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The Progress of the Protagonist from Alienation to Resistance.

A Study of Selected Post-war II American Narratives of:

Saul Bellow, Thomas Pynchon, and William Styron

Thesis Submitted to the Department of English-University of Mostaganem in Candidature for the Degree of Doctorate in American Literature

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DEDICATIONS

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to:

The sake of Allah Almighty and His messenger, Mohammed (PBUH),

The University of Abdelhamid Ibn Badis–Mostaganem,

My parents, especially my mum who passed away,

My elder brother Habib for his moral support,

My wife, for her endless support, encouragement, and patience,

My sons, and my daughters for their patience.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

CL49: The Crying of Lot 49

GR: Gravity's Rainbow

HRK: Henderson the Rain King

HZ: Herzog

CNT: The Confessions of Nat Turner

STHOF: Set this House on Fire

STD: Seize the Day

ABSTRACT

The present thesis aims to examine the protagonists struggle with the different forms of alienation and the modes of resistance they employ so as to overcome its effects. The progress of the protagonists from alienation to resistance is studied in six fictional narratives drawn from Post-War II American literature where two novels by three crucial voices of American postmodern fiction writers namely: Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), and *Herzog* (1964), Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), and William Styron's, *Set this House on Fire* (1960), and *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967), are the focal point of this thesis. Thus, the study attempts to provide a detailed discussion and analysis of the way the protagonists in the selected texts do not accept to be enslaved by the imposed alienation but progress and transcend to reach resistance. The method used is both descriptive and analytical. This research also hinges upon reading the selected narratives in the light of Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* as well as viewing them from existentialist and postmodernist perspectives. The findings reveal that the protagonists in the selected novels progress from mere alienated individuals, to emerge as resistant and triumphant figures. It also confirms the three authors' optimistic outlook holding the view that in spite of the filth, debris, and corruption that characterized the American society, the protagonists manage to overcome their different sorts of alienation and succeed in maintaining their dignity and humanism.

Key words: alienation, Bellow, connectedness, existentialism, quest, post-war II, protagonist, Pynchon, Styron, resistance.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

For a long time, literature has been the most valuable means of relating what it is linked to man and his existence. Through the different ages, writers have produced works that constantly express an indisputable interest in man and his struggles with limitless problems and with the meaning of his personal experiences.

In the case of American literature, the Colonial, Revolutionary, Romantic Periods, and the Modern Age represent some of the major cultural epochs in its development. The literature of each age or period represents man's concern with the human dilemma in which he finds himself as a unique being with personal beliefs, ambitions, and frustrations.

Human being in modern society is encountered by many evils and dangers and so he happens to be the victim of loneliness, lack of affection, and lack of communication. Consequently, he becomes frustrated and thus, he loses faith in everything that surrounds him. In a world of mysteries, man's journey towards uncovering the hidden secrets of modern society seems itself mysterious. In a modern world characterized by shaken values such as the belief in an ordered and controlled world, and the belief in the sense of purpose in life has generated the concept of alienation.

Most scholars and critics hold the view that literature of the modern age in America is said to belong to a large extent to the literature of alienation. It originated from an individual feeling a kind of estrangement and loneliness in a society seeking adjustment to the circumstances of materialism, consumerism and fragmentation. A close examination of the fictions of many of the world's well-known writers will reveal that in the majority of their writings, they deal

with the theme of alienation which is treated as a widespread reaction to those wounds which society inflicts upon man, the social creature. Even though the manipulation of the alienation motif diverges among writers, one is safe in saying that it is on the whole a portrayal of man separated from the commonplace stream of societal life.

Although this ideology had its roots in the preceding narratives; it is still prevalent in modern American literature. Countless volumes are filled with the question of alienation, especially in post-war II American fiction, which portrays the protagonist as an alienated person. While precursors of modern fiction point at the character's free estrangement i.e. alienation determined by fate, post-World War Two American literature, on the contrary deals with the second form of alienation which is compelled. One has to distinguish between two forms of alienation, the self or free alienation, and the forced one. Some protagonists and out of their free will choose and accept to be alienated however, others are forced into a state of alienation. The latter is a kind of alienation imposed by the changes happening in a mass society-a society characterized by excessive consumerism, dominance of media, and high technology. The changes happening around force the characters to take the path of different quests in an attempt to find solutions to their enigmatic existence.

Even though the twentieth century is the primary home of literature exploring alienation, the concept is much older. Many scholars would relate alienation above all with the twentieth century and beyond, and indeed, the modernist movement which has as one of its central themes the idea that the modem man is alienated in the modern period. Such an era is characterized by its increased reliance on science and technology, and the gradual removal of

the individual from rural community into urban isolation. In a society as the like, the individual is at odds with himself, with society, and with one another. In view of that, the modern human being feels a sense of displacement, living in a disorganized and fragmented world. As a result, it seems increasingly harder for him/her to be able to find order and meaning in life.

However, it was more than just the world environment that fueled the feeling of alienation within many categories of people. It was the increasingly fast-paced lifestyle which most people were enjoying which distanced families and widened the gap in life between people. As a consequence, people grew further and further away from each other. The technological revolution of the Post-Wars amplified the amount of alienation which people were feeling.

The ideas on alienation have become relatively pervasive in recent years, and many societies in earlier stages of history have experienced this observable fact. But both in its form and in its extent modern alienation differs from that of the previous times. It has now become much more intensified and broader, and has in reality turned into a widespread trend.

Alienation is apparent in all different types of literature. Whether in short stories, poems, plays, or novels, it has become an unavoidable issue. However, it is commonly assumed that alienation did not just burst up out of nowhere and out of nothing. It must have had its roots, and they were to be found in the very beginnings of the history of a newly born nation, America. Since alienation has become an unavoidable aspect, characters and mainly protagonists in major works written in the Post-Wars era have tried to overcome their alienation by employing various ways and by going through different channels one of them is resistance.

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In order to better understand the notions of alienation and resistance that the protagonist experiences, six fictional narratives belonging to three major American fiction writers of the post-wars period have been selected for this purpose namely: Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King,* and *Herzog,* Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, and William Styron's *Set This House on Fire,* and *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. The choice of the theme of alienation did not arise out of a vacuum nor did the choice of the three authors. As for the first choice, it is motivated by my inspiration from a lecture I delivered to my master students on Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*. With regard to the second choice, it grew out of the inspiration I drew from my better half in using one type of thinking that she implements at home to make use of time and place, i.e. to get a short cut and to do different things at the same time. This type is called spiral thinking. It is composed of spiral that stands for twisting around the hub, and thinking means knowledge gained through the five senses and is combined and used, and is found within remembrance. This type of thinking is utilized in this work to kill two birds with only one stone; to come out with something original and to give the flavour to the work so as to kill the boredom of people and to motivate them to read this work.

Although the selected authors are from different socio-cultural and historical backgrounds, they intersect in some common points, such as their thematic concerns, modes of narration, and their style of writing. Moreover, the six fictional narratives are full of historical, cultural and social markers which make the experience of reading attractive and rewarding. The analysis of these six narratives follows three steps. The first step is through looking at the

origins and forms of the two concepts. The second step is seeking the way these concepts manifest in the selected narratives. The final step is through showing the solutions that the characters and mainly the protagonists achieve through their resistance.

An analysis of six post-war American narratives demonstrates how the concepts of alienation and resistance have been used to refer fundamentally to the desperate experiences and to the manner characters react to theses unpleasant experiences. Pynchon's works present absurd characters captured in an absurd world. They are portrayed as having no possibility to escape the restraints of the modern world. Bellow's narratives also illustrate the way characters struggle with alienation. These characters find no way to escape since the world, they inhabit does not only allow them any sort of freedom, but also keeps them hostages. They have no other solution but to resist what they confront with the hope for a better future. In Styron's writings, characters cannot escape the burdens of modern technological society. In Styron's view, characters are not absurd by nature, but rather, it is the obligation of confronting the world-reality- that renders their absurdity an obligation. Their estrangement is the outcome of both external and internal factors. Thus, it is the materialistic, capitalistic environment that enables the character to accept the superficial, negative attitudes of life, and to try to find meaning to a meaningless living. As a result, characters have no choice but to resist these changes.

The problem with the protagonists in the selected narratives seems to be one of adjustment. Having undergone the process of estrangement, they find it difficult to cope with the new conditions offered to them. There are two ways

or channels through which the protagonists resolve to escape the present conditions, it is either through accepting to cope with what might be perceived as necessities of living, i.e. to go through the process of adaptation and acceptance, or to undergo the process of denial and challenge, i.e., to stick to the very essence of living as opposed to the false claims and interests of a materialistic-oriented society–a society that does not conform to the protagonist's values, beliefs and principles. Unable to reach any conformity with the changes of the modern society, they prefer and admit to go through the process of resistance.

Despite of the fact that the protagonists in post-war American literature live in a society filled with alienation, they do their utmost to confirm their individuality and social firmness by resisting all these changes. They also try to catch the very real meaning of their lives. It is only thanks to their efforts, detective investigation and reasonable interpretation that they were able to exhibit their heroic position.

Despite the negative aspects of the modern world, its futility and its banality, still some resistance continues to be felt by the protagonists in the selected works of American fiction. The clash between what is usual and what is mystical continues to persist. It elevates the tension by dramatizing the confrontation and turns the resistance a sort of combative struggle.

By insisting on maintaining the sense of belonging and community within a hostile world, the protagonists are forced to go through a stage of resistance to the evils that encounter them. For man is sociable by nature; he has the desire for social bonds and connections with others. (Murray, 1938)

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The theme of alienation is common in the post-wars era literary scene. Characters suffering from loneliness, loss, and absence of meaningful relationship in the era of technological development and global interaction are still engraved in countless pages of writings produced during that period. It is the political, social, cultural, economic, and geographical displacements that have made each man an alienated. Cultural alienation has become a universal phenomenon. Post-war literature dealing with the emotional problems of the modern man reflects the painful experiences that the alienated individual goes through. By the late 19th century, the theme of alienation became important in the area of literature in general. Two major World Wars i.e. World War I and World War II, helped turn alienation into a popular subject that still remains, to this day, a theme of crucial importance in literature.

In American literature, numerous literary characters feel painfully alienated from their surroundings. Some like Bartleby in Herman Melville's short story *Bartleby, the Scrivener* (1853), the strangest man having no motivation to survive the effects of depressions. By the end of the story, Bartleby committed suicide. This short story can be considered a good example as it introduces many senses of alienation. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter,* (1850) treats the subject in the person of Hester Prynne, who moves to the suburbs of Boston, Massachusetts, unable to withstand the pressures of a persistently Puritan community. Other literary texts dealing with the theme of alienation include memorable characters in the writings of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) which revolves around the Negro as an outsider, a man who is alienated through his invisibility.

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The period ranging from the pre-world war era to the contemporary era in American literature is noted for works with their perspective on alienation and which include Jake Barnes in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), a main character who feels alienated from his own community. Caddy Compson, in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), is another character who feels alienated from her closer connections, including family members and loved ones. Caddy's alienation results in her brothers' obsessions. Through Holden Caulfield the novel's protagonist in *The Catcher in the Rye*, (1951), J. D. Salinger tackles complex issues of identity, belonging, loss, connection, and alienation. Alienation was too a relatable subject to race relations. James Arthur Baldwin, John Ernst Steinbeck, and Richard Nathaniel Wright, in particular, were concerned with the alienation that African-Americans felt within their community and within themselves. Richard, who is both the narrator and the protagonist in *Black Boy* (1945), exemplifies the character alienation from his community, the blacks and from the whites. Perhaps the most extreme form of alienation lies in characters such as Meursault in Albert Camus's *The Stranger* (1942), who feels alienated from everything with which he comes into contact: his family, his society, and the entire of modern life. Indeed, Meursault is the neutral anti-hero vis-à-vis the world that surrounds him. Another significant example could be also the lead character; Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise in Jack Karaoke's *On The Road* (1957), which in a post world war II scene went through a journey of self discovery from New York to New Mexico City in an attempt to escape the repressive East to find freedom. The search for self and individuality is a central theme in the novel.

This alienation and displacement were supported by theatrical movements as well. The Theatre of the Absurd paid its acknowledgment to these movements more than any other schools. In modern drama, without doubt, American theatre was a leading device for condemning this depression and decadence. The theme of alienation has also its lion share in contemporary American drama. American playwrights place alienation as one of their noteworthy subject. Of equal importance, the same theme has been treated in the media and particularly in television. The famous film *The Matrix Trilogy*, (1999) contextualizes theories of alienation in modern society. The fundamental theme of *The Matrix* is the increasingly imperceptible popularity of alienation in the world, and the difficulties that go together with challenges to overcome it.

The same theme has been treated in different genres of American music and also in paintings. The progressive Rock and Roll band, Jazz music, and even sentimental music have dealt with the theme of social alienation. The controversy over the forms of alienation, its causes and effects constitute the focal point for many sociologists, philosophers, psychologists, and psychotherapists.

The present thesis examines various aspects of alienation and resistance as they are depicted in six works written by three Post-world War II American authors namely: Saul Bellow, Thomas Pynchon, and William Styron, and to explore the modes of resistance they employed in an attempt to uncover their absurd meaningless living. The thesis will concentrate mainly on the protagonists and examine their behavior, response to the environment either social or physical, their inner life, the process of their search for meaning and

truth as well, and their relation to the antagonist. Major works belonging to this era will constitute the corpus of this study. Two narratives are selected for study by each of the aforementioned authors. Each of the six works under discussion portrays an individual who is distanced from society. Subsequently, the study stresses mainly on how the protagonist struggles with his alienation in its different forms i.e. either he is alienated from society and his surrounding, from himself or from nature and God, trying to find meaning to his life and progresses from a mere alienated into a resisting figure.

The study makes reference to primary as well as secondary sources. The primary sources consist of six novels selected for the study namely: Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain king* (1959), and *Herzog* (1964), Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*(1966), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), and William Styron's, *Set This House on Fire* (1960), and *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967). Reference to other works by the aforementioned authors will be illustrated when necessary. With regard to the secondary sources they comprise books on the meaning and history of the concepts of alienation and resistance, other books on the manifestation of the themes in American literature, in addition to some articles, un/published dissertations, and dictionaries. The researcher will also draw on some nooks of theories and philosophies such as the Theory of Urbanism, Thematic Theory as well as Camus Myth of Sisyphus.

The experience of alienation and resistance will be explored through fictional characters and mainly protagonists created by the three leading authors. It considers how protagonists like Eugene Henderson, Moses Herzog, Oedipa Mass, Tyrone Slothrop, Cass Kinsolving, and Nat Turner, individually suffered alienation and alteration to the normal equilibrium of their individual

lives upon being faced with new conditions and circumstances dictated by a consumer, capitalistic and materialistic oriented society. All the six characters are forced into a quest for meaning and truth. Even if the modes of resistance differ from one character into the other, they all needed to develop some sort of coping mechanism in their attempt to come to terms with these forms of alienation by undergoing a process of resistance. They finally reach affirmation of identity, confirmation of ethical codes, and more importantly are capable of finding meaning and truth to their very existence.

Alienation is well-established in the narrative structure of their respective stories. Each is told by a first-person-peripheral narrator[1]; Eugene Henderson and Moses Herzog in the two novels by Bellow, Oedipa Mass and Tyrone Slothrop in Pynchon's novels, and Cass Kinsolving and Nat Turner in the two novels by Styron. In order for the researcher to identify with these notions of alienation and isolation that the characters experience, it is indispensable to go through three steps of analysis. First, it is obvious that one has to look at the origin of isolation and alienation. Then, when the origin will be clearly defined, it will allow us to develop how these two concepts manifest themselves in the stories and in the three writers' style. Finally, the different solutions will be shown, solutions which are all considered by the characters, and linked to the individual's awakening.

The intention here is to relate these current theoretical contributions to the literature that stems from this alienated American society and alienated

[1] First-Person Peripheral Narrator, a character who is not the main character or protagonist, but is chosen as the narrator. He/she is another character in the story, one who witnesses the main character's story and conveys it to the reader. (https://tropedia.fandom.com › wiki)

individuals in order to come to a better understanding of how alienation manifests in the six post war American narratives. The principal questions this study aims to answer is: Given the postmodern condition of shifting boundaries, erosion of moral codes, disintegration, and identity formation, what dimensions of alienation exist in contemporary western society and the individual who inhabits it, how does alienation manifest in contemporary American fiction, and how does each protagonist manage to overcome his alienation.

Preoccupied with how the protagonists of the six literary texts resist the forms of alienation they undergo, affirm their humanity and dignity, and subvert power relations, we shall investigate the transformations brought by their transgression, their determination in transcending this predicament in a quest to find meaning to their existence. This statement is rather provocative to pose a series of questions that will be investigated along this thesis.

The present research then seeks also to answer the following questions:

- To which extent is the protagonist able to find meaning and truth in modern American society?
- What form does the protagonists' journey of self-discovery take?
- Where there is resistance to undertake, what forms does it take?

Other guiding questions will include the following:

- What forms of alienation are the protagonists struggling with?
- How do the protagonists influence the course of their quests?

Therefore, the investigation to be basically done in this present research is to lay emphasis on the apparent similarities and differences that the three writers seem to address concerning the nuances of alienation from psychological, sociological and literary standpoints. To put it in another way,

the research will focus on the divergence and convergence of the concept of alienation from different angles in the six novels.

In order to answer the questions mentioned above, one's hypotheses suggest that: 1) the provocative meaning of the concepts under study evolve a critical dialogue vis-a-vis the different ramifications of alienation and resistance by Post-Wars American authors.2) the novels open new avenues as they revolutionize the old traditional modes of dealing with the concept of alienation.3) Post-Wars American writings have indeed dealt with the frustrations, and fragmentations of alienated individuals victimized and estranged as they are, they find voices in literary expression of optimism and triumph.

Primary fictional texts are drawn from Post War American literature. Some of the most pivotal voices are studied, Saul Bellow, Thomas Pynchon, and William Styron. These three authors are considered suitable to the study because they are central to Post War period American canon, and each depicts alienation in a unique way.

Two novels by each of these authors is the central focal point, but other texts by these authors are incorporated where necessary. Therefore, this study provides an exhaustive discussion of different perspectives on alienation within the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, highlighting relations between these perspectives from sociological and psychological viewpoints, and focussing on the most recent theoretical contributions.

In order to come to terms with the complex ramification of the two concepts one has to draw on many philosophers and sociologists such as Thomas Hobbes, Karl Marx, Friedrich Hegel, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert

Camus. The theme is then investigated in representative texts from the wide range of post war American narratives. Two of the major novels of Bellow, Pynchon, and Styron are traced and treated in separate chapter in which the theme of alienation is traced. According to the three authors the six protagonists' alienation is explicitly social and implicitly enormous; their efforts to identify themselves in society constitute a major theme of the novels. The six novels under study foreshadow modern themes of frustration, isolation, inescapable conditions of life mainly in big cities such as California, Chicago, and New York.

In this thesis, the six narratives don't only schematize and set the factors that force the protagonists into alienation, but also demonstrate how the protagonists resist the forces that cause them to be alienated. It is worth noting that although the selected authors are from different social historical and cultural backgrounds, they intersect in some common points, such as their mode of narration, their thematic concerns about alienated individuals, and more importantly their modes of resistance.

It is evident then that the novels of the three authors previously mentioned are marked by states of despair, estrangement, impotence and alienation. I hypothesize that, it is impossible for the protagonist to reach a state of affirmation or confirmation. Indeed, this is evidenced in the way these protagonists are kept captive by the mysteries that turned their role to detective heroes/heroines in their quest for meaning and truth within an antagonistic, hostile environment. I hypothesize also that the three authors revolutionized the old tradition. With their optimistic outlook, they don't regard the human being

as helpless and victim, but the one who is a resisting figure who emerges from all calamities triumphant.

To serve the aims mentioned earlier, this thesis is thus methodologically divided into two parts. The first part is rather theoretical and includes the first chapter; whereas in the second part which presents the main body of the thesis, the most important aspects of alienation and resistance will be analyzed for each work.

The first chapter serves for defining the concept of alienation. It contains two sections. Section one provides meanings to alienation in different dictionaries and encyclopedias, according to various disciplines i.e. psychology, sociology…etc, as well as its meanings in different schools and theories. Other concepts such as postmodernism, existentialism and absurd realism are also explored. Section two sheds light on the presence of the concept in post-wars American fiction. It treats the theme of alienation and in literature; and more precisely in post-war American fiction.

The practical part comprises four chapters. Three chapters are devoted to the analysis of the selected narratives. Chapter two examines the progress of the protagonist in the works of Pynchon namely in his novella titled *The Crying of Lot 49* published in 1966 and in *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973).

Chapter three involves the alienated protagonist in Bellow's works namely in his novels titled, *Henderson the Rain King,*(1959) and *Herzog*(1964).

The fourth chapter puts emphasis on the protagonist struggle with alienation in Styron's fiction namely in *set this house on fire* (1960) and *The Confession of Nut Turner Set* (1967).

The last chapter is concerned with the synthesis of our research aims through our literary corpora. It evokes the process of resistance that the protagonists go through. This chapter is devoted to the analysis of the progress of the protagonist‘s from alienation to resistance. It seeks to demonstrate the progress of the protagonist into the stage of resistance in the narratives of Bellow, Pynchon and Styron. This chapter also offers a synthetic evaluation on the thematic analogies and contrasts which exist in the selected literary corpora as well as a conclusion that summarizes the findings.

Last, but by no means the least, a general conclusion will be drawn to clearly confirm or infirm the answers to the main research questions, reflect upon the set hypotheses, make recommendations for further researches on the topic, and show how the researcher’s findings can open new horizons about the study of postmodern American literature for our students.

With regard to the manuscript format and rules of writing used in this thesis, we have agreed my supervisor and me, to use the updated eighth edition of the Modern Language Association (MLA) formatting and conventions of writing (2009) currently required in most English and Humanities classes. Therefore, all in-text citation resources as well as the works cited in the bibliography are due to the MLA 8th edition.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORY AND CONCEPTS

I.1. Introduction

This chapter attempts to provide well-founded explanations to the concept "alienation" and pursue its traces in different dictionaries and encyclopaedias as well as according to different disciplines in the social sciences.

Owing to the different usages of the concept of alienation, it has become difficult to arrive at a narrow definition. The concept is understood in myriads of meanings according to the time period, and the type and dimension of alienation. Its meaning varies from one dictionary to the other and from one encyclopedia to the other. The concept has been also interpreted differently from one discipline to the other in different social sciences.

Alienation is a complex, yet common condition. It is both sociological and psychological.The most prevalent type of alienation is social alienation which is defined as "a condition in social relationships reflected by (1) a low degree of integration or common values and (2) a high degree of distance or isolation (3a) between individuals, or (3b) between an individual and a group of people in a community or work environment". When viewed from the relationships between an individual and his society, alienation can mean the unresponsiveness of society as a whole to the individuality of each member. When describing this concept, alienation can allude to the various social phenomena that include the feelings of loneliness, isolation, powerlessness, meaninglessness, separation and dissatisfaction with society. (Ankony, 120-32)

Alienation occurs when a person withdraws or becomes isolated from his environment or from other people. As it is the case, individuals who show signs of alienation will often reject loved ones be they parents or children, or

society. They may also show feelings of distance and estrangement, including from their own emotions.

The dialectic between alienation and belonging has been treated in a more detailed way in recent sociological studies. For a feeling of alienation is automatically a feeling of not belonging. At one time or another, each individual has experienced alienation in one form or another whether in the workplace, in school, among family members, in religion, in politics, and/or in society. The most common form of alienation is the physical "foreignness". This type of alienation is most easily understood in the context when one feels alienated in one' own home, society, religion, or culture. It is more difficult to rationalize or understand that feeling of not belonging.

The problem of alienation has marked the condition of modern man, and this problem has become a great concern in some areas of cultural studies such as in sociology, philosophy, and literature. Alienation has been used to describe various social phenomena that include the feelings of loneliness, powerlessness, meaninglessness, and isolation.

In the social sciences, the concept has been developed by several contemporary theorists. The concept has different uses in different disciplines, and can refer both to a personal psychological state, and to a type of social relationship. Alienation has formed the spirit of modern literature which depicts the world as a wasteland, replete with coldness, fog, darkness, sterility, despair, loneliness, and as deprived of hope, friendship, security, love, warmth and comfort.

I.2. Defining Alienation: Evolving Conceptions of Alienation

Because of being a vague concept, alienation has been used and even treated over the ages with varied and sometimes contradictory meanings. Alienation is an outstandingly historical concept. If man is alienated, he must be alienated from something, and as a result of certain causes.

Because of its complexity, the concept of alienation has not had a fixed definition since Socrates. Generally, the term is associated with loneliness, aloofness and invulnerability. Fritz Oppenheim (1968) points out that especially after WWII,

> Restoring cities and bridges, technological equipment and economic-financial institutions, seems to go faster than rebuilding the spirit of a world which has undergone the destruction of modern war … In spite of the amazing speed with which the physical reconstruction has been carried out, it seems that gloom and despair still retain a strong grip on European thinking. (19)

After modern war brings out the awareness of alienation of modern man, that is, man cannot be himself, and he is destined to remain a stranger in the world where he lives. Man always locates himself in the eyes of others. As a result of this estrangement, he cannot find a proper position in his relationship with others, he is quite likely to fail to know himself, and a direct consequence of this is self-alienation. (Oppenheim, 1968)

Alienation is defined in a dictionary of literary terms as: “the state of being alienated or estranged from something or somebody; it is a condition of the mind”. Another definition is provided by the Encyclopedia Britannica which states that: “Alienation, in social sciences, is, the state of feeling estranged or separated from one's milieu, work, products of work, or self,” encompassing such variants as “...powerlessness, the feeling that one's destiny is not under

one's control but is determined by external driving forces, fate, luck, or institutional arrangements." Meaninglessness is a universal sense of purposelessness in life, cultural estrangement, is the sense of removal from established values in society, and self-estrangement, perhaps the most difficult to define, and in a sense the main theme, is the understanding that in one way or another, the individual is out of touch with himself.

In English the term alienation appears under other words. They are estrangement, isolation and separation. Alienation, according to G.H. Heller, is a psychological state of an individual and alienated is the person who has been estranged from, made unfriendly towards his society and the culture it carries. Arnold. S. Kaufman states that to claim that a person is alienated is to declare; "that his relation to something else has certain features which result in avoidable displeasure or loss of satisfaction". Fewer Lewis offers a somehow different definition when he states that: "the word alienation is used to convey the emotional tone which accompanies any behavior in which the person is obliged to act self destructively."(132) Scholar Keniston proposes another view. Most shared assumptions about alienation point to the loss of some relationship or connection that once existed and united people.

One source considers alienation to be "estrangement from other people, society, or work, a blocking or dissociation of a person's feelings, causing the individual to become less effective." (270) The focus here is on the person's problems in adjusting to society. However, some philosophers believe that "alienation is unavoidably produced by a superficial and depersonalized society."

Alienation has also been described as: “estrangement; mental or emotional detachment; the state of not being involved; the critical detachment with which, according to Bertolt Brecht, audience and actors should regard a play, considering action and dialogue and the ideas in the drama without emotional involvement.” (Concise English Dictionary, 17)

I.3. Origins of the Concept of Alienation

No one can dare deny the extent to which the concept of alienation is a very popular one. Many people have experienced alienation at varying degrees and according to the time period peculiarities. Needless to say that the alienation of the 16th century is similar to that of the 18th century as the circumstances were not the same. But the peak of its popularity was the 50s and 60s, when the concept restored again its place.

The concept is much older as Erick Fromm believes it can be traced back to the Old Testament and even long before. Since its rediscovery in the 1950s, alienation is applied to the contemporary society, industrialization, mass society of urbanism, and the decrease of community, decline of traditions and supremacy of urbanism. (Fitcher, 1973) It has been described by Nisbet as, “an age of pessimism, an age of uncertainty, social disintegration, and spiritual isolation” (64) It follows from this definition that pessimism, uncertainty, and isolation are terms that can be annexed with the concept alienation. (Nisbet, 1953)

Taken from Latin words, ‘alienare’, and ‘alius’, alienation in its early usage means other or another. The verb ‘alienare’ is derived from the noun Alianato which means to make a thing for others, to snatch, to avoid, to remove, etc...The source of the word in Western Civilization is tied up with humanity's

former concern over separation of self from other, a distinctness of individual consciousness from the whole. Such distinctness entails human concern over loss of affection, resources another might represent, relationship with a deity, country, or even products of intellect (truth), one's mind, or one's self.

From the middle ages until early industrialization, English speakers employed the term alienation in the following ways: "separation from a deity, from one's persona or mind, from ownership and/or affectionate relations, from 'correct' opinions, and to describe a condition of enforced separation from legitimate rule." (165)

These usages were not unimportant to life; rather, they were vital concerns, central to existence between self and other. 'anomia' is a sign of personal disintegration of man from the society. Generally speaking, anomie, anomia or alienation are interchangeably used. Alienation has been interpreted in different ways.

From a political point of view, alienation had also a particular legal-political meaning. In Ancient Roman times to alienate property means to transfer its ownership to someone else. Other terms in differing cultures or religions such as ideas of estrangement from a Golden Age, have also been described as concepts of alienation.

Alienate and alienation as terms, are used in French language, in the same sense they are used in the English language. Anomie and Anomia are used as synonyms of Alienation. The use of these words is considered modern. These words are Greek in origin. The meaning of 'Anomia' is self-alienation and 'Anomie' is alienation from society. 'Anomia' is a marker of personal dissolution of man from the society.

The concept of Alienation is interchangeably used with other terms such as estrangement, isolation, and separation. The concept has been also interpreted in different scenarios according to the time period. (American Sociological Review, 670-677)

I.4. Usage of Alienation in the Social Sciences

The concept has been extensively employed in the contemporary literature, sociology, and philosophy. Due to its extensive use in numerous fields of science, there has not been a common agreement on even its most principal aspects yet. To a certain extent, alienation as a concept causes considerable difficulty, because it is used to refer both to a personal psychological state and to a type of social relationship. Iain Williamson and Cedric Cullingford highlight that, "there is disagreement about the definition, debate over whether the phenomenon is a sociological process or a psychological state, or both, and confusion over the inevitability of the experience" (263).

According to philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists alienation bears the following characteristics which include an extra-ordinary variety of psychological and social disorder, including loss of self, despair, depersonalization, rootlessness, apathy, social disorganization, loneliness, powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, and the loss of belief or values. From the above stated quotation one can conclude that alienation has been used to describe various phenomena such as any feeling of separation from society and feeling of discontent with society; feelings of loneliness, powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation and feeling that there is a moral breakdown or the loss of belief and values in the society.

The problem of alienation in American society, according to Oppenheim, has become more apparent in modern time. The manifestations of the crisis are shown in the emptiness and meaninglessness of modern life, the terrible loneliness suffered by individuals and their feeling of isolation (Oppenheim, 2002)

Sociologists regard loneliness as a sort of alienation that is to be found in the absence of intimacy with others. When a man confesses his loneliness, he is therefore disconnected and disassociated from others. The feeling of loneliness and yearning for supportive primary relationships is pointed by McClosky as the two sides of a coin. From a sociological point of view: "Émile Durkheim's anomie, or rootlessness, stemmed from loss of societal and religious tradition..." In the opinion of Heidegger, "mankind has fallen into crisis by taking a narrow, technological approach to the world and by ignoring the larger question of existence." (Heidegger, 1984)

Philosophers, psychologists and sociologists describe the characteristics of alienation as an extra-ordinary variety of anxious feelings, despair, loneliness, meaninglessness isolation and the loss of values (Q.f. Eric and Mary Josephson, 12-13). From the stated statements, it becomes evident then that alienation is an unavoidable phenomenon in modern society. Alienated people experience the many aspects of psycho-social disorder. Even though they live among a crowd these people feel isolated and lonely. They are in a state of anxiety and despair and their life is meaningless as their hope, belief, and values are evaporating.

Marx's theory of alienation is uttered most clearly in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844) and *The German Ideology* (1846). Kostas

Axelos has classified Marx's concepts of alienation into four types which are: Economic and Social Alienation, Political Alienation, Human Alienation, and Ideological Alienation. Marx believed that alienation is a systematic result of capitalism. Basically, there is an "exploitation of men by men" where the division of labor creates an economic hierarchy. His theory of alienation was based upon his observation that in emerging industrial production under capitalism, workers inevitably lose control of their lives and selves by not having any control of their work. Kostas Axelos summarizes that for Marx, in capitalism, "work renders man an alien to himself and to his own products." Axelos argues that,

> The malaise of this alienation from the self means that the worker does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy....The worker only feels himself outside his work, and in his work he feels outside himself....Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, it is avoided like the plague. (Axelos, 58)

With regard to Human Alienation, individuals become estranged to themselves in the quest to stay alive, where "they lose their true existence in the struggle for subsistence" (Axelos, 111). Marx centers his attention on two aspects of human nature which he calls "historical conditions." He refers to the first aspect as the necessity of food, clothes, shelter, and more. As for the second aspect, Marx believes that after satisfying these indispensable needs, people have the tendency to develop more "needs" or desires that they will work towards satisfying. For this reason, humans become blocked in a cycle of never ending wants which makes them strangers to each other. While trying to satisfy these needs, they unwillingly create distances which eventually lead to their alienation.

Psychologist Frank Johnson defines alienation as “separation or distance between two or more entities. Equally basic to this separation is the connotation of anguish or tension. Associated with such separation is the quality of estrangement and loss.”(Roberts, 346) D.K. Pabby keeps this definition and goes a bit further to add that other feelings like paranoia, frustration, fear, and psychosis can become consequences of such a feeling. It also creates very negative feelings about the person himself, mainly downgrading, generating loneliness and a mere lack of connection from the self and from the environment he lives in. (25).

Kalekin Fishman (97) claims, “The term alienation refers to objective conditions, to subjective feelings, and to orientations that discourage participation.” He remarks that “in modern sociology, alienation is a term which refers to the distancing of people from experiencing a crystallized totality both in the social world and in the self.” (Fishman, 6)

Alienating effects of modernization have been the center of focus of many sociologists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Pioneer among them was the American sociologist Charles Wright Mills who conducted a major study of alienation in modern society with White Collar in 1951, describing how modern consumption-capitalism has shaped a society where you have to sell your personality in addition to your work. Seeman used the insights of Marx, Emile Durkheim, and others to construct what is often considered a model to recognize the five outstanding features of alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement (Seeman, 1959). These classifications are not as useful to the current study as Seeman’s. According to Roberts, Seeman “identifies powerlessness and self-

estrangement with Marxian notions of alienation." (346) Later, Seeman added a sixth element (cultural estrangement), although this constituent does not feature exceptionally in later discussions of his work.

As for the behavior that accompanies suicidal relation, Albert Camus mentions, that people commit suicide because they judge that "life is not worth living". For Camus, a reason for living is the same as a reason for dying. Simply put, this implies that people may kill themselves for the ideas and misapprehensions that give them the reason for living (Camus, 4). Camus provides further explanation of the uselessness of suffering and the loss of the will to live. According to Camus, a world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. Pessimistically viewed, man feels like an alien, a stranger in a universe suddenly stripped of illusions and lights.

According to Durkheim, the act of committing suicide is caused by a social condition, rather than by the personal disposition of the person who commits it. It is due to the weaknesses in the web of relationships among the members of the society and not weaknesses of the personality of the people that a high rate of suicide is indicated in certain societies (qtd. in Stark, 1998).

Many sociological concepts of alienation were derived from German intellectual usage of the 19th century. Hegel created a method of dialectical knowing, "*entausserung*"[2], which influenced anthropology (Feuerbach), political economy (Marx), ethics, drama and theology (Kierkegaard and the Niebuhr), social psychology (G.H. Mead), and sociology (Park). Hegel

2 Entäußerung is a term used by Hegel to refer to the concept of alienating of the self in others and opening and revealing of the self in others. The problem is that Hegel uses another very similar term for alienation - Entfremdung. Moreover, in philosophical text written in English, these two concepts are always left in German, and then described and explained, never really translated, i.e. so far I haven't found equivalents. .(https://www.proz.com/kudoz/german-to-english/philosophy/)

conceived it as a method of self-alienation in a self-preserving pursuit of knowledge.

