. And theories of parody have changed along with parody's aesthetic manifestations. (xi)

With the passage of time irony has changed its strategies and now plays an integral role in postmodern art and literature. Postmodern Irony just like parody is a "rhetorical and structural strategy of resistance and opposition. In other words, irony today is neither trivial nor trivializing" (11). In response to conventional irony (which was simple and usually had one possible hidden meaning) postmodern irony is quite difficult to comprehend. It is why Hutcheon supports the idea of active role of ironist and the reader in order to make the irony happen. Moreover, postmodern irony has two important

functions, destructive and constructive. This research deals with the constructive or self-protective irony with its focus on countering authority.

Though, the major concern of this research focuses on how both texts confront *métarécits*, it is not entirely dependent on Lyotard and Hutcheon's concepts (but remains in the paradigm of postmodernism). Some salient postmodern features like non-linear narration, depthlessness, and waning of affect are also supportive in questioning the authority of *métarécits*. Therefore, this research does not merely bind itself to the idea of *métarécits*, Parody, and irony, rather goes beyond them in order to investigate how postmodern components contribute in challenging modernist viewpoints. Thus, within the delimited perspective of this research, the elemental concern of investigating the fall of *métarécits* in the texts is kept constant.

Jean Francois Lyotard's theorizing of *métarécits* and Linda Hutcheon's concept of postmodern parody and irony helped me investigate *TPS* and *Season* that I have discussed in detail in the analysis chapter. In the next subheading, I have discussed research methodology.

## ( II )

**3.3 Research Methodology**

The research is qualitative in nature which helps me explore the embedded postmodern consciousness by exploring the presence of petit recits, which are possible through the techniques of parody, and irony in the selected texts. My research aims to explore the meanings associated with postmodern sensibility and therefore, the qualitative nature of research supports and guides this analysis. What has made this analysis conveniently possible is the interpretive and exploratory design that I have followed in my analysis chapter. Since this dissertation is a postmodern reading of the selected texts, the plurality and contingency of meanings is addressed through analysis. The reason is that qualitative research supports multiplicity of meanings and does not adhere to one absolute truth (Nunan 13, my paraphrase). Nunan's idea is vindicated through my study which intends to analyze possible interpretations rather than presenting one definition as an absolute truth. This is what addresses the main title of my research that questions grand narratives and celebrate mini narratives.

**3.3.1 Research Method**

I have used Catherine Belsey's textual analysis as a research method to read and analyze the selected fiction. According to Belsey quoted in Griffin's *Research Methods for English Studies*, "textual analysis is indispensable for research in cultural criticism that includes English, cultural history and cultural studies" (Griffin 157). Therefore, Belsey's textual would be appropriate as a research method to read my selected texts. This method helps decode and understand the objectives of the narrator and creates a link between the text and the interpreter, which is always the researcher in case of research. Interpretation demands active role of the reader, that is why Relation between the reader and the text is integral. Therefore, the increase in the number of interpreters could produce a variety of interpretations and perceptions. Belsey's textual analysis supports multiplicity and plurality of meanings rather than conforming to one absolute meaning. In order to support her argument about multiplicity of meaning, she quotes Jacques Derrida, "meaning is inevitably plural" (Belsey in Griffin 162). This multiplicity of meaning support Lyotard's theorizing of petit recits in response to métarécits. My research intends to explore postmodern consciousness that could be associated to the

selected text. That is why, this study employs textual analysis as a method because it provides a rich comprehension of the texts.

Belsey is of the view that, “there cannot be a final signified” (Belsey in Griffin 167). It also suggests that the interpretation of the text depends on the perception of the reader. Since this research is qualitative in nature, and qualitative analysis is largely subjective, the understanding and perceptions of the reader play a significant role when textual analysis is brought to the text. Thus, it may be inferred that the interpretation of the text by the researcher determines the selection of possible meaning for the study.

Catherine Belsey is of the view that textual analysis is one of the best ways to examine the intended meaning by keeping a close look at words, phrases, and passages. (Belsey 167, my paraphrase). By employing Belsey’s method of reading, I have made a discreet selection of relevant words, phrases, and passages that possess postmodern essence in them. Belsey, in Griffin's *Research Methods for English Studies*, suggests that her method deals with one specific dimension of the text that the researcher has chosen and explores the meaning in the same direction and present moment. Rather than the past or future, the interpretation depends on the present. Belsey vindicates her method of analysis elsewhere also. Belsey, in *Critical Practice*, opines that, with the help of textual analysis, researchers can “seek not only the unity of the work but the multiplicity and diversity of its possible meanings, its incompleteness, the omission which it displays and above all its contradictions” (100). Thus, textual analysis is very helpful for this research as it opens up different possible ideologies and intentions (embedded in a text).

My selection of the relevant parts of the texts helps me make a close reading of the text that Belsey refers to in *Critical Practice*. She writes, “method that involves a close encounter with the work itself, an examination of the details without bringing to them more presuppositions than we can help” (132). According to her, the textual analysis gives the reader a wide range of options on how to understand a particular text. A reader may have a few queries before or during the reading of a text, such as, what kind of stance does the text take? So far how many counterarguments exist or have been presented about the text in the available knowledge? What connection does the text have to existing scholarship. She is of the view that a researcher “tries to find if something exists in its difference” (163). She further notes that, the textual analysis

looks at the social, racial, religious, and political issues that are usually challenged in a work (167, my paraphrase). In this way, finding multiple aspects of the texts under scrutiny helps substantiate my argument.

Since a postmodernist reading questions the normative evaluation of texts, Belsey's poststructuralist stance in "Constructing the Subject" is in line with her view of textual analysis. She is of the view that textual analysis challenges the reader to read a work from new perspectives and "[m]eaning is never a fixed essence inherent in the text but is always constructed by the reader, the result of a 'circulation' between social formation, reader and text" (664). It supports the postmodern idea of multiplicity and shows that, within a particular historical moment, a reader in engagement with a text may come up with his/her own interpretation and understanding.

To conclude, this chapter provides a rationale for my theoretical framework and research methodology that I use in order to carry out this research. It would be instructive to say that both my theoretical framework and research methodology mutually support each other for examining the texts. Since qualitative research is non-generalizable, it evades fixtures in interpretation and, therefore, Catherine Belsey's "Textual Analysis as a Research Method" (written in a poststructuralist vein) suits the postmodernist reading of the selected texts. This research method itself gets vindicated by the choice of theoretical positions that I bring to my primary texts in order to pursue my argument. In this fashion, it may be noted that my theoretical support and research methodology concord with each other and get productively merged in my analysis chapters. and support and research method favor the contingent and the provisional in response to authentic and valid. Jean Francois Lyotard and Linda Hutcheon's theorizing gives voice to the unvoiced and, as a result, dismantles the *métarécits* of religion, war, science, race, history, Marxism, nationality, morality, love, manhood, white man's burden, the supremacy of the west, and the like. The selected texts interrogate the (authenticity of) *métarécit* by deploying Lyotard and Hutcheon's perspectives that protest against their legitimacy. The next chapter deals with the textual analysis of *TPS* in order to show how a postmodern text question the overarching universal *métarécits*.

## CHAPTER 4

### “I can’t take it anymore”: A Postmodernist Interrogation of Métarécits in *The Patience Stone*

This chapter explores the idea of métarécits in *The Patience Stone* by employing the theoretical positions of Jean Francois Lyotard and Linda Hutcheon. *TPS*, configures postmodern consciousness in the lives and experiences of characters. Rahimi seems to be challenging the authenticity of métarécits like religion, honor, love, war, family, patriarchy, manhood, masculinity, and Marxism. In this way, *TPS* subscribes to the postmodern concept of the fall of métarécits and decodes them by presenting a number of mini narratives. Rahimi’s *TPS*, therefore, subverts the grand narratives like logic and truth through his plot and the daily lives of his characters.

The novel under scrutiny deals with an anonymous brave woman who takes care of her husband and two small daughters. In a country where men make the rules and bloodshed is the order of the day, we find Rahimi’s female protagonist highly unconventional who faces inevitable issues that shake the social codes. While analyzing the text, I attempt to counter métarécits by presenting what Lyotard calls the “heterogeneity of language games” or petit recits like, hunger, pain, power, loneliness, rape and personal desires, inter alia, as highlighted in the text (xxv). I have analyzed Rahimi’s *TPS* by invoking Lyotard and Hutcheon’s theorizing together with Belsey’s idea of textual analysis. I do this in the following subsections.

#### 4.1 Love as a Métarécit

In this part, I discuss love as a métarécit and how it is countered by its mini narratives. Love seems to have been presented as a signifier without any signified. The postmodern texts never resolve the tension of their paranoid readers who always want to reach some kind of meanings. I as a researcher experience the same anxiety while reading this text and, therefore mini narratives embedded in the text seem to be answering my questions as a reader, though it is hard to reach any conclusion. Rahimi’s novel is all about unreliability of narration. There is a non-causal relationship between the signifier and the signified. David Paul and G Alan note that, “[r]ather than the modernist hunt for meaning in a chaotic environment, the postmodern author dismisses

the idea of meaning in a playful sense”, (1117), and it is this playfulness that shows up when mini narrative of love keep cropping up in the text. *TPS*, in sync with the idea of playfulness by countering the grand subjects like love (in a playful way). The semantic slipperiness between the “object” and its meaning is running throughout the novel. Métarécit of love is dismantled by the petit récits of desire, protection, hunger and basic needs of life. The lonely and unnamed female protagonist of the novel wants someone to bring food for her and for her children. She questions God: “What about his children” (24). In the guise of love, we find petit récits which most of the times are ignored. In *TPS*, without her husband, the protagonist and her daughters are experiencing hunger. A continuous danger of death lurks around because there is a war going on in the country.