Although in sociology it was maintained by the Research Committee on Alienation of the International Sociological Association (ISA), interest in alienation research collapsed more than ever after the boom in alienation research that characterized the 1950s and 1960s, (Geyer, xii), However, things have changed especially in the 1990s, where there was again an upsurge of interest in alienation prompted by a series of events such as: the fall of the Soviet, globalization, the information explosion, increasing awareness of ethnic conflicts, and post-modernism (Geyer, 1996). Geyer thinks that the growing complexity of the contemporary world and post-modernism provoked a reinterpretation of alienation that goes well with the contemporary living environment. In late twentieth century and early twenty first century sociology, it has been particularly the works of Felix Geyer, Lauren Langman, and Deborah Kalekin-Fishman that address the issue of alienation in the contemporary Western world.

Secularization was a dominant concern of these authors and many associated cultural referents of their own with alienation. Feuerbach understood religion as separating humanity from its true nature. Marx, using Hegel's term and Feuerbach's terms, centered on goods and detailed a worker's separation from the products of labor through capitalism. The German sociologist, economist, and philosopher, Tonnies focused in his conception of will on two key factors which he applies in social action.Social action is people coming together to tackle an issue, support other people, or improve their local area. It involves people devoting their time and other resources for the common

good, in a range of forms – from volunteering to community-owned services, and peer networks to community organising. Tonnies saw basic cleavage between Wesenwille (essential or natural will) creating (Gemeinschaft), and Kurwille (arbitrary or rational will) creating (Gesellschaft), a strangeness which results from cultural disorganization of gemeinschaft[3] society through commerce. Kierkegaard provided a Scandinavian rejection of Hegel's synthesis, substituting a (hopelessness) of personal relationship to God.

Erich Fromm has contributed notably to the spread of the term 'alienation.' He was considerably inspired by Marx's *Early Manuscripts* (1844) and infused those inspirations in his book called *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961). The issue of 'alienation' has occupied a dominant place in his discourses starting with his book, *The Fear of Freedom (*1942). In fact, the concept of alienation is the principal matter in what, perhaps, is his most significant book, *The Sane Society* (1990), in which he says: "I have chosen the concept of "alienation" as the central point from which I am going to develop the analysis of the contemporary social character" (Fromm, 110).

Fromm's description of alienation is one of the most often cited definitions in the studies conducted on this phenomenon. Herbert Read uses it as an introduction to his work *Art and Alienation (*1968), and it is the only definition used by Gerald Sykes in his two volumes Anthology, and Alienation. To further explain the concept, Fromm is worth quoting:

> By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the centre of his world, as the creator of his

[3]*Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* generally translated as "community and society", are categories which were used by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in order to categorize social relationships into two dichotomous sociological types.

> own acts--but his acts and their- consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he may even worship. The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person. He, like the others, is experienced as things are experienced: with the senses and with common sense, but at the same time without being related to oneself and to the world outside productively (103).

Fromm's description of alienation as a manner of experience grants him complete freedom to discover its social and economic roots, its modern temperament, and the nature of alienated man with regard to himself and to human beings. In *The Sane Society*, he plumps for alienation as the principal motive in his examinations of contemporary social aspect because he considers it as something which "touches upon the deepest level of modern personality" (Fromm, 103).

American social psychologist and emeritus professor of sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles, Melvin Seeman (1989) has claimed that the present day, the notion of alienation offers an old-fashioned sense which is pretty much in contrast with its significance in the 1960s. There is plenty of evidence to confirm a declining romance with alienation in the social sciences. Seeman affirms that alienation is leading a secret life in contemporary theory and research. According to his estimates, this concept will continue to survive because the presuppositions, included in the convention of the notion of alienation are essential for critical examinations in the fields of sociology and psychology. Henceforth, he proposes five models which will be discussed in the following section.

I.5. Melvin Seeman's Models of Alienation

Melvin Seeman was one of the leading figures in alienation research; and a pioneer in the middle of the twentieth century, when he published his article, *On the Meaning of Alienation*, in the American Sociological Review in 1959, followed by *Alienation, Membership, and Political Knowledge: A Comparative Stud*y, in 1966. Seeman formulated a model of alienation which comprises of five categories or as he puts it the five alternative meanings of alienation which are: Powerlessness, Meaninglessness, Normlessness, Social Isolation, and Self-estrangement (Seeman,783). Despite critical reception, most researches on alienation have been led through Seeman's categories in a sociological framework. In this regard, Robert Nisbet writes, "At the present time, in all the social sciences, the various synonyms of alienation have the foremost place in studies of human relations. Investigations of the 'unattached', the 'marginal', the 'obsessive', the 'normless', and the 'isolated' individual all testify to the central place occupied by the hypothesis of alienation in contemporary social science." (cf. Seeman, 783)

Seeman asserts that it is "the notion of alienation as it originated in the Marxian view of the worker's condition in capitalist society, that an individual feels powerless when he is treated like an object, self-possessed and deceived by other people or by inhuman mechanized systems such as technology. Powerlessness results also, when he feels too weak and restrained to cause a considerable change in the orientation of this dominative force. (Seeman, 784)

It is impossible to understand alienation outside the context of the five models. The comprehension of these variants will enhance our understanding

of the way alienation manifests in the six narratives selected for analysis. A close reading of the six texts will demonstrate how the protagonists, each in his manner suffers from one or more of alienation variants.

I.5.1. Powerlessness

Powerlessness can be described as an overwhelming feeling of helplessness or inadequacy in stressful situations. It makes the individual more susceptible to anxiety, stress and depression. This may include an inability to exercise his free will when it comes to expressing opinions, making decisions, or asserting his personal choices.

Powerlessness refers to the anticipation that people's behaviours before cannot determine the outcomes or reinforcements that they look for. It may further be explained as the lack of strength or the absence of power. Lack or the inability to regain control may be the direct consequence of powerlessness. Seeman (1959, 1983), powerlessness is a generalized expectation that outcomes of situations are determined by forces external to one's self, such as powerful others, luck, fate, or chance. Zeller, Neal, and Groat conceptually defined "Powerlessness" as "… low subjectively held probabilities for controlling events."

I.5.2. Meaninglessness

Seeman suggests that this second type of alienation refers to "the individual's sense of understanding the events in which he is engaged" (Seeman, 786). This alternative acts in accordance with the view that as an organization grows in size, the individual feels the difficulty to match small tasks to the general objectives of the very organization. He fails to capture how his role in the organization corresponds into the design of the whole operation.

Additionally, Seeman says that "this second version of alienation is logically independent of the first, for, under some circumstances, expectancies for personal control of events may not correspond with the understanding of these events, as in the popular depiction of the alienation of the intellectual" (Seeman, 786).

It will be useful to examine briefly such notions as meaninglessness, alienation and subjectivity, which more often than not prop up popular versions of existential philosophy. Alfred Kazin explains the partiality for meaninglessness as a "temporary fatigue" representing the sometimes frolic some dependency of intellectuals who place great efforts for their moral influence-for changing things-in a future laid out in advance by technology. (245).

Meaninglessness emerges from within existential thought itself. Theodor Adorno in his critique of Heidegger connects the experience of meaninglessness with the presence of leisure in a society, which does not provide real freedom for the individual. Powerlessness and nothingness instead of being seen as a historical state of affairs are "eternalized" as the pure essence "or substance of man: "actual, avoidable, or at least corrigible need." is revered as: "the most human element in the image of man." (Tarmowski, 34-36)

I.5.3. Normlessness

Seeman derives this third variant of alienation theme from Emile Durkheim's depictions of the French word 'anomie,' Durkheim (1976) termed normlessness (a form of alienation) as anomie. To him the presence of too many norms to follow and not a single one that individual can relate to his

subjective conditions can result in anomic feelings. Merton used the concept of anomie in a different perspective. According to Durkheim this condition stems from disharmony between culturally defined goals and institutionalized means to attain those goals. Both of them were of the opinion that social conditions can give rise to individual feelings of normlessness.

In its conventional use, normlessness for Seeman, "denotes a situation in which the social norms regulating individual conduct have broken down or are no longer effective as rules for behaviour" (Seeman, 787) The idea of normlessness has been used in both the sociological and psychological contexts like personal disorganization, cultural breakdown, mutual distrust, and so on and so forth.(Seeman, 1976) These undesirable social behaviours come into sight when the below mentioned social norms can no longer be proficient in restraining the individual's behaviour. 'Anomie' or Normlessness' as conceived by Merton results when the means or conducts prescribed by social institutions fail to achieve the culturally prescribed goals. (Merton, 427) Following Merton's analysis, Seeman (1976) assumed that the anomic situation may lead to low predictability in behaviour (meaninglessness) as well as the belief in luck (powerlessness). According to Seeman this version of alienation is independent of the other two (i.e., powerlessness and meaninglessness). In short, normlessness is a situation in which the individual feels the previously approved social norms no longer effective in guiding his behaviour for the achievement of culturally defined or personal goals.

I.5.4. Self-Estrangement

According to Seeman, this option of alienation, "refers essentially to the incapability of the individual to find self-rewarding - or in Dewey's phrase, self-consummatory - activities that engage him" (Seeman, 790). In this portion of alienation, the worker or housewife does not regard the natural value of the work or household tasks as satisfying and self-fulfilling. C. Wright Mills advocates the same meaning when he observes that: "Men are estranged from one another as each secretly tries to make an instrument of the other, and in time a full circle is made: One makes an instrument of himself and is estranged from it also"(Mills, 188). In Erich Fromm's *The Sane Society*, this variant of alienation is extensively used for the dividing line between alienation and estrangement is hard to trace. Fromm states, "By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself". (Fromm, 120) Similar to Fromm, Mills adds more clarity to the term in his description. He states, "Men are estranged from one another as each secretly tries to make an instrument of the other, and in time a full circle is made. One makes an instrument of himself and is estranged from it also". (Mills, 184-188)

I.5.5. Social Isolation

Like self-estrangement, isolation as a variant of alienation stems from Normlessness. Isolation is much more than just a plain separation from the objectives and rules of the industrial society. Social isolation happens when a person develops his own norms and cannot or proves ineffective in sharing them with others. More than that, the individual feels separate from society and disassociated from its normative system. According to Seeman, the usage of

this type of alienation is "most common in descriptions of the intellectual role, where writers refer to the detachment of the intellectual from popular cultural standards" (Seeman, 788). It indicates a lack of involvement from the community itself. It refers to the lack of a sense of belonging or responsibility to the professional role and the one or more centres of the business community.

I.6. Alienation and Existentialism

Alienation becomes known as the natural consequence of existential predicament. Before any attempt to understand the relation between alienation and existentialism and how one affects the other, it is necessary to understand the meaning of existentialism. In its broadest sense existentialism "is a form of philosophical enquiry that explores the nature of existence by emphasizing experience of the human subject-not merely the thinking subject, but the acting feeling, living human individual." (Macquarrie, 14-5)

The term "existentialism" refers also to a literary movement of the mid-twentieth century which holds that man has complete freedom to determine his own fate. According to Jean Wahl, existentialism is not a well organized and systematic philosophy of life nor can its beginning be identified. He considers existentialism as "Philosophies of existence." It is also considered as a sharp reaction to all forms of rationalism.

Existentialism "became widespread after World War II, and it strongly influenced multifarious disciplines besides philosophy, including theology, drama, art, literature and psychology" (Guignon and Pereboom, 13). Existentialism emerged from the writings of several major philosophers; among the most chief proponents of the movement were Soren Kierkegaard,

Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, Simone De Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus. Accordingly, a more trustworthy analysis is given below:

> The term existentialism was explicitly adopted as a self-description by Jean-Paul Sartre, and through the wide dissemination of the post-war literary and philosophical output of Sartre and his associates—notably Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Albert Camus—existentialism became identified with a cultural movement. Among the major philosophers identified as existentialists (many of whom—for instance Camus and Heidegger—repudiated the label) were Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, and Martin Buber in Germany, Jean Wahl and Gabriel Marcel in France, the Spaniards José Ortega y Gasset and Miguel de Unamuno, and the Russians Nikolai Berdyaev and Lev Shestov. The nineteenth century philosophers, Søren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche came to be seen as precursors of the movement. Existentialism was as much a literary phenomenon as a philosophical. (Crowell, Existentialism 1)

Despite the existing differences among the leading existentialists, they all seem to highlight that the human condition was an inextricable structure within the existential discourse, whereby every being through his or her individuation and subjective insight give his life meaning in a world that evades understanding. According to existential theorists, the human condition, free will, choice, authenticity, alienation, absurdity, and subjectivity are all significant.

Jean-Paul Sartre who is regarded as one of the most outstanding and creative existentialists supported his personal pronouncement of existential tenets in his philosophical teachings universally called the "Sartrean Existentialism". This is quite evident in setting the tone for critical debates in existential discourse, mostly in his copious philosophical statements and literary outputs in the twentieth century. Sartre's huge contribution to the existential discourse is visible in his critical literary essays. He analyzed his own perception of existentialism in *Being and Nothingness* and some other

plays and short-short stories, for instance, *Nausea, No Exit*, and *The Stranger*. Sartre position the tone for such writers and dramatist as Samuel Beckett, Albert Camus, and Franz Kafka. And one of his most proliferated pronouncements within the existential discourse is the assertion that "existence precedes essence". On the meaning of the term, Sartre makes it clear,

> What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man, first of all, exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterward. If man as the existentialist sees he is not definable, it is because, to begin with, he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature because there is no God to have a conception of it. The man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing as he wills to be after that leap towards existence. (Sartre, 33)

Man's existence is in fact determined by the actions he chooses. Existentialists believe that a fastidious individual is not the way he is because God made him that way, or because he is part of a great human community with common characteristics. The uniqueness and independence of the individual are characteristics of existential existence. The individual is the first and last responsible for his destiny as well as his choices. It is this outstanding individuality, in fact, that permits him to exist at all. Even though existentialists are inclined to have as many areas of disagreement as agreement, the concept of "existence before essence" is more or less universal.

Another relatively universal point is that a person, who is unaware of his "essence", cannot be aware of his very "existence". Expressed differently, a person who is not conscious of his own freedom to choose the path he follows, and who is not sufficiently self-actualized to choose that path freely, cannot

really be said to exist. Existence, for the existentialist, implies not only awareness of existence but also of its implications.

In existentialist literature, the theme of alienation has been dealt with in extensive way. Most existentialists believe that each individual human being is fundamentally alone. One's essential lack of close association with others makes the individual in due course responsible for his or her own decisions. For this reason, the existentialist avoids doctrine and ideology, but holds to a few basic beliefs.

First, existentialists seek to avoid interfering on the lives and "boundaries" of others. The general assumption is that there is no such thing as absolute right or wrong, one has no business telling others how to behave, or imposing standards from outside that the individual should develop for himself. Secondly, existentialism rejects a sense of "pattern" in the universe, an impressive system in which all people play a part. There is no definitive meaning, they argue; all people have to forge their own meaning for themselves, and therefore one person's decisions have no enormous interrelationship with another's.

Therefore, creativity is prized much more highly than conformity, since a creative approach to life's problems implies that one is struggling with them in an individualized way. Effort is prized much more highly than skill, for skill derives from having done something the same in repetitive way, and since no two problems are exactly the same, treating them as if they were ineffective. Sincerity, self-analysis, and conviction, existentialists feel, is all one can expect with regard to ethical decisions, because there are no unconditional standards of morality to which people can turn.

In due course, the most common denominator of existentialists is a rejection of authority. The only authority which any person has is himself. The existentialist teacher attempts to instill in his pupils a sense of their own independence, as well as giving them tools they can use to forge their own set of moral principles and define their own destiny. The existentialist political leader puts responsibility back onto the shoulders of the people involved, helping them to be on familiar terms with that they alone are responsible for themselves. Generally speaking, existentialists stay away from the positions of power because authoritarianism conflicts with their indispensable views of life.

The fact that existentialists insist with determination on the primacy of the individual self does not mean that they are careless of the feelings of others, immoral, or uncaring. They are likely to be profoundly compassionate people, because they care for their fellow man out of honest humanity and not because they think God expects it of them. They also tend to be tremendously moral, because they have given a great deal of thought to their system of morals.

Existentialism has played a significant role in the twentieth century as humanity struggles to come to better grasp the new challenges. Man's sense of alienation and fear has been reinforced by the threat of sudden nuclear destruction. In the same token, it has also been caused by the devastating loss of community, and the disintegration of the family.

Existentialists put emphasis on what they call the burden of responsibility. They assert that only through self-actualization and self-determination, man will actually be able to look at the problem realistically, without doctrine, dogma, or ideology, and forge some solutions that work adequately. Although many people attribute to the humanism inherent in existentialist literature a

devaluation of "traditional moral values" and the centrality of God, existentialists see in their creative and deeply genuine approach to the study and practice of ethics, a new ray of hope for humanity. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre (1956) argued that man exists without purpose. From an existential view, Sartre argues that,

> Man can will nothing unless he has first understood that he must count no one but himself; that he is alone, abandoned on earth in the midst of his infinite responsibilities, without help, with no other aim than the one he sets himself, with no other destiny than the one he forges for himself on this earth. (Sartre, 320)

I.6.1. Alienation and Existential Fiction

In Existential fiction, alienation is a concept which has been broadly dealt with, analyzed, and interpreted. Alien individual's quest for his own identity is a major concern of Existential fiction, and this concern is central especially in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), which puts an alien individual who is put side by side between life and death.

Sartre, himself, says in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) "All human activities are equivalent; all are destined by principle to defeat." Nihilism steps beyond Feuerbach into pessimism, by denying that thought can achieve union of the self. In mid-1960'stheater in France, this also became a cultural feature. Ionesco and Beckett's plays in the "Theater of the Absurd" employed similar existential notions, based upon Camus' philosophy of the absurd.

It is only after the two world wars that the word existentialism got currency all over the world. The chaos, disorder, total destruction, fears and frustration on the one hand; and the crumbling traditional values and old world views including loss of faith in God and trust in man along with distress and anxiety, estrangement and loneliness on the other hand rendered the life absolutely

absurd, meaningless, directionless, and futile. It is what Albert Camus called the 'Sisyphean Act'.

Existentialism therefore swiftly became widespread and entered the spheres of literature also. The entire West echoed the aftershock of existential attitudes like, guilt, nausea, and despair, lack of intimacy, estrangement and overarching absurdity. The thoughts of many existentialists found demonstrations in the writings of Franz Kafka, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Marcel Proust, Eugene Ionesco, James Joyce, William Golding, William Faulkner, T.S. Eliot, Earnest Hemingway, and others. The whole philosophy of existentialism deals with values, attitudes and relationships which determine man's role in society and the freedom or bondage that he is subjected to. If he is under unjustifiable pressure, he will have to adopt methods for survival to liberate himself from an aggressive society.

Another important point to be discussed is the pronouncement that the existentialists set forth – existence precedes essence. The latter asserted that man first of all exists and then only he thinks of it. All his "contemplations and his actions are possible only because of his existence". It follows then that for this reason, existence is the first principle from which everything else flows. Accordingly, Sartre rejects what he calls "deterministic excuses" and claims that people must take responsibility for their behavior. Sartre defines anguish as the sentiment that people feel once they realize, that they are responsible not just for themselves, but for all humanity.

In a similar world, man must create his own essence. "It is in throwing himself into the world, suffering there, struggling there, that he gradually defines himself." (1944) This idea is simply put in Albert Camus; essay *The*

Myth of Sisyphus "A man defines himself by his make-believe as well as by his sincere impulses." (Camus, 1942)

Sartre points at the fact that the key defining concept of existentialism is that the existence of a person preceded his essence. The term "existence precedes essence." subsequently, became a famous saying of the existentialist movement. Simply put, this means that there is nothing to dictate that person's character, goals in life, and so on; that only the individual can define his essence. In this regard, Sartre claims that, "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world–and defines himself afterwards".(28)

Modern existentialism of the nineteenth and twentieth century moved in two different directions from the two main sources, one led by Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish thinker, and the other by Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher. Kierkegaard who has a great impact on the writing of the three novelists develops a Christian and theistic existentialism, while Nietzsche develops anti-Christian and atheistic existentialism. The German Karl Jaspers and the French thinker Gabriel Marcel took the Kierkegaardian line of philosophical faith into consideration. On the other hand, the German Martin Heidegger, and the French Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre develop it on the Nietzschean way of theism and the absence of God or the "death of God". Albert Camus develops a kind of existentialism of the absurd which is also of crucial importance to the analysis of the six narratives.

Most existentialist thinkers share the same conventions that are adequate to the theory that life as a whole is futile and that one's comprehension of life can never be utterly comforting. Thus, alienation is rational to existence as an inherent solipsism encloses the subconscious even while the mind is

consciously attempting to reach out to other living beings to make life meaningful.

The uselessness that man feels within the depths of his soul is existentialistic by nature, and this has to be argued against to bring the individual to the mainstream of life, to liberate him from constant living conditions.

1.6.2. Authentic versus Inauthentic Existence

The Existential concept of 'authenticity,' developed by Heidegger and Sartre can be traced in the novels under study. According to Heidegger one may exist either as an 'authentic' or an 'inauthentic' human being. With regard to Sartre the concept of authenticity is defined as, "the courage whereby man consents to bear the burdens of freedom." (Scott, 177)

Unauthentic life is also a concept not easy to grasp since it is governed and controlled by what other people think, and by the rules that society dictates. The lives of such unauthentic persons may persuade them to take a certain action, or abide by certain rules. The concept of authenticity can be defined in contrast of this concept. They raise questions about the validity of directive norms from society, and they reject certain behavioral codes of the society they belong to. There is nothing more Holden Caulfield[4] hates than being an inauthentic; consequently, he begins to search for authenticity. Holden shows signs of frustration and aggravation against certain kinds of phoniness such as, hypocrisy, ignorance, indifference, and moral corruption. As pointed out by Richard Gill and Ernest Sherman, "an authentic individual constantly

[4]Holden Caulfield is a fictional character, the teenaged protagonist and narrator of J. D. Salinger's 1951novel *The Catcher in the Rye.* It's worth pointing out that Holden largely experiences alienation because he chooses to ostracize himself from others.

strives to attain self-awareness, rather than keeping to safe and customary paths inherently alien to him, chooses to realize his own true self." (20)

I.7. Alienation and Absurd Realism

In modern age, literary works portray the effects of the world wars and the great depression. Postmodernist's writers develop new genres that express social change, popular culture, chaos, and paranoia. Thus, it has become the writer's duty to capture these concerns in their works. Absurdity as a theme is frequently expressed in contemporary fiction. The very theme suggests that people are trapped in a chaotic and fragmented modern world and cannot escape the feeling of displacement and alienation. Departing from the recognition that conditions, situations and experiences in life are much more complex, so, the state of paranoia and disorder will be an inevitable consequence of wars and insecurity. In 1971, Charles Harris argued that recent sociological theories persuasively defend the view that "we are lonely crowd of organizational men, growing up absurd ... we face a loss of self in a fragmented world of technology that reduces man to the operational and the functional" (Harris, 17) In the same vein, Harris continues to state that "ours is an absurd universe chaotic and without meaning" (Harris, 07)

Many writers of such an absurd novels attempt to present an understanding of this helpless situation that pervades the modern society, giving insights into how one can adjust to this new way of life. In this sense Bellow, Pynchon, and Styron can be regarded as widely renowned postmodern authors who explored alienation and absurdity. In most of their writings, they construct existentially trapped protagonists who vulnerably confront an ineffective attempt to exist in an extremely absurd and alienated world they have been plunged into.

In the age of absurdity, Michael Foley explains how a countless number of artificial and natural factors account for the chaos in contemporary society. One can include under such factors as wars and natural disasters added to the people's endless consumption of goods, and elusive pursuit of happiness. The direct consequence of all these is reducing the meaningfulness of life and throwing life into a state of existential angst.

Themes in novels of absurd realism correspond with those of existential philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche, Soren Kierkegaard, and Martin Heidegger. These philosophers' main concern is discerning the proper way to live, and revealing the basic truths about human nature and the universe. They also raise ethical questions about life. They do not only offer reasonable solution that might help humans find a meaning in life, but also express the strangeness of the absurd universe in which humans now exist. They all seem to agree that "since no God exists to rely on, man must rely upon himself" (Harris, 31)

Many writers of such absurd novels attempt to present an understanding of this hopeless situation that pervades the modern society, giving insights into how one can adjust to this new way of life. In a book titled for the absurd, Michael Meredith attests that, "absurd realism produces a space in which the search for meaning is something both vague and concrete is highly encouraged. No stable grid, no absolute doctrine datum." (Meredith, 7-15) The three writers, Pynchon, Bellow, and Styron reflect the absurd in their works, and their themes express the same existentialist principles-human's struggle to give meaning to a chaotic world in which their characters find themselves. Foley supports their views when he suggests that, "the way to survive in this

postmodern world is to accept and embrace chaos as an integral part of existence—finding solace in its absurdity."

In his *Edifying Discourses* (1847), Kierkegaard substantiates Christianity's "inverted dialectic" which implores that the individual exercise "double vision" by putting emphasis on the spiritual opposites of sophisticated concepts, like seeing hope in hopelessness, prosperity in adversity, and strength in weakness. Kierkegaard proposes that the way to survive in a chaotic and disorderly world is to draw strength from within rather than from the society.

In general terms, critics have used the concept of "alienation" to hint to highly diverse types of experience in literature. In its most specific use it has been applied to those works where the characters' estrangement is determined by fate: they are born alienated, and there is no possibility for them to create a sense of order in life. Consequently, they find themselves in a "wasteland". This interpretation reflects Sartre's theories about human life. This notion has been used to designate any characters who become estranged when forced to confront the absurd world of the twentieth century. These individuals, unlike the former ones, eventually arrive at some kind of order and learn to live with the conflict, which is often due to external conditions.

Sartre affirms that life has no meaning in itself and that only the individual can bring some partial meaning to it by the free choice of his goals and by recognizing responsibility for the results of his actions. Albert Camus has developed his entire philosophy around the thesis of the absurdity of life. According to him, the disparity between the individual and the world does not stem from either one of these two factors, but is determined, rather, by the interaction between the two. The world in itself is not absurd; it merely exists.

Likewise, man is not absurd when taken on his own. He merely exists as a being that has certain demands to make of life. He asks for purpose, order, and fulfilment, but the world cannot fulfil these demands and therefore the relationship between man and the world, i.e. life, becomes absurd. It is man who makes it so with his constant demands.

The concept of alienation, which has a central place in existentialism, has acquired a broad significance and range in late century. In sociological terms, alienation can mean loneliness, the absence of relationships, the feeling of dissociation from others or the explicit rejection of social values and norms.

While sociological categories of alienation register the inability to relate outside one self, existential category; on the other hand, indicate alienation from the self, the failure of experiencing oneself which may come from an excess of conformity, a lack of individuality or spontaneity. Consequently, they call into question the criteria of selfhood. Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1927) associates alienation with being cut off from one's potential "authentic" existence by over involvement in the present or a superficial understanding of oneself.

For Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness* (1943); alienation is the individual's experience of himself as an object, which is not a disparity to be overcome but a fact to be acknowledged. Alienation as a sociological category is a historical phenomenon susceptible to change, but as an existential category it is becoming almost the quintessence of human nature. It is therefore both an eminently social, and an asocial concept.

Absurdity lies in the antagonism between the human need for meaning, on the one hand, and the indifferent and meaningless world, on the other.

Absurdity comes to us in a feeling that can strike a person, as Camus said, "at any street-corner." One "feels alien, a stranger" even to oneself. Encounter between the world and the demands people make as rational beings, gives rise to such a feeling. Distinctively, Camus explained that, absurdity results from the outcome of the confrontation between "human need and the unreasonable silence of the world." We ask a thousand "whys?" that lack answers. "The absurd," wrote Camus "depends as much on man as on the world." Thus, when we ask the question of life's meaning, "there is so much stubborn hope in the human heart." (*The Myth of Sisyphus,* p.66)

I.8. Alienation and Postmodernism

As a consequence of the aftermaths of the Second World War, the western world witnessed a speedy change in almost every aspect of culture, a change that took that world from the stability of modernism to a new period of fragmentation and doubt which came to be known as postmodernism. The latter represents a turning point in almost all aspects of western culture. It is not easy to define postmodernism though the general philosophy originates as an opposition and reaction to the philosophical beliefs and values of the modern period. Postmodernism has its roots in modernism, but differs greatly from its predecessor in its coveting of ambiguity or the rejection of one singular meaning. Linda Hutcheon puts clear when she states that "postmodernism's distinctive character lies in this....wholesale' nudging' commitment to doubleness, or duplicity" Unlike modernism which championed the strong belief in science and reason, postmodernism called for a radical change and shift from the concepts and component of modernism. On account of this Huyssen explains the postmodern vision in the following way:

> What appears on one level as the latest fad, advertising pitch and hollow spectacle is part of a slowly emerging cultural transformation in western societies , a change in sensibility for which the postmodernism' is actually , at least for now , wholly adequate . the nature and depth of that transformation are debatable, but transformation it is don't want to be understood as claiming that there is a wholesale paradigm shift of the cultural, social and economic orders; by such a claim clearly would be overblown . But in an important sector of our culture there is a noticeable shift in sensibility, practices and discourse formation which distinguishes a post-modern set of assumptions, experiences and propositions from that of a preceding period. (Huyssen, 8)

Contrary to the deceptive modern world, postmodernism is a kind of culture that emphasizes that there is a comfortable, more advanced sphere, a world of remedy and rehabilitation. Departing from the deconstruction of the premises of modernity which are based on reality, universal truth and reason, Claire Colebrook maintains the existence of postmodernism pillars. She states:

> Postmodern: a notoriously difficult and contested term that, for its opponents, signals the twentieth century's abandonment of truth and reason in favour of a world that is known only through images, signs or copies. For its defenders the postmodern is a liberating attitude that remains suspicious of any single foundation, or ultimate position of truth. (Colebrook: 182)

James A. Glass defines postmodernism as a philosophy which "celebrates difference, change, transformation, and flux" (256) According to Samuel Coale, postmodernism in most parts extends and/or dismantles modernism (2). Postmodernism rose as a reaction to modernism. For instance, in modernism where certain fixed realities existed and human objectivity was commonly accepted, postmodernism on the contrary "subverts and questions every form of authority, including that of language itself" (Coale, 2). Concepts that seemed given or natural phenomena now were found to be human constructs-societal

organizational institutions like administration and politics rapidly lost trustworthiness. In the 1960s, postmodern theory began to flourish in the United States. However, 1970s, an era characterized by the assassination of Kennedy, the Vietnam War, and the Watergate, an antiauthoritarian cynicism grew and exploded. (Coale, 1)

Broadly speaking, "Postmodernism" is the new wave of thought and artistic creation in architecture, literature, and philosophy which developed in some sort as a reaction to modernism. Postmodern literature, is roughly the literature produced between the early 1960's and late 1980's that shows confirmation of postmodernist qualities: an emphasis on abundant realities and disbelieve of totalizing discourses; fragmentation, irony, pastiche, and collage; "a shift from the kind of perspectivism that allowed the modernist to get a better bearing on the meaning of a complex but nevertheless singular reality, to the foregrounding of questions as to how drastically different realities may coexist, collide, and interpenetrate" (Harvey, 41). A postmodernist world will be interpreted according to the characters experiences, through a schizophrenic sensibility. While schizophrenia is the psychological response to the conditions of post modernity, the experience of post modernity is too fragmented, multiple, and overloaded with information to be understood through paranoia as well as it is understood through schizophrenia.

Geyer believes that the growing complexity of the contemporary world and postmodernism encouraged a reinterpretation of alienation that suits the contemporary living environment. In late 20th and early 21st century sociology, it has been predominantly the works of Felix Geyer, Lauren Longman, and Deborah Kalekin Fishman that address the issue of alienation in the

contemporary western world. After the boom in alienation research that characterized the 1950s and 1960s, interest in alienation research subsided (Geyer, 1996) in the same context and while commenting on postmodernism and the American fiction, Tony Pilfer points out: "The affective relation of reader to protagonist that centres the reader's moral response in traditional realism is absent ..." (11)

Additionally, postmodern literature is distinguished by technological developments, the development of new genres that express social change, popular culture, chaos, and paranoia**.** In contemporary fiction, absurdity as a theme is frequently expressed, though not exclusively; this theme suggests that people are trapped in a chaotic and fragmented modern world and cannot escape the feeling of alienation and displacement. Foley suggests that the only way to survive in this postmodern world is to accept and embrace chaos as an integral part of existence.

I.9. Alienation Theme of the Twentieth Century Novel

The problem of alienation has marked the condition of modern man, and this problem has taken the lion's share in literature. The wide consideration that is focused on the condition of alienation points out to the fact that the world is now faced with the symptoms of social sickness (Novack, 5-6). Alienation has confirmed its recurrent power in literature. Even if alienation results from characters' estrangement from their true selves, or from their cultural heritage, or from society, this problematic has been used successfully by many contemporary American writers whose main concern was the study of the relationship between an individual's true and false identities, between assimilation and cultural heritage, and between the individual and society. This

feeling of alienation can be brief for some characters while for others it can be tragic especially when characters fail to bring together who they are with who they are meant to be.

Most criticism in Brian Lamb book, Authors on reading, writing, and the power of ideas pointed to the fact that in twentieth century modern fiction, alienation is probably one of its signature themes (Lamb, 106). David B. Poirier states that: "The theme of alienation has been dealt with persistently and unflinchingly in modern literature" (Poirier, 21) He adds, "It is a natural phenomenon so that it leaves such an indelible impact upon the contemporary literature" (21)

1.9.1. Alienation as Literary Theme

One of the recurrent themes of the twentieth century is alienation which refers to the feeling of being estranged from others. In literature, two main aspects are mainly looked at: one aspect has to do with the causes of alienation; the other is related with the effect of the character's alienation. Throughout the history of literature, one can notice the abundant use of the theme of alienation this is particularly appealing to the German Romantics[5]first group of writers and poets in whose work the concept of alienation is regularly found. Around the start of the ninetieth century, Hegel popularized a Christian and Idealist philosophy of alienation.

[5]German Romanticism was the dominant intellectual movement of German-speaking countries in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, influencing philosophy, aesthetics, literature and criticism. Compared to English romanticism, the German variety developed relatively early, and, in the opening years, coincided with Weimar classicism (1772–1805). In contrast to the seriousness of English Romanticism, the German variety of Romanticism notably valued wit, humour, and beauty. (https://www.hisour.com)

In the world of literature, the problem of alienation is depicted in the works of many prominent American writers. In American theater a considerable literature is written around the theme of alienation especially in the works of Tennessee William, Edwards Albee, and Sam Sheppard. In *The Zoo Story* (1958), Albee employs the problem of alienation as a remarkable symptom of social sickness in the United States in the mid-twentieth century. Is spite of the fact that, Jerry, lives together with these people, he has no contact with them. The absence of personal contact among the people in the rooming house reflects the problem of alienation and impersonality of modern and urbanite big cities. Albee puts emphasis on the need for man to break his self-alienation and contentment, and to get in touch with his fellow men. For Albee, true human relationships are very indispensable. Many people in metropolitan cities seem to have lost the sense of communal life as these people are occupied by their personal businesses. As such, social relationships grow weaker and this creates an obstacle for people to establish contact with others. According to Krupat, big and metropolitan cities share certain common characteristics. These cities are densely and heterogeneously populated (40). In the same vein, Krupat mentions, "At its extreme we have a picture of the urbanite as a person who is physically embedded in a tight web of others, yet feels psychologically almost totally isolated" (131)

Kafka has described man's alienation and his anonymous way of existing with frightening exactness. He wrote of himself: "I am separated from all things by a hollow space, and I do not even reach to its boundaries." The main characters in the novels *The Trial* (1925) and *The Castle* (1926) are completely depersonalized and reduced to mere masks. The state of radical anonymity

results in the loss of identity, which the author symbolizes by not using a name but just a letter of the alphabet to refer to them.

American novelists have also described man's fate of alienation and homelessness. We shall mention for example, Thomas Wolfe, who devotes much of his work to recording the painful experience of the deracinate man, the nostalgic exile and wanderer. Wolfe summarizes it in the symbolic words of Eugene Gant, the central figure of *The Return of the Prodigal* (1992): "What did you come home for? … You know now that you can't go home again!"

Many individuals have found their own lives portrayed in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949). The story shows Willy Loman determined all his life to be popular and "liked" but remaining absolutely friendless and unconnected, forever dreaming that "personality always wins the day" but in reality predestined, as his wife fears, "to fall into his grave like an old dog." His slogan is: "Start big and you'll end big". He advises his son: "Get right down the field under the ball, and when you hit, hit low and hit hard." He does not realize that he himself is kicked around and that his whole existence is summed up in the word with which one of the women in the play describes her life: "a football." (Miller, 55)

1.9.1.1. Alienation and Identity

Contemporary American literature is mainly concerned with a large group of characters whose attempt to define their relationship with society leads them to alienation from their true identity. From Arthur Miller's protagonist in *Death of a Salesman* (1949), Willy Loman, to the protagonist,Griffin who is also known as the Invisible Man, in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), tragedy becomes unbearable when characters believe that they do not have any other

identity than the one that is imposed on them by society. The invisibility of the main character in *Invisible Man*, for example, is occasioned by society's intolerance, or in the narrator's words: "a matter of the construction of people's inner eyes", those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality," and by the character's lack of self-awareness. It takes the narrator almost twenty years to realize that he cannot expect other people to treat him as who he really is, if he himself does not know who he really is.