Uncertainty and unreliability are at the heart of postmodernism. We remain skeptical about the métarécit of love and the problem remains unresolved throughout the novel. Sometimes, we feel that the female protagonist loves her husband but soon, we think that she has no feeling for him. She says about her husband, “I don’t care” (20). Again, we start realizing that she hates him. Then, comes the feeling of desperate love again and it remains unresolved. Unlike a traditional woman, she takes stand against her husband calling him a “monster” for what he has done to her. But, at the same time, we sense a strong sense of catharsis for her husband who is more than "a living corpse" to her (105). She feels free to ask whatever comes to her heart. Neither she gets interrupted from her husband nor his family. In the beginning, it seems that she loves her husband. It looks as if she is a devoted wife and a real-life partner who stands with her husband through thick and thin. Atrocities of war fail to threaten her from keeping a watchful eye on her husband. But soon we find that Rahimi’s protagonist gets sick of her husband. After a lot of care and love, when she finds no positive change in him, she starts hating him. She says, “I did everything I could to make you stay with me. Not just because I loved you, but so that you wouldn’t abandon me” (64).

These words openly dismantle the métarécit of love by replacing it with petit récits of protection and security. Rahimi’s female protagonist takes care of her husband but there is no element of affection and love between them. She is not concerned about his recovery. Meanwhile, a reader thinks that she is mechanically fulfilling her conventionally imposed duties as “she removes the dirty sheet covering the man’s legs.



Washes his belly, his feet, and his genitals. Once this is done, she covers her man with a clean sheet” (25). These lines show that she is showering affection and love on her husband like a traditional wife in those testing times. She seems concerned with completing her assigned duties. But soon we realize that she is not concerned about the health of her husband. Thus, being a postmodern text, *TPS* keeps shuttling between uncertainty and certainty. The female protagonist says:

“I’m afraid of you!” She searches the floor for something. Words. But more importantly, courage. She finds them, grabs them, and hurls them at him: “I can’t do anything for you. I think it’s all over!”. (53)

These lines show that the wife who is supposed to feel secure in the presence of her husband is instead afraid of him. Because there is no relationship of love and affection between the husband and the wife. Her husband used to torture her miserably and she used to suppress her anger and disgust. Resultantly, when her husband is unable to move his body due to paralysis, the wife is manifesting to him her suppressed hatred and anger. She does not like to serve him in order to help him recover from his deteriorating health. Petit recits of protection, home and revenge dismantle the romantic *métarécit* of love that is usually considered the essence of a married couple's relationship. She takes revolt against the traditional grand narratives of female submission and docility. The grand narrative of love experiences another jolt when the wife says that, “I felt relieved because I had finally been able to desert you, to leave you to die, to rid myself of you!” (67).

The female protagonist challenges the *métarécit* of love because she feels powerless to sympathize with her husband. Moreover, her illicit love affair with the young soldier has terminated every soft corner from her heart for him. There is no love in the relationship of husband and wife. It becomes superficial and loses all its conventional charms and beauties. She wishes for his death and wants to get rid of him. The traditional love between husband and wife has vanished from their lives. Moreover, even a very little concern that she shows toward her husband is also because of her own benefit.

To ensure the availability of the necessities of life, Rahimi’s protagonist has consciously decided to stay with her husband. There is no exchange of affection between both of them. Rather, they are accompanying one another due to their material

purposes. Here, Rahimi's female protagonist dismantles the conventional notions and challenges the dominating universal grand narratives of love, affection and mutual pains of married couples. She unveils the personal and private benefits behind their apparently loving companionship. She constructs petite recits of protection, loneliness, children, hunger and revenge by dismantling the totalitarian structures of love and affection between married couples. Honor is also traditionally a grand narrative, and I have discussed it in the next section.

## 4.2 Debunking the Grand Narrative of Honor

The narrative is a story in telling of a story. But *Métarécit* is the more comprehensive idea behind the story. Thus, if there is a comprehensive idea like "Honor", it would have mattered to everyone. This generalization is very suspicious when it comes to postmodernism. A woman is considered the embodiment of honor, dignity and respect. She is expected to perform the stereotypical feminine gender role by displaying shyness, docility and submissiveness. Being an unconventional woman, she says to the soldier in a bold voice: "I sell my body as you sell your blood." "What are you on about?" "I sell my body for the pleasure of men!" (78). The same kind of attitude can be noticed in Lorrie Moore's short story, "How to Be an Other Woman". The narrative of this story dismantles the grand narrative of honor. The text reveals that the female character Charlene has an affair with a married man. She is not shy of her illicit relation, rather she celebrates being a mistress as she says, "Hello, I am Charlene. I am a mistress" (Moore 5). In *TPS* an alone female protagonist also sleeps with a young soldier and feels good the way Charlene feels good being a mistress. The metanarrative of honor that demands honesty, piety and loyalty among married couples has been rejected in the texts.

*TPS* shows that a woman revolts against the conventions of society by rejecting "the notion that women were 'the mere property of the men', with no right to dispose of their own persons" (Walters 30). She displays her autonomy and independence by manifesting the fulfilment of her repressed sexual desires. She is not afraid of anything, not even her husband, family, children, society and religion. She refuses to sacrifice her desires just to abide by the conventional norms of feminine honor. Rahimi further says about his female protagonist:

Lying on her back, looking toward her man, she spreads her legs. And waits. The boy is paralyzed. She cries impatiently: “Come on, then, let’s get this over with!” (95)

It shows that the wife has become utterly fearless as she is engaged in a sexual activity with her lover in the presence of her paralyzed husband. She is not afraid of being interrogated. She does not consider herself accountable for her illicit relationships. She is not afraid of patriarchal surveillance and dominance. Rather, she dominates a man; her lover. Instead of thinking of herself as a wife, mother, sister, daughter and wife, all her wits are focused on the satisfaction of her desires. She is ready to sacrifice her dignity and honor for the fulfilment of her sexual desires. She explicitly dismantles the modernist notion of feminine honor and dignity:

She teasingly says to her bedridden paralyzed husband: “Bull shit! Look, your honor has been screwed by a sixteen-year-old kid! Your honor is screwing your soul!” (105)

*TPS* shows that a female protagonist is bluntly attacking the conventional notions of honor and dignity. It also shows that the man who had caused the suppression of her sexual feelings is now teased by her. She very boldly pokes at her husband. She is also trying to instigate the anger of her paralyzed husband and feels secure while saying so because her husband is unable to exercise his power on her now. She is utilizing the chances provided by the ailment of her husband to fulfill her desires. In response to meta-narrative of honor, we find petit recits of sexual desires, revenge, basic needs and home. The patriarchal tyranny seems shattering as it can be said that its helplessness is metaphorically presented by the paralyzed husband. Like the paralyzed husband, the patriarchal structure has also lost its control over the life of females. In the next section, I have discussed how religion is also considered a grand narrative because of having repressive ideologies.

### **4.3. Playing down Religion**

*TPS* delegitimizes religion and presents a darker side of the religious authorities. Rahimi’s protagonist questions the authority of God that “he fought in your name” and what kind of deity he is that his creation fighting in his name is left in pain and no help comes (24). What kind of God he is who brings suffering to those who fight for his name and religion. Métarécit of holy war makes the common people blind. As a result,

they don't see the other side of it. Rahimi, notes that, "a bomb explodes. The violence destroys a few houses perhaps, a few dreams" (13). Instead of other much needed religious and moral values, such as sharing the pains of others, honesty and brotherhood, religious authorities seem propagating their own plans. In doing so they do not think about the lives of the ordinary peoples. Therefore, the meta-narrative of religion is used to execute the political plans of the higher strata at the expense of the lives of the poor.

"Al-Qahhar ..." moves away.

"Al-Qahhar ..." becomes faint.

"Al ..." Imperceptible.

Is gone." (16)

The form of the text presents, woman's gradual disbelief in religion and God. While taking care of her husband, she continues reciting the holy name of Allah- "AL-Qahar". Meanwhile, somewhere in the city a bomb explodes and her voice goes louder with the explosion. Al-Qahar is an Arabic word which refers to God as conqueror and master of all, which seems ironic here. On the one hand, it seems as if she is reciting the holy names of God for the better recovery of her husband. While, on the other hand, it seems as if she is referring to God as the reason behind all the chaos and disaster. So, the métarécit of religion seems helpless in bringing change in a woman's life.

Unlike modern texts, *TPS* intends to interrogate the supremacy of God as Gabriel Garcia Marques' short story, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings", questions the metanarrative of religion. Marques discards it by presenting (possibly) an angel as weak and fragile. When the old man with enormous wings comes to Pelayo's house, it is in a miserable state. Marques writes that that, "[b]efore going to bed he [Pelayo] dragged him out of the mud and locked him up with the hands in the wire chicken coop" (2). These lines show that the status of an angel is neither divine nor magnified. His image is of a tattered man. He is humiliated as if he were a thrown down angel. The female protagonist in *TPS* losing her faith in religion seems to connect with Marques' presentation of the angel in a delapidated condition. She faces a brutal treatment in the world. In the beginning of novel, she seems "[r]eciting the names of God, over and over from dusk till dawn" (15). But ultimately, she puts an end to it in

the end of the novel and shows her disagreement with her religious faith by having sex with a young boy.

Likewise, Linda Hutcheon's concept of irony also operates in the text. She says, Postmodern irony does not take a fixed position. Unlike the traditional irony it can have multiple signified. The words "*Al-Qahar, Al-Qahar, Al-Qahar*" as signifier keep looking for a uniform signified but it is missing.

"*Al-Qahar, Al-Qahar, Al-Qahar...*" The woman sits up slowly. Stares desperately at the man. Puts her hand back on his chest. In despair, she mutters, "I can't take it anymore." (15)

Woman is reciting the holy names of God. Then she starts talking to her husband. She asks her different questions to her paralyzed man but all in vain. Likewise, reciting the holy names are bringing no change in her affairs. So, her words, "I can't take it anymore", are like a protest (15). We keep dancing between different thoughts. We don't know whether she is upset with God or has lost hope in her husband's health. She questions God about her children and herself that, who will take care of them if her husband dies. She says:

After all, he fought in your name for so long. For jihad! And you're leaving him in this state? What about his children? And me? You can't, you can't, you've no right to leave us like this. (24)

*TPS* questions the Metanarrative of war by showing that the man, who was prepared to fight in war for his religion and country, is left alone by the same religious communities and his own family in the time of lurch. When he loses his bodily strength and become paralyzed, his children and wife are left alone to starve to death. There are no religious leaders and groups to take care of his family. The authority of religion and faith loses its command on the life of people. War has brought disillusionment in their lives. *TPS* dismantles the métarécit of religion by showing characters following religion suffering from pain and disaster. Religion seems helpless to do justice with its devotees. Disillusioned female protagonist questions the authority of god:

"Prove that you exist, bring him back to life!" She opens the Koran. Her finger moves down the names of God featured on the fly leaf. "I swear I won't ever let him go off to fight again like a bloody idiot. Not even in your name!" (24)

In the extreme pain of having a paralyzed husband, starving children and ruined house, Rahimi's protagonist questions the presence of God. She is not a blind follower of religion. She is able to question the agency of God and religion. She considers it a foolish act to fight for religion: "Did you think about us, when you shouldered that fucking Kalashnikov?" (21). She has lost her faith in religion completely as she vows to never let her husband go again in the battlefield to serve religious groups. Instead, she thinks of preferring worldly activities to earn bread for the family. To get free from the constraints of religion and honor, she builds physical relation with a holy fighter. But being an alone woman in the house, she has no other option. Rape is a common crime during war times but throughout the history, metanarrative of war used to hide it.

[I]s this the first time? "You had to start somewhere." She glances around to locate the gun. It is far away. Look back at the boy who is still in the same position. She moves her legs a little. No protest. (96)

Here, a holy fighter is having sex with a married lady. Métarécit of war hides these kinds of petit récit. A woman's rape is common crime when it comes to war. In *TPS*, an alone woman finds no other way than submitting her body to a holy warrior. She has nothing except fulfilling his sexual desire.

Moreover, Mullah appreciates war and after the call to prayer he recites holy verses and hadiths in order to make people fight. But, he himself is afraid of bullets. This dual nature of clergy makes the protagonist suspicious about religion and God. When her husband is lying paralyzed on the ground, she questions God. she says, "he fought in your name for so long. For jihad! And you're leaving him in this state? What about his children? And me?" (11).

Grand narratives of religion is deplored by Rahimi's female protagonist and as a result, we find Petit récit of hunger, disease, loneliness, grief, disaster, disillusionment, rape and lie. She challenges the grand narrative of religion and blames it to be futile for wasting their lives in war.. Marxism's performance, which was considered unquestionable became "undoubtedly inconsistent in many ways" in this postmodern age (Lyotard xxiv). Marxism is also a grand narrative, and I discuss it in the next section.

#### 4.4 Debunking Marxist Preferences

In *TPS*, the female protagonist refuses to abide by the conventional notion of assuring financial stability. Bringing such objective *métarécits* into consideration, makes a common reader think about the other side of the stories, concepts and ideas. Lyotard opines that throughout history it was possible for militants and intellectuals to recognize “Marxism as the privileged mode of analysis” either for capitalism or social moments in a society (Xiii). In this postmodern age, machines and non-human objects have gained the position of authorities and decision makers. We see a kind of war where countries are fighting with each other for the sake of information. Sometimes, a small microchip containing trillion gigabytes of data. Thus, this breaking up of the grand narratives is obvious in multiple facets of the postmodern age.

In *TPS*, the female protagonist has nothing to do with financial stability and, thus, debunks the traditional Marxist preferences. It appears that kindness, love, and companionship are more important to her instead of having a consistent supply of luxuries of life. She condemns the Marxist ideological societal preferences while narrating an instance from the married life of her aunt. She says that, “They married her off to this terrible rich man. A total bastard. Stuffed with dirty cash” (83). Protagonist’s aunt gets sexually abused by her father-in-law because she is infertile. So, getting married to a rich man brings havoc in her aunts’ life. Marxism that says that financial stability brings good fortune to people seems crumbling in *TPS*. It shows that women are traded like commodities by their families. The character of the suitor is not examined carefully in case he is the possessor of great bank balance. It thought is against Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, that focuses on the “young man of large fortune” (3). Rahimi’s protagonist criticizes this conventional trading of women. She also attacks the traditional culture where females are considered useless if proved infertile.

Marxism believes in the class system- a kind of hierarchy that is the foundation at which the whole theorizing of Marxism stands. But in *TPS*, we don’t find any kind of class system. The text shows that the present age does not conform to Marxist mode of analysis because when it comes to social formation, the industrial working class has lost its power. So, this diverse status of contemporary age leads us to think about the

culture (most importantly Postmodern culture). If we look back into history, we are left with the culture presenting mode of production. We find a flaw in the past where culture was negated especially when it comes to knowledge production, but, for Lyotard it has got great importance. The present culture defies all such narratives that are considered universal and authoritative. In line with the postmodern thought, a female character in *TPS* denounces conventional concept of family. The next section deconstructs the grand narrative of family that seems to ensure stability and care.

#### **4.5 Dismantling Familial Conventions**

In this section, I discuss how *TPS* dismantles the metanarrative of family. When the husband in the novel becomes paralyzed during war, his whole family leaves him alone. They refuse to bear the expenses of his family and children. Due to his illness, his family disowns him with the fear of financial burdens. They leave him to die alone in deteriorating health. As a female character shouts with pain to her bed-ridden husband:

Where is your mother, who always used to say she would sacrifice herself for a single hair on your head? She couldn't deal with the fact that her son, the hero, who fought on every front, against every foe, had managed to get shot in a pathetic quarrel! (120)

It shows that the meta structure of the family is dismantled in the wake of war. The family leaves this paralyzed man alone instead of sharing his pain. Postmodern parody presents a different view. It does not take any specific position, as a way we get a new perspective. The man who is given the title of hero gets injured in a small fight parodies the concept of Heroic wars where men used to fight with their lost body parts. It is strikingly different from what we see in the conventional representation of war in Lord Alfred Tennyson's, "The Charge of the Light Brigade", where he writes how the soldiers think and behave: "Theirs not to reason why, - Theirs but to do and die" (75). Tennyson does not present the suffering of soldiers and their families in war. *TPS*, being postmodern narrative, gives voice to the unvoiced and as a result shows other side of the metanarrative of war. We come to know about the painful words of the female protagonist:



That they wouldn't be able to take care of either your wife or your children. They've abandoned you. They don't give a fuck about your health, or your suffering, or your honor! They've deserted us. (23)

It shows the extreme torturous experience of the wife who has faced everything all alone. Because the family turns out to be selfish and self-centered. The text shows the indifferent nature of family members. Family and family system were considered perfect and ideal in the past, but the contemporary age does away with such type of notions. *Métarécit* of family being loyal, supportive, caring and loving is dismantled thoroughly. In response to *métarécit* of family, we find *petit recits* of selfishness, indifference, loneliness, discomfort and financial burden. The next section presents how Patriarchy as a grand narrative is mocked in *TPS*.

#### 4.6. Challenging Patriarchy

In line with the postmodern concept, *TPS* questions the grand narrative of manhood by gives voice to the unvoiced. The hero is unable to speak when his wife is abusing him, "I spit in your mother's pussy!" (22). His wife goes outside to get eatables for the children and medicine for her husband. Thus, throughout the narrative, the hero is passive and the lady has got an active role. Men are considered to be brave, courageous and fearless. But in the novel, the *métarécit* of manhood has shattered badly with the emergence of cowardly men. The female protagonist says:

"The mullah won't come today. He's scared of stray bullets. He's as much of a coward as your brothers "You men, you're all cowards!" "Where are your brothers who were so proud to see you fight their enemies?". "Cowards!" she spits (22).

It shows that the religious leaders use the innocent people to execute their plans, but they themselves are afraid of bullets. They live luxurious lives in their homes while using many innocent lives for their personal purposes. They themselves live the lives of cowards and feel afraid to face the enemy. This cowardliness is challenging the previously unshakable *métarécit* of manly courage and bravery. The next section presents the dismantling of the *métarécit* of war.

#### 4.7. Questioning the Glories of War

The métarécit of war and nation make people fight against the other nations and obey their governments. In order to drive the public according to its needs, métarécit of freedom is used by the states. These métarécits provide direct control over the folk. The second half of the twentieth century came with a new cultural, philosophical and literary tendency characterized by the questions: “What is my purpose? And where am I going?” (Judd 9). *TPS* rejects and mocks the grand narrative of war, by questioning the massacre it caused. The Characters in the novel do not seem to subscribe to the glorious religious, scientific and nationalist ideologies because they do not want to sacrifice their lives for the sake of these abstractions; they are more concerned about their very personal likes, priorities and choices for life. That is why their identities are not welded with anything that is outside their lives. Hence their tendencies for mini narratives.

A female protagonist in *TPS* condemns the extremist activities of religious groups who use innocent poor people for the execution of their own political plans. She gets angry at her husband and shows her disgust for war by saying, “Did you think about us for even a second, when you shouldered that fucking Kalashnikov? You son of a...,” the words suppressed again.” (21). These lines show that the paralyzed husband and starving children have made the woman furious. Her husband, “the hero, who fought on every front, against every foe”, served the religious communities during war (22). But on becoming paralyzed, those extremist groups have left him alone to die in starvation. His companions and leaders who claim to be faithful have left him alone in the challenging phase of his life. In response to heroic notions of war we find petit recit of starvation, destruction, pain, injuries, lack of moral values and hunger.

War is a repressive ideology. It does not let us think about family and children. Hundreds and thousands of humans have become victims of Wars, but they are still praised. It is the discursive nature of métarécit that becomes unquestionable. Since the beginning, humanity is paying its price but instead of all the catastrophe and disaster war is still admired and appreciated. While being a postmodern novel, *TPS* interrogates the métarécit of War. In the name of war, it is the family and children who pay the price. The fighters also get severe injuries. They crumble for their entire life. On visual level, it is presented that, war has great purposes but there are always several hidden

agendas which common folk are not told. *TPS* challenges the *métarécit* of War. The woman says, “now that you were all fighting for nothing but power” (56). Here, the *métarécit* of war is challenged by personal interest and power. They were not fighting for Allah or Islam, rather had their own agendas. Most of the times, we think that countries fight for the sake of religion and country, but, a lot of people and multinational companies have their interests in the wars. Whereas, common people unfortunately keep fighting in the name of religion and country.