The importance of reconnecting people with their ethnic and cultural roots to the front position has been brought by the celebration of multiculturalism. Many contemporary American writers, especially writers of color, have taken it as their responsibility to commemorate their ethnic cultural heritage and to reclaim their sense of history and identity by giving voice to where silence used to reign. In their works, characters' lack of self-awareness is constantly connected with their alienation from their culture. In Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* (1989), the author portrays a group of characters who, in their attempts to assimilate into the mainstream of American society, have rendered their relationships with their own culture uncertain.

I.9.1.2. Alienation and Society

The individual is seen victimized at so many levels because of the restraining and sometimes oppressive role played by society. As such, many contemporary American writers point to the fact that society works against democracy and individualism. Ellison once posited that "all literature is about minority; the individual is a minority." In T. S. Eliot's narrative poem, The *Love Song of J.* Alfred Prufrock, the poet creates a very complicated character.

One of the poem's central themes is social anxiety and how it affects Prufrock's ability to interact with those around him. Prufrock is conscious of what his problems are but refuses to confront them. His undecided relationship with society reveals his defenselessness as a human being.

Supported by a widely held but questionable assumption, this explanation, although right in reemphasizing the historical aspect of man's alienation, must be challenged. It attributes the rise of alienation to a few isolated and almost accidental occurrences which have broken in upon the lives of the present generation. Such a premise is of doubtful worth because it tends excessively to limit the scope of investigation. It leads us to conclude that alienation is manifest in all realms of modern life, that its existence is not just the 'result of certain accidents of recent- history, but exemplifies one of the basic trends of the modern age.

After World War II, American writers started to show an individual character in a completely different way than it used to be described in the thirties. Now, the individual is an alienated character that does not belong to any group or society. This character's biggest problem is his loneliness. In this line of thought, one of Tennessee Williams' characters in *Orpheus Descending* (1957) complains that, "we're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins for life." (Williams, act2- scene1, 36)

1.9.1.3. Alienation - Theme of Post Wars American Fiction

As a consequence of the aftermaths of the Second World War people were getting more and more preoccupied with self-interest. This had led to the loss of family values and social integrity. Fathers did not care for their sons, and wives did not for their husbands. Rather their relationships assumed an abnormal measurement that was fully based on give and take policy. This is, because of the Second World War had thrown the world into a turmoil and chaos of far reaching proportions saturated in the world. The enormity of death, besides the threatening implications of the various techniques of wartime disturbances, left an ineradicable disfigure on the minds of the people. The results of this indifference environment might be Salinger's first novel *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), which is concerned with the changing life style of the post-war Americans, and its impact on family relations. J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* contains the three central parts of existential thematic aspects: death, alienation, and authenticity.

World War II brought the United States out of the Depression, and the 1950s provided most Americans with time to take pleasure from the material prosperity. In this period of prosperity, the material comfort becomes the priority of American people. It seemed that one was living for earning money and enjoying the luxurious life. The spiritual world, social and familial commitments of people become secondary to the material luxurious life. Family life of the people of the era was destroyed by materialism. Holden, the protagonist belongs to such kind of family. He has a strong desire for the pure love and the sincere care of his family. His father is a rich lawyer, who provides him good education, but he is failed to look after his sensitive mind. His mother is very hysterical in emotion, but cannot understand

him. She does not know what he really wanted. So, his running away from home clearly manifests that he does not find comfort in the family. His quest for family love and the failure to achieve it makes him alien furtively as well as externally. The aftermath of the Second World War demonstrates the alienation some particular Americans felt. Most Americans posed the following question: What would the postwar era bring? In fact, the postwar economy ascends, producing a level of material abundance unequaled in American history. A big number of American people purchased new homes in the suburbs; bought new cars, appliances, and television sets; and spent their money without restraint on leisure-dine activities.

The economic explosion affected all aspects of the American experience in those years. At the political level, the twenty-year Democratic Party's period in office-the party of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal - ended in 1952 as voters gave the Republicans control of Congress and elected the war hero Dwight Eisenhower as president. The return of prosperity had an intense social and cultural impact as well. Some spoke of postwar America as a 'consumer culture". It is in such a culture that the production, marketing, and acquisition of the material symbols of the good life became the central reality shaping society and its values. As a result, American society between 1945 and 1960 presents a complex and paradoxical picture of dramatic advances in material well-being the whole situation was uneasily coexisting with severe but only half-acknowledged social problems and cultural damages.

The war also spurred the cityward migration of Americans that had been under way for decades, including the movement of Southern rural blacks to the industrial centers of the North. Between 1940 and 1950, the black population in

the South declined by 1.6 million, while equally that in the urban north increased. Besides, over 935,000 blacks participated in World War II, many for the first time experiencing life outside the communities where they had grown up. These and other wartime social trends affected postwar life in significant ways.

As the 19th century was coming to a close, the theme of alienation became important in the realm of novels and literature in general. Two major world wars helped turn alienation into a popular subject that still remains, to this day, a theme of importance in literature.

After the First World War, poets began to question humanity. In particular, poets like T.S. Eliot were addressing the "emptiness" of the men and women who lived in the early twentieth century. The poem exemplifies themes of futility and alienation. It highlights the social, cultural and moral crumble of modern civilization due to the commercialization of life where everything is for sale. The term 'waste' does not represent the aftermath of war but rather the "emotional and spiritual sterility of Western man". The poem has been interpreted as a criticism of the sterility and barrenness of modern culture. The poem also suggests that the war played a significant part in bringing about this social, psychological, and emotional collapse. In so doing, his poem is an attempt to better understand oneself and others, and to overcome the isolation otherwise innate in the human condition. In response to this early examination of alienation within the human race, other writers began to develop a greater sense of the term during the midpoint of the twentieth century.

Alienation was a relatable subject to race relations. James Baldwin and Richard Wright, in particular, were concerned with the alienation that African-

Americans felt within their community and within themselves. Those who labored in factories also felt the pressure of "The Man" and knew, to an extent, the feeling of alienation that African-Americans felt within American society.

The increasingly fast-paced lifestyle which most people were enjoying fueled the feeling of alienation within many types of people. The advancement of technology meant less "togetherness" of people. The direct consequence of the latter is that families were being distanced as people in general were growing further and further apart. The technological revolution of the twentieth century increased the amount of alienation which people were feeling.

Furthermore, as a reaction to that general feeling of alienation, writers and poets alike began to examine alienation and its roots. Was it the Wars? Was it technology? Was it destiny? Arriving at a clear answer and a cut decision was a sort of disillusion. What was certain is that people were growing further apart. Families were beginning to move farther from one another; one brother may move to California while one stayed in the East Coast. One would move halfway around the world to Europe, while the rest of the family stayed behind in Asia.

Alienation is apparent in all different types of literature, whether the novel comes from Cuba or from Japan. However, we can be assured that alienation did not just pop up out of nowhere. It must have had its roots, and they were to be found in the beginnings of the history of mankind. It seemed that alienation was written in the cards for the human race.

The strong response to the writers from whom we have cited reflects a growing contemporary concern about man's isolation and alienation. However, this does not mean, that all those who are concerned visualize this

estrangement in the same way that the existentialists do. Unlike those followers of Heidegger and Sartre who look on man's alienation and homelessness as his eternal fate, many of those who turn to the writers we have mentioned earlier attribute the alienation to historical events. For example, they make reference, to the two world wars in this century, to the rise of totalitarian governments, with their ignorance for the sacredness of the human person. They even point to gas chambers and all the brutalities to which victims of the concentration camps and of brain washing they have been subjected. As it is the case of William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* protagonist's experience in Auschwitz[6]. They sometimes mention the unexpected economic changes which have accompanied the international conflicts and which have intensified the insecurity and damage in the living conditions of millions of people. World War II literary texts have focused on this theme of alienation in American society, and have done this through the use of one main character to illustrate this idea.

Alfred Kazin points out in his *On Native Grounds* (1956), that much twentieth century American literature "rests upon a tradition of enmity to the established order, more significantly a profound alienation from it." In its celebration of democracy and individualism, post-World War II American literature has consistently demonstrated its mistrust of and hostility toward the established order. The theme of alienation is objectified in characters' emotional conflict as well as in their concerted dislike of social establishments, which are not only domineering in nature but also ethically confusing. Such

[6]Auschwitz which is located in the South West of Poland was the largest of the German Nazi concentration camps and extermination centres in the period (1940-1941). Over 1.1 million men, women and children lost their lives there.

experiences result from characters' having to deal with a reality that goes in opposition with the claim of a true identity.

I.10. Conclusion

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to trace the development of the concept of alienation from the early ages through the 20th century which could be summed up as the career of a concept. The researcher has then explored the nuances of the term alienation in different dictionaries and encyclopedia's. Of significant relevance to the study of alienation is Melvin Seeman's five categories model which are dealt with in a detailed manner. In order to investigate the manifestation of the theme of alienation in world literature, and more specifically American literature, the different types of literature are also evoked.

As existentialism constitutes the bulk of our study. We have devoted a whole section to the definition of this philosophy, its influence on the selected novelists' narratives as well as its close relationship with the concept of alienation. The period in which the six narratives were written cannot pass unnoticed; a special section has been devoted to World War II literature. Additionally, an attempt has been made to cast some light on absurd realism which is thought to be of paramount importance to the present research.

In so doing, a theoretical background has been provided to our analytic study. This chapter will be followed by three chapters dealing with Bellow, Pynchon, and Styron respectively. Detailed reference will be made to other works of the writers to further illuminate their renditions of the theme. The following three chapters shall put under scrutiny the analysis of the six fictive

works. Each two literary corpora will be analyzed and examined in a separate chapter.

Chapter Two

Alienated Protagonists in Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King,* And *Herzog*

II.1. Alienated Protagonist in Saul Bellow's *Henderson The Rain King* (1959)

II.1.1. Introduction

In chapter one, an attempt has been made to trace the evolution of the concept of alienation and how it has been used with differing meanings and degrees throughout the different periods. Having argued in the previous chapter that the concept of alienation has different ramifications and that it has been treated based on various dimensions, this chapter will be concerned with examining and analyzing two masterpieces by Saul Bellow namely: *Henderson the Rain King* and *Herzog*. The researcher will demonstrate how Bellow as a postmodern novelist has been influenced by both existentialism and absurd realism. This will be followed by showing Bellow's protagonists typical qualities, their struggle with the different types of alienation as well as their obsession with their quests. This is crucial in order to demonstrate their victory over their frustrating, hostile universe which they inhabit.

Saul Bellow is regarded as one of the prominent postmodern novelists (1915-2005). His concerns are distinct in his treatment and focus on the theme of alienation and the struggle of his characters in a cruel antagonistic environment for adjustment, connectedness, and belonging. Thus, the struggle between the protagonist's humanism and social patterns is common in all his novels.

Over the past few years, the work of Bellow has triggered a good deal of critical interest. His themes revolved around alienation and accommodation. Dozens of articles point to Bellow's significance as a writer and his great

contribution to American fiction. His rejection of pessimism is well appreciated.

During his time, Bellow lived through Socialism, Stalin's betrayals and brutalities, the Ukraine Massacres, Trotsky's assassination, the killing of the Jewish writers and intellectuals, the Depression, the Spanish Civil War, Fascism, the Holocaust, the Hungarian Uprising, WWII, and the Atomic Bomb. So, definitely all these factors had a great impact on his writing. In almost all his writings, he attempted to portray the existential complexities of modern man. Until his death in 2005**,** Bellow had spent more than 60 years as a public figure, writing not especially straightforward literary works about estranged characters looking for nothing less than meaning in their lives. His attempt in breaking the traditional existentialist mode of writing is quite evident especially, in his two masterpieces *Henderson the Rain King* and *Herzog.*

II.I.2. Bellow's Protagonists

Most twentieth-century novels of social realism and naturalism depict man suffering because of the apparently undefeatable, ugly and blind forces of society or nature with which he is in conflict. In his fictive world, Saul Bellow gives a picture of these forces working against the individual in full measure, demonstrating how his protagonists also have a hard time dealing with them. But the distinctive character of his novels is that most of their protagonists, suffer not because they are defeated by the external natural or social forces, but because they do not relate with these forces. Suffering is a notable characteristic of Bellow's protagonists. In fact some critics consider them to be self-indulgent masochists. For instance, critic john Clayton concludes that

Bellow's protagonists are "pathological social masochists, filled with guilt and self-hatred, needing to suffer and to fail" (Clayton, 50-53)

It is a shared assumption that Bellow's concern falls mainly with the individual and his alienation from society, nature and the spiritual sphere. What can be linked with the problem of alienation is Bellow's anxiety to find, or at least to suggest, an answer for the individual's dilemma in a very unfriendly world.

But Bellow wanted to focus on the problematic temperament of the human condition, through which man is continually confronted with diverse possibilities or alternatives. But his protagonists were not fully broken down at the end of the novels. There was always a hopeful ending in his novels. That is why; his heroes are always seen struggling for survival and meaningful existence in life.

Bellow's novels also present the intimidating environments, and apparently absurd world. What is unique is that Bellow has dealt in a different way with this mode of existentialism showing a positive outlook among the protagonists at the end of his novels. Although Bellow's protagonists are entrapped by the forces of modern complexities, they refuse to resign themselves to alienation and isolation. It is therefore for the sake of maintaining a sense of human dignity that they have to struggle all their lives. In an interview, Bellow himself says that his books are concerned with free choice. He claims,

I seem to have asked in my books, how can one resist the controls of this vast society without turning into a nihilist, avoiding the absurdity of empty rebellion? I have asked, are there other, more good-natured forms of resistance and free choice? And I suppose that, like most Americans, I have involuntarily favoured the more comforting or melioristic side of the question." He also says: I've tried to suggest this in my books that there may be truths on the side of

> life. I' am quite prepared to admit that being habitual liars and self-deluders, we have good cause to fear the truth, but I'm not at all ready to stop hoping. There may be some truths which are, after all, our friends in the universe. (Harper, 48)

According to Scott the "Central moments" in the experience of a Bellow character are those in which he, "transcending the immediate pressures of his environment and the limiting conditions of the social matrix, asks himself some fundamental questions about the nature of his own humanity." (105). Dutton locates Bellow in the humanist tradition for continuing to make acknowledgment to the nature of man. For Harper, Bellow's protagonists are initiated into "a larger transcendental conception of humanity" which transcends the limited and limiting dimension of "pure reason" (20).

For Scott, though Bellow's protagonists are burdened by "the pressure of concrete circumstance" and the "bitter taste" of "inauthenticity", the novels still move towards "disburdenment" and reconciliation. Bellow's concern may be with the shocking state of affairs of society at large, with its materialism and secularism. Malcolm Bradbury attempts to explain the complexity of Henderson as a hero when he writes:

> The mythic intent makes it very much a book of the fifties: a decade obsessed with the hope that the imagination might generate at last the saving fable, the tale of the waste land redeemed, the desert of civilization watered by some humanist or metaphysical discovery. But the myth both asserts and mocks itself, takes on a neo-parodic form; and it is the method of comic fabulation, of expansive and pyrotechnic farce, of absurdity finding a path to human measurement, that makes Henderson the Rain King so strangely notable a novel. (66)

But critics hold conflicting views when it comes to the different ways of reading Bellow. Bellow's heroes, in the view of Jeanne Braham follow two

paths: the first path of "retreats" and the second path of "re-entries": Their "retreats", then, are attempts to escape the psychology of unfair treatment; their re-entries are posited on the conviction that individuals can have power over their own experience, defining relationships to history, country, and family in creative and sustaining ways. (39)

Malcolm Bradbury suggests that "all Bellow's heroes in some way rise up against the constrictions of their environment and their society, and are concerned with moulding a morality, realizing their humanity more intensely" (32). In this line of thought, many of Bellow's protagonists attempt to be on familiar terms with the importance of their individual possible development, and they become soul searching protagonists. In this vein, Peter Hyland suggests that Bellow's heroes are generally intellectual or sensitive. (15) Bradbury raises the same issue about Bellow's heroes:

> Bellow's novels' are populated with heroes that are likely to be in some sense intellectuals or sensitive and receptive to, or representative of, modern intellectual dilemmas, uncertain of their nature and their responsibility, remote from their traditional faith, and concerned with their relationships to their fellow men and to their society. (32)

Furthermore, Jonathan Wilson also lays emphasis on the fact that Bellow's protagonists are obliged to get used to the world in order not to fall down. He states: "Bellow's heroes are thus constantly obliged to adapt to a world that they find unaccommodating in preference to the risk of falling to the hellish world that waits for them with open gates." (61)

Bellow thus depicts man as lonely, a stranger in his society, searching for a way to live in the modern world. Alienated from their deepest selves, the

protagonists make every effort, consciously or unconsciously, to put together an end to this alienation, to make whole the fragmented image of man by uniting the functional and metaphysical aspect. Bellow's heroes may be distressed, complain, lament, but they never despair about the future. This makes of them successful in most cases. Like all protagonists, Bellow's characters have the heroic desire to triumph over or escape. However, compared to their modernist forerunners, they find it impossible to do either. But unlike the modernist heroes who inevitably moved toward tragedy or tragic absurdity, Bellow's protagonists no longer believe in their own tragedy. Rather, they seek out for a way to remain heroic in a world that would seem to disallow them this opportunity.

II.2. Influence of Existentialism on Bellow's Writings

Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* and *Herzog* have been selected for this analysis because it is thought, they provide a good example of "an existential hero in search of existential values" and therefore, they can provide an illustration of the influence of French existentialism on Bellow's work.

Very often, Bellow refers to Sartre's existentialist terms when he states that: man himself is the measure of all things and he is what he chooses to be. Most critics see Bellow's heroes as drifting aimlessly, indulging in gratuitous action, haunted by or confronting death, trapped and alienated yet, searching for identity and meaning.

The nature of individual identity in the modern absurd world has captured the attention and concern of Saul Bellow. His analyses of the quest of modern

man for a meaningful existence in a Post-War world which has lost all traditional values are based mainly upon the influences of two widely different - indeed even contradictory - philosophical schools. It has been pointed out by Keith Opdahl, that Saul Bellow's writings are influenced by the American Romantic literary tradition, and by the adoption and Americanization of French existentialism.

Saul Bellow has been inspired by Jean-Paul Sartre, the principal proponent of French existentialist philosophy, which is manifested in his novels. In his intended break with the metaphysical world view of the Middle Ages, Sartre maintains that existence precedes essence. In *Being and Nothingness* (1956), he argued that man exists without purpose.

In the same line of thought, Sartre claims that human beings exist, but what they are or what they may become depends entirely upon what they themselves choose to do. They must take the responsibility for their own development. In fact, there is a suggestion that Bellow share certain similarities with the Existentialist heroes of French fiction, Sartre's Roquentin in *Nausea* (1938) or Camus's Meursault in *The Outsider* (1942). Whether the influence of Existentialism on Bellow has been direct or indirect, the impact is noticeable in almost all his novels.

Unlike Sartre's and Camus'' philosophical novels, Bellow's novels do not end with the hero's self-destruction. Rather, Saul Bellow maintains that through responsibility, the individual can make of his environment a better place for survival. This is evident in both Eugene Henderson and Moses Herzog's struggle with the meaning of identity; their search for fulfilment, their

pre-occupation with limitless freedom, and their formulation of values in an ethical vacuum which are dealt with in a very detailed way. The uninterrupted repetition all through Bellow's fiction of the theme of the alienated individual's search for a meaningful existence highlights the importance he must assign to it. But the repetition of "open" endings reveals a certain doubt on the part of Bellow as to whether that particular kind of self-realization which he advocates is actually attainable in the absurd modern society.

As an American, brought up on the doctrine of the individual's unlimited opportunities, and writing within a literary tradition that has been dominated by authors like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, it is understandable, in my opinion, that Bellow has attempted to find different solutions to the problem of the nature of existence. Bellow wanted to state publicly that modern novels had lost their faith in man and could only expose man as a helpless victim of overwhelming forces which he did not like. Subsequently, he wanted to break that traditional existentialist mode of writing. Philosophically speaking, this places him somewhere between the French Existentialism and the American Transcendentalism.

Bellow's social critique thus accords with Irving Howe's contemporaneous essay *Mass Society and Post-Modern Fiction* (1959), which lists *Henderson the Rain King* as one of a number of novels that criticize a "relatively comfortable, half welfare and half garrison society." (25). According to the famous critic Irving Marlin, the novel *Henderson the Rain King* is "important in theme and important in structure, important for what they reveal about contemporary reality and for what they demonstrate about itself

and its much—healed-crisis" (Marlin, 69). It is no wonder that critics consider *Henderson the Rain King* as Bellow's first mature works. The novel can be divided into three parts in this thesis for the sake of convenience: Henderson's life in America, Henderson's journey in Africa and his return to America. Among the three parts, the second one is the most important in the sense of Henderson's Transcendence. His transcendence becomes possible, only after what he has experienced and learnt in the continent of Africa. His journey in Africa makes him transform from a "giant shadow" to a whole man, from a "pig" state to a "lion" state and from the chaotic state to a peaceful one. (Bellow, 199)

II.3. Henderson's Forms of Escape

Eugene Henderson took many forms of escape from the pressure imposed on him. Either these forms were the outcome of internal or external forces, social or psychological; they inevitably led him to experience one of the following forms of escape.

Fighting in World War II was the first of one the many forms of escape Henderson resorts for. Conversing with his wounded comrade about what to do in the future he said, "I'm going to start breeding pigs". An unending voice in his heart continuously cries out, "I want, I want, I want, oh, I want..." (15).

Henderson's disappointment with his life persistently appears by a voice-an inner voice that always asks for a want, "I want, I want ..." (24). This inner voice is a signal that Henderson needs to change. This particular inner voice of

Henderson is the main reason that pushes him to the search to find a solution for his situation. Commenting on this inner voice, Donald W. Marcos states: "The voice does not express desire in the ordinary sense, but rather a need for coming into one's identity and a cessation from the neurotic, hyperactive flight from the inescapable human condition" (110).

As the novel progresses, Henderson says that the lack of meaning and the feeling of alienation have almost become the destiny for most Americans and that it has become widespread to go and search for meaning outside of America. As will be illustrated, this is the main reason that urged Henderson to travel to Africa. The following quote gives evidence "It's the destiny of Americans to go out in the world and try to find the wisdom of life" (Bellow, 277).

Before Henderson decides to go to Africa, there, he tries out different sorts of activities that he thinks might help him to get out of his distressful situation. The desire in him to have a better life is so great that he almost tries everything he can think of. His efforts are not very helpful and they do not serve as a remedy. We witness that he is almost helpless. He says: "I tried with all my heart, chopping wood, lifting, ploughing, laying cement blocks, pouring concrete, and cooking mash for the pigs. On my own place, stripped to the waist like a convict, I broke Stones with a sledgehammer. It helped, but not enough". (23) And he adds, "Among other remedies, I took up the violin" (25).

Since, Henderson was not able to silence this demanding voice; he takes his flight to dark Africa looking for an answer. During his stay with African tribes, he takes part in public rituals attended by a large number of tribal folk, an

experience which cures him of his uprising. The consequence was that Henderson was finally able to live with his fellow humans. This inflexible and stubborn reply suggests both Henderson's and the writer's way of thinking and living, and their negative response of the modern existence which is based on capitalistic free competition.

Other forms of escape include drinking. For Henderson, whenever he felt that pressure, he took of alcohol as a refuge. But the real escape was his flight to Africa which is motivated by his influence of the immigration influx. Chicago, for instance, used to be a refuge of people not only from Europe and other continents, but also from South America. Therefore, African Americans constituted a considerable number of inhabitants of newly-arising Chicago. As Koy points out: "In this sense, Saul Bellow shared an experience with African Americans, the other major 'outsider' group of recent Chicago immigrants." (Koy, 2004) In the novel *Henderson the Rain King*, the reason for Henderson's leaving for Africa is to "leave things behind" and "wake the sleep of his spirit". The things Henderson wants to abandon are the things that of the twentieth-century western world: industrialization, materialism, and estrangement from nature.

II.4. Eugene Henderson's Types of Alienation

The protagonist in Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* seems to be alienated at so many levels. His alienation takes many forms as well as various dimensions. Eugene Henderson is not only alienated from his family and surroundings, but also from nature, and the spiritual world.

II.4.1. Henderson's Alienation from his Surroundings

In spite of the fact that Henderson possesses almost everything- this includes: money, health, power, fame, he still feels cut off from his surroundings. Eusebio L. Rodriguez is very clear in *Saul Bellow's Henderson as America*, writing that: "He can be seen as the embodiment of mid-twentieth-century America, bursting with vital energy, victorious in war, triumphant in technology, at the very peak of its prosperity" (120). In his book *Quest for the Human* (1981), Rodriguez sees the novel as "a Jeffersonian cry for the renewal and resurrection of the true spirit that had animated America in the past." (113)

Living in a society with all these good qualities did not prevent Henderson to act with different masks which are dictated by the surrounding environment. This hidden truth which is expressed in Dalai Lama´s saying: "The very purpose of our life is to seek happiness", constitutes the central subject matter in Henderson´s life. No matter how noble Henderson´s intentions were, the marriage was not happy and ended up with a divorce after years of struggles and sufferings. Nevertheless, he is not to be blamed for this. He was raised in the modern era of individualism and separation, in the age of running after wealth, education and supremacy over other people. To use the language of Barfield, Henderson did not consciously participate; he did not have any sense of unity or relation with the universe he inhabited. He was the extreme example of the "intelligent man" who, as Alan Watts, writes, "feels independent or cut off from the rest of nature." Alan Watts could say that Henderson lacked "cosmic, Instinct, Intelligence, and Anxiety." (Watts, 41) Podhoretz states that Henderson is "an allegorical personification of the vague

malaise, the sense of aimless drift and unused energy, that seems to cause problems to a prosperous and spiritually stagnant society like our own" (225) Levi Moffitt Cecil, in the title of his essay, calls Henderson the "American Imago of the 1950s."

II.4.2. Henderson's Alienation from Nature

After falling the prey of the forces of modernity, be them internal or external, Henderson has become alienated or estranged from the natural world. He has come to understand and experience the natural world as something alien or strange to him as human being, and reciprocally to understand and experience himself.

Convinced by the idea that neither money nor any of the people surrounding him could relieve him of his nervous tension, he prefers the state of alienation instead of that of community. Above all, he had not only suffered, but he made his family´s life a real hell as well. Conditions got so harsh that one incident of losing his temper with his wife scared an elderly woman from their neighbourhood to death. What necessarily followed was the moment of his ultimate decision to make a real escape - a flight to Africa.

Burdened with the chaos and fragmentation, and losing faith in everything, Henderson decides to look for another place -a better environment than his America. His escape to Africa is motivated by the fact of finding some solace. Still, his trip poses unanswered questions, because Henderson himself is looking for a justification for his trip to Africa. He has simply run away from

America and is for all his superhuman wasteful; passively waiting for himself to be explained to himself.

But this is not striking at all, and Henderson's attachment to the beauty of nature is deeply rooted. Moreover, Bellow's interest in the theme of "primitive conditions" could be traced to his study years, when he graduated with a degree from a bachelor program in anthropology in 1937, and ended his studies with a thesis on Eskimos. Thus, both the out of the ordinary setting and the author´s anthropological education are depicted in *Henderson the Rain King*. The influence of his years of studies at the anthropology department in 1937 cannot pass unnoticed. This is particularly typical in *Henderson the Rain King.*

What mainly urged him to take this trip is this strange, repeated voice saying "I want". After some time he started to hear the inner voice again and the pressure in his chest was increasing every day. Considering the arising agitation, he was forced to separate from his friend and travel on his own. A native African called Romilayu, was hired to accompany him and promised to show him the real, aboriginal African. This guide believes that through the African expedition, Henderson should have the chance to find the essence of his self. This was not an act of coward; rather, his escape was motivated by the fact of finding truth and meaning. The closer Henderson comes into contact with Africa, the more he discovers the inconsistency of the phenomena that is commonly perceived as reality and a sphere of people's thoughts. In the novel Bellow makes it clear that man's phobias make him self-recoiled as well as deprives him of his ability to see and enjoy the world's beauty. It only by imitating the lion and by learning to stand on all fours feet in a leonine way that

he will be able to conceive of the environment: the sky, the sun, the leaves and feel oneness with them, which will help him "rise from a grave of solitude" (HZ, 226).

In this respect, Bellow, gives hope to his readers that although life has compelling forces, there is a way to live happily. African setting is employed here in order to criticize the emptiness of modern life in American and to offer a way for the protagonist's transcendence over the anxiety and contradiction imposed by American society of that time. In this sense, Africa with its undomesticated nature represents a healing power of the twentieth-century chaos and people's feeling of alienation.

II.5. Henderson's Manifold Quests

Being shunned by those closest to him and being unaccepted by society, the character in this novel is a perfect example of an estranged person. In *Henderson the Rain King*, Saul Bellow's character Eugene Henderson is a man who struggles to change his ways and find out his true calling.

With the aim of justifying his existence, he embarks on a series of quests ranging from his quest for truth, for reality, for his identity, to his journey of self-purification. What is for sure is that the Henderson of America is in no way comparable to Henderson of Africa. He explains that, "At one time, much earlier in this life of mine, suffering had a certain spice (263)." I feel that this shows how he is growing as a person and being able to find out more about who he really is. Like Camus, Henderson sees life as a plague, afraid as he is, he

says to himself "make a move Henderson, put forth effort. You, too, will die of this pestilence ...for the sake of all, get out" (40)

II.5.1. Henderson's Quest for Truth

In this novel, the representation of searching for truth is displayed more attractively as the hero travels to the out of the ordinary Africa where he encounters many remarkable native personalities. Henderson finally manages to rise above his fears and reaches the state of balance which he has long looked-for. However, he has to undergo many dreadful situations and uphill struggles to unburden himself of his fears and suffering. At the end, he realizes that a person is stable and balanced only if he is full of understanding and love, and then, he can be beneficial for other people. In one of the passages, Henderson explains to his son Edwards who asks him, "What do you fight for dad?" and he replies "for truth. Yes that is it, the truth. Against falsehood. But most of the fighting is against myself." (HRK, 124) Henderson does not stop reflecting on the absurdity of life. He seems aware of the plight of Sisyphus and the consequences of his actions. Henderson confesses that he has "never been at home in life (84), and that he "is one of the displaced person", (34) "occupying a place in existence which should be filled properly by someone else." (78) He also confesses that the great estate which he inherited "my ancestors stole land from the Indians "he says, "they got more from the government and cheated other settlers too, so, I became heir of great estate (21) this is in itself an expression of guilt-laden and an explanation of his sense of loss and alienation. It appears that Henderson has some real desirability for the

Hemingway code. This is evidenced in several scattered references to the possibility that the moment of truth comes through a blow.

Not only has Bellow been attracted by Hemmingway, but he has been much more attracted by Miguel de Cervantes. Bellow's humanism can be compared to that of Cervantes. For according to Abbes Bahous, "Cervantes is a humanist, a man with great sensitivity, a Spaniard already prepared and predisposed for a new look at the Moriscos" (Bahous, 19). Henderson and Don Quixote have something in common. The image of man has been the central focus of *Henderson the Rain King*. One of the main inspiration of the novel Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, in fact permeates the novel to inform its deeper matter. Both Bellow and Cervantes take for granted the pose of a simple man, telling a simple story. The writer examines Bellow's extensive use of chivalry to treat the modern dilemmas of men seeking meaning in a faithless age. For when Henderson arrives at the court of the Wariri King, Dahfu, he says, "but my purpose was to see essentials, only essentials, nothing but essentials, and the guard against hallucinations. Things are not what they seem, anyway." (HRK, 37) The theme present here is identically the very same theme of *Don* Quixote. This justifies the reason behind classifying *Don Quixote* the first modern European novel. This is due mainly to its preoccupation with reality, which the fact that individual mortality is the ultimate inescapable reality. As has been mentioned in this study, it is Bellow's worry, through Henderson's quest to disentangle his inner being to know reality, to face it, and more importantly to accept it. What can be deduced also is that both protagonists begin their journey in mature life. Like Don Quixote, Henderson, embark on a

voyage of experience, to ultimate confrontation with their fear of death, the reality he had sought to avoid all their lives. One is safe in saying that the scene of the death-avoiding anti-hero is quite similar to that of an immortality seeker, but in twentieth–century fashion. Properly considered, we see in Bellow's novel the shadow and ghost of Don Quixote after over a thousand years. Don Quixote is here again but not in the Dark Ages, but 'the modern Age'. Indeed, the story provides the readers with much to reflect on. There is one question which needs to be asked, "Is the world out of order or are we human beings mad?" Probably both, if so, which is a hazard and growing to resolve.

II.5.2. Henderson's Quest for Reality

The great question of why Henderson chose to go to Africa plagues the novel from the very beginning. Is Henderson running away from or embracing reality? In one sense, Henderson wishes to escape from American reality because it has become chaos to him. In another sense, he desires to hold close a primitive or baseline reality in the way that Norman Mailer had called for a move "backward toward being" (Advertisements, 307) Undeniably, as Henderson walks into the valley of the Arnewi, he states that "I felt I was entering the past—the real past, no history or junk like that. The pre-human past. And I believed that there was something between the stones and me" (46). What Henderson wishes is to start again in an effort not to escape reality but to understand and, consequently, accept it. He desires to strip away his American reality, simply because he has lost the ability to explain it.

This is where most of Bellow's protagonists become frustrated and alienated. They are able to accept reality because of their extreme fear of facing death as the only certainty in an absurd world. Moreover, in their paranoid journey from a confrontation with their own mortality, they only ensnare themselves even more in the suffocating web of alienation which is a result of "bad faith." While attempting to escape from physical nature, the protagonists are unexpectedly confronted with a sense of unreality. Therefore the first impediment to be overcome in man's search for a meaningful existence, for a life within reality, is this evasion of nature. Instead of trying to overcome undefeatable limitations, man must accept that he, too, is part of that physical existence which he has been trying to set himself above; i.e. that he, too, will pass away. Only then he may realize himself as a truly existing person. Eugene Henderson appears to have sensed that the recognition of one's own mortality is a prerequisite of self-realization, when he gives his opinion of the social and moral background for the quest of modern man. He states, "All the major tasks and the big conquests were done before my time. Encountering death seems to be the biggest problem of all. And coming to terms with this issue is enigmatic in nature. Henderson insists on the fact of making an end to his everlasting suffering. He states, "We've just got to do something about it ..." (HRK, 258)

Reflecting on his present conditions and the situation he has reached, he states: "For me, the entire experience has been similar to a dream." (262) Henderson starts out on his quest in order to pursue his true self and to learn to accept reality. If he is able to attain both, he hopes that he can in this manner fulfil himself as a truly existing person. In this way, the confrontation with

death has turned him into an active searcher for self. To use the words of Francisco Collado Rodriguez, this -task- this heavy burden demands the presence of an active protagonist- a quality- that the other characters lack. (Rodriguez, 2016)

The moment of overwhelming trepidation which Henderson undergoes in this confrontation with the death of his alter ego serves to blow apart his ego-emphasis, and this marks for him the beginning of a new kind of existence within an acceptance of reality: "But now I was blasted away from this practice [of unreality] by the throat of the lion. His voice was like a blow at the back of my head." (HRK, 287) This way of overcoming one's alienation is quite in accordance with Karl Jasper's view of the circumstances under which an individual may eventually throw off his false self and realize himself as an existing person. Henderson's original purpose in going to Africa was to pursue his authentic self and to attain an understanding of reality.