Rahimi’s female character is disturbed because of the war atrocities that she is compelled to bear despite having done no crime. She inculcates her husband of destroying the whole family's life. She challenges the *métarécit* of the war by highlighting the perspective that war brings nothing but destruction and distortion. She says to her husband, “Without you, I have nothing. Think of your daughters! What will I do with them? They’re so young ...” (22). She further considers her painful past experiences a product of war because she was forced to live with her in-laws without her husband as he was busy fighting a war. She remembers her torturous days and says:

To all of us, you were just a title: the Hero! And, like every hero, far away. Engagement to a hero was a lovely thing, for a seventeen-year-old girl. I said to myself, ‘God is far away, too, and yet I love him, and believe in hi’. And so, I had to be married, despite your absence. At the ceremony, you were present in the form of a photo. (56)

She recollects her memories of the past where she was married to her husband in his absence. These sentences are very ironic and can have multiple interpretations. She says that she got married to a man who was not present at the time of marriage. She relates it with the idea of God whom believers believe in, though they cannot see him physically. But, ultimately we find her man like a corpse, “a living corpse” (105). Maybe she is questioning the authority of God like Friedrich Nietzsche who declared “*God is dead*” in the context of *idealism*. As she is forced to live with her in-laws without her husband, she is also entitled a barren and infertile woman by an illiterate mother-in-law without considering the absence of her husband. She narrates her traumatic experience of being a newlywed bride and being abused while living with her in-laws in her husband’s absence. She considers that war has deprived her of many beautiful moments of her life. The *Métarécit* of war bringing peace is dismantled by Rahimi’s protagonist as she considers it to be the reason of atrocities, tortures and

sacrifices only. She further exposes the brutal side of war where the innocent children of the poor are used by the political leaders to execute their own terrorist plans. She says about a religious leader, “He keeps that poor little boy for his own pleasure! He kidnapped him. An orphan, left to cope. Kidnapped him and put a Kalashnikov in his hands!” (111). These lines show that the poor innocent children are deprived of their beautiful childhood and instead of toys guns has been given to them. They are exposed to the dark and stark realities of life to make them emotionless. She deplores the *métarécit* of war strongly that since their childhood constructs false consciousness in the minds of the children. In this way, the religious leaders camouflage their political motives by using the *métarécit* of religion.

The above-mentioned textual analysis presents that the human thirst for power and greed drive them to fight against one another. It is the quality of the war narrative that common people fail to get a lesson from, even after facing the atrocities of war. The interrogation of *métarécit* of war is peculiar to Afghanistan as it remained a war ground for empires. *TPS* pleads to put an end to the wars by presenting the sufferings and disasters faced by the people, especially, children and women (who even do not take part in the war). The next section presents unconventional narrative style of postmodern fiction.

#### **4.8 Fluid Postmodern Boundaries and Protean Meanings**

Atiq Rahimi's *TPS* employs postmodern parody and irony to deconstruct traditional narratives and power structures, particularly those related to patriarchy and war. One of the key examples of postmodern parody is the character of the unnamed woman, who is a symbolic figure representing the struggles of Afghan women. The woman's experiences are parodic in nature, as they subvert traditional notions of a submissive, passive woman who is subject to male authority. Through the woman's character, Rahimi exposes the constructed nature of gender roles and challenges readers to question their own assumptions and beliefs about gender and power. In addition, the novel employs irony to critique the power structures and ideologies that have led to war and conflict in Afghanistan. woman's husband is paralyzed, but she finds herself talking to him, revealing her innermost desires. This is ironic, as the husband is symbolically representative of the patriarchal society that has silenced women's voices, and yet

through her interactions with him, the woman is able to find a voice and assert her agency.

In the past, texts were given the name after human subjects like Joseph Andrews and Dr Faustus, but *TPS* does away with the enlightenment thought. Moreover, in line with the concept of postmodern irony, the works like "Eyes of a Blue Dog" by Gabriel Garcia Marques and *The Patience Stone* by Atiq Rahimi, shows an inadequacy of language and slippage of meaning. The novel is narrated in a fragmented, non-linear style, which challenges the idea of a single, linear narrative. The language is also parodic, as it subverts traditional ideas of poetic language and challenges readers to question the nature of language itself. There is irony packed in the titles of both of these works and this is what provides multiple meanings to these works. These titles are grammatically correct, but neither does a blue dog exist nor a patient stone. Neither of the titles convey an absolute meaning and therefore both show inadequacy of language.

Likewise, the concept of fluid boundaries between genres, nonlinear narration, no proper beginning, middle and end are some of the distinguished postmodern features. As I mentioned in my theoretical framework that this research is not limited to the celebration of petit recits, but it also presents some salient features of postmodernism. *TPS* dismantles the conventional forms of narration and plot structure. One sentence talks about the Koran, "on a velvet pillow, is a book, the Koran." the holy book of Muslims the next about a crying girl, "A little girl is crying" and the next one about the woman's age (12). Waning of affect is also obvious in the novel. Rahimi does not prepare its readers for the sensitive events. Events happen suddenly and the reader has no chance except getting surprised. The concept of fluid boundaries is also visible in the play. Walls of poetry, prose, dialogue and story are merged together in the play. Rahimi notes;

"What did you find?"

"Look!" says one of them, brandishing a bra. "He's got a wife!"

"Yes, I know?"

"You morn, you took off his wedding ring, didn't you?" (45)

This text does not look like a conventional fiction. Linda Hutcheon, in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, says that, “The borders between literary genres have become fluid: who can tell anymore what the limits are between the novel and the short story collection” (p 9). Breaking the conventions, *TPS* incorporates poetic and sometimes dramatic style. Moreover, in line with the postmodern concept of waning of affect *TPS* does not deal with the emotional side. If it does so, its attitude would be teleological and it will have a purpose which is against the concept of postmodernism. *TPS* does not want to address human feelings or make a conscious position. *TPS* never prepare grounds for the uncertain conditions to (conventionally) amuse their readers. Surprising events happen instantly. “The man pulls her toward him, grabs her hair, and dashes her head against the wall. She falls. She does not cry out or weep” (125). Throughout the fiction woman is taking care of her husband and he seems silently listening to her, but at the end he suddenly attacks his wife without speaking even a single word. Moreover, Language presents the uncertainty of a postmodern man: “C-c-can ... c-c-can I ...” “I told you, not today ...” the woman says wearily. The boy comes closer. “N-n-not ... n-n-not to ...” (110). She fails to express her emotions while using language. It is purely a postmodern condition as language becomes an unreliable medium to present the anguish and discomfort of a postmodern man. Moreover, unlike the conventional fiction *TPS* presents, non-human and animal characters like bee, picture, quail and khanjar. In line with the posthumanist thought explained by Cary Wolfe, *TPS* is less concerned about the “reflection and introspection associated with the critical subject of humanism”. (122). The Female Protagonist says about her father: “All my dad cared about was his quails, his fighting quails! I often saw him kissing those quails, but never my mother, nor us, his children” (58). In response to enlightenment movement postmodern art and literature seems to give central position to non-human objects.

Against the convention, *TPS* presents the marriage of a young girl with the picture of her fiancé. She says that, “At the ceremony, you were present in the form of a photo” (56). In postmodern narratives, parody is presented as normative and real. We see an effort where unrepresentable or unacceptable is presented in a natural and normal manner. We can replace the unrepresentable with the representable. *TPS* presents parody of traditional marriages. The whole marriage ceremony takes place in a normal way and the groom is missing.

Throughout the narrative, we don't know about the woman's name. Being protagonist, she has got an active role and man is presented as "a living corpse" (105). Likewise, In Don DeLillo's "The Itch", the narrator describes a character as 'he' whose name is not mentioned and, therefore, his identity is fluid. likewise, *TPS* challenges the metanarrative of identity by not giving the name to any of its character. The next section presents, an overview of, petit recits presented in the above sections.

#### **4.9 Countering the Authentic and the Valid**

In the foregoing subsections of this chapter, I have discussed grand narratives of love, honor, religion, Marxism, family, war manhood, and narrative conventions. In this section, I discuss significance of petit recits as counter narratives. In response to these métrarécits, *Season* supplies petit recits such as hunger, pain, power, loneliness, rape, and personal desires, lawlessness, home, revenge, disaster, women agency, small wound, unreliability, no resolution and multiple provisional truths.

In *TPS*, the grand narrative of language is interrogated in the absence of an absolute signified while highlighting the unreliability of narration in *TPS*. Similarly, text's consistent semantic uncertainty and fluid boundaries challenge the traditional narrative style. It neither maintains the categorization of genres nor has a proper beginning, middle, and end. The novel does not have any closure. Rahimi does not build any suspense in his narration, he rather surprises his readers. In this way, Rahimi builds another mini-narrative of a non-linear nontraditional postmodern narrative.

Likewise, the métrarécit of love is dismantled by the petit recits of desire, protection, hunger, home, revenge, and worries about life's essentials. The female protagonist in the novel shatters the grand narrative of love as she neither loves her husband nor has any feelings for him. Rather, she gives birth to mini-narratives of protection, home and security for which she is living with her husband. Here, the meta-narrative of ideal and romantic love that veils the real-life challenges is interrogated. Moreover, the protagonist in *TPS* constructs the mini narratives of loneliness, children, hunger, and revenge by dismantling the totalitarian structure of affection between married couples.

She also dismantles the conventionally celebrated grand narratives that are often associated with a woman such as honor, dignity, respect, stereotypical feminine gender roles, shyness, docility, and submissiveness that are often associated with a woman. The meta narrative of patriarchy has lost its reign. With his independent and autonomous female protagonist, Rahimi is reinforcing petit recits of pleasure and sexual desires. The woman in *TPS* rather seeks the gratification of her libidinal desires unabashedly.

The Grand narrative of religion is bringing disillusionment on the surface by giving birth to nihilism and de-legitimation. Rahimi is deploring the grand narratives of piousness, dignity, supremacy, happiness, and God's approval. *TPS*, shows that religious leaders use their followers for the execution of their own plans instead of strengthening the brotherhood by sharing their pains. Similarly, the female protagonist in the novel is also not a blind follower of religion and does not constrain herself to fulfill her religious obligations. Thus, the mini-narratives of unreliability, power, selfishness, greed, and corruption are strengthened. Furthermore, the grand narrative of family is challenged by the mini narratives of indifference, loneliness, discomfort, and financial burden. The family instead of sharing the pain of its paralyzed family member leaves him alone. In this novel, an active female protagonist supplies the mini narratives of female strength and freedom with her bold presence. The meta narrative of manly courage and bravery are replaced by petit recit of cowardliness as men feel afraid to face their enemies.

Grand narrative of war shows, how the senior officers use their subordinates and other innocent poor people for the execution of political plans. Instead of fighting for Allah or Islam, the soldiers in the novel are fighting a War without knowing that they are supporting the personal agendas of their superiors. Thus, this analysis section shows that the novel subverts the grand narratives of war by providing the mini narratives of rape, suffering, greed for power, lawlessness and disaster. So, the textual analysis of *TPS* supplies many petit recits such as greed, hunger, pain, female power, loneliness, personal desires, protection, loneliness, children, security, home, worries of life's essentials, individual personal, pleasure, indifference, financial burden – all presented in a non-linear postmodern narrative. The next chapter deals with a postmodern scrutiny of Tayeb Salih's *Season*.





## CHAPTER 5

### “[s]o was I also a lie”: A Postmodern Analysis of *Season of Migration to the North*

In Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, the narrator creates small narratives to subvert the established metanarratives. Tayeb Salih uses the character of Mustafa Sa'eed in to subvert the dominant metanarrative of European superiority and colonialism. Mustafa's story challenges the idea of a single, linear narrative by incorporating multiple perspectives and experiences. Through his character, Salih questions the legitimacy of colonialism and exposes the contradictions and complexities of postcolonial identity. Tayeb Salih uses the story, genre, and characters in the novel to destabilize some existing metanarratives like the idea of manhood in rural life, the perception of village women as coy and sheepish, the idea of the west as civilized and morally grooming place, and the metanarrative of colonial discourse. In expressivist realist tradition, we see that narrative and is considered unreliable when it does not have a logical closure. But, in contemporary times, we consider such logical truths unreliable. Fredric Jameson also supports this idea in forward to Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, “older master narratives of legitimation no longer function anywhere”, rather “small narrative units [are] at work everywhere locally” (XI). The main argument of Jean Francois Lyotard, in sync with *Season*, also goes against the great métarécit of science and logic. In the forthcoming pages, I discuss how *Season* questions the conventional metanarratives in six subsections.

#### 5.1 Women's Petit Récits and Patriarchy

In this section, I discuss that usually women in the Arab world have been considered coy and voiceless. This narrative is grounded as Ma Ling writes, “women in the third world have been oppressed by colonized people and by traditionally patriarchy society” (2). *Season* tends to unveil both sides of this narrative. *Season*, through the character portrayal of wad Rayees, shows how men try to imagine and understand women, while through the characters of Hosna and Bint Majzoub, it creates distrust in this meta narrative of women as passive and forms petit récit where women are shown bold, indulging in the vulgar discussion, drinking and keeping company with

men and also resisting against the forced oppression of them. Hosna threatens the wad and other male character that “if they force me to marry, I’ll kill him and kill myself” (47). However, the character of Bint Majzoub is more prominent and has relatively greater agency than Hosna. Salih notes:

“Laughing in her manly voice made hoarse by too much smoking, “you’ve been jumping on and off like a jack donkey”. “You’ve buried eight husbands and now you’re an old woman you wouldn’t say no if you were offered it.” (38)

The character of Bint Majzoub subverts the expectations from an Arab woman. She is not “angel in the house” (Patmore 1582) at all but a dangerous subversion of it. She marries eight men who die one after the other and she has no emotions or respect for any of them. While listening to Bint Majzoub we feel as if we are listening to some highly empowered western lady. She smokes and laughs in a male tone and talks about sex in a daring and unconstrained manner. When asked, which of her spouses was the “best”, she mentions one of them and narrates his qualities in these words:

he’d drive right into me so I could hardly contain myself. He’d lift up my legs after the evening prayer and I’d remain splayed open till the call to prayers at dawn. (39)

Bint Majzoub’s use of bold, explicit and man-like language is a tool through which Salih challenges and subverts the meta narrative of women as modest, shy and inexpressive about their sexual life and experiences. Moreover, the character of Bint Majzoub also dismantles the stereotype of marriage by getting married to eight different men. Usually, it is thought that only men are allowed to marry more than once. Her character is a stronger foil among people like Wad Rayyes who is a thorough womanizer and takes pride and satisfaction in telling the madness of his youth as he says at one occasion. In a late-night conversation over sex and women he says:

Hajj Ahmed, I put the girl in front of me. I forcibly stripped her of all her clothes till she was as naked— her breasts, Hajj Ahmed, stuck out like pistols and your arms wouldn’t meet round her buttocks. She had been rubbed all over with oil.” (38)

Bint Majzoub feels good in the company of men, who talk about their sexual affairs like Wad Rayyes. She is fond of drinking and sexual discussion with her friends. She uses language in the same fashion as men. Her remarks in the discussion about female

circumcision are bold and vulgar when she supports the circumcision of a female because it forces women to work hard for the satisfaction of men in sex. Another female character that the narrator uses in order to deconstruct the meta narrative of females as oppressed, coy and voiceless individuals is Hosna who later in the novel refuses to accept the proposal of the brutal womanizer Wad Rayyes. She resists consummating the marriage after being forced into marriage and later kills Wad Rayyes and gets killed too in an attempt to save herself from forced wedlock. Narrator tries to convince her to marry but she rejects the idea of marrying an old man against her will. Narrator keeps trying to convince Hosna but all in vain. At one occasion he says to her:

You have two children and are still a young woman in the prime of life. Think about the future. Who knows, perhaps you will accept one of the numerous suitors who want to marry you. (47)

Hosna dismantles the *métarécit* of eastern women as coy and dependent. She is a brave lady who herself decides about her life. Men and the society fail to govern her. It is why Lyotard dismantles the idea of legitimation of any kind of narrative whether it be social or scientific because legitimation of knowledge can't be separated from legitimation of the legislator. Then we must say that besides knowledge, power is equally important in building a narrative (the way Hajj Ahmad utilizes his power). But here a question arises that "who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided?" (Lyotard 9). The one who makes rules must be a human being and the decisions made by him/her must not be universal, religious, racist or the like! It is through the characters of Hosna and Bint Majzoub that the narrator disagrees with the meta narrative of females as easily oppressed and coy individuals living voiceless lives and we find *petit recits* of woman as authoritative, independent, uncontrolled, and free. Manhood is also a grand narrative, and I have discussed it in the next section.

*Season* presents narrator's grandpa, Hajj Ahmed, as an arrogant masculine figure and a model of manhood. Because of his ties to the past and his stability as a cornerstone of the village, the narrator appears to admire his grandfather the most among other people. Symbolically taking his grandfather as a stable tree, the narrator says that he wants to be "like that palm tree, a being with a background, with roots, with a purpose" (9). Hajj Ahmed is presented as the symbol of the stable society formed in popular Islam. The narrator says that financially east is poor but if compared to the

west, the eastern people are far more sensible and intelligent. He says, “we are poor peasants, but when I embrace my grandfather, I experience a sense of richness” (38). Unlike Wad Rayyes, who is ego-driven and lusty, Hajj Ahmed is presented as a wise elder man with whom people seek to talk. He is land- and family-oriented, with little interest in passion, ego, or sex.

Beside this, Hajj Ahmed is admired by Mustafa for his tenacity, youthfulness at 90, and religiosity. Having admired the narrator’s grandfather hajj Ahmad, Mustafa entrusts his children to the narrator because as he says “I have seen in you a similarity to your grandpa” (45). Mustafa believes that a guardian like Hajj Ahmad will be able to keep his boys from contracting their father's germ. He says, “How sad it would be if both of my sons grew up with the germ of this infection in them, the wanderlust” (35). Mustafa does not want his children grown up like him because of the stability he notices in the narrator. To put it another way, Mustafa sees in the narrator a superior set of masculine ideals, similar to those of his grandpa, that he hopes will pass on to his kids and save them from selecting the lusty, egotistical male identity he developed in England and carried with him until his death.

Though having created a version of his grandfather as an ideal man in the Sudanese rural society the narrator brings forth a side of him that tries to puncture this avatar of an ideal man. Wad Rayyes, Bint Majzoob and Hajj Ahmad’s conversation dismantles the *métarécit* of manhood and piety. Hajj Ahmad, who seems a religious personality, spends hours in sexual conversation. He feels pleasure in the company of his friends who share the sexual encounters of their youth. Wad says:

if you’d had a taste of the women of Abyssinia and Nigeria, you’d throw away your string of prayer-beads and give up praying — the thing between their thighs is like an upturned dish (41)

This Conversation also dismantles the idea of western lady as a symbol of beauty and prettiness. In response to the white girls, Salih’s character presents Arab African girls as the symbol of beauty. His grandfather’s image as a man of values is tarnished by his conversation with the narrator on the issue of Hosna’s marriage with Wad Rayyes. The narrator is advised by Hajj Ahmed to persuade Hosna to wed Wad, but he asserts that Hosna is free to do what she likes. The persuasion of the narrator by his grandfather

serves as the destruction of the meta-narrative of manhood that encompasses values and virtues in a rural Muslim society.

Not just this, but also the way he keeps his company with a man and women where, “Their voices were all raised in laughter” (42). He drinks and discusses women and sex as openly as one can is also another indicator that strengthens the destruction of the meta-narrative of manhood and values. West thinks that man and women can’t meet and talk openly. But *Season* presents a different worldview where women “laughs in her hoarse, manly voice” and feels free to talk about matters considered taboo (42). Men and women enjoy their late-night gossips over sex and women.