We need 'the Other' in order to define ourselves: "the existence of the person, the for-itself, is actually dependent on the existence of another person. Without it, no one would be able to conceive any definition of himself." (Chelstrom, 2009)

Henderson first visits the humble and cattle-loving Arnewi tribe, who suffer because a drought is killing their cattle. During his stay there, he is taken to see the Arnewi Queen. This old woman asks Henderson who he is and where he comes from, but he is not prepared for those very palpable questions and he becomes frustrated because he does not know how to answer her. He is the total sum of all of his social and moral roles, but he senses that the queen

will not be satisfied by an answer which simply refers to all those relationships, i.e. to his false identity. What she deserves to learn is what his true self is really like, and this he cannot tell her. He says, "I began to suffer. I wish I could explain why it oppressed me to tell about myself, but so it was, and I didn't know what to say." (HRK, 73) "Once more it was who are you? I had to confess that I didn't know where to begin." (HRK, 74)

Queen Willatale remarked that Henderson is unable to answer her question. She understood that he is fleeing responsibility for himself, and she tells him: "World is strange to a child" (81) Henderson's desire to live within the physical world, but beyond the reach of death has alienated him from himself, because he has tried - in a very Sartrean manner - to bring together these two contradictory alternatives. In this self-deception, he has behaved like a child in the various "roles" he has taken on in order to escape responsibility for his own life. When he admits this, she answers, "grun-tu-molani. Man wants to live" (81). Henderson cheerfully accepts her words as an affirmation of life. This is, indisputably, precisely what he has been looking for, and he devotedly adopts for, and he enthusiastically adopts "this molani" as his new philosophy of life. (82) This affirmation has fulfilled part of his need but not all of it, so he must continue his search for personal redemption, for his own true "I."

Like most of the other Bellow protagonists, Henderson tries to throw off the burden of his old self which prevents him from becoming human, and as in most of Bellow's other novels this burdensome ego is described in terms of a gigantic weight which the hero feels is weighing him down. Henderson's objection of the weight he has to carry brings to mind Bellow's use of sea-

imagery for connotations of death. He claim: "I was very stubborn. I wanted to raise myself into another world. My life and deeds were a prison." (266) I had a voice that said, I want! I want? I? It should have told me she wants, he wants, they want. And moreover, it's love that makes reality, reality. The opposite makes the opposite. (267)

This is where most of Bellow's protagonists become frustrated and alienated. They are able to accept reality because of their deep fear of facing death as the only certainty in an absurd world, and in their paranoid escape from a confrontation with their own mortality. They only catch up themselves even more in the suffocating web of alienation which is a result of "bad faith." Trying to escape from physical nature, the protagonists are suddenly confronted with a sense of unreality.

II.5.3. Henderson's Quest for Identity

The protagonist quest for identity is of great significance in Bellow's novel. He has developed this theme throughout his novels, experimenting with it by applying it to very different types of characters in an attempt to solve the problem of the nature of individual identity in the absurd modern world. Henderson, this rich and violent giant has lost his identity in the noise and mass-culture of modern America. By continuously drifting into "bad faith"' he seeks to evade taking any responsibility for his own life. It seems that he has thrown his true self away in order to achieve several different social "roles" which create a false identity.

Henderson's despair of the meaninglessness and emptiness of his life is manifested by "a ceaseless voice in my heart that said, I want, I want, I want oh, I want" (15). The voice wants without saying what it wants, so in order to satisfy it, Henderson must proceed by the method of trial and error to find out what it is that it wants so badly. He looks for an answer in literature, he tries to satisfy it with money, with sex, with violence, with hard manual labour, with yells, with pigs, and with violin lessons (in an attempt to recapture his own past and thus to escape morality), but nothing works.

Henderson recognizes that by isolating himself from other people, he has become estranged from himself. The moment of overwhelming anxiety which Henderson undergoes in this confrontation with the death of his alter ego serves to shatter his ego-emphasis, and this marks for him the beginning of a new kind of existence within an acceptance of reality. "But now I was blasted away from this practice [of unreality] by the throat of the lion", he says. (287) This way of overcoming one's alienation is quite in accordance with Karl Jasper's view of the circumstances under which an individual may eventually throw off his false self and realize himself as an existing person.

Jasper assumes that behind the realistic self, the individual has a true self of which he is made aware in what Jasper calls "boundary situations" i.e. in "situations of an extreme kind where we confront despair, guilt, anxiety and death. In these moments of awareness, we realize our own responsibility for what we are, and the reality of freedom of choice is thrust upon us." He realizes that his emphasis on his individuality has kept him detached from other

human beings and from the true existence which his inner need kept demanding.

One insight which Henderson has gained in Africa is an acknowledgment that he is fundamentally just like other human beings, and especially, that others fight the same problems of identity as he has fought: "What I'd like to know is why this has to be fought by everybody, for there is nothing that's struggled against so hard as coming to an end. Man's search for a meaningful existence is encountered by many obstacles. One such an impediment is his evasion from physical nature. As an alternative of trying to rise above insurmountable limitations, man must accept that he, too, is part of that physical existence which he has been trying to set himself above; i.e. that he, too, will pass away. Only then, he may realize himself as a truly existing person." (HRK, 275)

Eugene Henderson is an activist hero. This rich and violent giant has lost his identity in the noise and mass-culture of modern America. By continuously lapsing into "bad faith" he seeks to avoid taking any responsibility for his own life. It seems that he has thrown his true self away in order to achieve several different social "roles" which create a false identity:

> When I think of my condition at the age of fifty-five ... all is grief. The facts begin to crowd me and soon I get a pressure in the chest. A disorderly rush begins- my parents, my wives, my girls, my children, my farm, my animals, my habits, my money, my music lessons, my drunkenness, my prejudices, my brutality, my teeth, my face, my soul!" (7)

But in this endeavour to go beyond human mortality - and human life generally - he plays at being God, and these results in his alienation from life,

from other people, and most importantly, from his true self. Henderson's despair of the meaninglessness and emptiness of his life is manifested by " a ceaseless voice in my heart that said, I want, I want, I want oh, I want " (15)

Apparently, all Henderson's social and human needs are fulfilled: he has money, sex, and the sense of continuity which children bring, but his voice still wants more, and he is beginning to sense that this more, which the voice wants, must be a qualitative change and not a quantitative one. Having fled his human condition, which must be lived within an acknowledgement of death, he has been trying to reduce himself to a state of pure "thingness," and thus he has alienated himself from his surroundings and from his own true self.

Henderson first visits the modest Arnewi tribe which show a great desire for its love for the cattle. That tribe suffer because a drought is killing their cattle. During his stay there, he is taken to see the Arnewi queen. This old woman asks Henderson who he is and where he comes from, but he is not pre pared for those very obvious questions and he becomes frustrated because he does not know how to answer her. He is the total sum of his entire social and moral's roles," but he senses that the queen will not be satisfied by an answer which simply refers to all those relationships, i.e. to his false identity. What she deserves to learn is what his true self is really like, and this he cannot tell her. He states, "I began to suffer. I wish I could explain why it oppressed me to tell about myself, but so it was, and I didn't know what to say. (HRK, 73) once more it was, who are you? I had to confess that I didn't know where to begin. (74) Seeing that Henderson is unable to answer her question, Queen Willatale

understands that he is fleeing responsibility for himself, and she tells him : "World is strange to a child" (81)

Henderson's desire to live within the physical world, but beyond the reach of death has alienated him from himself, because he has tried - in a very Sartrean manner - to merge these two irreconcilable alternatives. In this self-deception he has behaved like a child in the various "roles" he has taken on in order to escape responsibility for his own life. When he confesses this, she answers, "grun-tu-molani. Man wants to live" (HRK, 81).

Henderson admits that by isolating himself from other people, he has become estranged from himself. Jasper thinks that behind the empirical self the individual has a true self of which he is made aware in what Jasper calls "boundary situations," i.e. in "situations of an extreme kind where we confront despair, guilt, anxiety and death. In these moments of awareness, we realize our own responsibility for what we are, and the reality of freedom of choice is propelled upon us." He realizes that his emphasis on his individuality has kept him aloof from other human beings and from the true existence which his inner need kept demanding.

Despite all circumstances of oppression, despite the violence of nature and the violence of men, despite the cocky, assertive "I", despite all determinism and despite finitude and death, the individual is free and free to choose. He can become better.

It was Romilayu, the first native African who came in closer contact with Henderson. This native African man became Henderson's guide in Africa.

Their relationship eventually matured in a friendship, since they had to rely on one another in countless arduous situations. Henderson's survival in Africa and among the African tribes was thanks to this guide Romilayu who was well-accustomed to the African habits. Thanks to his ability to hold talks with public figures as well as ordinary people, they avoided many misunderstandings.

Without the acceptance of death as well as life, he could not succeed in his quest. Given that the ritual of rain-making went off sufficiently, the real perception of existence drew closer. Owing to Henderson´s act of bravery, Dahfu, "the comic and semi-philosophical king", was willing to teach Henderson his wisdom of life. A change from failure to success also symbolizes the possibility of Henderson's desired transformation. Among the most significant beast Henderson met at Wariri was the lioness.

At the end of the novel, Henderson´s image of reality was accomplished. Therefore, the tough way back home seemed more bearable to Henderson as he reached some form of transformation. Marcus Klein adds that Henderson's transformation "is a progress of the soul through its freedom, from isolation to affirmation of ordinary life in the world. Henderson´s concluding notion of reality means that the essence of life dwells in love."

In *Henderson the Rain King*, we see the protagonist trying to escape the pressures of society, and going to Africa, where he still "thinks in city metaphors and of city events; the city maintains its pressures, and alive within his other speculations is the city idea of people, nameless, faceless, with whom no communication is possible."

II.5.4. Henderson's Journey of Self-Purification

Henderson's story is not only a narration about an expedition to Africa nor is it an adventure journey. It is rather a journey of self-purification. It is a transformation of his thoughts and a movement from isolation to the acceptance of his role in society. During the process of "bursting the spirit's sleep", he manages to find and bring to life his real, deepest and suppressed self. As Henderson says, "travel is advisable. And believe me, the world is a mind. Travel is mental travel. I had always suspected this. What we call reality is nothing but pedantry." (HRK, 157) As Christopher E. Koy stated on account of the purpose of Henderson's journey in his article *Saul Bellow and His Fictions of Black Culture* (2004): " In his escape to Africa, Eugene Henderson sought to achieve self-purification and moral accountability, to strive spiritually and seek out a new personal destiny in Africa." This voyage to Africa meant a lot to Henderson since it give limitless possibilities and chances in his process of transformation. It is implicitly a harsh criticism to his modern America. In one passage Henderson states, "Africa reached my feelings right away even in the air, from which it looked like the ancient bed of mankind" (42). This feeling suggests that it was with the 'modern' bed of mankind (America) that he had felt sickened, since this unclear awareness of the ancient, the primitive, is already satisfying to him. He felt a strong sense of 'life' here; he "kept thinking, 'Bountiful life'. Oh, how bountiful life is. I felt I might have a chance here" (42-43).

Because the protagonists could neither control his fears nor reach his real self, he would rather die in Africa than return home non-purified of an

unnecessary part of the self. Childhood is thought to be the age of purity. Provided that children are not corrupted by the outside world, they are still blameless. Enthusiasm, vitality, and joy are characteristics of this age as children derive pleasure from the most common things.

Despite all circumstances of oppression, despite the violence of nature and the violence of men, despite the overconfident, assertive "I", despite all determinism, and despite finitude and death, the individual is free and free to choose. He can become better. The story ends not in fragments of frustration, but with a redemptive vision of humanity. There is a kind of rebirth through which Henderson achieves purification. Bellow demonstrates that the individual is not isolated and that Henderson's world is a luminous creation of multiple possibilities.

II.6. Alienated Protagonist in Saul Bellow's *Herzog* (1964)

II.6.1. Introduction

The novel tells the story of Moses Herzog, an American-Jewish scholar of immigrant parents who, originally poor and unsuccessful, finally achieves late in life a business success, which leaves him financially secure, and free to follow out a life of ideas. Herzog got married two times, first, to Daisy, a conventional Jewish wife called, whom he divorces; second to Madeleine, a Catholic convert of intellectual interests but of extravagant tastes.

The whole novel is about the story of Moses Herzog who is regarded as, a big sufferer, joker, mourner, and charmer, and who has failed in his life as father, as a husband, and as an intellectual. Although his life progressively

collapses around him, he has failed as a writer and teacher, as a father, and has lost the affection of his wife to his best friend. Herzog sees himself as a survivor, both of his personal disasters and those of his age. He writes unsent letters to friends and enemies, colleagues and famous people, revealing his cynical perception of the world around him, and the innermost secrets of his heart.

In the novel, Herzog is seeking to create equilibrium between extreme pessimism and extreme optimism. He is seeking to come to a state of wholeness. The seven slices of life described in the novel are all stepping stones to Herzog's resolution and state of peace with America and himself.

II.6.2. Herzog's Inauthentic Existence

The whole novel centres its attention on the question of authenticity. For Scott the "central moments" in the experience of a Bellow character are those in which he, "transcending the immediate pressures of his environment and the limiting conditions of the social matrix, asks himself some fundamental questions about the nature of his own humanity" (105). Labelled as the optimist humanist, Dutton locates Bellow in the humanist tradition for continuing to pay tribute to the nature of man.

According to Harper, Bellow's protagonists are initiated into "a larger transcendental conception of humanity" which transcends the limited and limiting dimension of "pure reason" (20). For Scott, despite the fact that Bellow's protagonists are burdened by "the pressure of concrete circumstance"

and the "bitter taste" of "inauthenticity", the novels still move towards "disburdenment" and reconciliation. (Scott, 1968)

This same image is displayed in the universe of Bellow's novels: People playing roles, exhibiting masks, camouflaging their own identity, indifferent to the personal implications of their acts. The society Herzog lives in leads him to passivity, lack of participation, making him alienated from his true social role and preventing him from questioning the meaning of his own life. This alienated state makes him inauthentic concerning himself and his inter individual relationships, leading him to mask his identity, both individual and social.

In *Herzog*, Bellow delineated the absurdity and existential dilemma in the postwar world through three characters-Moses, Madeleine, and Valentine Gersbach. Correspondingly, the three characters have three different stories to tell. All these characters struggle in their person always of being and existence in the course of the novel. They are totally paradoxical in thoughts, ideas, emotions, temperament, and even behavior.

Bellow detected relationship breakdown in the modern society, where even intimate and close relations lost their appeal. In the novel, Moses Herzog represents the relationship breakdown through his strange attitudes. Even his close relatives such as his uncle remain unfamiliar to him. In the universe of Bellow's novels, we notice the portrayal of people showing a weak sense of commitment concerning love, friendship, family, tradition, moral and religious values, and mainly concerning the past.

Herzog, the second novel under analysis, depicts a hero in his mid-forties going through a breakdown after divorcing his second wife, Madeleine. He is in a nearly mad state of mind as everything around him is shaken. Owing to this break-up, he is forced to reconsider his former life and values. The writing of letter serves as a unique means of dealing with the oppressive reality.

Moses Herzog isolates himself in an almost destroyed house where he writes his letters and thinks about his life. At first, he appears full of hatred, companied by feelings of injustice. His resentment almost directs him to a violent act of revenge. Hitherto, this act is not accomplished as he realizes the ineffectiveness of it, in a view of the absurdity of life. Therefore, he returns to the countryside, where he finally reaches mental balance. The truth in this novel is found after a total rejection of any intellectual or modern values. The protagonist gets pleasure from the state of not being involved in any institution. Yet, the conclusion, or the truth, remains the same. No matter how absurd life may be, it is worth living.

The random and disordered manner of objects represents the distorted existence of postwar American people. They also present the hostile environments, and apparently absurd worlds. But Bellow has dealt in a different way with this mode of existentialism showing a positive attitude among the protagonists at the end of his novels. Although Bellow's protagonists are entrapped by the forces of modern complexities, they refuse to resign themselves to alienation and isolation. Instead, they struggle to maintain a sense of human dignity.

Remarkably, we do spot enormous urban alienation materials in this novel such as its peculiar metropolitan landscape, miserable hero and attentively constructed patterns of crash, sickness, decay, impotence and saturated imagery. Bellow is actually making here an amusing ironic use of such materials to show the absurdist and Freudian estimates of man.

Life itself has become a heavy burden particularly on Herzog's part and he is lost in the words of what Bellow seems to be saying: "We are all lost, more or less." But by the end of the novel Bellow is marked to be optimistic.

As Bellow himself states that man lives and goes on saying-" I labor, I spend, I strive, I design, I love, I cling, I uphold, I give way, I envy, I long, I scorn, I die, I hide, I want" (STD, 102) and then become dust in the wind for " life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying in the end, nothing". (Macbeth, Act V, Scene V, 25–27) This reminds us of *The Myth of Sisyphus* by Camus (1942). All people's labours are like those of Sisyphus pushing the stone up the hill only to watch it roll back down again.

In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus uses the analogy of the Greek myth to demonstrate the futility of existence. Sisyphus is condemned to roll a rock up a hill for eternity, but when he reaches the summit the rock will roll back to the floor again. "We value our lives and existence so greatly, but at the same time we know we will eventually die, and ultimately our endeavours are meaningless." (Camus, 1942) Therefore, Camus believes that human existence is meaningless but Bellow believes that his protagonists find meaning in life by never giving up in life. That is why; at the end of the novel a sign of

hope is marked in the face of Herzog which opposes the long-established code of existentialism.

The story ends not in fragments of frustration, but with a redemptive vision of humanity. There is a kind of rebirth through which Herzog achieves purification. Bellow demonstrates that the individual is not isolated and that Herzog's world is a sparkling creation of multiple possibilities.

The powerful ending of the novel shows Herzog as successful in the long run. The oppressive forces could not completely crush him. He finally realized what is to be a man. He remains emotionally alive. He experienced an immense love for the entire mankind. The nobility of Herzog's heart lies in the fact that in a heartless world based on money and culture, he is the single person who is not only able to maintain his humanity, but he is also capable of love. What Bellow wants to say is that all human beings have a certain determination to find meaning in life. By embracing anxiety as foreseeable, a person can use it to achieve his or her full potential.

II.6.3. Moses Herzog's Alienation

Moses Herzog suffers from the pains of the several sorts of alienation he has experienced at varying degrees. Not only does he feel alienated from his surrounding including his very close people but also from society at large. This process of estrangement which Herzog has experienced in his life can be analogous to that described by Camus:

> The first step in the development of the absurd consists on the individual's shocking recognition of the now apparent meaninglessness of the universe. The second step consists in the absurd man's living the now apparent conflict

between his intention (his inner voice) and the reality which he will encounter; finally, the third step consists on his assumption of heroic dimensions through living the conflict and making it his god. (Galloway, 16)

II.6.3.1. Herzog's Alienation from Society

As portrayed by Saul Bellow in his novel *Herzog*, the central point is the theme of modern man's alienation from his surroundings. The individual is seen in *Herzog* as alienated from society. The analysis of the main character reveals Moses Herzog's alienation which results from the clash between his dreams and the disappointing reality which is full of conflicts. All these make him distressed and finally cause his withdrawal from the society. He alienates himself from the society he lives in and when the thing is getting worse, he endures self alienation since he is strange to himself. At last, Herzog who feels that he is nobody in his present environment struggles to be somebody by choosing to join his fellowmen.

We can notice Herzog's sense of alienation in his relationship with other people like his sister Helen, and his two brothers. He felt cut off from his family once he had grown up. It is his sense of separation from his childhood family world that is at the root of his alienation. His alienation to some extent can be accounted for being betrayed by everyone in his life including those who are very close to him. As an illustration, his elder brother rebukes him at his father's funeral for weeping loudly before his high-bred acquaintance. His brother reprimands him because he fears that his behaviour may seem ridiculous or unwelcome to his rich acquaintances. From Herzog's elder brother's point of view, even a death in the family is an occasion for a get together of his rich business colleagues and not a moment for sharing the

genuine feelings of grief. Such incidents are the outcomes of the materialistic capitalistic society. Herzog reads somewhere else that people in New York had returned back to calling the police for help. "Send a squad car, for the love of God! Send someone! Put me in the lockup with somebody! Save me. Touch me come someone ... please come" (HZ, 203). This incident shows how the individual has been segregated, alienated and almost completely cut-off from human connections during a foolish race of progress and material advancement.

II.7. Moses Herzog's Multiple Quests

Similar to Eugene Henderson, Moses Herzog seems to embark on nearly the same types of quests although the circumstances are not quite similar for both protagonists. Still in a chaotic and absurd universe, the protagonist expresses his thirst for unity, community and values as well as his yearning for order and stability.

II.7.1. *Herzog* Quest for Peace and Stability

One of the fundamental questions which the hero must resolve is whether or not the individual can preserve sanity and put into effect freedom of choice in a technological and materialistic society Moses Herzog "dangles" between engagement and disengagement. Lacking the sense unity both internally and externally, Herzog, instead, sees decay everywhere he looks. Subsequently, he immerses himself in his suffering, his sense of failure, and his victimization.

Through confrontations in his life, Herzog achieves his identity in a way that he is free from his self-doubts and masochism. Dutton also supports this

idea by saying that "after confrontations that call for intensive soul-searching examinations, [Herzog] will reach a viable position from which he can live a life founded on a measure of dignity and integrity" (119). Jung argues that a man could achieve a new identity. He states that, " Rebirth may be a renewal without any change of being, inasmuch as the personality which is renewed is not changed in its essential nature, but only its functions, or parts of the personality, are subjected to healing, strengthening, or improvement" (55).

It has been observed that by the end of the novel, Herzog is now able to accept the fact that he is an ordinary man like others. Dutton also argues that "Herzog is released from a self-imprisoning self-hatred of elements in his own nature" (133). That is, he returns to his country house in Berkshire, Ludeyville. It can be argued that Herzog starts a new life as a reborn man in Ludeyville, where he achieves peace: "He reached his country place the following afternoon, after taking a plane to Albany, from there the bus to Pittsfield and then a cab to Ludeyville" (HZ, 316). This return to Ludeyville can be regarded as a return to the beginning for Herzog.

That is, Herzog returns to the place where the novel starts, and it can be suggested that rather than New York City or Chicago, Herzog chooses Ludeyville because he can find peace there. This is in itself a harsh criticism to the debris and filth inherent in big cities that characterized America at that period. This also justifies Henderson's escape to primitive Africa.

This reconciliation process is also confirmed in the protagonist's strong belief in the self, for Herzog accepts Madeleine's offer, which is to move

to Massachusetts, Ludeyville. Where he buys an old house in this village and isolates himself from the phoniness of the civilized world. It is significant to note that he resigns from his academic position at the university to find transcendental peace. Kulshrestha supports this by saying that "his aim is almost always to reject theories that decry modern society and to affirm man's possibilities of transcendence by hinting at a system of values that, in his view, characterizes–or ought to characterize human life" (121). As such, there is no need for further justifications for Herzog's existence. In other words, he is now secure in Ludeyville as he is confident, strong, and cheerful. Kulshrestha states that "the important elements in the system of values affirmed by Herzog are joy, humility, compassion, and acceptance. In Ludeyville, he discovers that he is 'consciously cheerful' in spite of his 'present loneliness'" (130).

II.7.2. Herzog's Quest for Values

Being a contemporary writer, Bellow sees the western world, in the absence of a fixed, stratified society, as complex and chaotic, lacking meaningful motivations and unity, which his protagonists look for. In this sense, Bellow agrees with Irving Howe's comments, when he contrasts the contemporary novelist with the modern novelist who wrote realistic novels, saying that, "the task of the novelist was now to explore a chaotic multiplicity of meanings rather than to continue representing the surfaces of common experience." (Howe, 1968)

Thus, money and values are consequently two opposing and dominant elements in the structure of most of Bellow's novels, including *Herzog.* His

protagonists who see themselves lost in a world moved by materialistic motivations. Irving Howe in his discussion on modern and contemporary fiction says that "by now the search for values has become not only a familiar but an expected element in modern fiction," This search for values in a bewildering, materialistic and alienatory society is a pertinent point in Bellow's fiction and has been discussed in details by the critics.

Two other aspects of contemporary society, related to the individual, and which are alienation and lack of identity are characteristic of technocracy. He notes a few traits or symptoms in consumer society and most of them connected to the problem of passivity and alienation. This passive character of contemporary man is revealed in Bellow's protagonist; who acts passively in relation to people who exert coercive forces over him.

II.7.3. Herzog's Quest for Community

Saul Bellow's presentation of a hero searching for the essence for life entails certain autobiographical allusions ranging from the family background and failed relationships to notions of ideology and values. Unlike other works of Bellow, Herzog is a novel of ideas. Moses Herzog is an intellectual protagonist. He tries to answer one question "what it means to be human ... in a society that was not community and devalued the person" (HZ, 66). Herzog alienation – community dialectic is explored in the dimensions of ideas.

Moses' facade of academic success collapses when Madeline enters his life. He wants to make "a fresh start in his life". He was forced to go to Chicago to get a job not only for himself, but also for Guesbach. Realizing that his life is ruined, he becomes suspicious of his work, his writing of history seems irrelevant, and his intellectual intuitions were not materialized.

Consequently, he loses contact with everyone around him. Unable to support his new situation, he lives a life of self-imprisonment.

In spite of going for a European tour and having a short affair with Wanda, he was unable to escape from his feeling of loneliness. Moses attempts to express his sufferings, alienated mind, and also an effort to move towards community. The tension between his feeling of alienation and his yearning for community is of great significance in all his unsent letters. By writing letters, Moses longs for establishing a link with his lived separated world. His unsent letters helped him in his quest for communal life hoping that through writing he can shorten the distance separating him from family members, close friends and society as a whole.

Ramona plays an important role in making him return to his human life, telling him that he has great capacity for life. When he moved to New York, he sees life in its lower form; it's less than human aspects, full of evil, immorality and corruption. This return to human feelings is an important turning point in Herzog's progression towards community.

This is made clearly explicit in the later parts of the novel which deal with Herzog's Chicago's experiences. Through the character of Herzog, Bellow demonstrates his revolt against the contemporary society which fosters separation, and boosts torn relationships between its members. Bellow thus put too much weigh on Herzog's humanism which connotes brotherhood. He says, "I really believe that brotherhood is what makes a man human. If I owe God a human life, this is where I fall down."

That people are sociable by nature is reinforced through the following quote by Bellow which reads, "Man liveth not by Self alone, but in his

brother's face ... Each shall behold the Eternal Father and love and joy abound" (HZ, 280). Thus, Herzog's Judaism suggests the idea that all people are responsible for others, and this is what makes the individual human.

All the characters are finally forced to come out of their isolation by certain unexpected happenings. These events force them to join a public gathering, visit a public institution, and/or participate in a public ceremony, all of which are attended by a large number of ordinary people. In these places, in the midst of a crowd of ordinary people, Bellow's protagonists face the truth of ordinary life which disperses their egos and makes them aware of their commonality. Hence Bellow uses the public phenomenon as a metaphor for man's inevitable affiliation to other humans and thereby attempts to answer his own question: "When will we see new and higher forms of individuality, purged of old sickness and corrected by a deeper awareness of what all men have in common?" (Bunuel, 112)

It is only after the protagonist becomes aware of certain "defects" in human nature that he thinks of gathering all his strength in order to stand against the forces leading to his collapse.

Herzog is not only the image of the solitary man in the middle of the mass, but also that of the lost, confused man, who, rejecting the values imposed by society, attaches himself to strange philosophies, which he thinks might bring him the possibility of facing reality.

Burdened by his many failures, Moses Herzog is on the margin of madness. His personal life has collapsed and the world itself seems chaotic and mad. Unable to explain what is happening around him, he finally reaches the conclusion that life may be without meaning. The latter leads him to pose a

series of questions. Can rational thought reaffirm Herzog's sense of himself? Are there any moral certainties anymore? The novel shows us Herzog's anxious efforts to answer these questions. This has forced him to go through a complex process of self-examination. Moses Herzog seems to epitomise the modern intellectual, suffering an emotional and intellectual breakdown Herzog has this fundamental Jewish belief that his life is precious, valuable and has a purpose.

The significant theme in *Herzog* for him is "the imprisonment of the individual in a shameful and impotent privacy, which is not an "intellectual privilege" but "another form of bondage," (Tanner, 304) But the distinctive character of his novels is that their protagonists, most of them, suffer not because they are defeated by the external natural or social forces, but because they do not relate with these forces, because they have, tendency to turn their back upon them, because, in short, they are alienated from them.

Herzog is not only the image of the solitary man in the middle of the mass, but also that of the lost, confused man, who, rejecting the values imposed by society, attaches himself to strange philosophies, which he thinks might bring him the possibility of facing reality. It is in this sense only that Herzog represents the possibility of consciousness. None of the others, regardless of their degree of happiness or unhappiness, reach awareness; they are assimilated unconsciously into the system.

II.8. Conclusion

In the study of two of Bellow's novels, I have intended to show that the author, in these novels, has presented the protagonists' attempts to solve their problem of alienation. Through a careful effort, this protagonist has to break out of the self-imprisoning temperament in order to relate with society, nature,

and the spiritual world. This chapter has dealt with the protagonist as an individual in each of the two novels from the point of view of how each suffers because of his unusual alienation, and eventually how he triumphs over his alienation through a conscious effort. In each of the two novels, Bellow concentrates on his protagonist's relationship with either society or nature. In *Henderson the Rain King*, the protagonist's impatience is mainly due to his inability to relate with nature. With regard to the protagonist of *Herzog*, the most important question that needs to be answered is the question of mortality and immortality.

It has been observed that alienation is the main problem of Bellow's protagonists. His protagonists are all struggling to get along with their surroundings which appear not only ugly, but, more importantly meaningless. They feel entirely cut off from them. Seeking freedom and happiness away from them, they only find loneliness, restlessness, and dissatisfaction. Eventually, they come to realize that real freedom is not in escape from their surroundings but in a commitment to them. To find this commitment they must change their approach to the world they inhabit; even if they find it harsh and dreadful, they have to live in it.

Bellow himself, more than once, has emphasized that all is not finished so far; and that man has the capacity to find answers to his problems, to regenerate and live a happy life. In fact, Bellow has complained that twentieth-century novelists have not done their duty in merely dwelling upon the forces against an individual of this era. They should have strongly pointed out man's capacity to face and fight these forces in a successful way. Novelists, he writes, "must value human existence or be unfaithful to their calling." (114)

As Richard Rupp points out about his protagonists in the two novels: *Henderson the rain king* and *Herzog*, that "all of Bellow's heroes are preeminent sufferers and are forced upon themselves by a society that refuses to allow persons to exist without roles" (190) In this, Bellow's protagonists refute either suicide or madness, but, most significantly, they deny the incomprehensibility of surrender and submission.

Henderson the Rain King and *Herzog* are companion books to Bellow's growing strength as a writer and his growing frustration with how to be a writer. While Henderson stretches the believability of the Hemingway hero, and the physical American hero in general, Herzog stretches the believability of the Enlightenment hero and the intellectual hero in general.

It has been also the focal point of this chapter to explore the crisis of identity in Bellow's two novels. As both novels deal with alienation, despair, nothingness, and complexity. Their central message dictates that man must be saved, humanity must be preserved, and towards the end of the two novels, the protagonists recognize that happiness lies in forging others and sharing with others. The finding of the study reveal that one must seek his new self in the company of other fellow men, in loving and sharing with each other. This message, though simple and very straightforward but enhances our knowledge about the way a good man should live.

Chapter Three

Alienated Protagonists in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*

III. Alienated Protagonists in Thomas Pynchon's The *Crying of Lot 49* (1966)

III.1. Introduction

In discussing the two novels in the second chapter, I have tried to show Bellow's unremitting preoccupations with alienated humans. As one novel follows another, Bellow's sense of alienation continues to characterize the inner self of the individual and his superficial relationship with society and the world he is living in. By the time *Henderson the Rain King* and *Herzog* were published, Bellow was able to present a clear picture of alienated characters.

In this chapter, light will be cast on the theme of alienation in two major works namely: *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, written by Thomas Pynchon who is a renowned major contemporary novelist. His work is both splendidly imaginative and complicated to be easily understood. Owing to their complexity, linguistic playfulness, experimentation, and richness of allusion they can be compared to the work of James Joyce. In his masterpieces, Pynchon mingles fictional narrative with aspects of history, psychology, technology and science, as well as cultural and political movements, which are all portrayed with unexpected elegance and power.

Thomas Pynchon's works combine black humour and fantasy to depict human alienation in the chaos of modern society. His two masterpieces, *The Crying of Lot49* (1966), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), have confirmed the early impression that an outstanding talent had finally appeared in the post-war period, a talent which might eventually compete with Faulkner's period. To use

the words of Charles Kinbote[7], each of Pynchon's books seems "the monstrous semblance of a novel." (Walkarput, 1977) Pynchon has been the subject of harsh criticism. This is due mainly to his use of figurative devices such as flat characters, odd names, his considerable dependence on historical and scientific materials; his apparently obstinate refusal to tell a story straight, to "convert his multiple cultural meanings into the stuff of human relationships." All these habits have bothered Pynchon's admirers and detractors alike.

Undeniably, while his works are all complex, and some of them are massive, his indispensable position in the literary canon has ensured that he is widely taught on all university levels both in the US and abroad, and that he remains a popular topic of advanced research at colleges and universities worldwide.

III.2. Pynchon and Postmodernism

The influence of postmodernism on Pynchon's fiction cannot pass unnoticed. In the 1980s, he was canonized and regarded as the leading American postmodernist mainly on the strength of his two most celebrated novels: *The Crying of Lot 49*, and *Gravity's Rainbow*. After the release of these two novels, he has become a staple of academic reading lists dealing with the period.

[7]Charles Kinbote is the unreliable narrator in Vladimir Nabokov's novel Pale Fire *(1962)* He is professor at Wordsmith College who is a desperately lonely man, narcissistic, unpleasant to others, and insane. In addition, he has strange delusions and even hallucinations.

Pynchon's fiction is literally the paradigmatic case of postmodernism, Brian McHale[8] argues that Pynchon's novels embody various theories of post modernity– the historical and cultural conditions of the postmodern period. He has been influenced by great figures including Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Donna J. Haraway and others, who illustrate various theories of postmodernism – the period's characteristic aesthetic forms and practices. In the opinion of McHale, Pynchon's novels display the full range of typical postmodern narrative strategies. (McHale, 2012) In postmodern literature, parody is often linked with metafiction. Hutcheon claims that metafictional parody is what was called "defamiliarization" in the formalist scholarship. She states:

> The laying bare of literary devices in metafiction brings to the reader's attention those formal elements of which, through over-familiarization, he has become unaware. Through his recognition of the backgrounded material, new demands for attention and active involvement are brought to bear on the act of reading. (Hutcheon, 24)

III.3. Pynchon Novels and Post War Situation

Post war period in America was a period of paradox. From the fifties to the sixties through the seventies, America witnessed the most turbulent decades in its history which was characterized by the many fears and instability. These had led to the re-evaluation and most importantly the questions of the prevalent American situation both domestically and at the foreign level.

[8]Brian G. McHale is Humanities distinguished Professor at The Ohio State University, USA. He is the author of *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), *Constructing Postmodernism* (1992), and *Introduction to Postmodernism* (2015) from Cambridge University Press. He is co-editor with Randall Stevenson of *The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Literatures in English* (2006), and co-edited *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature* with Joe Bray and Alison Gibbons (2012) and *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Pynchon* with Inger H. Dalsgaard.

The same period could be divided into two contradictory sides: the brighter side and the seamy side. The bright side of the post war period America was a kind of euphoria. Unlike Britain, a large part of the American population benefitted from the new technologies. There was an obsession with technology and new devices that prevailed that period. There would be TV for nearly everybody; there were airplanes, spacecrafts, and rockets. And in 1969, man was able to reach the moon.

On the dark side was an increasing gap between the white middle classes and the black mainly Afro American minorities living on the periphery of society, often working in farms or in Suburban housing holds. (Cullen, 150) Domestic servants and subject to a different set of laws, which frequently caused racial tension and fuelled hate and anxiety in many parts of the American society. In the America in the fifties and the sixties, there were so many fear provoking incidents. The first of those fears being that of Soviet spies which fuelled the McCarthy era. The second fear was mainly the great diplomatic stand-off: the arms race of the Cold War with its 'near miss' crises like the Cuban Missile Crisis which added fuel to the fear of nuclear war and gave rise to the American emphasis on core values like (FFF) Flagg, Family, and Faith. American society seemed to be in a mood of self-examination. On account of this, Skinner argues: "that Post-War society was a mess, typified by the fact that millions of young people were choosing places in a social and economic structure in which they had no faith."

As anticipated the situation and the environment in which Americans lived have influenced many writers. Some American writers of the post-war period naturally and unavoidably thought that society and belief were unreasonable.

They were of the opinion that the only important value that should be paid attention was personal experience of the individual. On this situation, Donald W. Markos comments as follows: "The felt sense of many American intellectuals of the post-war period that communal life and belief were chaotic and irrational and that the only valid source of value lay in individual experience echoed both American naturalism of the 1890s and contemporary French existentialism." (87)

Individuals have become more important than ever, because society and religion did not have any impact to stop the emergence of the world wars. The new situation of the individual was similar in Europe. After the two world wars, individuals found themselves in a barren landscape; baffled by such conditions, they lived without any signs to guide them, and without any hope that could make possible for them to create a better world. Questions asked before the wars were altered, and a result of this new situation questions have to be changed following the changes happening around. M.J. Charlesworth summarizes this changing situation up in the following way, "....he [the individual] found himself with an existence and a responsibility foisted upon him which he had not chosen and did not particularly want. Under such circumstances the questions, "why is life worth living; why go on living; why not commit suicide and end it all?" were asked. (2).

John Lehan notes that some American writers including Thomas Pynchon were partly influenced by the existential philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. A number of American writers-Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow, Richard Wright, Walker Percy, Ronald Barth, Josef Heller, among others approximated some of the key ideas of Sartre and

Camus, adapting these ideas to a more purely American experience which also involved depicting a fragmented world without mythical or moral centre. (80)

What was prevalent at the time of writing the two novels is the drug culture which causes many individuals to be alienated. The use of drug made social system not only chaotic but also fragmented. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, drug culture is first introduced by Dr. Hilarius who is a psychologist. He experiments with LSD[9] drug. Oedipa, Mucho Mass, even Dr. Hilarius, himself is the victim of drug. The use of drugs creates the boundary between reality and hallucination. Throughout the novel, Oedipa gives a sense of misunderstanding between hallucinations. She is not sure of anything. She cannot even decide whether this is reality or she is just hallucinating. We learn that Oedipa hallucinates. Oedipa's husband as well as Dr. Hilarius becomes insane due to drug effect. When she tries to talk him he says, "Do you think anyone can protect me from these fanatics? They walk through walls. They replicate: "you flee them, turn a corner, and there they are, coming for you again" (Pynchon, 110).

The use of drug does not only make the characters of this novel insane but also makes them feel depressed towards life, make them isolated, and feel alienated. They lose their identity. Trough his presentation of the drug effects in this text, Pynchon plainly criticizes paranoid and fragmented society of contemporary America.

[9]LSD is a particularly powerful hallucinogenic substance. It produces distortions and hearing, visual and tactile hallucinations.

III.4. Alienated Protagonist in *The Crying of Lot 49*

Thomas Pynchon's book *The Crying of Lot 49* deals with a quest of an American housewife in the nineteen-sixties. Like a Bildungsroman, which follows the evolution of a character from childhood to maturity, The *Crying of Lot 49*, presents the "education of its central figure" (Schaub, 21). In this novel, Oedipa Maas is the central figure. Following the theme of Oedipus, she assumes the role of the tragic hero of ancient Greek mythology. Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, is a conventional postmodern novel published in 1966. It is his second, complex text because plots are difficult to follow and the names are not only easy to understand but also meaningless and fragmented. Society is not in order and communication is twisted. These are the major discussed topics regarding this text. Through this text, Pynchon describes with scrutiny contemporary American's life.

The Crying of Lot 49 is a short and intense novel, sometimes referred to as a novella. Pynchon mockingly refers to his novella in his introduction to *Slow Learner*, a collection of his early short stories, in the following way: The next story I wrote was "The Crying of Lot 49", which was advertised as a "novel," (Pynchon,22) The novel consists of six chapters with a more or less linear structure following the path of a classic detective story. It has multiple characters, one protagonist and a third person omnipresent and at the beginning of the novel an intrusive narrator. Mostly narration which is set in California in the early 1960s is limited to the mind of the protagonist Oedipa Maas. She lives the easy and normal life, attends parties and pays usual visits to her psychiatrist. One day, she learns she has been named executor of her former lover's will. Without informing her husband, she went to meet her new

obligation and her co-executor of the will. The new obligation assigned to Oedipa sends her into a deep existential crisis and on a transcendental journey of self-discovery, manipulation and detective work bringing her in touch not only with the bright side and the seamy side of America, but, ultimately also with her own existence in the universe.

When *The Crying of Lot 49* was published in 1966, one of its main themes was that the element of the two worlds could be seen as a reflection of American society at that time. The anxiety caused by living in a sort of focus between excitement and tension is echoed in the foregrounded themes of the novel – in the paranoia, the mess of new-age religious references, the weakness to communication through time and space and the intertextual play with bizarre allusions mixed with resonances of formal historical text. Pynchon's novel is rooted in the American history of the sixties, and it is not surprising why literary critic Brian McHale should favour 1966 as year zero.

The novel does not only mirror the physical, mental and cultural environment of its period, but also reflects the spiritual opening towards eastern philosophies that were very typical to America in the sixties. The influence from eastern religious philosophy disseminated by scholars like Alan Watts (73), who lived and taught in California in the fifties and sixties, is evident. This was the mood for all other arts: music, painting, or writing. It was a new age, the 'Age of Aquarius', an age of seeking and experimenting with distorted states of consciousness and ways of living and being in the world.

In the opening passages Oedipa is presented as any American woman of the sixties, leading a normal life, a typical housewife living in suburban America. Her daily routine consists of cooking, cleaning, housekeeping and Tupperware

parties. Trips to the market for purchases are also among her repetitive activities. Her husband is an alcoholic, former salesman, now working as a radio disc jockey. All in all, Oedipa seems the prototype of a patriarchal society.

III.4.1. Postmodern Techniques in *The Crying of Lot 49*

Being a postmodern writer, Pynchon uses copious postmodern techniques in his writing of *The Crying of lot 49*. With such techniques, he has adopted an intellectual strategy, that is, the information is not explicitly and directly given in the novel but require the involvement of the readers to search for the meaning from the text. The text makes use of these techniques which include: use of language, parody, irony, intertextuality, satire, dark humour and open ended, to name a few.

Pynchon's use of language, undoubtedly, is one of the best techniques used in the novel, *The Crying of lot 49*. Names that he uses in this text are the best example of word play. Pynchon provides the character names to ridicule and mock the society because the names do not imply any meaning. As Richard Poirier states in his essay,

> The importance of Thomas Pynchon, the writer does not use language to only satire cultures and characters but also to mock at the notions of self, importance of an emphasis on one's own works as well as the concepts of history, theories and systems: "Pynchon extends parodic perception from literature not only to science, to pop culture, to the traditions of analysis, but even to the orderings of the unconscious, to dreams themselves. (...) It is as if human life in all of its recorded manifestations is bent towards rigidification, reification and death. (Bloom, 47)

Pynchon wants to say that not only history is in itself a form of repression, but so, as well, is the human impulse to make or write history.

(Poirier, 155) His use of language in this text is very complex because the author makes use of advance scientific and technical language to express the feeling of various characters especially Oedipa Maas.

Parody is one of the main features of postmodernism. Pynchon uses this technique through narration of the text. In this novel the music group, "The Paranoids", is a group of young Americans who sing songs in a fake English accent which is copied from popular band group. Then we learn that Oedipa finds the underground postal courier service. Its name is 'WASTE'. Actually through the word 'WASTE' author, makes us understand people's life in America during that time. The way he uses this word is parodic. Thus, the novelist himself parodies the culture of contemporary America. Theorist M. H. Abrams goes a bit further in making the meaning of parody more explicit. He states,

> A parody imitates the serious manner and characteristic features of a particular literary work, or the distinctive style of a particular author, or the typical stylistic and other features of a serious literary genre, and deflates the original by applying the imitation to a lowly or comically inappropriate subject." (A Glossary of Literary Terms, 40)

In this novel Pynchon uses one of the major postmodern techniques which is irony, as is the case in the use of words to express something other than what they convey. In this novel, we find that Dr. Hillarius is sort of an insane doctor who treats patients having any kind of mental stress or disorder. It is ironic. The doctor calls Oedipa at 3AM, and asks her to take part in the experiment involving LSD drug. What is ironic in this text appears at the end of the novel when Dr. Hillarius starts hallucinating when he thinks everyone is out to kill him.

Intertextuality is another postmodern technique used by Pynchon in *The Crying of Lot 49.* This technique means one text referencing other texts. The best example to be given about intertextuality is referencing the Jacobean play. In this text a Jacobean play featured, Oedipa went to the theatre to watch the play and to talk to the director of the play. Eager to know more details, Oedipa discusses with the director Randolph Driblette the Jacobean play, who answers that the original writer of the play, Wharfinger: "It isn't literature, it doesn't mean anything. Wharfinger was no Shakespeare." "Who was he?" she said. "Who was Shakespeare? It was a long time ago" (Pynchon, 60). As the tragedy is a story within a story, this makes of the relating to the one of features of postmodernism which is intertextuality.

Satire is a widely used technique in this text. Being a satire, it must first have a comic element or ridiculous element as it is the case in the novel where WASTE is used to satire the postal courier service, Oedipa finds in the underground. Though the author names the courier service, WASTE, but implicitly this is used as a satire to people's life in California in contemporary time. Besides this, we see that during her quest Oedipa encounters different men. Through the encounter, she feels different kinds of feelings such as tension or potential for romantic involvement which provide a postmodern context for the parody of romance.

In *The Crying of Lot 49* dark humour technique is found. When a serious event is expressed in a simple and cool manner, it is called dark humour. In this text, we see that human bones serve as a source from which ink is produced – is an example of dark humour. Pynchon says:- "Later on, their bones were fished up again and made into charcoal, and the charcoal into ink, which

Angelo, having a dark sense of humour, used in all his subsequent communications with Faggio, the present document included" (Pynchon, 50). The novel has a structure called self-explanatory. Self-explanation can also be called in one sense metafiction which is also one of the techniques in the postmodern literature.

Open ended technique which is a modernist technique, is undoubtedly, also a major technique in postmodern fiction. This text is not exceptional than other postmodern text. From the beginning we find Oedipa, as a detective character rather than a typical house-wife. She gets involved in a series of adventures throughout the whole novel but at the end her adventures were not fulfilled. She leaves the reader with an open ended action of the story. At the end of the story we see, Oedipa waiting for the auction of lot 49. The narrator says,

> Oedipa sat alone, toward the back of the room, looking at the napes of necks, trying to guess which one was her target, her enemy, perhaps her proof.(…) She heard a lock snap shut; the sound echoed a moment.(…) The auctioneer cleared his throat. Oedipa settled back, to await the crying of lot 49. (Pynchon, 152)

This is how the novel ends. The author makes the story open ended to readers. One can imagine different endings to Oedipa's story.

Fragmentation is a vital aspect of postmodernism. *The Crying of lot 49* is a parodic and fragmented postmodern text. Pynchon uses fragmentation in his text in various ways. Examples of fragmentation can include social context. Names are also best examples of fragmentation. In this text not only names are fragmented but identities too. All these fragmentation elements are explained in the light of postmodernism in this is novel.

It should be emphasized that it is typical of postmodern literature to take various concepts with established properties and assumptions about reality and undermine them with the use of such tools as parody. And this is exactly what Pynchon does not only in *The Crying of Lot 49*, but also in his other works; for instance in *Gravity's Rainbow* or *Mason & Dixon*, both playing with American and world history and presenting a grotesque image of reality (Britannica, 2016).

III.4.2. Absurdism in *The Crying of Lot 49*

In Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, a close analysis is given to the use of language in order to shape meaning and experience. Pynchon's manipulation of language and meaning to depict an exaggerated human existence is considered as an absurd realist feature, essentially because this adds to the broad picture of the purposelessness of human existence. Therefore, the text under study is approached from the angle of absurdism, highlighting how the theoretical standpoints of absurdist can be used to understand and how language is used to portray alienation and isolation in absurd realist works.

Like most of Pynchon's other works, *The Crying of Lot 49*, reflects an absurd reality by embracing non-linearity and integrating multiple concepts that illustrate the variability of meaning. Through the use of information technology, Pynchon creates a narrative style that attempts to explain the world in terms of what Emily Apter refers to as "Oneworldedness," a concept that "imagines the planet as subject to 'the system' and wants to disable plans of escape" (370). This concept fails "the optimists (left or right) by endorsing the idea that there are legitimate reasons to be paranoid in a world bent on civilizational self-destruction" (370). Likewise, Oedipa Maas, the protagonist

in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49,* embarks on a quest to resolve a mystery by following clues that seem to lead to more questions than answers. These novels follow the pattern of absurd realism as they exhibit chaos and paranoia that pervade contemporary society.

Pynchon uses absurd and suggestive names to draw remarkable connections to other understated interpretations. Critics have tried to make sense of the names of the characters and places in *The Crying of Lot 49*; many of the names are not very realistic and they all seem to carry at least some sort of symbolic meaning. Usually, realistic authors are subtle about names that suggest certain ideas, but Pynchon gives his characters names that spark associations. (Apter, 2006)

Absurd is defined as "the chaotic and purposeless nature of the universe and the futility of human attempts to make sense of it" (OED). Albert Camus describes the absurd struggle for meaning in a world that is inherently meaningless in "The Myth of Sisyphus": "this world in itself is not reasonable. Safer writes that,

> Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland*, like *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), and *V.* (1963), directs attention, with sharp-edged humour, to people's quest for meaning and fulfilment in the twentieth century, a time when many have become upset by the repeated failure of their dreams and aspirations. This continued yearning and frustration helps set up an absurd perspective, absurd by Camus' definition, which focuses on a "divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints, [the] nostalgia for unity, this fragmented universe and the contradiction that binds them together." (107)

The unremitting yearning and frustration are of crucial importance to the absurd quest. Camus writes in the *Myth of Sisyphus,* that the, "mind's deepest desire is an insistence upon familiarity, an appetite for clarity". Within

absurdism, the individual seeks knowledge in order to understand. Camus continues, "Understanding the world for a man is reducing it to the human, stamping it with his seal".

According to Safer, Pynchon's narrative techniques make the reader part of the quest, especially the quest for meaning. He argues that "in Pynchon's earlier novels, the main characters, and the reader as well, search for life's meaning and for hope. Slothrop in *Gravity's Rainbow* and Oedipa Maas in *The Crying of Lot 49,* in this novel the absurd quests is manifested within Oedipa Mass. The two protagonists in the two novels quest for some form of order, and fulfilment in the face of absurdity. (107).

There is a dividing line between the way the concepts of isolation and alienation is portrayed by absurd realists, and the manner it is exposed by existentialists. While existentialists view alienation as an intrinsic, inescapable aspect of human existence, which holds back the individual from finding meaning in an absurd life, absurd realists see it as the conflict between the individual and the environment. For instance, Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915) (which is not realist in any sense) supports the existential notion of alienation.

III.5. Oedipa's Alienation

Isolation or alienation is the major problem which Oedipa suffers from throughout the novel. In fact, contemporary Americans suffer from this problem. They feel isolated, especially, after the World War II. After that period American people started questioning themselves. They started losing their faith in religion. So, they involve themselves into many illegitimate acts such as, drinking alcohol, using drugs, and sometimes committing suicide.

They feel emptiness, lack of communication, losing their identity, deprived from love, suffocation, and these make them feel isolated. As an effect of these, people are haunted by nightmares. In this text, Oedipa, and her psychotherapist, Dr. Hilarius, are haunted by nightmares.

It seems that most of the characters *The Crying of Lot 49* become alienated, not by natural design, but by the struggle to cope with the world which is not only upset by violence and hostility but which is also utterly mysterious. In the case of the protagonist, Oedipa's alienation results from being overwhelmed by a world that is constantly under the influence of drugs, populated by fanatics, and submerged by illusions and conspiracies. As the first chapter comes to a end, we learn that Oedipa thinks of herself as a Rapunzel[10] trapped in her lonely suburban "tower," awaiting a "knight of deliverance" (CL49, 10-11).

As she tries to resolve the mystery of the Tristero, she becomes lost in a network of suspicions that continues to build up, but instead of leading to insight, it leads to ambiguity and confusion. All these characters exist like pawns in a system too vast to be understood, and their continuous attempts to fit into the system further estrange them from it. Eventually, they attain some kind of order and learn to live with the externally induced conflicts.

As mentioned in the second chapter, Oedipa's quest also leads to more questions than answers. During her quest for the mysterious underground mail system, called the 'Tristero System', she was puzzled while trying to unveil that secret. As stated by Newman, "Oedipa descends to the underworld of America", she leaves her familiar environment behind to inspect into an

[10]Rapunzel is a fairy tale about the love between a young prince and a beautiful girl imprisoned in a tower who overcame all the witches of evil intentions. They were persistent in their intentions to be happy together again, and on the way to happiness, the witch was their biggest obstacle.

underground mail system which makes itself known to her. But with every new piece of information and with every disclosure Oedipa gets more confused. (Newman, 80)

The period of the publication of *The Crying of Lot 49*, was also characterized by the birth of numerous social welfare programs after the Democrats swept Congress in the 1964 elections. The same decade witnessed the assassination of John F. Kennedy's, and Martin Luther King's, the Civil Rights, and to some extent, women's rights movement. Nearly, the same events happened during the publication of the two first analyzed novels written by Saul Bellow. The novel hits into this explosion of cultural occurrences, portraying a dramatically fragmented society. *The Crying of Lot 49* is permeated with an all-embracing sense of cultural chaos. Undeniably, the book portrays all areas of culture and society, including many of those mentioned above. Oedipa Maas, the novel's protagonist finds herself alone and alienated from that society, being cut from all her surrounding, and having lost contact with the life she was accustomed to before, she began her attempt to unearth the mystery of the Tristero. The drug culture has a great impact in this sense of isolation. The world around Oedipa seems to be the one dependent on drug culture, overexcited and full of conspiracies and false impressions. And although that world is exciting and new, it is also dangerous. Drugs paved the way to Oedipa's alienation and also contributed to the destruction of her marriage, and it is also drugs that forced Hilarius to go insane. Oedipa's sense of chaotic alienation is accented by her constant hallucinations which often seem to be continuously high.

III.5.1.Oedipa's Alienation from her Surrounding

As the novel opens, we are informed that the first person oedipal is alienated from is her husband mucho. Reasons for this alienation are not explained. It is only later that we learn that Oedipa is betrayed by her husband with teenage girls. And although she knows about this she seems to be comparatively unresponsive towards it. She just comments once on his infidelity and the dangers of constitutional rape (Pynchon, 31). Her relationship with her husband is burdened with an inability to communicate. Mucho does not listen to what his wife says and thus does not reply to her comments, her questions or the problems troubling her (Pynchon, 7-9). But, she too has a lover who is named Pierce. She has been manipulated by Dr Hilarius, her psychiatrist, who tries to use her for his drug testing on housewives. She has been also manipulated by her lawyer. He harasses her whenever she goes to consult some advice concerning the will she has to execute. Feeling insulated in her boots, she ignores his attempt to "play footsie with her under the table" (Pynchon, 12). Thoughtless against any degradation and the indifference of men towards her, she lives a life of boredom. Later, we also learn that Oedipa prefers the peacefulness of four walls to a fantasy of freedom like she experiences it on the highways of California (Pynchon, 16).

III.6.Oedipa's Diverse Quests

As most of Pynchon's writings are mysterious and difficult to grasp from the first few lines, it is not easy at all to know what Oedipa is after-looking for. To figure out what Oedipa is looking for; one has to delve deeper into what is

written between the lines. For Oedipa is not only looking for the secret behind her lover's treasure. She actually finds herself involuntarily involved in other quests. The necessity to find not only meaning, but also reality, truth, and love, obliges her to take profit from every second. Given this chance which she has to seize (as in the case of *Seize the Day*[11], as this to a certain extent seems to be a general theme in most of Bellow's novels), oedipal has to seize every opportunity offered to her.

When Oedipa started her quest concerning her ex-lover estate, she actually embarked on a series of quests. She was suspicious of what she might find. She also expected a lot of revelations. (Pynchon, 15-29) Cowart refers to her quest using the expression of "Oedipa in Wonderland"

Her quests were an opportunity to break out of her monotonous life- a way of stopping the endless repetitions of her daily routine. This was also a chance for Oedipa to escape from her forced alienation. Oedipa's quests are motivated by her attempt of explaining the meaning and nature of her world- America of the 1960's.

III.6.1.Odiapa's Quest for Reality

In her quest Oedipa was in need to construct a reality that she can depend on and believe in. All the groups she has met during her research believe in a reality which has been constructed by themselves. The protagonist is looking for a sense of life she has been missing during her existence as a housewife dominated by the patriarchal society of the nineteen sixties. It is through this quest that she will be able to find a sense of self-esteem and a confirmation of

[11]*Seize the Day* is Saul Bellow's fourth novel published in 1956 which centres on a day in the life of Tommy Wilhelm, the protagonist who experiences a day of reckoning as he is forced to examine his life and to finally accept the "burden of self."

self-independence- an independence from the constraints imposed on her by a society that devalued woman. If she succeeds in her investigations then this will be an affirmation to break the bondage of the daily routine activities. Her progress will help her escape the prison–like life created by the tower which has made of her an alienated.

Due to the characters' inability to understand the driving force within their society they continuously move backwards and forwards between two, perhaps equally absurd, conclusions on reality. Pynchon's characters make every effort to construct sense of the world, yet are unable achieve this. Moreover, Pynchon suggests that paranoia is desirable because it at least grants the pretence of meaning in life.

III.6.2. Oedipa's Quest for Truth

The quest for truth constitutes a central point in the novel as a whole. Never has Oedipa been determined by any quest than her obsession with finding truth. The real starting point for the quest is her infidelity with Metzger, which definitely means taking a different line for a change. "Oedipa realises that she has been playacting within a self-conceived fairy tale that has fostered the illusion of escape when indeed the tower has contributed to her isolation." (Newman, 72)

All of a sudden, things start to take a turning point with her discovery of the Tristero System which is an illegal mail-delivery system. The starting point of her discovery is the stamp collection of her ex-lover. This collection, Oedipa's former rival for Pierce's attention, contains some stamps which are forged and lead her to further investigations concerning their origin (Pynchon, p.29) Oedipa also receives at the same time a letter from Mucho. Though there is

nothing important inside it, this letter is another forward signal to investigate on the Tristero System, as it has a misprint on its envelope telling every addressee to report obscene mail to the "postmaster", actually meaning "postmaster". (Pynchon, 30) This misprint 'sensitises' her for the following incidents and the "technique of her education." (Schaub, 25) and forces her to start examinations.

In the evening of that same day, Oedipa and Metzger enter a bar called "The Scope". There they meet a character called Mike Fallopian, who tells them about an organisation called the Peter Pinguid Society[12] and illegal delivery of post through the inter-office delivery of one of Pierce Inverarity's firms. He would not have told them if they had not by incident witnessed an illegal "mail call" (Pynchon, 34) that they were not supposed to see. They also learn that to keep this system up each member has to send at least one letter a week through this illegal system, no matter how newsless the conveyed messages may be. By coincidence, they also take notice of a book Mike Fallopian is writing on the theme of private mail delivery. At this bar, Oedipa also finds another link to the Tristero System, although she is in a state that does not allow her to understand the meaning of it. This link is a message written on a toilet wall telling people to get in touch with the writer of this information through "WASTE" (Pynchon, 34). As Oedipa learns later, WASTE is an acronym meaning "We Await Silent Tristero's Empire" (Pynchon, 116) and is also used as a code for the Tristero System. All these inexplicable information sharpen Oedipa's senses for her future enquiry. On

[12] Peter Pinguid Society, an extreme right-wing group that takes its name from the first U.S.-Russia military encounter in history. The ardently pro-American organization is to the right even of the John Birch Society.

the other hand, Oedipa seems to be looking out for a substitute for a lost religious belief. For instance, she tries to see all kinds of religious signs in the events. She sees an epiphany in the event with the old drunken sailor (Cowart, 109), feels a "promise of hierophany" (Pynchon, 20). Surprisingly, the novel's title contains the Pentecostal number 49.

Furthermore, the protagonist is looking for a sense of life she has been missing during her existence as a housewife, dominated by the patriarchal society of the nineteen-sixties. If she can reveal the Tristero mystery, there is a duty she has fulfilled, which proves her to be worthy and valuable. This would give her the affirmation she needs to keep up some self-respect. A successful investigation could be the starting point for some more activities beyond shopping and house holding and for an independent life. For her, the quest is a way out of the metaphorical tower which encapsulates her. The search offers a reason to get away from her buffeted existence as a "consumerist monad in the suburban grid engulfed by insulation both physical and emotional." Although she might not herself describe it like this, her "experiences express the general victimisation of housewives in patriarchal suburbs" (Hum, 308) and this is what she tries to flee. Suddenly, she remembers her first unsuccessful attempt to break out with Pierce, thence; she becomes aware of her sadness and looks for a way to break out again.

Oedipa must finally admit that the ultimate truth cannot be attained. This assertion accompanies us until the very end of the novel, which is set in a atmosphere of total ambiguity. Oedipa steps into the auction house to finally resolve the case of the "lot 49" and the true face of Trystero, but we do not get the answer. The novel ends before the auction starts.

III.6.3. Oedipa's Delusional Quest for Meaning and Knowledge

Fundamentally, Aristotle states in his book metaphysics that "all men by nature desire to know" (950a) This implies that the intellectual delight is the impetus for which this quest is sought. The statement is an indication that the desire to know is an innate human drive that urges individuals to explore nature and ultimately oneself.

In the case of Oedipa, her quest is also a quest for meaning and knowledge. Oedipa, thus penetrated, is now "impregnated" with the desire to gain knowledge. (Seed, 119) It is less important to her what she finds out. She is driven to research. The more Oedipa gets involved in the events around the Tristero System, the more she fears that she suffers from paranoia or that there is a plot against her. From that time on, Oedipa also searches for truth; whatever it may be like and whatever it may mean for her mental state. There is a desire to know whether she is insane or not. At the end of the story, Oedipa thinks to herself that "your gynaecologist has no test for what she was pregnant with" (Pynchon, 121). Here, Pynchon also uses the image of being impregnated. The pregnancy starts with the above mentioned climax and the intrusion by Metzger and it ends with the "awaiting" of the final revelation, which is expected to happen through *The Crying of Lot 49.* (Pynchon, 127)

The quest for meaning and unity requires interpretation to find it. All associations must add up to some form of unified truth. Pynchon describes numerous individuals who, in the face of a meaningless society, embark upon a purpose of their own. In this regard, Peter Freeze describes the novel as,

> (…) a search for meaning and values expressed through its befuddled heroine's abortive quest for an under-standing of self and the world; as a serious investigation into the endangered future of the American Dream hidden behind a relentless satire upon the fads and aberrations in the Southern California of the sixties; and as an exploration of the state of the world through the ingenious employment of the concepts of both thermody-namic and informational entropy. (Freese, 495)

The protagonist's lack of belief in a coherent and meaning behind the world which is presented to her is accentuated by the absurdity of the different situations. But this disbelief is acquired first in connection with The Courier's Tragedy, which takes place earlier in the novel. Being manoeuvred by the play, Oedipa goes to Randolph Driblette, the director in the backstage to ask him what he knows about Inverarity or the Trystero.

Driblette avows that there is no such thing as an original, transcendental meaning, but rather a complete variety of meanings which emerge in differing contexts. Oedipa's meeting with the director has vital consequences as she starts to realize that the existence of the Trystero may emerge out of her own perception of reality, of a paranoid belief that there must be an alternative reality underlying all these seemingly relevant traces. This realization leads her to write down a question, "Shall I project a world?" (Pynchon, 56)

Oedipa strives to understand every philosophy of organisations or persons she is involved with. She shows no feminist but rather an old fashioned and patriarchal attitude, as she tries to understand every speech one of these mostly male characters is imposing on her. Oedipa represents in a way the archetype of the understanding woman, who is always open for the troubles and attitudes of men. Due to her "cultural conditioning" (Madsen, 59) she is often misled as the above mentioned behaviour occupies her with things that are not necessary,

but very confusing to the reader as well as to Oedipa. As soon as she asks specific and demanding questions the men refuse to say anything further and withdraw. They only offer her the knowledge they want her to have, the information they consider as suitable for her. She is never given any helpful information by purpose. On every occasion, when she gets to know rational and helpful facts and details, this happens by accident.

Oedipa, more than all other names in the text, is an apparent reference to the Sophoclean Oedipus. David Kirby and Michael Seidel agree that Oedipa is a feminine version of Oedipus because, like Oedipus, she searches for answers about a dead man (188). As the inquiry into the death of King Laius leads to a series of self-discovery for Oedipus, Pierce Inverarity's death, which is referenced at the beginning of the novel, sets off the series of events that sends Oedipa on a delusional search for meaning. Oedipa's quest to uncover the meaning of "Pierce's attempt to leave an organized something behind after his own annihilation" produces many unanswered questions and clues. (Pynchon, 64) On the other hand, James Dean Young argues that Oedipa has no correlation with Oedipus because her failure to meaningfully solve the mystery of the Lot 49 shares no characteristics with Sophocles' myth. He claims that if any correlation exists at all, it would be an ironic one, because Oedipa's journey does not mirror Oedipus quest. (72)

Also, Oedipa's nick-name, OED is an acronym for the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). This suggests that she is an existential source of meaning, representing different aspects of everyone's life and condition. She represents the human attempt to create order in a disorderly world. Despite suspecting that

she might be a victim of a practical joke at the end of the novel, she still sits patiently awaiting the call of Lot 49.

Pynchon seems to give good reason for Oedipa's attempts to make sense of a senseless world by imposing bizarre characterizations on these people. Her confused walk through San Narciso demonstrates the insanity of the search for "meaning" in a meaningless universe.

Pynchon portrays the pointlessness of human existence and also demonstrates that "in a world where all things are equitable in their significance, it thus follows, that all things then become equitable in their insignificance as well, creating a cosmos where there is so much meaning that there is then no meaning at all" (Graham, 4)

For example, in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, elements of mystery, history, pop culture, counterculture, and science are combined to create a parody of the cultural preoccupations of the 1960s. Rather than situate his characters and events within a familiar setting, Pynchon creates a fictional city called San Narciso, by which he alludes to San Francisco, and he paints this fabricated city, with the dominated disorganized postmodern culture.

III.6.4. Oedipa's Quest for Identity

Categorized as a Bildungsroman[13] novel, *The Crying of Lot 49* follows the evolution of the protagonist form childhood to maturity. As the name implies "Oedipa", can bring resemblances with Oedipus, since following Oedipus the

[13]*Bildungsroman* is a literary genre that focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood. A *Bildungsroman* is a growing up or "coming of age" of a generally naive person who goes in search of answers to life's questions with the expectation that these will result in gaining experience of the world.(Encyclopædia Britannica)

hero of the Greek mythology, suggests, also a quest for identity in the sense of a Bildungsroman. Just like Oedipus learns about his origin, Oedipa also learns something about herself during her various adventures. In the course of the events, we learn that Oedipa is interested in finding about the roots of the Tristero System and evidence of its existence. Meanwhile, she also learns what is important to her and how she reacts to difficult situations. She thinks about her life and the role she has played in the past. An important part of this is that she also reflects about her past with Pierce and that she comes to terms with this old relationship and the one she has been having with Mucho. At the end of the novel, her relationship to Mucho is at an end as well. She states that "the day she left him for San Narciso was the day she'd seen Mucho for the last time. So much of him had already dissipated." (Pynchon, 100) His personality had changed, so that a relationship to her husband is no longer possible for Oedipa. Now, she has to re-define herself because her relationship to Mucho as to Metzger is over. Therefore, she has to define herself by her own personality and not by being the wife of a disc jockey or someone's lover. She is Oedipa, which is more than just being somebody's wife.

One more interesting fact during Oedipa's quest is that she assumes different names and as a consequence adopts different identities on the way to her own identity. She dresses in a button which identifies her as "Arnold Snarb" (Pynchon, 76) when she enters a bar called "the Greek Way". This could as well be considered as a reference to the Greek hero Oedipus and his quest for identity. He does not know who he actually is and has to find out about his identity during a long row of unkind experiences. Later, Oedipa is even addressed as "Edna Mosh" (Pynchon, 96) in the course of a radio

interview by her own husband, as he is not willing to expose the real identity of his wife. When she visits a gynaecologist, fearing that she is pregnant, she calls herself Grace Bortz, a false name which reveals a false identity. This assumed name she chooses is the name of the wife of a university professor, whom she contacted several times during her investigations.

Although Oedipa has more questions at the end of the novel than at the beginning, this is has not created any changes and to some respects is not of benefit to her quests. It is better to have a lot of questions one cannot answer yet and may never be able to answer, than having no questions at all, which means that one did never question anything and thus can never develop ones consciousness to create a distinguished personality.

What is important after all is that, Oedipa finds America. This is the special heritage Pierce has given to her (Pynchon, 123) She realises that this America "is home to the disinherited, the alienated, the betrayed, all those denied the illusion of an American Dream." (Madsen, 75) She finally reaches the conclusion that there is more than one truth to find, which means that there is no ultimate truth which can fit to her expectations. There is also more than one American history, which means that there is also more than one reality, depending on the system or construction of reality one believes in. As long as she did not know about the Tristero System, this system did not exist in her consciousness. The accumulation of all these circumstances leads her to the conviction that she has been living in a different world than the people who knew about it and lived in is their own construction of reality. She finds out how implicated she has been all of the time, that she had lived a limited life

(75) Her old image of America has been deconstructed, giving way to new impressions and a sense of ambiguity Oedipa can finally learn from.

Oedipa's quest is "grounded in a hyperbolically banalized world." (Hite, 73) As she is not able to cope with its banality any longer, she misses any greatness or real feelings. From this, the protagonist tries to escape. Her quest is thus a "birth passage" (73) for a new life. Oedipa who is heading for a change is "directed toward transcendence" (73) which she finally reaches stating that her inheritance was America. Although she failed to find any ultimate truths, she succeeded to a certain extent to find different concepts of life, different interpretations of America, various attitudes and ideologies, and finally had access to new interpretations of American history. She learned about poor individuals outside the bright and wonderful city centres and the comfortable suburbs. Later, all these achievements will be counted under her precious gains. Although her knowledge had been amplified, and although she is at present not in a position to use the knowledge she has gained, up till now, she is not able to cope with all this. She did not find any substitute for her lost religious belief. But instead of this, she has reached something that is more important, even if she might not see the worth of it, yet. Oedipa might be convinced that she has lost something, now that she does not know any more what to believe in. Her conceptions of reality have all fallen down and there is nothing to replace the loss. What she does not see is that she can do without such painless comfort. She has the chance to do without a religious symbol to set her hopes on, and she will as well be able to live without the lie of the American Dream she has once believed in.

Being optimistic about her future, she lives with the hope of not returning to her conventional suburban life, seeking a life free from male dominance and the bondage of marriage. She will never once more have to bear the "lifeless repetition" of her former daily routine again. (Newman, 73) When her relationship to Mucho is reaches an end, this forces her to chose a different kind of relationship or otherwise she might be able to live without any male assistance at all. She is not likely to pick up her former "Rapunzel-like role" (Quilligan, 112). Caring for her husband, who is the centre of her attention, will surely not be a satisfactory aim for her any longer after the experiences she has made during her investigations.

All along her quest Oedipa assumes different names and thus adopts different identities on the way to her own identity. She dresses in a button which identifies her as "Arnold Snarb" (Pynchon, 76) when she enters a bar called "the Greek Way". This could as well be seen as a reference to the Greek hero Oedipus and his quest for identity. He does not know who in reality he is and during a long chain of brutal experiences, he has to find out about his identity.

Wherever she goes she finds muted post horns and other coded messages. After a short time she is "quick to read the messages encoded in the medium of America" (Schaub, 25). Her search includes both historical and literary research. As Cowart describes it, Oedipa is "devoted to the word" (Cowart, 107). For example, she searches the authentic text of a play that is linked to the Tristero System, hoping to find out who changed it in which way, and for which purpose this was done. She tries "to find meaning through metaphor" (Newman, 73). Her quest consists of solving "riddles" (Kermode, 11) and

contacting various sects. Her journey resembles to an adventurous trip. Her quests are compared to someone turning the pages as if she was "reading a book" (12), continuing "to spot the clues though never sure where they are" (13). Her actions are very spontaneous and driven by intuition rather than by her intellect, following impulsive motives. As a result of this, the protagonist goes through "series of adventures, each building on the last, lacking any systematic concept." (Hite, 67)

The search offers a reason to get away from her battered existence as a "consumerist monad in the suburban grid engulfed by an insulation both physical and emotional." (Hume, 308) Although she might not herself describe it like this, her "experiences express the general victimisation of housewives in patriarchal suburbs" (308) and this is what she tries to run away from. Suddenly, remembering her first futile attempt to break out with Pierce, she becomes aware of her melancholy and looks for a way to break out again.