Hajj Ahmad’s association with Bint Majzoub and Wad Rayyes insinuates the fact that having termed as the ideal of manhood and virtue the narrator's grandfather embarks on a free discussion about sex with women and also befriends people who possess animalistic sexual behavior towards women. Thus, through the character of Hajj Ahmad, the narrator demolishes the symbol of rural manhood and values and paints another façade over it by presenting the petit recits of lust, pleasure, local not universal values and women suiter. Marriage as a metanarrative is discussed in the next section.

## 5.2 Interrogating the Institution of Marriage

*Season* questions the métarécit of marriage and familial knots. Salih questions the métarécit of modesty and marriage. He says, “Is it true... ‘that they don’t marry but that a man lives with a woman in sin?’” (9). It is obvious that métarécit of marriage as a structure emerging with the big story hides a number of smaller stories. The big story becomes the grand narrative on which a number of other stories acquire legitimacy. That is why Lyotard is of the view that “philosophy of history” has lost its credibility “to legitimate knowledge” (11).

Mustafa seduces a lot of white girls while his stay in England. He wanted to marry them but those ladies were not in favor of marriage. But coming back to his homeland he finds the different idea where a woman wants to live with her husband after getting married. So, Protagonist dances between western liberal thoughts and eastern norms. What is taboo for the east could be normative for the west. It is the

reason why Lyotard calls to, “wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences” (82). There is no single concept that could be applied to everyone in a very universal and general way because human experiences are very diverse. The next section depicts how *Season* questions the metanarrative of West.

### 5.3 Parodying West

The concept of western imperialism “is governed by the demand for legitimation” (Lyotard 27). Edward Said points out in *Orientalism* how the west considers itself the center of civilization and reiterates the idea of “European superiority over Oriental backwardness” (7). The same ideas are also expressed by the Indian-born English poet and novelist Rudyard Kipling in his poem “White Man’s Burden”. He describes the duty of the white man as the harbinger of civility, enlightenment and peaceful world full of tolerance and companionship. Kipling further asks the white men to civilize eastern people who are “half devil and half child” (1821). *Season*, challenges dominant metanarratives of European superiority and colonialism, and offers a more nuanced and complex understanding of postcolonial identity. Mustafa Sa’eed’s experiences are shaped by his position as a Sudanese man in a European context, and Salih explores the ways in which this position shapes his understanding of himself and his interactions with others. The promise of progress, advancement, and the good life that modernism and modernity put forward could be seen as *métarécit* and, according to Lyotard, all such concepts should be viewed with suspicion. *Season* also dismantles the idea of truth. Salih writes:

How strange! How ironic! Just because a man has been created on the Equator  
some mad people regard him as a slave, others as a god. Where lies the mean?  
Where the middle way? (89)

Notions of heroic west as democrat and educated are parodied in *Season*. The protagonist, Mustafa Sa’eed, who is a Lecturer by profession, is mistreated because of his color and race. Jean Morris, during his second meeting with Mustafa Sa’eed says, “You’re ugly”. “I’ve never seen an uglier face than yours” (21). Here *métarécit* of Education seems crumbling before physique and color. Moreover, it contributes to the postmodern concept of deathlessness where visible is preferred. Western society would

have no issue with Mustafa if he had a fair color but no Education. Parody, which is the best way to criticize the past is obvious in the text. Mustafa Sae'ed exploits west by raping multiple white women the way *Heart of Darkness* presents Kurtz exploiting nature and life in Congo. In *Season*, the European society is “the heart of darkness” that corrupts Mustafa Saeed and turns him into a sadistic killer whose “soul is mad” (110). Salih challenges the western notion of enlightening the whole world by rewriting against what is considered canonical. Saeed says “I’ll liberate Africa with my penis” (56). On the visual level it seems that west wants to educate the world. And it is why they have constructed schools and institutions in the colonized nations. But *Season* dismantles the métarécit of “The White Man's Burden”. Salih notes:

[T]he English language was the key to the future: no one had a chance without it. Gordon College was actually little more than an intermediate school where they used to give us just enough education for filling junior government posts. (30)

In the guise of education and English language, white men produced innumerable servants who strengthened their colonization and loot in the entire world. They never wanted to educate the non-English states but in order to transfer their culture, language and thought it was integral to do so. There is always something bigger and superior behind the common stories. *Season* does away with the métarécits of Education and “The White Man's Burden”. We know that métarécit stands on petit récits and it is obvious through this reference. On the surface level West built schools and institutions in order to educate the natives but there are other intentions to transfer their culture, language and thought and to loot the resources. In the guise of educating the natives they get servants who strengthen their hold on the natives as was clearly stated in Lord Macaulay’s “Minute on Indian education”:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. (375)

Through the character of Mustafa, the novel shows how his journey into the heart of light turns out into a fiasco of intolerance and narrow-mindedness. During his stay in England, Mustafa gets a chance to unleash his hyper-sexual persona and openly involves in sexual relations with more than one woman and carries on expressing his attributes until he kills his wife. Mustafa recalls how he was disrespected by his wife



Jean Morris. She says, "You're ugly" Jean Morris said to me. "I've never seen an uglier face than yours." (21). Mustafa vows to one day make her pay for that. And in the pursuit of his revenge, he starts chasing her and finally settles to marry her which later Mustafa recalls as an act of hostility. Sae'ed during his stay in England becomes a sadist person who enjoys to deceive by changing his sexual partners. He has no trace of being a conscientious individual and never regrets what he does to the hearts of females there.

We find parallels between *Heart of darkness* and *Season*. In *Heart of Darkness*, it is Kurtz who goes into the heart of Africa and kills innumerable people and in *Season* Mustafa Saeed seduces the English women. As an ironical counter reply to *Heart of darkness* and the cruelty faced by Africans, Mustafa says, "I'll liberate Africa with my penis" (56). The postmodern parody is also obvious here. *Season* is a perfect postmodern parody of *Heart of Darkness*. Postmodern parody presents difference rather than mere ridicule and it is obvious in the text. It takes into account the older texts and helps us understand the unsolvable. Kurtz moves to heart of darkness in search of irony. Likewise, Mustafa moves to the heart of light in search of education and good future but fails in doing so. Jean Morris' words "I've never seen an uglier face than yours." (21) show that west has nothing to do with education and knowledge. Looks matter a lot in postmodern world. It gives insight to postmodern concept of depthlessness, where looks are more important than any hidden meanings. Fredric Jameson explains this postmodern feature in these words:

Most evident [postmodern feature] is the emergence of a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense, perhaps the supreme formal feature of all the. (60)

West would have no issue with Mustafa if he had a nice skin color. West, who claims itself as liberal and open-minded still exercises the difference of color, creed and race. This Western obsession with color does not have any deep reason but it is just superficial behavior.

Mustafa's remarks about his first girlfriend Ann Hammond, who is a wealthy twenty-year-old Oxford student of Oriental languages, bring forth his destructive and indifferent mental approach towards women. She eventually gassed herself to death. Not just these two but also Sheila Greenwood, his other girlfriend. Mustafa is shocked that Sheila, who was a virgin when he first met her, dared to kill herself. She was

described as “A waitress in a Soho restaurant, a simple girl with a sweet smile and a sweet way of speaking.” (23). From his life with females in England the novel tries to shrug off the perception of the west as a morally high and enlightened society and that it can humanize the nature of humans who belong to third-world or less civilized areas. On the contrary, it shows how London gives Mustafa his first disrespect and how later it allowed him to unleash his sadist attitude of revenge on the people in a sexually revolutionized society. After spending time in jail he comes back to home and lives a simple life of love with his wife Hosna who has borne him children as well and remains faithful to each other as long as they are together.

Every day, we find some new technological advancement in the field of science and technology. So, this technological transformation is having a lot of impact on knowledge. A good deal of research and then a continuous production of new knowledge everyday shows the proliferation of learning knowledge. And this present knowledge subscribes to the postmodern worldview where everything has a sign exchange value. The old thought where training of mind and acquisition of knowledge were considered incapable of being separated for learning, the knowledge has become a commodity in the contemporary age where we find suppliers and users or consumers of knowledge. We find a gap or you may say a kind of alienation between the knower of Knowledge and its user. “Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself, it loses its “use-value”. (Lyotard 5)

Same is case in *Season*, Where Mustafa Saeed has nothing to do with the knowledge he possesses. His vast knowledge is of no value in the distant region of Africa which has its own petit récits. It is the postmodern world where power is gained by having more and more information (about the scientific advancement). So, Information has become a commodity in the contemporary age. And this computer age which is bringing new versions of information appreciates transformation and this rapid change can't be separated from the present culture.

Moreover, we find figurative parallels between *Season* and *Heart of Darkness* on different levels like characters and plot development but the most important and notable thing is that these parallels work by keeping an ironic difference. It is why Hutcheon says that, “parody is a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion” (Hutcheon 6). There are multiple binaries at work which construct these

parallels. In *Season*, the protagonist, a black negro, is travelling from Africa to Europe, and, in *Heart of Darkness*, the narrator, a white man, is moving from Europe to Africa. The North-South divide in *Season* represents a larger divide between colonizer and colonized, as well as between cultures and identities. The concept of metanarratives is related to this divide because the dominant narrative of colonialism is a metanarrative that seeks to impose a singular narrative onto diverse cultures and identities. Through the character of Mustafa Sa'eed, Tayeb Salih challenges this metanarrative and provides a more nuanced and complex understanding of postcolonial identity. *Heart of darkness* presents Africans as unvoiced but *Season* gives voice to the unvoiced. As compared to western protocols we find a different lifestyle of African people discussed in *Season*. Postmodern irony welcomes us to widen and extend the concept of irony and fit it to the requirements of the contemporary age.

Thus, *Season* serves to rewrite the perception of west as civil, human and enlightened society, where one can easily unleash his animalistic instincts that can cause death to people directly or indirectly. So, the established notion of the west in the eyes of western imperial writers and Rudyard Kipling has been questioned and the meta narrative is counter-presented by exposing the western culture, language and thought, control and resources. What comes forward as instances of petit recits is that Mustafa Sae'e'd does not get civilized when he is in the west and his western education does not make him successful back in his native place. It means that the local culture and concepts of civilization, success and failure constantly push against the influential and conventionally civilizing metanarrative of the west. The metanarrative of identity is discussed in the next section.

#### **5.4 Floating Identity**

*Season* explores the complex issue of identity in a postcolonial context, highlighting the hybridity of cultural identities and the fluidity of individual identity. The novel's characters embody this hybridity, as they navigate the tensions between Arab and Western cultures, traditional and modern values, and individual and collective identities. Mustafa Sae'e'ds' identity remains shifting and floating across the text. The paranoia of cultural options never lets him settle down with any stable identity. The hide and seek between the present and past, absence and presence, and life and death

of Mustafa Saeed offer him no anchorage. In postcolonial and diasporic novels, the issue of homecoming or authentication of one true identity is mainly focused and the characters, with a few exceptions, largely want to claim their true recognition with their national, cultural or religious identities against the hybrid, assimilated and imposed identities of Western societies which they fail to maintain or uphold. Salih's *Season* depicts the homecoming of the narrator and Sa'eed from their western host land England and also discusses the issues of identities oscillating between two opposite ends, creating tension and indecisiveness.

Homi K. Bhabha discusses this condition in his book *The Location of Culture* wherein Bhabha uses terms like "hybridity", "in-betweenness" and "Unhomeliness" to explain such a condition in which someone's identity is mixed between different cultures (122-123,124). Both Sa'eed and the narrator come back to their homeland after facing marginalization and mistreatment in England. Sa'eed comes back after causing havoc to the life of people in England. However, when they come back to Africa, none of them finds their real identities in their homeland. Their homeland, Sudan, proves to be the "imagined community" (Anderson 123) that they lost long ago and now they can't be natives again. Their cultural identity has changed because of their exposure to Western culture because cultural identity is not any fixed condition but it is in a continuous flux and change as Stuart Hall writes: "[C]ultural identity ... is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. ... [It is] far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past" (436). Sa'eed who comes back after spending years in jail in England also vanishes improperly and the narrator who has come back doesn't find himself the representative of his true ideals and self. Quoting Mustafa, narrator say, "He had said that he was a lie, so was I also a lie? I am from here — is not this reality enough?" (28). These words show that narrator and Mustafa lose their true self. They find themselves unfit to live in their imaginary homeland while coming back from England. Both, Mustafa Saeed and narrator dance between western liberal thoughts and eastern norms. What is taboo for the east could be normative for the west. It is the reason why Lyotard calls to, "wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences" (82).

Moreover, narrator's rift with his grandfather and his friend on the issue of Hosna's marriage shows how lacking his homeland is as compared to his true ideals of

the right of choice and voice. Thus, both the narrator and Sa'eed never truly acclaim their homecoming as true homecoming neither they both claim their home as their pure and true identity. Narrator says:

Occasionally the disturbing thought occurs to me that Mustafa Sa'eed never happened, that he was in fact a lie, a phantom, a dream or a nightmare that had come to the people of that village one suffocatingly dark night. (27)

Here narrator's words draw a parallel between his own and Sae'ed's identity because he finds a kind of self in Sa'eed. The narrator feels out of place at certain occasions while Sa'eed remains as mysterious as he had been at the initial of the novel. The portrait of his late English wife on the wall inside his secret room and the absence of Arab books in his library show the vacant space inside his identity and his obsession with the west.

Thus, the meta-narrative of true identity is replaced with the mini narratives of confusion, hybridity and lack of conviction. The novel serves to critically question the issues of identity, nationality and race. Postmodern unreliability and uncertainty is explored in the next section.

## 5.5 Contingence and Uncertainty as Mini Narratives

If we look at the form, we find *Season* celebrating unreliability. contingence is one of the distinguished features of postmodern art and it is something celebrated rather than lamented. Education, death, and truth as a signifier look for signified but signified is missing. *Season* employs a non-linear narrative structure that includes multiple narrators and flashbacks. The novel's complex narrative structure reflects the fragmentation and complexity of postmodern identity and challenges traditional linear storytelling.

*Season* displays unreliable narration like William Carlos Williams's poem "The Red Wheelbarrow" that surfaces the inadequacy of language. The language of the poem does not convey a single meaning. There are a few words that do not have definite meanings such as '*wheelbarrow*', '*white chicken*', the '*red*' color of wheelbarrow and '*white*' color of chickens. Here, a *wheelbarrow* could possibly present the hard work of Americans. It could also be a symbol of farming. Whereas, *Red color* could be

symbolizing murder, blood, revolution or danger. Furthermore, white color can be a symbol of death, purity, peace or sickness. Likewise, *Season* shows uncertainty of meaning and gives birth to a mini narrative of ambiguity, unreliability, and open-endedness. The language used fails to convey a definite meaning.

In *Season*, the whole story moves forward and backward. Mustafa Sae'ed comes, hides, dies, comes again, tells the narrator about his past and dies again. But throughout the text it is not clear whether he is dead or alive. Death as a signified looks for signified. There is no chronology in the course of the events. If Mustafa is dead, we don't know the reason of his death. Salih notes;

village searched the whole night through it was without avail. Telephone messages were sent to the police stations right along the Nile. In the end they presumed he must have been drowned. (27)

We don't know whether he committed suicide, drowned in the river, eaten by wild animals or just went somewhere. In this way, the novel invites the reader to participate as an active reader and interpret the incident in his own way. In contrast to postmodern readers Victorian readers were passive readers. They used to read novels of Charles Dicken and Jane Austen passively because England was earning money and had colonized multiple nations in the world. Texts were risible for the Victorian readers and they had to enjoy and absorb what was being told. Meanings were close-ended. But the condition of the world changed after the world wars. There was chaos and uncertainty which emerged in the postmodern narratives as well. The lack of order, centrality and reliability made the postmodern readers paranoid and invited them to give their own interpretations to the texts.

As Linda Hutcheon says in *A Postmodern Problematics* "In theory and practice, 'postmodernism parody' is the contradictory state of being a part of that which it critiques" (Hutcheon). It shows postmodern pastiche, parody and irony use as well as subvert the use of traditionalist grand-narratives. *Season* presents petit récit against the meta-narrative of the genre. In contrast to the métarécit of *Heart of Darkness* where Africans are presented as inhuman "What a row the brute makes!" (30), wild and uneducated, *Season* serves to right back and as a result brings forth the life of Sudanese rural society and explicitly depicts the values, life, religion, customs, language,

condition of women (as comparatively independent), gender inequality and moral vicinity of that life.

The novel starts with a narrator who has been to England and comes back to his roots, his nation and village, where he meets another individual Mustafa Sa'eed who has been to London on scholarship and had been jailed there for the murder of his wife. The story tries to compare the life and experiences of both individuals in their host countries. The narrator also compares the weather in London to the weather to the weather in his village. The work serves as an anti-colonial work through the image of Mustafa Sa'eed's life as an anti-colonial figure working against the western exploitation of Sudan by the west. The intention gets cleared when, After Sa'eed passes away, the narrator goes to his hidden chamber and discovers several books like -- "*The Economics of Colonialism* Mustafa Sa'eed. *Colonialism and Monopoly* Mustafa Sa'eed. *The Cross and Gunpowder* Mustafa Sa'eed" (63) at his home in Wad Hamid. Sa'eed sees the colonisation of the Sudanese as a behaviour of sexual abuse and cruelty. These books depict the violence the colonialists inflicted upon the African people, which prompted Mustafa to consider exacting revenge through sexism and exploitation. The term "the economics of colonialism" described how colonisation affected Sudan's economy. The reserves of his books show why Mustafa acts so in the work. However, the work is not mainly concerned with the connection between Arab and western culture but in fact, presents the life and values of the people of rural Sudanese societies.

*Season* presents boldly speaking women who enjoys to discuss sexuality which is usually considered taboo. It also discusses how the widow of Mustafa is persuaded by an old man who forces her to marry and consequently dies while forcing her to consummate the marriage. It also puts light on values of patriarchy, manhood, religion and sex within the rural Sudanese society and thus presents the novel not just as a purely post-colonial work but also as a panorama picture of life in Sudan, its culture, values and social ills. Thus, the novel breaks the meta-narrative of the genre that is normally believed to present the work through a single lens and focus mainly on the interaction between colonized and colonizers and presents a full life of Arab African Muslim society disconnected from its colonial implications.

Ordinary characters, presentation of petit recits, local not universal phenomenon and no proper beginning, middle and end makes *Season* a pure postmodern reading. Novel beautifully presents the typical mindset of the west and east in an ironic way and as a result we find no resolution. As, according to the postmodern philosophy there can't be a single overarching concept that could be applied everywhere in a universal and general way because human experiences are very diverse. So, if someone takes a particular idea and applies it to everyone in the same manner, this kind of imposition of métarécits needs to be seen with suspicion and should be replaced with petit récits. The next section concludes petit recits discussed in the above sections.

## 5.6 Defying the True and the Original

The sections discussed in the foregoing pages show how *Season* challenges metanarratives of truth, manhood, West, originality, identity, and the institution of marriage by presenting the petit recits of provisional truths, cowardliness, native and multiple cultural discourse, hybridity, multiple signified, and unconventional narrative style.

In *Season*, we find language as an unreliable tool that fails to express the uncertainty of postmodern man. The semantic uncertainty and fluid boundaries of the text merge multiple genres. The novel, neither has any proper beginning, middle and end, nor has any closure. Moreover, Salih builds mini narrative of a non-linear narrative style by giving surprises to the readers. The métarécit of female is dismantled by the petit recits of women as authoritative, rebellion, brave, and independent. Conventions and rules fail to hijack their independence. We find the métarécit of manhood pathetic and coward. A man who is presented as muscular and macho exercises his agency on a widow woman. The petit recit of lust, sexual desires and pseudo manhood breaks the métarécit of manhood in *Season*. Métarécit of marriage is also questioned. Against the convention Bint Majzoob marries eight different men one after the other. But western women seem reluctant to marry a single man. Hosna wants to live with his husband for the rest of his life. What is right is kept as secret and reader is given no clue about it. The petit recit of multiple marriages, sex without marriage, and living women without any relation dismantles the métarécit of romantic matrimonial knot.