III.7. Alienated Protagonist in Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*

III.7.1. Introduction

In the previous sections light has been cast on Pynchon's best acclaimed novel *The Crying of Lot 49* following Oedipa's journey of self-discovery. This section will be concerned with the second masterpiece by Pynchon's indisputable classic *Gravity's Rainbow,* the most celebrated American novelist of the past half-century, an indispensable figure of postmodernism worldwide. Since the 1960s, when his first work was published, Pynchon has enjoyed an impressive, critical reputation because his works are fundamentally different from the great novels of the American tradition. Pynchon's two accepted

masterpieces, *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow* are all set in the same place and time, Southern California in the late sixties, and which together sketch a trajectory of late twentieth-century American culture from its high-water mark of social experimentation and utopian hopes to the conservative reaction of the Nixon and Reagan years.

In Pynchon's career, the highpoint of seems to be the fame he gets from the publication of *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973). Though he had originally intended to entitle it "Mindless Pleasures," it is hardly escapist entertainment, for all its humour and extravagance; rather, as Steven Weisenburger indicates, it is a supremely mindful moral fiction. A historical novel about the roots of the Cold War and the military-industry complex, *Gravity's Rainbow* explores collective complicity–including its author's own personal complicity – with bureaucracies of terror and mass destruction. If some of the novel's characters imagine a post war condition matured with possibilities for freedom, Pynchon counterbalances their joyful vision with a darker, ironic alternative in which history's arc terminates in the death camps. Gravity's Rainbow examines themes of war and technological advances from the beginning of World War II through the Vietnam War. Pynchon is concerned about the massive and intricate technologies for destroying human life that have proliferated since World War II.

Based on an apparently inexhaustible fund of knowledge and having a good command of a prose style whose richness and flexibility justify comparison with Dickens, and Joyce, Pynchon is capable of overwhelming attractive clarity. (70) In this regard, Tony Tanner, who cannot deny the fact of pointing to the uniqueness of the novel, insists on making such comparisons: "Pynchon

has created a book that is both one of the great historical novels of our time and arguably the most important literary text since Ulysses" (75).

In writing *Gravity's Rainbow* in 1973, Thomas Pynchon creates a novel which according to Moore (1) is among the "most widely celebrated, unread novels" of American literature and already "a piece of minor folklore." This novel has caused excessive reactions by being praised and criticized. The contemporary novelist, Thomas Pynchon has been the target of controversial criticisms and judgments by various critics. He is "universally perceived as a writer of the first magnitude" (Cowart, 6), one who, according to Mendelson, "is the greatest living writer in the English-speaking world" (qtd. in Cowart 6). He has, "in Housman's phrase, shouldered the sky, set himself the task of responding to everything in the experience of modern man" (qtd. in Cowart, 4). He is regarded by Harold Bloom as the one and the only novelist who has "surpassed every American writer since Faulkner" and draws attention to Pynchon's unparalleled "invention." This is the invention that Dr. Samuel Johnson, "greatest of Western literary critics," considered to be "the essence of poetry or fiction." Bloom maintains that Pynchon's greatest talent is "his vast control, a preternatural ability to order so immense an exuberance at invention." His "supreme quality is what Hazlitt called 'gusto', or what Blake intended in his infernal proverbs, 'Exuberance is Beauty'" (Bloom, 2).

According to Richard Poirier, *Gravity's Rainbow* is an unconventional mixture of "the esoteric and insanely learned with the popular or supposedly popular" (qtd. in Bloom, 3). Pynchon's brilliance manifests itself in his distinctively wide range of subject matter and literary techniques of presentation, narration, and interpretation. Though extremely serious in content

and concern, this novel presents a continuous amusement that underlies even the darkest scenes. The art of playing with the readers' feelings and sense of comprehension is Pynchon's unique mastered technique. *Gravity's Rainbow* bombards the reader with data, tempts him with a surplus of clues. Yet, "the data never entails a sure conclusion," and the clues do not lead us to solutions. They just expose additional problems (Mackey, 60). In Pynchon's own words, "this is not disentanglement from, but a progressive knotting into" (GR, 3).

III.7. 2.Postmodern Features in *Gravity's Rainbow*

Almost like any other work by Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow,* is abundant in features of a postmodern text as it rejects the idea of absolute meaning, and instead embraces randomness and disorder. It is also full of playfulness, fragmentation, and metafiction. One other major feature in this novel is intertextuality. Pynchon makes reference to other source rather than his fictional world. *Gravity's Rainbow* is a test-case of postmodern disbelief, persistently questioning, exposing, and undermining cultural narratives about scientific knowledge and technological progress, about liberalism and democracy. Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* has been received as a canonical instance of postmodernism. The novel appears to undermine traditional definitions of plot and characterization. Many critics believe this work to be a true postmodern masterpiece, since, as Charles Russell puts it; Pynchon's novel presents a, "massive system of analogies of decay and destruction, of repression and fragmentation, analogies that may only fall apart as does the book in its final section." He refers to Pynchon's "art of fragments" and wonders whether these fragmentary pieces promise "death or revitalization." He believes that this is the "final art of Pynchon. It is an

anarchic vision that promises freedom or impotence, creation or mindless pleasures." (Qtd. in Hume, 3-4)

III.7.3. Paranoia in Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*

Compared with the *Crying of lot 49*, Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow,* is a perfect example of paranoia. Like Oedipa Mass, protagonist character, Tyrone Slothrop is searching for social order. Labelled as the prophet of paranoid fiction, Pynchon's fiction confronts the reader with every degree of paranoia. The two novels exhibit the habits of language or the paranoid style which Hofstadter observes as "the paranoid spokesman sees the fate of this conspiracy in apocalyptic terms he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political order, and whole system of human values..." From early views of Pynchon as a prophet of doom, critics, such as Kellman, labels Pynchon as a Black Humour writer, no distinction is apparent. (Hofstadter, 29)

Apter believes that "paranoia consistently emerges as a preeminent topos in major works of the post-World War II American canon" (2006: 366). Many critics believe this work to be a true postmodern masterpiece because it is characterized by the major features of postmodern literature which include but are not limited to fragmentation, discontinuity, and intentional complexity. In his recognition of the work as purely postmodern, Charles Russell argues that Pynchon's novel presents a "massive system of analogies of decay and destruction, of repression and fragmentation, analogies that may only fall apart as does the book in its final section." He refers to Pynchon's "art of fragments" and wonders whether these fragmentary pieces promise "death or revitalization." He believes that this is the "final art of Pynchon. It is an

anarchic vision that promises freedom or impotence, creation or mindless pleasures" (qtd. in Hume, 3-4).

The first three of his novels, which were published within the space of a decade, had thematic similarities: metaphoric entropy and paranoid individuals, relationship between language and intersexuality, and documentation of history and reality. Many of his works are quest narratives; for instance in V. (1963), the plot extends from the search for sewer crocodiles to the mysterious identity of V.; in The Crying of Lot 49, the protagonist searches for a secret underground postage system called the Trystero; and in *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), characters search to explain how an immoral U.S officer's exploits seem to be geographically connected to bombing sites during World War II. Pynchon uses allegorical devices, such as flat characters, odd names, and schematized action, to present an insubstantial form or semblance of reality that tends towards the absurd.

Lost undecided between two questions: How to live the good life? , and which generally ends with the question 'what is the good life?' Pynchon rather attempts to answer the question 'why has the good life not been realised?' It is this question that incites Pynchon to develop a more profound theory of political life. This theory finds expression in a political cosmology that depends on a fixed exploitation of metaphors drawn from the Western tradition which represents Earth as a contested globe between Hell and Heaven.

Pynchon equally has a profound ability to see deep into the human soul, but does so in terms beyond the human, incorporating forces greater than humanity, from worlds deeper or higher than our own. The choices that Pynchon presents as existing to humanity in the face of evil range along a

spectrum from complicity with these forces, to acceptance, transcendence, flight, and perhaps, eventually, resistance.

Pynchon is a above all a historical novelist, and his suggestion of the past relies, as David Seed demonstrates, on his practice of intertextuality, that is, on extracting textual material from a diversity of historical sources. *The Crying of Lot 49* makes telling use of Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media*, just as *Gravity's Rainbow* does of Pavlov's *Lectures on Conditioned Reflexes*, counterpointed against the Freudian writings of the notion of polyvocal history leads Pynchon to offer paranoia as an instance of the "cognitive mapping" that Fredric Jameson has described as meaningful resistance against the disorientation of the individual in late capitalism.

Pynchon is regarded by Harold Bloom as the one and the only novelist who has "surpassed every American writer since Faulkner" and draws attention to Pynchon's unparalleled "invention." Along with Kurt Vonnegut, Terry Southern, and John Hawkes, Pynchon emerged as the major American practitioner of black humour and the absurdist fable. His novels and stories were highly plotted mixtures of historical information, comic-book fantasy, and countercultural suspicion. Using paranoia as a structuring mechanism as well as a cast of mind, Pynchon worked out complicated "conspiracies" in *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973). The underlying supposition of Pynchon's fiction was the unavoidability of entropy which stands for the disintegration of physical and moral energy. Pynchon's used techniques had great impact on many writers such as Don DeLillo and Paul Auster. In William S. Burroughs' *The Naked Lunch* (1959) and other novels, one can notice that in addition to the abandoning plot

and coherent characterization, the novel's usage of a drug addicts consciousness is made apparent and explicit in the depiction of a deplorable modern landscape.

Though writers such as Roland Barth, Donald Barthelme, and Pynchon rejected the novel's traditional function as a mirror reflecting society, a significant number of contemporary novelists were unwilling to abandon Social Realism[14], which they pursued in much more personal terms. Harvey (79) says that the publication of *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) by the American novelist Thomas Pynchon signalled the start of the 'contemporary' period in international fiction. Harvey (80) also states that, "it is a novel that can sum up the whole new launch of fantastic exuberant, fabulatory fiction that came in the late 1960s and early 1970s". He bases his distinction between literature written before *Gravity's Rainbow* and thereafter on the particular depiction of the movement of time and space that the novel portrays, similar to the movement of a camera from scene to scene. According to him, the novel was published within a context of new literary publications that differed strikingly from what had come before. Fussell has come with many significant observations as regards the post–Great War and the birth of "modern" literature which might motivate one to wonder about this literary movement, postmodernism; at least, it invites one to reread Thomas Pynchon. Fussell suggests that Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* treats World War II as if it were World War I. The novel is all about this idea of

[14]Social Realism art movement was a Depression-era American art movement that took place between World War I and World War II. The movement included filmmakers, poets, photographers, painters, and cartoonists, all of whom were dedicated to representing real-life subject matter in their respective art forms. (https://www.masterclass.com/articles/social-realism-art-guide)

World War II as a dream. Indeed, this seems so much the case that one is almost tempted to say that its "storyteller" is someone who is, as one minor character is said to be at one place, "dreamstruck" (346) it begins with a dream, as stated above (whether or not one wakes from this dream is the whole point of Pynchon's war narrative.

The art of playing with the readers' feelings and sense of comprehension is one of Pynchon's unique techniques, yet his critical end is by far different. *Gravity's Rainbow "*bombards us with data, tempts us with a surfeit of clues." Yet, "the data never entails a sure conclusion," and the clues do not lead us to "solutions." They just expose "further problems" (Mackey, 60). In Pynchon's own words, "this is not disentanglement from, but a progressive knotting into"

In fact, the novel is a universe of similarities, oppositions, and dichotomies. *Gravity's Rainbow*, as Tony Tanner (1986) says, is a work of "such vastness and range that defies-with a determination unusual even in the age of 'difficult' books-- any summary" (69). It offers an unparalleled immensity of scope and an exceptional variety of themes and content. Pynchon represents the "intricate networking of contemporary technological, political, and cultural systems," and "in the style and its rapid transitions," he attempts to adjust the "dizzying tempos, the accelerated shifts from one mode of experience to another" (Poirier, 12). *Gravity's Rainbow* is shaped by the memories of the Second World War, its end and "its immediate aftermath." (Fussell, 22)

As E. Mendelson (1986) points out, it is a book of "recall[ed] origins" and "foresee[n] endings" that highlights the relentless continuation of the "responsibility of those who live in present that lies between" (46). As Kathryn Hume (1987) puts it in her book, Pynchon's "pyrotechnics–explosive, surreal,

and violent" have introduced a completely different and "new form of fiction" (xi).

III.7.4. Protagonist Identity in a Postmodern Context

In a postmodern context the individual identity is marginalized and presented as soulless. This is due mainly to the fact that, the postmodern writer provides no importance to the feelings of the postmodern body. They regard this identity as devoid of sensation and creation. Instead of valuing this identity, their main interests are to treat the postmodern identity in the name of science and technology. The very treatment cannot concretize the illness that haunts the capacity of identification as well as creation for the Western male identity.

Of great significance, the cyborg[15] identity creates a space allowing anxiety and defamiliarization to be played out through technically enabled modes of creation and reproduction. Applying the observation to cyborg identity, one cannot deny the fact that the masculine body too can be conceptualized as a site of an inescapable disappearance. Ultimately, far from being an immense labyrinth of the masculine entity, fictional cyborg body stands for a computerized brain used to deconstruct and control the Western male's equation of domination. In fact, the only motivation for creating mechanical functionality is to prove a desire that could be seen as a form of transcendence for the traditional hierarchy. In this process, technology embodied by the Western male corpse is regarded as a potentially manipulative force to

[15]A cyborg in science fiction is a being that is part human and part machine, or a machine that looks like a human being.a person whose physiological functioning is aided by or dependent upon a mechanical or electronic device. (Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's dictionary)

challenge masculinity by giving access to the pain of living without a concrete body. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Slothrop was technologically formed and existentially unliveable. Indeed, one reads that his divided self is a straightforward acceptance of the technological man.

Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* has obvious delineation of this situation. The novelist's presentation of Slothrop puts forward for the reader a justification for the dominant presence of technology in the construction of the character. In this sense, Slothrop seems to be the creation of a technological projection. Slothrop's body is absorbed by technology. This absorption considers the male weakness in relation to the scientific marginalization of the humanist aspect of the Western International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research.

This contention puts Slothrop in direct communication with a series of electronic experimentation on his body to effectively fall victim to his own machinations. Following this way of reasoning, a self with a technological body might be looked upon as supermen to whom the postmodern male ambition aspires. The desire to perform this ultimate task requires the deconstruction of the mythic image given to the status of manhood. Indeed, this decentralization of the traditional conception of male identity highlights the complex virtual reality of the phenomena, and begs an analysis of the western male identity as representative of a particular socio-cultural context with regard to gender, sex, and social traditions. What is interesting for Pynchon's characters is the way in which they come to consciousness and the way they express their positions.

For instance, Slothrop is stimulated into desiring physical contact when one of the scientist's wives, Mrs. Elizabeth, dances naked before one of the

computer's external sensors, then presses her breasts against the grass of the building in a deliberately sexual manner. Mrs. Elizabeth holds the view that the computer has male qualities. Elizabeth reveals that she has been programmed by her creators to feel sexually attracted to science. This admission hints the extent of the erotically complex relationship to technology. The postmodern novelist relies on hyper-traditional notions that bring to mind the supremacy of manhood. However, Pynchon does much to underline the highly problematic erasure of the body in cybernetic experiment, and throw light on the validity of the dualistic conceptions of the Western male identity.

Based on account of what has been stated, no one can contradict the fact that the postmodern fiction privileges the technological progress at the expense of the body, just as Western epistemology has privileged rationality over corporality. In his study of the Western identity, Pynchon argues that methods of connecting human consciousness with computer technology will devise the electronic postmodern body. This identity does have powerless authority with respect to the incorporeal flows of information with which the Western man is surrounded. In a similar vein, many postmodern approaches to the question of cyborg identity argue for reclamation of the technological.

In this regard, François Lyotard asks whether thought can go on without the body. Likewise, Lyotard thus with determination champions a plurality of discourses and positions against unifying theory. Supporting this suggestion, one can assert that Lyotard's position is of fundamental importance for contemporary postmodern theory and in this part his idea will be discussed which is to be found to be most central to the illness of the Western male identity. In this, the critic does not take into account the fact that the path

through which Pynchon took up and developed the discourse of the postmodern male identity in American society. Accordingly, there is continuity between Pynchon's novels and the theory of Lyotard. They are foreshadowing their apocalyptic end through the massacre of alienation and limitation. The prospect of alienation is mostly based on the substitution of the human body with a technological one. The act of limitation suggests the jeopardization of the mind body relation.

Pynchon's powers as a historical novelist, shone brightly in his first novel, V. (1963). Entitled "Mindless Pleasures," for a time, *Gravity's Rainbow* would fasten his prominence and define Pynchon alongside William Faulkner as a writer who uses history to represent central contradictions and dilemmas of the identical projects named "America" and "Modernity." Two decades after it was published, literary critics and theorists had analyzed the historiographical innovations and narrative challenges of *Gravity's Rainbow*, recognizing it as the path breaking work of post-war US fiction fictions such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Don DeLillo's *Underworld* (1997). Like those books, *Gravity's Rainbow* brushes American history against the grain, and it is despite contrary claims considered a profoundly moral fiction.

The epigraph of the novel is borrowed from a 1962 essay. The novelist trimmed away the rocket scientist's remarks on how mankind's survival in an age of total war depends on "our adherence to ethical principles," high-minded words bathed in hypocrisy.

Gravity's Rainbow is, according to Richard Poirier, an unconventional mixture of "the esoteric and insanely learned with the popular or supposedly popular" (qtd. in Bloom, 3). Pynchon's brilliance manifests itself in his

uniquely wide range of subject matter and literary techniques of presentation, narration, and interpretation. Though extremely serious in content and concern, this book presents a continuous conviviality that underlies even the gloomiest scenes. Playing with the readers' feelings and sense of comprehension is a trick Pynchon possesses and employs in his fictive work. *Gravity's Rainbow* "bombards us with data, tempts us with a surfeit of clues." Nevertheless, "the data never entails a sure conclusion," and the clues do not lead us to "solutions." They just describe "further problems" (Mackey, 60). In Pynchon's own words, "this is not disentanglement from, but a progressive knotting into." (GR, 3)

Binary patterns dominate the major themes presented in the whole novel. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, the list of binaries is endless. Essentially, the novel is a universe of parallels, binaries and dichotomies. As Tony Tanner (1986) says *Gravity's Rainbow*, is a work of "such vastness and range that defies-with a determination unusual even in the age of 'difficult' books-any summary" (69). It puts forward an incomparable vastness of scope and an exceptional mixture of themes and content. Pynchon represents the "intricate networking of contemporary technological, political, and cultural systems," and "in the style and its rapid transitions,"

He attempts to adjust the "dizzying tempos, the accelerated shifts from one mode of experience to another" (Poirier, 12). *Gravity's Rainbow* is shaped by the memories of the Second World War, its end as well as its immediate aftermath (Fussell, 22). As E. Mendelson (1986) points out, it is a book of "recall[ed] origins" and "foresee[n] endings" that highlights the relentless continuation of the "responsibility of those who live in present that lies

between" (46). With regard to Kathryn Hume (1987), Pynchon's "pyrotechnics–explosive, surreal, and violent" have introduced a completely different and "new form of fiction" (xi).

Criticisms concerning *Gravity's Rainbow* are multiple and colourful. Expressing disapproval of the work, many critics consider the novel as "committed to the easy myth of apocalyptic nihilism" (Siegel, 3). In the same account, some critics find it "essentially nihilistic, ultimately downbeat in the way it regards human experience" (Moore, 2). Others, like Joseph Hedin, describe the book as "the sign of 'Death's hate, Death's grimace, the tragic mask of heaven's pulled down forever in one inviolable affirmation of depression" (qtd. in Moore, 2). In a very pessimistic tone, Tony Tanner, describes Pynchon as "a genuine poet of decay and decline...of a world succumbing to an irreversible twilight of no-love, no human contact" (qtd. in Cowart, 7). On the other hand, such simplistic nihilistic interpretations leave "much of the novel unaccounted for" (Siegel, 73). Nevertheless, as Siegel suggests, this controversial claim is not that surprising, for "important novels almost always offend the sensibilities of some readers and create problems of comprehension for others" (3).

In *Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale identifies Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* as "one of the paradigmatic texts of postmodernist writing, literally an anthology of postmodernist themes and devices" According to McHale "it is of course in Gravity's Rainbow, that Pynchon practices to the fullest extent his paranoiac mode of secret history, uncovering layer upon layer of conspiracy behind the official historical facts of the Second World War" (*Postmodernist Fiction*, 91).

In fact, Pynchon's treatment of his most important themes, his method of narration, and his exceptional pattern of characterization appeal too much with his doctrine of parallelism and plurality. With the unravelling of the novel his narrative voice and narrative strategy alter and adjust themselves to the demands of the content. Pynchon's characters are either persistently paralleled by others in their lifestyles or common destinies, or stand at the end of a spectrum of dichotomy, and thus their characteristic features are highlighted.

III.7.5. Tyrone Slotrop's Alienation

Near the start of the second part of *Gravity's Rainbow,* Slothrop finds himself spread across the deep hole of the 'excluded middle', (Rodriguez, 2016). As it is described in *The Crying of Lot 49,* the protagonists are surrounded by conspiracy and sinister control. They are unable to see any coherent end or all embracing conclusion to the frustrating and potentially wicked uncertainty.

Tony Tanner describes the disorienting and initially unexpected effect on the unwary reader of Pynchon's fictive world, and in particular that displayed in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Due to its complexity, the reader finds it hard to easily and comfortably move from some ideal "emptiness" of meaning to a satisfying fullness. Added to this fact, he becomes involved in a process in which any perception can precipitate a new confusion, and an apparent clarification turn into an introduction to further difficulties. (Tanner, 75)

Slothrop who is obsessed with technology may not understand directly the significance of these ideas, but does at least intuitively feel them to be part of the movement around him. From this point forwards, Slothrop confronts a new dilemma, the resolution of which will dictate for the reader the ability to

interact sympathetically with the text, and in Slothrop's case to confront the chaos of detail that fills the Zone.

Through the character of Slothrop, Pynchon shows the cultural chaos and diversity that leads to the lack of love among members of society. In a piece of fitting symbolism, Slothrop finds himself in a balloon, an unanchored, moving at the will of the elements without control, without destination. The scene is somewhat representative of the whole Zone ethos. Such acceptance of defeat, gives way to uncertain rewards. "There is no action the balloon can take. Binary decisions have lost meaning in here." (GR, 335) The helplessness is recalled by Slothrop as he considers anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long ...] Either They have put him here for a reason, or he's just here. (336)

III.7.6. Slothrop's Paranoid Mentality

Paranoia is described as "more generally: any unjustified or excessive sense of fear; especially, an unreasonable fear of the actions or motives of others" (*OED* "paranoia"). On account of this, Bersani argues that in Pynchon, paranoia functions more "as if it were merely synonymous with something like unfounded suspicions about a hostile environment" (99). According to Pynchon paranoia originates basically from the perception of a menacing entity. The paranoid seeks connections and "other orders behind the visible" (qtd. in Bersani 100), which conspire against him. These unseen forces range from having one's erections scrutinized as a pre-determiner of V-2 rocket strike sites due to Pavlovian conditioning during childhood. Slothrop in *Gravity's Rainbow*, can be a case in point.Paranoia is all-pervading in Pynchon's work, containing "every degree of paranoia from the private to the

cosmic…a mentality which assumes 'the existence of a vast, insidious, preternaturally effective international conspiratorial network designed to perpetrate acts of the most fiendish character" (Sanders, 78)

Paranoia requests connections leading to a controlling force, and eventually, to a global conspiracy. It "offers the ideally suited hypothesis that the world is organized into a conspiracy, governed by shadowy figures whose powers approach omniscience and omnipotence, and whose manipulations of history may be detected in every chance gesture of their servant." (Sanders, 177) Within this context, Louis Mackey states that Pynchon orders his fictional world along the lines of "all men are either Elect, the handful chosen for salvation, or Preterite, passed over and tacitly consigned to damnation" (1) According to David Cowart, the notion of conspiracy and the consequent anxiety is engrained within 60s America (7), an atmosphere which Pynchon explores. In the alternative series of assassinations of the Kennedys, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King "'the American public began to suspect, like Oedipa Maas in the *Crying of Lot 49,* that 'it's all part of a plot, an elaborate [...] plot" (Cowart, 7)

Both paranoid society and characters are shown in this novel. Pynchon demonstrates paranoia as an ongoing process in this text. It is a mental disorder which is characterized by delusions of persecution, unjustifiable jealous or fear of unknown or exaggerated self-importance. It makes the line between reality and imagination less distinct. In this text characters are suffering from it especially, Slothrop.

III.7.7. Slotrop Quest for Love

The quest for love has been the bulk in the two novels by Bellow. In the case of the protagonist in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the quest for affection, care and emotions is of prime importance. As Slothrop suffers from the ache of the machine age due to scientific progress, his need for love surmounts all other forms of quests. A noticeable point is that, from the beginning of this novel, we find that Slothrop lives a loveless life. His wife, Lily, is not a promising wife. A real wife ought to support her husband and should help him when he is in need of help but Lily fails in playing the role of a good wife. He is always deprived of love from his wife. So, having no option left, Slothrop seeks help from other women. He starts find love in them. Pertinent to the idea of loveless life, Mathew J. Bolt claims that "marriage, an institution intended to unite people, has brought only further division". He regards loveless marriage as "an alienating institution" that has "no sense of communion". The theorist believes that alienation from marriage may result from the no distinction between "the sacrament of marriage" and the illegitimate relationships outside marriage. This kind of frustration also leads to the path of paranoia which in turn makes fragmentation of self and identity. As a result, society becomes fragmented at the end.

The quest drives the plot of the two novels: for Tristero in Oedipa's case, for rocket secret in Slothop case. In the two novels, the main characters find more than they bargained for, but Oedipa's search in Lot 49 is forward-looking, as she seems to stumble across or to some extent to produce alternative, possibly insubordinate energies on the brink of making a difference in the consensus culture of the United States, while *Gravity's Rainbow* is an

introspective novel, looking backward from within or under the impact of the reactionary politics of the Nixon and Reagan years.

This return to the same period suggests that the mid to late 1960s represent a watershed moment not only in the nation's life but in Pynchon's own life. Pynchon wrote *The Crying of Lot 49* just prior to the national upheaval that began in 1968, during what may be termed the psychedelic and Aquarian sixties, as a young man living in California and Mexico.

At the time of publication of the novel LSD use was still legal, the Free Speech Movement was under way at Berkeley, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) inaugurated second-wave feminism, Michael Harrington's *The Other America* (1964) kick-started Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs and the War on Poverty, the Civil Rights Act passed in 1964, followed by the Voting Rights Act in 1965. President Johnson had yet to order 500,000 troops into Vietnam. *The Crying of Lot 49* captures the mood then prevailing of a nation on the verge of substantive transformations. Because the novel was composed during this period, the author's temporal distance from his work is virtually absent. *The crying of Lot 49* emerges from a different era, and is expressing a mood and perspective radically distinct from those we find in other novels such as *Gravity's Rainbow,* and Pynchon's earlier works like *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice.*

Unlike the California novels to come, *The Crying of Lot 49* is a novel about the possibility of revolution, the proliferation of countercultures, and the secret withdrawal from the "cheered land" of middle-class life. The means of expression for these themes is Oedipa Maas, a California housewife charged with settling the estate of a former lover, Pierce Inverarity. In the process of

doing so Oedipa discovers an alternative America, invisible to those celebrating the American Century.

The Crying of Lot 49 is unique even among these novels because of its implication that the text itself is a kind of plot perpetrated upon the reader, containing a secret meaning known only to the author. This is to speak of the novel's effect rather than to suggest there is such a secret yet to be discovered.

Pynchon makes the open-minded element of these choices explicit in one of the novel's magical moments in which diversity and possibility are temporarily realized. Upon her return to her Berkeley hotel, Oedipa is swept onto the dance floor with a party of deaf mute delegates. Each couple on the floor danced whatever was in the fellow's head. But how long, Oedipa thought, could it go on before collisions became a serious hindrance? There would have to be collisions. The only alternative was some unthinkable order of music, many rhythms, all keys at once, and a dance routine in which each couple meshed easy, predestined. Something they all heard with an extra sense half-starved in herself. She followed her partner's lead, limp in the young mute's clasp, waiting for the collisions to begin. But none came. She was danced for half an hour before, by mysterious consensus, everybody took a break, without having felt any touch but the touch of her partner.

This scene is one of a series in chapter five, Oedipa's journey through the San Francisco night, in which she comes across a variety of isolated communities, such as the "circle of children" for whom the "night was empty of all terror" because "they had inside their circle an imaginary free, and needed nothing but their own unpenetrated sense of community."

The dancers symbolize an image of effortless community, the miracle of communication at work, however mysterious it is to Oedipa. Because of this communication, as hypothesized by Nefastis, collisions which must happen do not. The reader is treated to a miraculous scene. The dance of the deaf mutes cannot be interpreted outside the context of nothing less than utopia.

This suspicion seems to be rooted in the inability of the public and Pynchon's characters to understand society, resulting in a continuous search for a reason or a connection between events that disentangles them all. Molly Hite is worth quoting when he states that "Pynchon's fiction is driven by the trope of the absent centre, in the form of a central insight illuminating a unitary idea of order" (Qtd. in Simmons, 211) Therefore, "both Pynchon's key characters and his readers become involved in unfulfilled searches for the underlying logic of the world or the novel, or searches for…a total theory" (Simmons, 211).

Brian McHale explains as: "paranoia and anti-paranoia, the world as over-interpretable and as un-interpretable: these are the poles between which Pynchon's characters, plots, represented world, and narrative voice oscillate..." (223). Owing to the characters' inability to understand the driving force within their society, they continuously move backwards and forwards between two, perhaps equally absurd, conclusions on reality. Therefore, paranoia is the source of meaning and the "desired structure of thought" (Bersani, 103)

Pynchon's characters make every effort to make sense of the world, yet are unable to do so. Moreover, Pynchon suggests that paranoia is desirable because it at least grants the make-believe of meaning in life.

In the same line of thought, Safer states that in Pynchon's earlier novels, the main characters, and the reader as well, search for life's meaning, and for hope. Both Tyrone Slothrop and Oedipa Maas quest for some form of order and fulfilment in the face of absurdity.

III.8. Conclusion

What can be inferred from the study of the two of Pynchon's novels is that both protagonists Oedipa and Slothrop represent the earliest of Pynchon's 'postmodern' characters, who suffer from the "ache of postmodernism" (Rodriguez, 2016). It is also revealed in the course of the events that there are inner contradictions that confront us in the character of particularly Oedipa. Slothrop on the other hand is a prototype of man's difficulties in adjusting to the new ways of thinking and feeling. These difficulties of adjusting to new intellectual insights occur mainly in the last pages of the novel where Slothrop is portrayed as postmodern tragic hero whose conviction leads him to abandon the pleasures of 'civilization' and to return and embrace his nature (new America).

That Slothrop and Oedipa embody modern man's alienation is the central issue of the two novels. Not only should we understand Oedipa and Slothrop alienation as the embodiment of modern's man's predicament in a hostile world, also the presentation of personal relationships probes their personalities at considerable depth. There are many conflicting views on both protagonists; they have been described as 'victim', 'villain', and 'masochist'. Both Oedipa and Slotrop suffer not only because of their refusal to embrace the reality they were living as an integral part of their existence, but also because of their

society's unwillingness to accept their attempts to achieve perfect harmony of being with the environment they inhabit.

Moreover, social values that threaten to limit or destroy the two protagonists are concentrated in external forces, in the natural environment and in other persons, particularly those close to Oedipa and Slothrop, members of the family and more precisely the father, Oedipa's husband and Slothrop's wife, her lawyer, and even her psychiatric. Unwilling as he is to direct political statement, Pynchon in his novels nevertheless insists that responsibility for cultural resistance begins with the self-reliant, community-minded Emersonian individual.

Chapter Four

Alienated Protagonist in William Styron's *Set this House on Fire*, and *The Confessions of Nat Turner*

IV. Alienated Protagonist in William Styron's *Set This House on Fire*

IV.1.Introduction

Although the dilemma of alienation influences modern man in general, the blacks in America feel a special kind of alienation due to racial discrimination. The protagonists in William Styron's novels are no exception. They feel alienated not only socially, culturally, but even spiritually. The consequences of social and cultural alienation are psychological alienation. It is really difficult and painful to be alienated to one true self.

It is therefore of high worth to make a statement on the variety and complexity of fictional tradition in America during the Post-war period. William Styron, it is clear, does not fit into any specific sub-tradition. He has written about the South; but is not strictly speaking, a Southern novelist like Faulkner. He has written about blacks, but cannot be described as belonging to the protest tradition. Styron's place in the tradition of Post-War fiction is significant because he exploits the resources of Southern tradition only to transcend it. He provides a picture of social manners and morals but elevates it into a religious, Christian dimension.

This chapter attempts to bring out this creative specificity of Styron's novels by concentrating on his themes in terms of his perception of society, his exploration of human psychology, his religious sensibility-all culminating into a mature tragic vision of the human condition. William Styron is the novelist who most clearly sees the spiritual identity of the self against historicity.

IV.2. Styron Novels and the Predicament of the Southerners

His novels are set in North Carolina and Virginia. They identify the Southern culture of memory with the secrecy of the self. The literature of the South is thus predominant with its own identity. Slavery, aristocracy, plantation, were earlier themes but are substituted now by self, history, alienation thus reaching a wider global level.

William Styron offers virtual paradigms of the novel of victimization. His central characters are subject to disintegrating forces over which they appear to have little control. He portrays the contemporary condition in such a way as to pointedly reveal man the victim. But within this victimization are perception of and rebellion against that condition. William Styron's characters are vividly aware that something has gone out of line and they are losing viable choices and significant action. Nat turner, the central character, in The Confessions of Nat Turner is equally vividly aware that his society is bent on making him a total victim that is, enslaving him to insane means in order to reach equally insane goals. Rebellion in Styron's in *Set This House on Fire* becomes a determination to live significantly in spite of personal limitation and metaphysical isolation; in *Confessions of Nat Turner* culminates in the violent rejection of that total experience of victimization, in which man is considered as property.

If Styron's works are examined collectively, however, it is evident that his characters are not only perceptive of their condition but capable of rebellion against those forces which victimize them. Styron's novels should illuminate those shadowy areas of the "existential" novel where man by all accounts sits alone along with empty and futile gestures, suffering total defeat. Rebellion in

Styron's novels is the assertion of an individual's will against those forces which threaten to cancel his identity, and a strong word like rebellion is essential to this study because the forces directed against man are awesome.

Departing from what has been mentioned; this chapter examines William Styron's view of the human condition and his attitude toward race as they are reflected in *Set this House on Fire,* and *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. The first section asserts that although the two novels under discussion are not a really good historical novel, they are representative of contemporary fiction that deals with man's suffering, alienation and despair.

William Styron, who belongs to the post-war American era, is regarded as an American novelist noted for his treatment of tragic themes and his use of a rich, classical prose style. In novel after novel, Styron sets out to explore the predicament of man in a world discernible with distress and suffering. The fiction of the period has concerned itself with the deepest private suffering, and private agonies of men and women.

A study of his literary background exposes the ambiguous nature of the grip the South has on him. His fiction challenges easy categorizing. He is born and bred a Virginian but has spent almost the whole of his adult life away from the South in Roxbury, Connecticut. Right from the publication of his first novel *Lie Down in Darkness* (1951), critics have persistently named him as a Southern writer. In fact, he was hailed as the successor to Faulkner's Southern tradition and most of the critical exegesis of the period found analogous between Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), and *Lie Down in Darkness* which clearly revealed the influence of Faulkner.

Styron fictionalized the dark side of modern history in two controversial later works namely: *Set This House on Fire* and *The Confessions of Nat Turner* which depicts an antebellum slave revolt. Styron's preoccupation with history and memory, and the use of settings and remains of ancient civilizations and the inaccessible past to allude to the continuities and discontinuities between past and present, have their most concentrated expressions in *Set This House on Fire,* and *The Confession of Nat Turner.* Styron's unusual treatment of man's predicament and his unnatural preservation of his affection from them foreshadow his ultimate self-alienation, his total loss of all human relationships and his complete disintegration. What has been adequately noticed is Styron's skill in presenting the physical breakdown of his characters, and its relation to their spiritual decline.

IV.3. Cass Kinsolving's Dimensions of Alienation

Similar to Bellow's and Pynchon's protagonists, Styron's protagonists also suffered the effects of alienation due to its different forms ranging from his alienation from his surroundings to his estrangement from God.

IV.3.1.Cass's Alienation from his Surroundings

Alienation, one would be on relatively safe grounds in saying that it is basically a portrayal of the battle between society and man, the social creature. Alienation—retreat, as it would be called in a battle between two great foes—is usually treated as a prevailing response to the wounds society inflicts upon man.

In *Set This House on Fire*, Cass symbolizes the American South who struggles to escape the corruption inflicted upon him by his association with

Masson Flagg who has exploited him to the utmost possible degree. Cass escaped to Europe, for the novel starts in North Carolina, moves to Europe and more precisely France and Italy where most of the events took place. Leading an unhappy life and sunk into chaotic past, Cass settled in Sambuco[16], a small province in Northwest Italy searching for joy, stability and attempting to find haven.

Married to a Roman Catholic, his wife Poppy has made of him an alienated and turned his life into a hell. Consequently, he takes of alcohol as a means of relief in order to forget about his pains and find happiness. In this vein, Gunnar Urang describes Cass's helplessness: "as a result of his sense of failure and guilt along with his heavy intake of liquor, Cass had lost almost all command of himself and was appreciably helpless. " (STHF, 206-07)

In Styron's novel, Cass's neurotic self-destructive nature makes him obsessed with Mason Flagg, and consequently he murders him. By keeling mason, Cass thought that he has killed the devil and he made an end to all his past sins. For Flagg is not only the image of the devil on earth, but also a symbol of the corrupted North. Cass's entire life has been haunted by this murder; subsequently he suffers the isolation of life imprisonment.

IV. 3.2.Cass's Alienation from God

Besides being alienated from his family and close people, Cass has suffered also the effects of being alienated from God. This type of alienation distresses Cass so much that all his life he tries to runaway. The protagonist's instability constitutes a major theme in the novel. It is not a physical instability as it is a moral one. Cass was forced to move from one place into another. And

[16] Sambuco is a municipality in the province of Cuneo in the Italian region piedmont where most of the events of the novel took place.

although the novel opens in Carolina, most of the events have Europe as their setting. In a country like America of the 1960s, God is not worshipped but the Almighty Dollar.

As a punishment from what he considers a sin, and by keeping a distance from God he has been chastised by God for all his sins. On their way to France, his children come down with a terrible fever. At that moment Cass feels how responsible he has been for the destruction of his children. That his God is angry against him is because he is sinful.

Although Cass belongs to a well-known Anglican family, and was married to a devout Roman Catholic, he has given all pretension to organized religion. In one passage, Poppy addressing Cass as she was preparing to leave him says: "may be if you had some of that religion you would be happier. May be you wouldn't be in such a torment all the time!" (STHF, 320) The expression of probability in this passage indicates that Cass has some faith, but a faith that has been killed or destroyed by people like mason Flagg. This sounds as if Poppy is certain that there exists inside Cass some compensating human values and that there is still a possibility for repentance. Poppy's certainty is confirmed in Cass's confessions to Peter in one of the passages about his past experiences at Sambuco. He tells him: "you know you can't work without faith, and boy I was as faithless as an alley cat." (STHF, 282) It is in fact the lack of faith which is the real evil, Cass has been confronted with all his life and which made of him an unbalanced individual and which ignited in him the desire to take revenge. This self hatred and self revenge is what makes of Cass leading a life of self-destruction. It is revealed through the course of events that

Cass has been his lone and worst enemy and that there is no one else to move the blame on.

It is only too late, that Cass finally realizes that man cannot live without an aim in life. It only through worshiping God and having faith that man can taste the sweetness of a good and happy life. The following passage gives evidence to what is stated: "man cannot live without a focus....without some kind of faith if you want to call it that. I didn't have any more faith than a tomcat. Nothing. Nothing!" (61)

Styron is not willing to close the novel into hopeless note. He rather insists on Cass's possibility of redemption. Lingui, the Italian police officer seeks through his advice and comments to free Cass at the end from his sense of evil and guilt. Lingui is bent upon emancipating Cass into the condition of love. In this regard he states, "Yes we fail often but it is our birthright no less than the Greeks to try to free people into the conditions of love "(408) Lingui urges Cass to reassess himself in the light of god's love "for the love of god, Cass" he says "consider the good in yourself, consider hope, consider joy." (562)

IV.4. Cass's Various Quests

It is in the mid-twentieth century American novelist who feels compelled to address himself to the concerns of man in this age. This new synthesis would seem to say that while it cannot accept the position of absurdity, which says there is 'no God' and that man must ultimately make all decisions alone—the nihilistic position neither can it slip back to the position of naturalism, in which God or some other transcendent power is the dominant force in determining man's existence.

In order to find answers to the absurdity of existence, man has to embark on a series of quests. In the novels of Styron, this seeking protagonist is usually honest, concerned chiefly with his own interests, and obsessed with the search not only for freedom, but also for meaning, order, happiness and autonomy. He is certain that there is something more in existence beyond what he is now experiencing, and therefore he commits himself to the quest. He accepts the fact that there is a God but is angry, even rebellious, towards the contemporary expression of God which he finds in the established church and religion.

Thus the quest is definitely a positive rather than a negative force. There is more to life than this. The pressures of social conformity weigh heavily upon him, but he now sees that he must escape in order to continue the search. Strangely enough, he knows that in a world of fugitives, the person taking the opposite direction often appears to be running away. Styron seems to be affirming his conviction that the quest is always singular and can be conducted only on behalf of oneself, and never for another, no matter what kind of relation exists between the person and the other.

IV.4.1. Cass Kinsolving's Quest for Joy

Cass's quest for happiness is of crucial importance in his journey of the various quests. His thirst for joy is the result of his feelings of sadness, disappointment, and estrangement. After Cass has fallen in love with Francesca, he cannot bring himself to have sexual intercourse with her, not because he is already a married man, but because she represents an ideal of beauty and innocence in a world which is otherwise corrupt. She represents to Cass what in *Lie Down in Darkness*, Peyton represents to Milton Loftis. Urang says that she is "the other side of the Gnostic or Manichean coin

... the paradisaic vision of perfect goodness and beauty." She brings Cass "a vision of this other world. "I found some kind of joy in her, you see," says Cass to Peter, "not just pleasure - this joy I felt I'd been searching for all my life, and it was almost enough to preserve my sanity all by itself. Joy, you see - a kind of serenity and repose that I never really knew existed" (439-40).

In the presence of the elegant Francesca, Cass is no longer a completely paralyzed artist. Instead of drinking every afternoon, Cass sometimes makes sketches of her in "one marvellous little secluded grove where there were willows and a grassy bank and a stream flowing through". As Cass would paint, neither of them would "say a word, just sit there sketching and posing and listening to the water flowing over the rocks and the crickets in the grass and the cowbells on the slopes". In this peaceful setting, it seemed to Cass that he was "under a spell- as if all...madness had been washed away for the moment, clean ... untouched by anything except this momentary, fabulous, bountiful peace" (440).

IV.4.2. Cass Kinsolving's Quest for Autonomy

To the majority of fiction that has been written in the 1950's and I960's, the quest for autonomy is of crucial importance compared to the forms of quests. There is hardly any work which does not have its protagonist engaged, directly or indirectly, in the quest for autonomy. Autonomy implies that man must admit that he has certain needs, and enter deliberately into the pursuit of their fulfilment in the realization that only by becoming a self-fulfilled, autonomous person can he effectively fill his place as husband, wife, brother, sister, or neighbour.

As the Putneys observe,

> The American people are slowly grasping the probability of annihilation. . . . If man is to refrain from genocide, it will be because the people who are able to achieve some measure of autonomy—and the rationality and objectivity which accompany it—are able to make their influence predominate. (98)

This urgent search for autonomy, honest existence, and eventual freedom is equally evident in John Updike's novel *Rabbit*, Run. Rabbit's "run" is not a flight from life but rather a desperate race for life. He, too, is sickened by the oppressiveness of the establishment which he feels closing in upon him in the form of the church, his Job, and his family, each of which he views as mere shells of meaning, devoid of any ultimate human relationships. That is, he sees them as the form without the substance.

The autonomous person is one who chooses his life in terms of objective reality and acts constructively, rather than simply reacting to inner compulsions. The will to fight, to change, to resist conformity is a basic ingredient in the personality of the one who makes this quest for autonomy. While every man ultimately lives alone, he longs for meaningful relationships beyond himself. Cass was not able to establish such a relationship with his wife, Poppy.

This kind of insight is developed in the character of Nat in the novel, which will be discussed at length in the following sections. Nat finally discovers that he must "let go" of the self-directed projections he has hung on his father, his friends, and on the women in his life. Only by accepting them for what they are, and not through loving or hating his own self-projection which he sees in them, can he "let go" and find both himself and a meaningful

relationship with other people. This self-interest and self-concern, far from being selfishness, is the kind of honest self-love that is essential to the development of personal autonomy.

Bellow, Pynchon, and Styron are the new novelists who show their characters as being engaged in just such a type of quest. One of Styron's novels which most directly tackle the issue is *Set this House on Fire*, whose protagonist is Cass Kinsolving. In the very symbolism of his name, Cass, is shown the angst man experiences even while he runs for the answer to the question of life's ultimate meaning. Cass Kinsolving, the protagonist in William Styron's novel, *Set This House on Fire*, is, like Nat, running for his life. Throughout the novel he is depicted as man in quest of meaning. "If I stop running all will be lost ... but if I just keep running ... I might be saved." (STHF, 262)

In the concluding statement from the sermon of John Donne which prefaces the novel, there is a connected theological understanding with that of his contemporary heir, Paul Tillich.

> what Brimstone is not Amber, what gnashing is not a comfort, what gnawing of the worme is not a tickling, what torment is not a marriage bed to this damnation, to be secluded eternally, eternally, eternally, from the sight of God? ([ii]).

Like john Donne, Paul Tillich defines sin as separation from God, and implies that salvation consequently is unity with the 'Ground of Being', as Tillich's puts it. Another term used by Tillich as a more adequate expression of the God-concept is 'Ultimate Concern'. Ultimate Concern is very much like quest for meaning, in that "concern" implies an activity of deep search into the secrets of life.

In his book, *Four Spiritual Crises in Mid-Century American Fiction (1964)*, Robert Detweiler makes two major statements which have special interest here. One is that he sees certain young contemporary novelists (Styron, Bellow, Salinger, Pynchon and Roth) as focusing on man's spiritual or religious crisis and using this as the focal point in their novels and in their treatment of man's contemporary situation. The second is that he sees these novelists using the same theological arguments and taking many of the same positions, using much of the same vocabulary, imagery, and certainly using many of the same existential problems or crises which are part of man's present situation. Detweiler further claims that this generation of writers have themselves grown out of nihilism. Such writers have been forced to some sort of religious affirmation or emphasis on meaningful existence as opposed to the nihilistic position which is the natural outcome of the naturalistic position during the first part of the twentieth century in American literature. He argues that,

> In seeking to articulate the new affirmation, the young writers have had the help of the only Western philosophy that faced nihilism squarely and invited an answer to it: I refer, of course, to existentialism, which like the writers themselves has grown out of nihilism, and which has revived the spiritual aspect of life as significant in its own right. (Detweller, 4-6)

IV.4.3. Cass' Quest for Intimacy

After leaving Paris with his wife Cass embarks on a new type of quest. Because as his assessments are by no means over, his quest now has a new urgency—"to save my very life," There is an endless variety of sensationalism displaying through the new American novel, but far from being mere sensationalism, of which it is often accused, it fits into the pattern of the quest

for intimacy; man's search for deep and abiding human relationships—man's search to overcome his terrible loneliness.

The search, the drive, the quest is nonetheless necessary to the working out of man's improving, if not perfect, mental and spiritual vitality. Sometimes through unpleasant sexual experiences, as in the case of Cass Kinsolving or Nat Turner, we see that even a misdirected quest for intimacy in the form of pure sex may finally lead to self-awareness and therefore to the possibility of self-fulfilment and intimacy. On account of this Cass asserts,

> I lay my head against her [his wife's] shoulder and thought of the day before, and the long night, and even Vernelle Slatterfield and what she had said about the divine spirit, which had indeed flowed right on out of me, and which to save my very life I knew I had to recapture. (STHF, 268)

Sex serves as a positive reinforcement. But always, the quest for intimacy, for ultimately meaningful human relationships, is expressed through sex, but sex as expressed through the term "sexuality" and not in the sense of "sexualisation."

The critic Ihab Hassan remarks that since the late nineteenth century all Western literature has been concerned with the ideas of victimization, rebellion, and alienation. (Ihab, 1961) Contemporary American literature is also concerned to address itself to some possible solutions to the problems and anxieties of man's existence. It is significant that this solution is often nothing more than the recognition of man's discontent with his rebellion and alienation. Therefore, his search, his pilgrimage—his quest—serves as this manifestation of positive value. This is clearly exemplified in Styron's novel, *Set This House on Fire* and *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, in which man's search for autonomy, for meaning, and for intimacy is admirably worked out in the

character of Cass and his relationships with his father, with his wife, and with his fellow blacks. (229)

For both of them marriage is a hindrance rather than a means toward mutual self-fulfilment. Cass is occupied with his job an artist a painter and his Jewish background, Poppy is caught up in her desire to be a model homemaker, and frustrated by her inability to be a mother. Their mutual failure to develop any personal autonomy is projected on each other in the form of senseless hostility. Only at the end of the novel do they seem to approach any awareness of their predicament.

In 'I' and 'Thou' the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, says that all real living is encounter, or relationships. He distinguished these relationships by describing them as 'I-Thou' and 'I-It.' 'I-It' is characterized by detachment, inordinate interest in things, and using people for one's own self-interest. 'I-Thou' is personal encounter that involves both giving and receiving, total involvement, Intimacy.

One cannot find Ultimate Meaning until he has first been able to discover meaningful personal relationships. Hence, the quest for meaning is not only important in establishing personal relationships, but is vital to the establishment of any basis for Ultimate Meaning in one's life.

IV.4.4. Cass Kinsolving's Quest for Security

The world of Styron's novels is depleted as a lonely and unwelcoming realm where man finds no external means of support. As a result of these conditions, man struggles aimlessly. The reason for this inconsistent behaviour is that man relies too heavily on finding guidance from the outside world. Styron asserts that man will continue to stumble so miserably, until he becomes

conscious that he will find no support from any outside source. Man's only option is to seek security from within himself. As a consequence, the only positive choice of existence that man can make is to struggle to find personal strength and courage.

Existential philosophy views man as lonely, living in a devastating unstructured world. His isolated plight is universally described with the depletion of a scene where man is seen being thrown onto the earth by some invisible hand and then being left to shift for himself without the support of any compassionate force. William Styron joins the ranks of many modern novelists when he studies this problem of the existential experience. In his novels, Styron portrays such a world of desolate isolation, and then he describes man's reactions to this isolated situation. Unlike the nihilistic or atheistic branch of the existential school, Styron suggests positive ways of dealing with life's dilemmas.

Similar to Pynchon and Bellow, Styron does not agree that life offers a "no exit" alternative or, in other words, that man's life is hopeless and frustrating. Instead, man has a very important choice that he can make, one that would provide him with the strength that he needs to challenge the repetitive forces of the world. He can affirmatively elect to find support and courage from within himself. Paul Tillich labels such an affirmative option "the courage to be." (Tillich, 1952)

Apparently, the end result of either condition is that man is left alone without any spiritual or divine source of relief. Without exaggeration to this situation, Styron utterly notes in his novels that this lack of divine presence is an inherent state of being. His characters obviously suffer traumatically from

the loss of such guidance and security. They would possibly not flounder in life if such a base of support was basically present in their world. Unfortunately, man must learn to survive in spite of this absence. According to Luigi the Italian police officer in *Set This House on Fire* man is sentenced to such an isolated existence where he is serving his sentence in solitary confinement. He is even not capable of, "talking with his Jailer, but now even He has gone away, leaving him alone with the knowledge of insufferable loss".

American modernization has wiped out any trace of such a regulated world. Even the Old South, which is traditionally conservative in the way it represents a world of strict values and customs, has changed. It is this so called modernized, mechanical, and consumer's age that contributes to the destruction of the social standards of Virginia. Old traditions cannot resist in the fast moving age of modern America. It is Because of this modern, mechanical progress, that America, and particularly the South has become impersonal and cold. In Cass Kinsolving's words, the world has been turned into "an ashheap of ignorance and sordid crappy materialism and ugliness." (STHOF, 272)

The feeling of loss and alienation are the outcome of the cold age of the machine. It becomes therefore understandable that man finds it difficult to adjust to this mechanistic environment. On another level of meaning, this episode exemplifies the lonely plight of man in general. There are no concrete sources of security in life, but there surely are concrete forces of destruction and dread in this world.

In *The Courage to Be*, Paul Tillich notes that there are two types of nightmares which confront modern man. One nightmare has to do with an entrapping narrowness which threatens to suffocate its victim. As for the other,

it is concerned with a vast and dark emptiness into which the person falls. The latter mage is developed in William Styron's novels in a more detailed way.

For instance Cass Kinsolving states that he has seen a big vacuum, an absolute blankness, a dark whiteness or a sucking vortex.

> I knew that I had come to the end of the road and had found there nothing at all. There was nothing. There was a nullity in the universe so great as to encompass and drown the universe itself. The value of a man's life was nothing, and his destiny nothingness. (STHOF, 465-466)

From the above stated quotation one can notice that there is a depiction of the loneliness and emptiness of man's exterior world which serves as a perfect description of the existential experience. Styron has created in these novels an unembellished and illogical environment where man finds no external means of support. Having established such conditions, Styron then proceeds to study man's responses to the existential world.

As a result of the senselessness of the exterior world, man becomes frustrated. Subsequently, man makes a desperate attempt to counterbalance this feeling of insecurity by turning to himself for support. This innermost search for security only leads to further despair, for man's first trustworthy look at himself is disappointing. This conscious assessment of the self makes the individual aware of his failures and guilt. In one of his self-oriented monologues, Cass Kinsolving describes this blameworthy feeling of anxiety.

> What I was really sick from was from despair and self-loathing and greed and selfishness and spite, I was sick with a paralysis of the soul, and with self, and with flabbiness. I was sick with whatever sickness men get in prisons or on desert islands or any place where the days stretch forward gray and sunless into flat-assed infinitude and no one ever came with the key or the answer. I was very nearly sick unto death, and I guess my sickness, if you really want to know was the sickness of deprivation, and the deprivation was my own doing, because though I didn't know it then I had deprived myself of all belief in the good in myself. The good which is very close to God. That's the bleeding truth. (STHOF, 259-260)

V.4.5. Cass Kinsolving's Quest for Love

Cass thirst for love has been one of the driving forces of his quest. Through such an immense feeling Cass could find only in his relation with Francesca and her father Michele. Through these two relationships, Cass gains a very real insight in to the meaning of love. His love for Francesca is the aesthetic love of beauty, purity, and truth for its own sake. His love for Michele is the active, sacrificial love that Christ commanded of his disciples. Both kinds must be experienced before Cass can deliver himself from impotent despair. What he lacks, however, is love of self.

Cass fails to see that until he is able to find beauty and meaning in his own soul, he cannot be truly redeemed. While Cass has progressed through Kierkegaard's aesthetic mode to the ethical, he is unable to move to a religious or existential level. Similar to Herzog, Cass has also been betrayed by his close friend Mason. By raping Francesca, Flagg kills every hope in Cass's life. In the act of raping, Mason defiles all that is holy in Cass's life. "At that very moment when through Francesca I had conceived of life as having some vestige of a meaning," Cass tells Peter, "he tore that meaning limb from limb" (444). Mason becomes for Cass a symbol of all that is evil in the universe. It is because of Flagg and people like him that poverty, pain, and wretchedness exist. Cass has come to believe that if, "hell is not giving", and then Mason is surely an embodiment of Satan himself. He is, to Cass, as Fossum indicates, "an American Satan let loose from chaos to wander to and fro upon the earth". (Fossum, 453)

In one of the scenes, Cass confesses to Peter:

> I knew that I had come to the end of the road and had found nothing at all. There was nothing. There was a nullity in the universe so great as to encompass and drown the universe itself. The value of a man's life was nothing, and his destiny nothingness. What more proof did I need that I travelled halfway across the earth in search of some kind of salvation, and had found it, only to have it shattered in my finger tips ? (STHOF, 283)

According to Cass, freedom would mean only that he could return to a chaotic, meaningless existence in a world without God or any moral order. This idea fills him with panic: "the notion of this awful and imminent liberty was frightening to me as that terror that must overcome people who dread open spaces. The feeling was the same. Yearning for enclosure, for confinement, I was faced with nothing but the vista of freedom like a wide and empty plain" (492).

Cass still believes that there is some God he cannot find or some moral code that he is unable to live up to. He does not see that all men are imperfect and consciously or sub-consciously consider themselves as prisoners in solitary confinement in a prison where the Jailer has gone away. The only possibility of salvation lies in his understanding and accepting his fate in an absurd world and then enjoying what there is in life to enjoy. "Consider the good in yourself!" Luigi tells Cass. "Consider hope! Consider joy!" (499).

Reflecting upon the advice given by Luigi, Cass finally understands that he exists in an absurd world where a man's only choice is between being and nothingness. Instead of feeling a suicidal guilt, Cass can now conclude, like his hero Oedipus, that all is well. He will not kill himself. He will accept the absurd state of the universe and be satisfied with creating what he can

create, in being what he can be. He will return to America with his family and start life afresh.

The problem with Cass's sudden reconciliation is that it is unconvincing dramatically. Are we to believe that an hour-long lecture by a policeman on French existentialism is sufficient to overcome the despair Cass feels after Francesca and Michele are dead?

Nonetheless, Cass almost immediately does overcome his bitterness, loses his paralyzing sense of guilt, simply accept evil as an inextricable force in the universe, and view America not as a "doomed land" but as a country of beauty and promise. (499).

It thus seems to me that Styron offers a rhetorical, not a dramatic, solution to Cass's predicament. Perhaps because he could not determine himself the many social and moral problems he posed for Cass and Peter, Styron was forced to let the existential language of the novel serve the whole narrative.

Whether Cass's redemption is noticeably persuasive or not, Peter learns from Cass's story that each man must in due course be his own liberator. There is no God who sits in judgment over man and damns or saves him. Likewise, there is no social or moral system which can deliver a man from despair. Man must first have faith in himself; he must find joy, and hope, and goodness in his own being. Only then can he find meaning in the external world.

In the passage above, Cass echoes the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard who can be designated as a Christian existentialist. Cass follows the path of the Kierkegaardian concept which suggests that man is incomplete and distressed because he is separated from God. As a person, he has neglected the eternal factor within himself. Styron does not consistently emphasize this connection

between man's personal success and the strength which comes from God. It is more prevalent for his characters to be seen as being independent of any divine power. They determine their lives according to individual strengths or weaknesses. Kierkegaard states that unconsciousness "may be the most dangerous form of despair. As Kierkegaard notes, some men will try to adjust to the absurd conditions of the world. This behaviour is completely futile because man can never be comfortable within such an environment.

Styron develops one image throughout his novels which illustrates the inability of "the unconscious man to confront himself with the truth. The characters cannot face themselves in the mirror because they see a reflection there that they cannot bear. In this glass, they see themselves as they really are, and since "the unconscious man" refuses to recognize the truth about himself, the image that he sees reflected is that of a stranger. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus refers to "the weariness tinged with amazement" when the unconscious individual looks into the mirror and sees this perfect stranger. Needless to say the strange person that he sees is less than attractive to the individual.

For Cass the mirror reflects "the countless faces of [his own guilt ..." (STHOF, 269) It becomes frightening for Cass to face a mirror and be confronted with his own guilty self-image. Cass says, "I am actually scared to look into a mirror for fear of seeing some face there that I have never seen before." (STHOF, 345)

The main body of *Set This House on Fire* however, is dedicated to the study of the new Cass, for here he becomes agonizingly conscious of his actions and particularly of his shortcomings. One specific incident in Cass's

life serves as a personification of his feelings of guilt and failure as a human being.

IV.5. Alienated Protagonist in Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*

IV.5.1. Introduction

Based on a fictional account of the Virginia slave revolt of 1831, the novel is narrated by the leader of the rebellion. Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* got its inspiration from a pamphlet of the same title published in Virginia shortly after the revolt, but he took many liberties in developing Turner's character.

The modern view of the human predicament is characterized by a post-Christian meditation on the human condition that consists of struggle, self-accusation, decay, ambiguity and death. Religion here is not a comfort, but another dimension of pain, one more level of awareness it might be better not to have. *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, published in 1967, reinforced his fame and earned him the Pulitzer Prize. For the same novel black writers accused him of stereotyping and cultural appropriation, since the book is told from the perspective of the historical figure, Nat Turner, who led a slave revolt in Virginia in 1831. By the time Styron published *Sophie's Choice* in 1979, his place in the literary firmament was secure.

Styron's fourth novel, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, is an account of a historical event, a slave rebellion led by the title character in Virginia in 1831. Based on a transcript of Turner's testimony and told from his point of view, the book sympathetically depicts a man who is denied happiness because of his

degrading enslavement. Alienated and embittered, he embarks on a bloody revolt that ends in his capture and execution.

Nat Turner's rebellion is a story told in the first person by the protagonist, Nat, who is characterized by Styron as being a condemned, thoughtful, anti-heroic Black slave who is markedly endowed with the neuroses and doubts of a post-Christian, twentieth-century white man. Styron's Nat Turner is a man sentenced to death for his role in the unsuccessful attempt to murder masses of whites in Southampton, Virginia and free Blacks from slavery. He speaks from his jail cell and tells the whole story of the rebellion through a series of flashbacks.

Being a typically modern, characteristically white, and peculiarly Southern author Styron meditates (from Turner's point of view), stressing issues implying that Nat Turner is a prototype of man in the middle of a human situation that is characterized by doubt, struggle, sexual tension, violence and alienation from God. Actually, Styron's Nat is a religious fanatic and it is his Christian fanaticism, not his Blackness, which is the cause of his problems.

Other critics point out that Styron's *Confessions of Nat Turner* "is in no sense 'historical' fiction of the kind we are familiar with..., "that the novel "is not centrally about negro slavery at all," and that "there is nothing in Turner's Negroness that accounts for his religious fanaticism..." (Gilman, 1968)

The novel's main tendency has to do with man's alienation and doubt in a post-Christian era where the only certainty is death. Death is an imminent inevitability for Nat Turner, since Styron's story begins after the insurrection and the protagonist is already in prison awaiting his turn at the gallows. Even at the start of the novel, Nat confesses that he had been experiencing "a hopeless

and demoralizing terror as each day passed and I slept and ate and breathed, still unclaimed by death" (9). Suffering from loneliness, and being spiritually alienated from God, knowing that he will soon die, Nat dangles in his jail. The feeling of "apartness from God" haunts him daily, and "His "God's" absence was like a profound and awful silence" (78).

IV.5.2. Nat Turner's Types of Alienation

Among the major theme in the novel, alienation seems to be of vital importance as it affects particularly the protagonist on all levels. Nat's alienation is caused partly because of being cut off from intimate contact with other black and being even removed from whites. What is even more painful is Nat's alienation from God. In *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, Styron considers Nat's alienation from man especially his separation from the company of ordinary slaves as well as his wide distance from the whites, and most importantly his alienation from God to be an essential constituent of the tragedy. In this vein, Frye argues that "the centre of tragedy is the hero's isolation" (Frye, 28).

IV.5.2.1. Nat's Spiritual Alienation

In *The Confessions of Nat Turner,* William Styron's defines modern man's attitude toward himself and toward his cosmic status. Like many other writers of this generation, Styron presents a human situation showing that man, afflicted by beliefs stemming from a tradition of Christian morality, exists in a 'God-is-dead' world where the realities are suffering, sexual tensions, violence and spiritual alienation. It is an attitude of despair and anguish. Man feels spiritually abandoned and unable to communicate with the enormous forces he tries to relate to. In the same line of thought, Robert C. Evans also explores the

alienation from religion in his criticism. He delineates that the religious institutions are corrupted and they even affect the relationship of the individual with God. He asserts that religion is not an avoidable atmosphere from alienation. Furthermore, he maintains that "God and religion no longer occupy central places of respect, veneration, or even serious attention" He adds that alienation from religion may even extend to doubt in God's "possible existence" or even to deny it by regarding him as "mostly absent". He argues that "god and Christianity are a convenient source of profanity" and he views them "as practical and consoling alternatives to alienation".

He knows that he is going to die, for he states to Gray, "yes, I know I'm going to be hung" (CNT, 29) he is not afraid of death as he is with his inability to enter into some kind of harmonious relationship with God.He states: "I began to fear the coming of my own death... And somehow this sudden fear of death... had less to do with death itself, with the fact that I must soon die, than with my inability to pray or make any kind of contact with God." (CNT, 79)

His sense of alienation becomes more accentuated when he was waiting in his jail, knowing he will soon die, he feels alone, spiritually alienated from God. After waiting for five days in his jail, he recognized the bridge separating him from his God. The feeling of "apartness from God" (78) haunts him daily, and "His God's absence was like a profound and awful silence" in Nat's brain. (78)

Nat's spiritual alienation is so real that it causes him to be suspicious about God and to take for granted an attitude of despair. He says, "I thought the Lord had failed me, had deserted me" (15). His doubt progresses to despair and he

relates: "Soon I tried to pray, but again as always it was no use. All I could feel is despair, despair so sickening that I thought it might drive me mad." (28)

Nat reports further that his despair had resulted not only from "His "God's absence alone," but rather, it had stemmed from Nat's feeling that "God had turned His back on me once and for all, vanished..." (78). It seems that Nat accepts the logic of Gray's assertions, for to some extent delayed response, he meditates, "maybe he "Gray. J. is right... Maybe all was for nothing and all I've done was evil in the sight of God." " Maybe he is right and God is dead and gone, which is why I can no longer reach him" (115). Both these quotes and the abovementioned lines suggest the contemporary Anglo-American death-of-God controversy; for Nat's dilemma results from an opposition between a desired enthusiastic, personal faith, and his all-going suspicion and alienation from God which he experiences.

Thus, Styron's Nat is "a victim whose cries cannot reach Heaven and whose actions have made earth a noisy hell." Leslie Paul describes the modern writers' concern with this aspect of the human condition as follows:

> Not only does Styron's Nat feel abandoned by God, he also experiences a sense of alienation from other people. He is different from white people because he is Black, and he is different from other Blacks in the novel because he is intellectually superior to them. For instance, Nat realizes even as a child that he was intellectually superior to other slaves. (Leslie, 1994)

In spite of the regular prayers, his intense feeling of carrying out a great mission, he is overwhelmed by a steady doubt. Aware as he is of the great gap that exists between him and His God, he says that prayer fulfilled "some great need to stay in touch with Him, making sure that I never stayed so far away, that he would be gearing my voice" (CNT, 78) Unlike Bellow's Henderson,

Nat is faced with a silenced voice rooted in "a sense of the absence of God" (252) Hopeless as he is, Nat also dangles. As he is presaged by perceptions of man's conditions, especially blacks, Nat wonders, "Why do men live at all? Why do men wrassle so with air, with nothing? For the briefest instant ... (Nat) was overcome by a terrible anguish." (325)

The "one" to whom Nat has reference in the above line is Margaret Whitehead whose role in Nat's emotional life is most significant in Styron's novel. It is worth noting here that the role Margaret plays in Nat's life can be compared to that played by Ramona in making return to his human life. For one and instead of considering other matters should not put emphasis on the racist implications of Nat's relation with Margaret. What should be noted here is that the relationship between these two, along with Nat's other infrequent somewhat perverted sexual experiences in the novel, show how man is constrained by his sexual desires; how sexual activity can for the short term relieve man's tensions during his struggle to find meaning and identity in life; and how sexual desire sometimes even supports itself with perversion and violence to make existence difficult, rather than relieve tensions.

His Confessions show a human situation where man dwells in the face of death, despairing and doubtful, plagued by spiritual alienation, moral confusion, and sexual tension. These are existentialist in nature. Existential, because according to the existentialists evil is innate in man and not something imposed from outside. Whereas according to traditional humanism evil was considered to be external to man.

Humanism believed in the perfectibility of man and evil lay in the corrupting influences outside him. Hence, the romantic concept of evil is that

man is a victim of evil forces that are outside. But modern humanism joins hands with existentialism in recognizing and accepting man's potential for evil. During an interview Styron states: "... basically, the unhappiness and the things we al1consider to be evil derive from ourselves ... We who are supposed to be brothers are the authors of the pain and oppression of the world." (West, 232)

IV.6. Nat's Myriads Quests

IV. 6.1. Nat's Quest for Faith

Nat's is not a quest for faith per se; he always has faith in something. Rather, his is a quest for a truly meaningful, redeeming faith, a faith which will make him a free and complete man instead of a slave. Throughout the novel, we see Nat being forced by experience to change or adjust his perception of self, of the world around him, and ultimately of God. The question that he must answer in the end is, Is my faith now such that it explains and justifies my past and gives me hope for the future?

In Styron's earlier books, we have seen how each of the principal figures in the story, after finding himself imprisoned or damned, is forced to consider his actions in time past, and pass judgment on his own soul. As Gunnar Urang has pointed out, time present is Judgment Day for each of Styron's protagonists.

Existentialism also postulates the hope of overcoming evil through conscious exercise of free will. Styron admits that events as well as aspects of man's nature tend to warp or twist free will and then it becomes "a conditional free will" (West, 57).

Styron's aim is to explore the possibilities of achieving love, goodness, and friendship despite the predisposition that man has for evil. His fiction explores

human relationships which involve domination and submission. He admits to Hilary Mills that he considers this "a very important artistic theme - what other people do to each other in the guise of idealism or of passion or of zealotry, whatever" (West, 235).

The final image of man is not dark and despairing but of man who goes through the dark night of the soul to rise phoenix-like to affirm the human condition. It is not the dark cheerless existentialism of the early Sartre that we find here, but the warm compassion of a Camus. Both, Nat Turner and Cass Kinsolving are brought to recognition of their true identity after violation of society's codes. A feeling of guilt is essential to reform. In other novels by Styron, characters like Peyton, Sophie, and Nathan Landau cannot survive the guilt. Guilt is what one tries to persuade in oneself in order to break the monotony of evil and prepare the way for one's own salvation.

IV.6.2. Nat's Quest for Communal Life

Even though Styron does not explore or dramatize the idea of community in any clinical way, he seems to have been interested in the concept of redemptive communion in all of his novels. He appears to believe that man alone is incomplete; he needs to share his consciousness with another human being. In their own limited, pathetic way, for example, Milton and Peyton Loftis want to develop an I-Thou relationship but are incapable of transcending their preconditioned ways of looking at themselves and the world. Neither becomes an authentic human being who is truly aware of his or the world's nature.

Also, one reason that Nat is unable to carry out a truly meaningful rebellion against the whites is that he becomes more isolated and therefore more fanatical as the revolt progresses. In his inauthentic role as enslaver, Nat has no

one he can communicate with. He is estranged from his own self as well as the men in his company.

Nat pass time with Margaret can be considered as the best example of communion in the novel as a whole. This one brief communion seems to be worth more than the total sum of his fanatical rebellion. Again, we can see Styron's interest in redemptive communion in Francesca and Cass's relationship in *Set This House on Fire* and in Margaret and Nat's relationship in *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. Both protagonists tried hard to resist their sexual desires.

Subsequent to this promise of freedom, seems the only chance given to Nat though, Nat's faith in Marse Sam is severely shaken. The one close childhood friendship that Nat forms is abruptly broken when Samuel Turner sells Nat's friend Willis in order to increase capital. Never does Nat feel closer to anyone than he does to Willis. "It was," he says, "as if I had found a brother" (201-202). Working together in the carpenter shop and afterwards reading the Bible and praying they were quickly inseparable companions.

This communion with another person is an effectively religious experience to Percy. It is what gives meaning to life. Failure to achieve this communion "leads to nothingness, an emptiness of mind and soul."

In fact, Nat's whole confession could be considered as a kind of extended repetition. He has looked backward in to time while keeping one eye on his impending death. And because of this repetition, Nat develops a new awareness of self and his relationship to the world. He is able to break down the barriers between himself and Margaret and himself and God and fuse his consciousness with theirs. At the end of the novel, Styron indisputably

wants us to see Nat as no longer an isolated, totally self-conscious man but an authentic human being who has transcended the everyday world and is able to share fully his new awareness and his love.

It is through this community that a person can give meaning to his life. And any failure to achieve this communion will inevitably "lead to nothingness, an emptiness of mind and soul."