West, usually presented as the metanarrative of enlightenment and progress, seems crumbling in *Season*. The guise of education and enlightening the third world they prorogate their agendas. *Season* supplies Petit recits of servants, loot, thought, desired educational system and corruption in response to meta narrative of greater west. In this postmodern age there is nothing pure or original. Characters lack their true identity. Petit recits of confusion, hybridity, lack of home and conviction question the métarécit of true identity and nation. Moreover, *Season* presents a different perspective in response to what most of the western writers opined about the east and Arabic world. Petit recit of different culture, rules, traditions and women as authoritative, challenges the metanarrative of history. Novel does not resolve any of the issues and remains open-ended. Petit recit of unreliability, uncertainty, unresolved and open-ended puts an end to the grand narrative closure and consensus. The next chapter concludes this dissertation.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

As my textual analysis in the previous two chapters shows, I have focused on how the grand narratives are dismantled and mini narratives are played up in Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*. Therefore, my study is an interrogation of (the reliability and authenticity) of métarécits (grand narratives) in my selected texts. As my argument in the first chapter reveals, my selected novels exhibit "incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard 24). My basic research premises presented through my thesis statement and research questions in the first chapter were to see how Rahimi and Salih subvert grand narratives in their novels. By providing alternative modes of narration and plural realities (petit récits), the selected authors provide different and creative worldview to their potential readers. As I argue in the first chapter, though my primary texts are rated well in the existing postcolonial fiction, not much critical attention has been brought to these texts from the postmodernist standpoint, especially by taking theoretical support from Jean Francois Lyotard and Linda Hutcheon. The controlling research questions of my study mentioned in the first chapter are: In what ways do the selected texts exhibit postmodern consciousness? How do petit récits challenge totalitarian monoliths in the selected fictions? What are the ways in which postmodern parody and irony play out in the selected narratives? In order to find out answers to these questions, I have analyzed my selected fiction by deploying the theoretical concepts of Lyotard and Hutcheon. Moreover, I have tried to read both texts by taking support from "Textual Analysis as a Research Method" written by Catharine Belsey. Since Belsey has written this essay in a poststructuralist vein, it suits my postmodern reading of the texts.

#### 6.1 Findings

On the basis of my analysis, I have reached some significant findings. In the first place both Rahimi and Salih bring forth multiple petit recits to counter and question cultural grand narratives. Both texts dismantle metanarratives and embrace mini narratives (petit recits) which is the main argument of this study. *TPS* dismantles the cultural grand narrative of family by supplying the mini narratives of selfishness,

indifference, loneliness, unloyalty and financial burden. The family of the paralyzed man leaves him alone when he gets injured in a pathetic quarrel. In response to a unified conventional family, *TPS* presents an indifferent family in which even mother does not care about her injured son and leaves him alone. (see page 56). Honor as a cultural grand narrative has been challenged in *TPS*. In response to conventional representation of honor, *TPS* intends to replace it with petit recits of sexual desires and free will of women. An anonymous female protagonist breaks the set conventions and exercises her free will by sleeping with a young boy who is a holy warrior. Neither her family nor her husband are able to control her (see page 50). Patriarchy as a grand narrative is also questioned in *TPS*. Text supplies petit recits of cowardliness and calculative male characters against the metanarrative of manhood. Mullah, who preaches hadiths in favor of the holy war, is afraid of bullets. Moreover, the female protagonist abuses her husband many times but her husband does not do anything in response to her acrimonious language (see page 57). Likewise, *Season* investigates the established metanarrative of Patriarchy by bringing up mini narratives of female as authoritative, bold, independent and self-sufficient. *Season* challenges the idea of village women as voiceless and void of agency. Both Hosna and Bint Majzub are very assertive and articulate their thoughts freely. They practice their freewill without any fear (see page 64). *TPS* and *Season* raise questions on the authenticity, and universality of metanarratives. The study shows that the thematic units such as fall of Métarécit of love, incredulity towards the grand narrative of honor, interrogating the institution of family, and challenging the grand narrative of manhood contribute in crystalizing postmodern consciousness in the selected texts.

My second finding is that Rahimi and Salih use postmodern parody and irony as stylistic devices in order to interrogate and dismantle the grand narratives of all kind. Analysis of *TPS* proves that the ironic language and parody utilized in *TPS* dismantles the métarébits of love, honour, war, and religion, inter alia. Texts prove that unreliability of overarching métarébits is the result of horrible atrocities of war, religious corruption and lust for power that causes irreparable damage to the entire humanity. *TPS* and *Season* present contingency and uncertainty in metanarratives. Both texts, by deploying unconventional narrative style present paranoia of the postmodern man (see page 68). *Season* does not abide by the classic or modern convention of systematic storytelling, rather a large part of the novel is told in the form of flashbacks.

In *Season*, the use of narrator, unconventional narrative style, temporal distortion, and absence of closure make it a postmodern text (read section 5.5 on page 74). In line with the perspective discussed in the theoretical framework, this study does not strictly bind itself to the idea of dismantling *métarécits* only. A tangential reading of the concepts of ‘waning of affect’ and ‘depthlessness’ (Jameson 16), the use of ordinary character and local truths also prove helpful in supporting the postmodern view of the selected texts (see page 71).

Being a postmodern study, this dissertation questions the conventional role of the author who, in realist and modernist literature, was given central position. The central position of the author carried a sense of the divine authenticity and unchangeability. In comparison to the West, *Season* presents different cultures and traditions of Sudanese rural life. I have attempted to relate the parallels between different texts and derive multiple meanings out of them. When Compared to *Heart of Darkness*, *Season*, in line with the Hutcheon’s concept of parody, presents a different worldview. *Season* challenges the idea of village women as voiceless and void of agency. Both Hosna and Bint Majzub articulate their thoughts and use their agency (see page 72). *Season* also challenges metanarratives of truth, originality and identity by bringing up the *petit récits* of provisional truths, hybridity, multiple meanings, and unconventional narrative style. Mustafa Sae’ds’ identity remains floating across the text. He fails to find any stable identity. Shifts between present, past, future, and life and death offer no anchorage to the reader (see page 73). Similarly, the narrator in *Season* also has a hybrid identity and he has impact of both British and Sudanese cultures on his personality.

My third finding is that both Rahimi and Salih defy universal grand narratives like war, religion, and West. I have discussed the metanarrative of colonial discourse in chapter five and analysed mini narratives in the text that counter it (see page 69). *Season* tends to puncture the concept of true identity and debunks West as a civic place with high standards of morality and peaceful society fit for people to live in. *Petit récits* show how Mustafa becomes a true sadist in the so-called civilized West. Just like in *Heart of Darkness*, England has been presented as the ‘heart of darkness’ that dangerously corrupts an African, Mustafa Sae’ed. The *métarécit* of ‘civilizing’ western education brings no change in Mustafa Sae’ed’s life. He is treated as a wild, uneducated

man in England because of his black color (see page 69). Moreover, his western education does not make him successful back in Sudan. Salih presents the fact in his novel that the local culture and concepts of civilization, rules, and customs push against the metanarrative of the west (see page 69,70).

Against the concepts of conventional fiction, where we find different repressive ideologies taking the central position, both the selected texts dismantle the multiple *métarécits* by exposing their hidden sides. *TPS* presents Russia's invasion over Afghanistan. Unlike the conventional war narratives, it neither romanticizes war nor does it glorify heroic slogans of killing. It shows the other side of story, where there is suffering, hunger, disease, bloodshed, lack of morality, torture, loneliness, and crime. The novel laments against the *métarécit* of war by presenting the view that there are always some political and personal agendas behind the glorification of war. *TPS* questions the Metanarrative of war by showing that the man who was prepared to fight in war for his religion and country is left alone by the same religious community and his own family (see page 58,59). The presentation of multiple stories against a single *métarécit* subverts the totalizing phenomena of modernism. Moreover, employing pure postmodern attitude, nonhuman and animal characters like bee, picture, quail and khanjar, have got a special position in the novel (see page 61).

This research proves that being postmodern texts, both *TPS* and *Season* show incredulity toward *métarécits*. Both novels support postmodern position in line with the theorization of Lyotard and Hutcheon. In sum, we come up with the view that no single controlling concept rules the contemporary times because there is an unlimited variety in the human experiences due to which truth(s) becomes provisional and meanings become contingent. The mini narratives (*petit recits*) proliferating the selected novels reject the grand narratives of religion, war, family, and west, inter alia, that carry the sense of the authentic and the universal.

## **6.2 Recommendations for Further Research**

This research is located within the popular domain of Postmodernism, and I have attempted to give a minuscule contribution to the production of knowledge in this area. Whatever is on the horizon and has not been included in this study should be taken

up by the future researchers. Postmodern theorizing may be employed to read most of the contemporary literary works in all genres to see how it dismantles the accepted notions of enlightenment and modernism. In fact, there are certain writers in Pakistan, Afghanistan and India who challenge the conventions, set patterns, and narratives of religion and history. Works like Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, deals with the contemporary issues like Climate and transgender. Text does not display the details about characters, it is dispersed. Moreover, there is no proper beginning, middle and end in the text. Mohsin Hamid's *How to get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* and Atiq Rahimi's *Earth and Ashes* need to be viewed from postmodern stand point. Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* is already a popular text for a postmodern reading. The future researchers may look at it from any of the postmodern theoretical positions they deem fit. Moreover, Sorayya Khan's *Noor* deals with the fall of East Pakistan. It may be conveniently read as a text of historiographical metafiction.

It is generally thought that postmodern theory does not conveniently link with the non-Western nations and the experiences of the Third World. This study tries to challenge this orientalist bias and welcomes new researchers to conduct their research on Asian and Arabic postmodern literature. New researchers may conduct a comparative investigation on postmodern literature of the eastern writings (as mentioned in the paragraph above). The future research may build on this study and make further readings of popular texts. In this way, conversation would continue and new horizons will be explored.

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