In the case of Nat, he was not only able to develop a new awareness of self and his relationship with the world but also to break down the obstacles between himself and Margaret, between himself and god. At the end of the novel, Styron wants the reader to see the new Nat turner, the one who is no longer alienated and estranged, but rather as a totally authentic man, self-conscious. To use the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Styron wants to show us the new Nat, the self-reliant who has surmounted all difficulties and transcended the everyday corrupt and faithless America. Nat feels alienated from both blacks who ignore him and treat him in a very cold manner, the same as from the whites who hate and pity him. He is denied friendship and love by the society that turns its back to him. In this manner, Nat arrives at comprehending the nature of his enforced isolation. Louis D. Rubin, Jr. contends that unless the individual is part of a social community, he can maintain order and stability. In order to combat the loneliness and emptiness of his existence, Cass escapes through two channels: alcohol and music to find comfort and refuge. Unlike Cass Kinsolving, Nat finds companionship and solace in his Bible and in prayer.

IV.6.3. Nat's Quest for Freedom

Nat's quest for freedom in the closed system results in one of the deepest ironies of the novel. It is only natural that he should search his own background and his own capabilities to see if there is anything which can be used both to plan his course of action and to justify it.

Also, it should be remembered that his father ran away before Nat's birth, and that his mother dies while he is still a young boy. After he leaves Turner's Mill, Nat remains isolated from others. Certainly, the Reverend Eppes is no bosom companion of Nat's, though they eat, sleep, and frequently work side by side. Likewise, Nat obviously cannot talk seriously with the illiterate Moore or with his subsequent owner, Joseph Travis, nor, unfortunately, can he really converse with his fellow worker and only adult friend, Hark. Even when they are alone together in the woods, Hark generally hunts or fishes while Nat reads the Bible. "In certain ways," Nat says of Hark, "he was like a splendid dog, a young, beautiful, heed less, spirited dog who had, nonetheless, to be trained to behave with dignity" (57). Needless to say, Nat cannot fully unburden his troubled soul to a man whose nature "could not long sustain a somber mood" (41).

Louis D. Rubin, Jr. believes that unless we recognize Nat's isolation from both the white and black communities, we can never understand why he becomes an extremist or why he revolts. Order and stability are maintained, says Rubin, only if the individual is part of a social community. (Rubin, 1967)

But as we have seen, Nat is denied love and friendship by his society. The whites do not only hate him, but also pity him or scorn him. The blacks on the

other hand, either treat him with an exaggerated admiration or ignore him with disrespect. He is then, not belonging to any community. Rubin also points out that Styron shows Nat as cut off from both the white and black communities through the use of multiple narrative voices. Rubin says:

> In the very contrast between the complex, subtle diction of Nat's thoughts, and the verbally crude language he must use to express himself aloud, there evolves a tension which grows more and more acute as the narrative develops and as Nat increasingly comes to comprehend the nature of his enforced isolation. The gulf between Nat's private self and h is role in time and place builds up toward a point at which language its e lf will no longer suffice to provide order. There then must be the explosion of action, whereby language and deed are unified through violence-and the tragedy is accomplished. (9)

Lacking the usual friendships of a boy and, later on, a man, Nat finds comfort and companionship in his Bible and in prayer. Altogether, the Old Testament and its God become for Nat what drink and music were for Cass Kinsolving-a way to combat the loneliness and the emptiness of his existence. Constant drink causes Cass to become alcoholic; and a too obsessive study of the Old Testament causes Nat to become a religious fanatic.

IV.6.4. Nat's Quest for Redemption

Loneliness, religion, sexual desire, hatred of whites, and a hunger for freedom - all of these play a part in Nat's complex attitude toward not only the whites but even the blacks. This has also influenced his relationship with Margaret Whitehead whom he has a special somewhat different union. Unless we understand Margaret's role in Nat's quest for redemption, it seems somehow impossible to understand either Nat's own act of violence during the insurrection or his consequent thoughts in jail. On the other hand, Nat hates Margaret simply because she is white.

More importantly, however, Nat hates her because she has sympathy for him. Styron makes much of this seeming contradiction throughout the novel. Over and over again, we see that Nat cannot tolerate sympathy, pity, or condescension from a white person. But this feeling is not really paradoxical. When a white person in the story pities Nat or another black, it seems obvious that they do so from a decided position of superiority. It is not the concern of one fellow human being for another; it is more like the concern of a human being for an injured animal.

Nat, of course, is a man with a great deal of pride, and he wants to be treated accordingly. And though, he obviously does not like to be abused or treated with indifference, he can at least combat these attitudes with manly endurance or contempt. Either way, he can act with pride. But by being pitied, Nat can only burn inside, believing that the person who pities him refuses to see him as a man with pride, as a man capable of standing in the face of losing cause with courage and dignity. As Marc L. Ratner indicates, Nat is in many respects like Milton's Samson, who also never loses his faith in God. Each "seeks redemption, though he has no idea from where it will come."

Consequently, when Gray mistakenly assumes that Nat was told by God or his conscience to confess his sins, Nat quickly tells him, "'Not confess your sins, sir ...He said confess. Just that. Confess. That is important to relate. There was no your sins at all" (15). Cass remarks at some point that "a man cannot live without a focus," he adds that "Without some kind of faith, if you want to call it that. I didn't have any more faith than a tomcat. Nothing. Nothing! ... I was blind from booze two thirds of the time. Stone-blind in this condition I created for myself, in this sweaty hot and hopeless attempt to get out of life, be

shut of it, find some kind of woolly and comforting darkness I could live without thought for myself or my children or anyone e else." (CNT, 29)

Styron examined what Cass needed to do in order to accomplish order, integrity, and tranquillity trying to show how Cass lived in hell on earth without spiritual conviction and moral responsibility. Although the protagonist is southerner and the events took place in Italy, they are rooted to the southern past the south for Styron represents not only a physical context but also a moral one.

In *Set this House on Fire,* Styron continues to focus on the horrors of entrapment and psychological disorder, but in new key and new surroundings. Styron locates much of the action of this novel in Europe. It should be noted that he takes his inspiration from contemporary European fiction and existentialist thought.

Being an existentialist protagonist, Cass Kinsolving is presented by Styron, as a "man of despair". However, through the course of the event, one can talk about a newly born protagonist who triumphs over his personal afflictions, defeats a deadly enemy, and at the end finds a new life. Cass is considered the first of Styron's protagonist to achieve. His protagonist chooses 'being' over 'nothingness'.

As the very name implies, Kinsolving is trying to recover what his country America has lost. He tries to resolve the question of his association with others and their common relation to god. His battle with Flagg "the ugly American" who represents the corruption of the south alienation and materialism releases him from his despair. Filled with hope, *Set This House on Fire*, epitomizes, the clash between the old and new South.

Cass returns to the South, but not home, to a new place, a faces, and new beginning. Cass takes his family to a remote place in South Carolina and settled there. *Set This House on Fire* affirms the power of a protagonist to lift the curse, get rid of the devil and master himself. If he succeeds in accomplishing this, it will be a projection of an optimistic prediction for the future of southern society. Styron traces a similar enlightenment in his protagonist. Nat turner, who is almost dehumanized to insanity, masters himself and forgives his oppressors moving from an absolute hatred to a final vision of union and love.

Isolated in the terrifying conviction that no order or responsibility combines together the human community, Nat responds to this vision of nothingness by committing himself desperately to annihilation. Nat does not give up his freedom. He emerges from isolation victorious.

Cass's determination to help the degraded people is a sign of his humanism. In defending them, he is asserting himself, trying as Henderson, to purify himself from his past and mainly his sins. The process is described as a kind of progression towards self-awakening. This is in itself is a confirmation by Styron of the resiliency of the oppressed spirit and his hope for the reconciliation of peoples whose separation has devastated southern history.

Alienation is the result of loss of identity. In modern fiction the evicted personality's search for identity is a common place theme. Man fails to perceive the very purpose behind life and the relevance of his existence in a hostile world.

It is worth noting that *Set This House on Fire* witnessed the birth of a new protagonist; the new Cass becomes agonizingly conscious of his actions and

particularly of his shortcoming. In novel after novel, Styron has explored the nature of evil in terms of existential humanism. Existential, because according to the existentialists evil is innate in man and not something imposed from outside. Whereas, according to traditional humanism evil was considered to be external to man. In an interview Styron stated: "... basically, the unhappiness and the things we all consider to be evil derive from ourselves ... We who are supposed to be brothers are the authors of the pain and oppression of the world." (West, 232)

Styron's aim is to explore the possibilities of achieving love, goodness and friendship despite the propensity that man has for evil. His fiction explores human relationships which involve domination and submission. We see the pattern of domination and submission everywhere - within the family, between individuals like Mason Flag and Cass Kinsolving in *Set This House on Fire,* in the institution of slavery in *The Confessions of Nat Turner.*

Styron explores these dark areas of the human psyche in order to see the possibilities for man. He reaches the conclusion that man's final image is not dark and despairing as it was generally assumed, but that of image of man who goes through the dark night of the soul to emerge in the image of phoenix-like to confirm the human condition. It is not the dark cheerless existentialism of the early Sartre that we find here, but the warm compassion of a Camus. Man discovers himself not by himself alone but when he reaches out to another, breaking the barrier of self. From his very first novel to *Sophie's Choice* he presents a growth from the landscape of despair to the affirmation of the spirit.

Mason Flagg is an interesting character with an inclination towards evil. Ultimately, his evil qualities dominate and he is destroyed. In an evil world,

man has to confront it directly in order to overcome it. Cass Kinsolving has to kill in order to experience regeneration. Similarly, Nat Turner has to commit murder before he has a chance to experience salvation. Both, Nat Turner and Cass Kinsolving are brought to a realization of their true identity after violation of society's codes.

In such a way, Styron's fiction offers no easy solutions. His fiction portrays his belief that "man is the only creature capable of inflicting pain." The measure of one's growth as a person is the sincerity with which one prevents the infliction of pain. "I don't think you can really define what evil is.... the word 'misunderstanding' is at the centre of all human relationships which go awry..." I would say anything that aggressively tends to hurt someone else is an evil act (West, 60).

William Styron belongs to the post-war era of American novelists. In novel after novel, Styron sets out to explore the predicament of man in a world marked with anguish and suffering. The fiction of the period has concerned itself with the deepest private suffering, the deepest private agonies of men and women. In his line of thought, David L. Stevenson observes,

> In company with such contemporary writers as Norman Mailer, Herbert Gold, Saul Bellow, George P. Elliott and J.D. Salinger, he has given us the moral bewilderment and the unfocussed anxiety haunting some of the most serious minds of the World War II generation. And he has pushed his explorations of the nature and meaning of human value, in an existential world, to the point where the essential act of staying alive is itself at stake, is the central question of his novels. (265).

Styron considers his fiction as a bridge between two generations of writers like Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Faulkner on the one hand and the post-war writers like David Barthelme, Philip Roth, and Kurt Vonnegut on the other.

The chief difference he sees is that the earlier group of writers wrote for a world which resembled a stable and apparently purposeful world. Contrary to the earlier group, Styron and his contemporaries wrote for an audience which had experienced the loss of all certainties, haunted by the atom bomb and the 'death-of-God philosophies'. He has faith in literature as a way to knowledge and order, and in humanism as a way to salvation. Like most writers of his generation, especially writers like Flannery O'Connor and John Updike, he feels that America is suffering from a disease of the spirit which as he observes "cries out for a religious interpretation, an interpretation in letters of finitude, anxiety, sin, guilt and despair, grace, repentance, faith, regeneration and eschatological interpretation" (Urang, 7).

This struggle to assert values like love, joy and hope despite the violent chaos of the modern world is at the centre of Styron's fiction. Describing the struggle in Styron's fiction, Frederick J.Hoffman says, "lack of belief carries great cracks in the human landscape: and man looks, desperate and afraid, across them at each other. Most of what they do has the character of trying to heal the wound, close the gap, but by means of ordinary secular devices." (145) More often than not, alcohol is used by his characters to avoid the abyss of nothingness yawning at their feet. His characters are thrown upon their own resources to make meaning out of existence.

Styron's work has been analysed in various ways. Lewis A Lawson in Adversity and Grace: Studies in Recent American Fiction (1960) and Robert Detweiler, in *Four Spiritual Crises in Mid-Century American Fiction* (1964) approach his fiction as spiritual explorations. They see the quest for redemption in religious terms, though Styron insists that for him redemption is always

humanistic, rather than religious. There is growth from despair to affirmation and Styron has shown himself as a worthy artist in undertaking this stupendous task. His novels stand as immortal testimony to the mortal condition of the unaccommodated man.

IV.6.5. Nat's Quest for Value

In his novels, Styron reveals a vision of man separated from his familiar values and unable to return to them. To live or to survive demands man's adjustment both to a world without a continuing order and to a world not necessarily concerned with his welfare. Their central characters are subject to disintegrating forces over which they appear to have little control. But within this victimization are perception of and rebellion against.

Two important recent studies explore the nature of man—in terms of how he understands himself and in terms of his relationship to family, community and universe—in this twentieth century climate of opinion Marcus Klein, in *After Alienation*, explores "accommodation" as a distinctive form of adaptation or orientation, where the hero makes a "tricky" and recurring adjustment to his world. Implicit in both studies is the view of contemporary man living under the peculiar intellectual conditions of his time and attempting some form of survival in a world not sympathetic to intellectual and moral security.

Through his fictional characters, William Styron is also contemporary observers of the American situation of his time. His works could be an answer to the question, "how does one live in a world lacking intellectual and moral security?" To a large extent there is a parallel between the twentieth century's climate of opinion and his works.

IV.7. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show that Styron has dealt with variations and progressions on the themes of alienation and redemption. In each of the two novels discussed above, Styron depicts the protagonists in a metaphysical journey toward light. In *Set this House on Fire,* and *The Confessions of Nat Turner,* Styron has explored these themes to the fullest extent possible. Throughout the analysis of the two novels, an attempt has been made to follow descriptively characters who struggle to maintain their values and aspirations in a world of mere surface, order, and harmony.

In each novel, the protagonist has attempted to overcome his alienation through his redemptive features. Driven by the conviction that man has to come face to face with the absurdity of the world, the protagonists were forced to go through countless quests in order to be able to create meaning and value where there seems to be none. The individual in the two narratives come to realize that he cannot live by himself and that the sense of communal life is of crucial importance for both continuity and survival. He must also learn that there is no prescribed external moral code by which man is to measure his actions and that without love, integrity, and communication, man can never lead a complete and meaningful existence. It is rather confirmed through the two protagonists that even though life is controlled and determined by circumstances beyond his control, the individual transcendence, faith and strength opens for him new avenues and possibilities to be able to surmount these forces and circumstances and forge for himself meaningful existence.

Because the protagonists are born into a chaotic and absurd universe, they have to suffer either physically or mentally. Suffering seems the only price the

character has to pay in order to make the world a better place for him and for his fellowmen. It is only through sacrifice and suffering that this individual can affirm his nobility as a human being.

The story of Nat Turner's revolution is told in the first person by the protagonist, Nat Turner, whom Styron characterizes as a condemned, thoughtful, anti-heroic black slave who is peculiarly gifted with the neuroses and doubts of a post-Christian, twentieth-century white man. Styron's Nat Turner is a man sentenced to death for his role in the abortive attempt to massacre masses of whites in Southampton, Virginia and free Blacks from slavery. His entire story of the rebellion is told from his jail cell through a series of flashbacks.

Styron a characteristically modern, typically white and uniquely Southern author contemplates from Turner's point of view, stressing issues implying that Nat Turner is a prototype of man in the middle of a human situation that is characterized by doubt, struggle, sexual tension, violence and alienation from God. Actually, Styron's Nat is a religious fanatic and it is his Christian fanaticism, not his Blackness, that is the cause of his problems.

Other critics point out that Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner,* "is in no sense 'historical' fiction of the kind we are familiar with..." that the novel "is not centrally about negro slavery at all," and that "there is nothing in Turner's Negroness that accounts for his religious fanaticism..." (Gilman, 1968).

In *The Confessions of Nat Turner,* William Styron's defines modern man's attitude toward himself and toward his cosmic status. Similar to many other writers of this generation, Styron presents a human situation showing that man,

troubled by beliefs stemming from a tradition of Christian morality, exists in a 'God-is-dead' world where the realities are suffering, sexual tensions, violence, and spiritual alienation. It is an attitude of despair and anguish. Man feels spiritually abandoned and unable to communicate with the cosmic forces (his idea of God) he tries to relate to.

The novel's main impulse has to do with man's alienation and doubt in a post-Christian era where the only certainty is death. Death is an impending inevitability for Nat Turner, since Styron's story begins after the insurrection and the protagonist is already in prison awaiting his turn at the gallows. Even at the beginning of the novel, Nat states that he had been experiencing "a hopeless and demoralizing terror as each day passed and I slept and ate and breathed, still unclaimed by death" (9). He knows that he is going to die, for he states to Gray, "yes, I know I'm going to be hung" (29) he is not afraid of death as he is with his inability to enter into some kind of harmonious relationship with God. He states, "I began to fear the coming of my own death... And somehow this sudden fear of death... had less to do with death itself, with the fact that I must soon die, than with my inability to pray or make any kind of contact with God" (79).

His sense of alienation becomes more accentuated when he was waiting in his jail, knowing he will soon die, he feels alone, spiritually alienated from God. After waiting for five days in his jail he recognized the bridge separating him from his God. The feeling of "apartness from God" (78) haunts him daily, and "His God's absence was like a profound and awful silence" in Nat's brain. (78)

Chapter Five

From Alienation to Resistance

V.1. Introduction

The present thesis deals with the narratives of three post war II American novelists covered mainly in three chapters foregrounded by a theoretical chapter. The fifth chapter, then, explores comparatively the similarities and differences found during the course of the textual analysis that characterizes each text of the corpora. This study examines how each of the six protagonists has experienced alienation in its forms and dimensions, and more importantly how each has managed to overcome his type of alienation, be it from self, society, nature, or the spiritual world. In their attempt to overcome their alienation the protagonists in the six narratives have employed different modes of resistance and coping mechanisms which were helping means in their triumph over the cruel, hostile environment. Based on thorough readings one has arrived at concluding that even though the circumstances for the six protagonists were not the same and despite the fact they employed different modes of resistance, they managed to paint a totally different picture as opposed to the one painted before. This new picture results from the different modes which range from transcendence, to responsibility, to resilience, to intimacy, and later to redemption. By employing these modes, the protagonists were able to maintain some forms of humanism, dignity, affirmation, and self-fulfilment.

V.2. Resistance in Bellow's Novels

V.2.1.Transcendence as a Mode of Resistance

Being influenced by the American transcendentalists mainly Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, the three authors have taken of transcendence as a mode of resistance, each in his own way.

Bellow's transcendental beliefs take of nature as a refuge-a companion to escape from big cities to seek comfort and solace in primitive Africa as exemplified in the case of Eugene Henderson or Moses Herzog return to the countryside.

For Scott the "Central moments" in the experience of a Bellow character are those in which he, "transcending the immediate pressures of his environment and the limiting conditions of the social matrix, asks himself some fundamental questions about the nature of his own humanity" (105). Dutton locates Bellow in the humanist tradition for continuing to pay tribute to the nature of man. For Harper, Bellow's protagonists are initiated into "a larger transcendental conception of humanity" which transcends the limited and limiting dimension of "pure reason" (20) For Scott holds the view that Bellow's protagonists are burdened by "the pressure of concrete circumstance" and the "bitter taste" of "inauthenticity" the novels still move towards "disburdenment" and reconciliation.

Bellow's critics have noted in his work both a mocking criticism of the deterioration of moral and spiritual values of modern society caused mainly by its sightless pursuit of materialism, and at the same time, an element of approval of life and a clear expression of hope for mankind. Sheridan Baker thinks that the most distinctive feature of Bellow's work is his eagerness to find answers for man living in a faithless age. Baker states "The measure of Bellow's work is not simply that he dramatizes the dilemma of a faithless age that needs a faith, and not that he makes art out of it-though he does both exceedingly well....but that, more than any other modern novelist, I believe, he is trying to work out some answer." (Baker, 119)

Bellow himself, more than once, has put emphasis on that all is not dead yet; and that man has the capacity to find answers to his problems, to renovate and live a happy life. In fact, Bellow has complained that twentieth-century novelists have not done their duty in merely dwelling upon the forces against an individual of this era. They should have strongly pointed out man's capacity to face and fight these forces successfully. Novelists, he writes, "must value human existence or be unfaithful to their calling." (114) Free choice is one of the main concerns of Bellow's books.

This is evident as he mentions it more than once in his interviews. He says,

> I seem to have asked in my books, how can one resist the controls of this vast society without turning into a nihilist, avoiding the absurdity of empty rebellion? I have asked, are there other, more good-natured forms of resistance and free choice? And I suppose that, like most Americans, I have involuntarily favoured the more comforting or meleoristic side of the question. (76)

In a similar context he adds,

> I've tried to suggest this in my books that there may be truths on the side of life. I am quite prepared to admit that being habitual liars and self-deluders, we have good cause to fear the truth, but I' m not at all ready to stop hoping. There may be some truths which are, after all, our friends in the universe." (Harper, 48)

It is this belief in the dignity of human life that one finds throughout in Bellow's works. Bellow establishes a fashion in his novels that breaks away from emphasis upon the absurd. He rather concentrates on individual's ability to make a useful, productive life out of an often incomprehensible yet tolerable world. It is only by relying on a balance between man's participation in the world and man's perceptive ability, which man can maintain and preserve his dignity.

The protagonist in *Henderson Rain King* is portrayed as a vital and active hero – a very important element in the process of understanding Bellow's concern with modern man's alienation. The present thesis also shows Bellow's faith in man's capacity to solve his dilemma into which the so called "civilization" with its emphasis on consumerism, its reliance on science, and its materialism has put him. Bellow's protagonist is determined to make a conscious commitment with society and nature that surround him. This conscious commitment, according to Bellow will give life a meaning and purpose to its protagonist.

Dahfu has overcome fear of these principles, not by hiding from them, as does Henderson, but by embracing them in the lioness. By imitating the lioness; he has absorbed them into himself. (HRK, 132) As a result, he descends into the darkness with Dahfu. But in confronting the lioness, he is not learning the qualities that Dahfu intends him to learn; instead he is facing a new vision of reality. This episode constitutes the fullest vision for Henderson, when he comes face to face with the things he has always evaded. In essence, then, *Henderson the Rain King* follows the pattern of the earlier novels-an internal quest whose answer revolves round the protagonist's relationship with an alter-ego. Leaving the protagonist purified, a new man, able to go back into the world. It seems that each of these novels illustrates the same strongly philosophical or moralistic pattern. Man, ultimately isolated from society and sick by its burdens, must seek within the means of his recovery.

V.2.2. Responsibility as a Mode of Resistance

Responsibility, whether it is social or moral can be considered as a mode of resistance. Bellow's profound engagement with such writers as Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Hobbes, and Sartre is reflected in Pynchon's two novels. Both of them portray the failure of the romantic quest and affirm the necessity for social responsibility.

They also represent the moral exhaustion of a generation of young men and the moral impoverishment of derived humanism. As such, they are preoccupied with absurdity, death, watchful loneliness and existential anxiety, which, in order to be fought, necessitates more than social responsibility, a moral one.

Compared with the other novelist of his period, Bellow's works are distinguished by his humanistic approaches for character and clear-sighted analysis of contemporary society. It is remarked that in his fiction there is a clear cut and rejection of the prevailing attitude of modernism. Without any doubt, Bellow's anti-heroes are overwhelmed by all of the well-known alienating forces of the modern world, but at the end, they all manage to maintain a life-affirming dignity, freedom and goodness. Broadly speaking, self-actualization and self-realization are accomplished in spite of all the barriers and the deterministic forces. Bellow's fiction seems to epitomize and represent a courageous struggle to gain a grip in this uncomfortable world. Bellow have the same opinion like the two other authors that modern man stands "open to all anxieties" and that "the decline of everything is our daily bread," but he also believes that man's "purer, subtler, higher activities have not succumbed to fury or nonsense." (Porter, 155-65) The latter justifies

Porter's views of Bellow as a "neo-transcendentalist,"[17] a writer reacting against the existentialism of his age.

His protagonists always try hard to find meaning and purposes of life. The two novels *Henderson the Rain King* and *Herzog* represent Bellow's affirmative belief in essential humanistic values. He always complains that other novelists always tried to adopt the early modern "waste land view" (Bellow's term) of man in order to be considered intellectually respectable. But, Bellow feels that the sense of duty of such writers should be to look for the truth about human nature, not to try to apply inherited historical estimates of man. That is why; Bellow is marked by most critics as an affirmative writer. May be humans are disappointed in their existence, but Bellow feels that man has a right to demand something better than only disappointment. Bellow expresses that man does not need to call for the destruction of the world in the hope of a phoenix. At the end of his existentialist novels, one can discern signs of hope in the face of his protagonists which oppose the traditional code of existentialism. At the inside of existential alienation, his protagonists never lose heart or are beaten totally; rather, they remain optimistic till the end. His novels end not in fragments of dissatisfaction, but with a redemptive vision of humanity. And thus, Bellow is different in his approach towards existentialism compared to other traditional existentialist writers.

[17]Neo-Transcendentalism was a philosophical movement on Earth, founded by Liam Dieghan in the late 21st or early 22nd century. Arising in the aftermath of World War II, Neo-Transcendentalism advocated a return to a simpler lifestyle, with minimal technology and an emphasis on nature. (https://memory-alpha.fandom.com)

CHAPTER FIVE: FROM ALIENATION TO RESISTANCE

The two analyzed novels contain certain autobiographical features and each of them reflects some period of the author's life. This is evidenced in Bellow's representation of similar details that happened to him. Herzog bears those features, for a small part of the plot is set in Chicago and the main character has Russian relatives. His strong disillusionment with his marriages is obviously expressed. Both Eugene Henderson and Moses Herzog went through a complicated divorce. By the time *Henderson the Rain King* was released in 1959, Bellow had undergone two divorces. The story of Moses Herzog is to a certain extent auto biographical as is built upon Bellow's personal experience with his ex-wife and her lover.

Alienation is the main problem of Bellow's protagonists. They are all struggling to get along with their surroundings which appear not only ugly, but, more importantly, meaningless. They feel entirely cut off from them. Seeking freedom and happiness away from them, they only find loneliness, restlessness, and frustration. Eventually, they come to realize that real freedom is not in escape from their surroundings but in a commitment to them. To find this commitment they must adjust their approach to the world they dwell in; even if they may find it harsh and ugly, they have to accept it as it is and live in it.

Through his protagonists' journey, Bellow intends to show that there are grounds for comfort rather than despair over existence. His characters are not afraid of the helplessness to control their lives and hence the meaninglessness of existence. He wants to make it obvious that through his protagonists' efforts, ways of coming to terms with existence, and that it is through accepting the ups and downs in life that they are able to find approaches to life. (Lehan, 1959) This is particularly exemplified towards the end of Henderson's trip to Africa,

where he comes out with this realization that the only way to relate to nature and to mankind is through love. He says, "I've gotten to that age where I need human voices and intelligence. That's all that's left. Kindness and love. (HRK, 316)

But, despite his shame from this last act, or perhaps because of it, he had learnt a very precious lesson from this tribe, and mainly from the queen Willatale -that life could be happy and meaningful, and that he could make it so as well. This was the message contained in the words that Willatale spoke to him: "Grun-tu-molani" (99). Besides, his experience with the Arnewi tribe also gave Henderson a hope that life could be made happy. It was with the Wariri, however, the second and last tribe he went to, that he underwent a kind of conscious; training that in the end led him to participate in the phenomena and thus discovers a meaning in existence. From his experience with the two tribes, he starts what has been called a rebirth of Henderson. Detweiler contends that, "The novel focuses consistently and from many angles upon the single concept of rebirth, and that concept in turn provides the vehicle for the redemption theme" (Detweiler, 408). Although, as it is mentioned in the opening chapters of the two novels, (which gives the reader no hope for the characters' victory over their miserable conditions), both Bellow's protagonists are unable to accomplish anything that significantly restructures their world, they do manage to save themselves by coming to an accommodation with the world as it is. This is shown in the last chapters of the two novels – that there are signs of a happy ending. Both his protagonists rise above their malaise by discovering within themselves an essential force for life.

Evidence can be found in the last passages of the novel. In the last pages of *Henderson the Rain King*, we see Henderson flying back to America. He is trying, through uninterrupted reflection, to understand in greater depth, clarity and detail, what he has learnt about life and death. A remarkable change in his attitude towards his surroundings is already noticeable. He has become extremely confident but remains at the same time extremely modest, and his concern transcends his own self. He had gone through a hard struggle to find his true self, and now he wishes that others may not be required to go through it: "What I'd like to know is why this has to be fought by everybody, for there is nothing that is struggled against so hard as coming-to" (HRK, 328).

R. Detweiler also stresses this point when he says that "one discovers in the novel a fundamental animal imagery that reveals the hero's gradual transformation from a lower into a higher creature, a kind of analogical chain-of being progression from a pig-like to a lion-like nature. (229)

Both of Henderson and Herzog continuously struggle to achieve dignity and to impose a moral dimension upon life. His protagonists are frequently at odds with the society they inhabit, searching for the freedom of self. But it is as much the self as the world that must undergo a proper adaptation. As it is mostly the case, his novels have an unsolvable moral and psychological dimension which owes a good deal to Dostoevsky and similar European novelists. His urban landscape is not simply anonymous, but a landscape of the spirit which must be realised as reality and turned into a condition for growth and self-renewal. There is a natural resistance in his novels, particularly in *Herzog,* especially to those who would stress on the uninviting absurdity of

reality, who say that man is necessarily alienated, who hold the view that the age of the moralised and personal self is finished.

It is in conducting his disagreement with such views that Bellow gets much of his energy as a writer. His standpoint is not, as many critics have suggested, one simply of adaptation to the system, but one that profusely seeks to restore a true sense of fullness of self-hood that demands that the world be made for men. The central point in all his novels resides in his clear conviction that the essential task is to discover the basis of individuality and brotherhood in a world of singularly complex reality. In a universe extremely complicated philosophically and socially, a universe whereas Henderson puts it world, no man has a place any longer, most of his heroes bear the burden of working out, in the most difficult circumstances a satisfactory relationship to other man and to the moral demands of the self. Bellow has practically channelled his intelligence towards questions pertaining to the moral possibilities of contemporary life.

The problematic theme to which Bellow has been engagingly drawn is that of trying to reconcile desirable quality with the fact of self-consciousness: can modern man attain "dignity", can he live a good life?

It is first and foremost a method of presenting the oppressive power of the human predicament in order to measure his protagonist's ability to endure the tormenting heaviness of his own life. His novels often begin with a sparkling conception, the idea of the ambiguous victim and mainly his protagonists' claim of having solved a problem. Henderson tells the reader at the outset that "living proof of something of the highest importance has been presented to me." And Moses Herzog feels "confident, cheerful, clairvoyant, and strong."

Bellow's novels habitually end with Bellow struggling to keep his protagonist's promise.

In novel after novel, Bellow reveals the journey of his protagonist from within to without, from one's self to society, from guilt to freedom, from idea to reality. Along this entire journey or quest, Bellow emphasizes the attractiveness and desirable quality and devotion of experience. It's only when the victims learn the strategies for survival and are prepared to undertake adventures of spirit that they can hope to live authentically in this unreasonable world. In fact, the theme of salvation is almost wholly related to the recovery of the spirit in the midst of life's unpleasantness, pain and tragedy. If we refer to the two novels in terms of binaries, one can notice that both Henderson's and Herzog's conditions now are the reverse of what it were before. They have moved from doubt to faith, from self-consciousness towards a concern for others, from rejection of life to acceptance of it.

It is rather the tension Bellow manages to create between the actual world and the confidence he puts in man, which distinguishes him from many other contemporary American novelists. In his fiction, Bellow does not reject the violent chaotic, corrupt, and dangerous world he sees out there. Rather, he plants his characters firmly in it. His novels are devoid of any description of the situation he creates as being totally helpless, absurd, and leading to absolute destruction. For Bellow, Sarcasm and nihilism are most rejected subjects. To Bellow, human reason is of paramount importance, for it enables man to understand. Therefore, in Bellow's novels, the individual is seen in disagreement with society and with himself. The latter is confirmed in Bellow's maintain to the humanist tradition. Indeed, he is conscious of the

chaos of the world and of the random quality of civilized society. But he sees no other choice for man except to go on living among those unwelcome and unpleasant conditions. He sees escape or refusal as impossible or impractical.

In his comments upon Bellow's eagerness to suggest ways of healing and alternatives to alienation, D. W. Markos writes: "In all of his novels, Bellow has imagined, with increasing fullness, conditions and images that are alternatives to what he has called 'the wasteland outlook. In *Henderson the Rain King*, the option is most powerfully imagined, and we can see both the earlier modernist version of man's alienation and the provisional offering of a new attitude toward the world and man's conception of himself. (Qdt, in *The Writer as a Moralist*, 1964)

Even though Bellow's protagonists are portrayed particularly in the opening passages of his novels as unsuccessful in being self-reliant, self-made men in a consumerist society, they are not blind followers of mass systems. They have vigorous reserves of hope and a capacity for joy that reflects the way of thinking of their creator: "either we want life to continue or we do not. If we don't want to continue, why write books? The wish for death is powerful and silent. It respects actions; it has no need of words" (The Writer, 62)

Bellow thus depicts man as lonely, a stranger in his society, searching for a way to live in the modern world. Alienated from their inmost selves, his protagonists do their maximum, consciously or unconsciously, to end this alienation, to make whole the fragmented image of man by uniting both the functional and metaphysical aspects.

V.2.3. Henderson's Progress from Be-er to Becoming

Henderson must first rid himself of his obsessive "Becoming" self: a self that, like the chaos of America, cannot be comprehended, instructed, or controlled and, therefore, finds no easiness. This being expressed in different way, Eugene Henderson leaves America because he cannot have power over his 'Becoming' self there. In Africa, he hopes to find the role or the religion that will make him a Be-er who, in Henderson's mind, is the true form of a protagonist. To "Be" is to conquer, to grow up, to burst the spirit's sleep, and to stop "becoming." In the same line of thought, in her book, *Saul Bellow and History* (1984), Judie Newman writes that "Henderson is established as a serious quester after real values, victim of a representative American malaise, setting out to bring back a healing boon to society" (74–5).

Bellow's response to existence is hopeful and affirmative: "[E]ither we want life to continue or we do not." But if we do, "we are liable to be asked how. In what form shall life be justified? That is the essence of the moral question." This question is predominantly appropriate to the modern concept of the Self, which so often emphasises man's impoverished spirituality, his impotence and despair, while Bellow would have a preference to see man "in the image of God, man a little lower than the angels," to stress his dignity and nobility. He agrees that, "undeniably the human being is not what he commonly thought a century ago." (Bellow, 1964)

His characters, seldom overtly Jewish, scarcely seem aware of Jewish law, and search for "axial lines," for answers to their ontological questions. Questions that urge the character for an answer "[h]ow should a good man live; what ought he to do?" "Man has a nature, but what is it? They explore a

variety of available alternatives: Materialism for Henderson and existentialism for Herzog and Madeline. Their dissatisfaction with these “truths” offered by the “real” world leads them to a tentative exploration of inner values.

As this study has attempted to indicate, Bellow’s characters measure their shortcomings by an identical code. Accordingly, man is depicted by Bellow as lonely, a stranger and wanderer in his society, searching for a way to live in the modern world. Alienated from their inmost selves, the protagonists make every effort, consciously or unconsciously, to end their alienation, to make whole the fragmented image of man by uniting the functional and metaphysical aspects. In order to do so, “they investigate the consequences of possessing a conscience, and perhaps even a soul [t]errible handicap, a soul”. (33)

For Scott though Bellow’s protagonists are burdened by “the pressure of concrete circumstance” and the “bitter taste” of inauthenticity. The novels still move towards “disburdenment” and reconciliation. He regards Bellow as being critical of such existential notions as indictment, angst, and nothingness.

Henderson evolves as a chastened and reborn hero. He confronts the concrete images of the dark forces, which help him to master the points of 'beyond'. Herzog’s self-realisation transforms him into the array of a resurrected seer. After witnessing the scene of tenderness and love, Herzog appreciates the conversion of Gersbach into an embodiment of an affectionate comedian. Almost all Bellow protagonists testify the pragmatic approach to life and above all trust in man.

Bellow does not exclude from his fiction the violent chaotic, corrupt, and dangerous world where his protagonists live. Rather he plants them firmly in it. But he does not describe the situation as totally helpless and absurd, nor does

he give us an interpretation of history as ineluctably leading to absolute destruction. To Bellow, human reason is of paramount importance, for it enables man to understand. In spite of the fact that in Bellow's novels, the individual is seen in conflict with society and with himself, Bellow remains well within the humanist tradition.

His heroes are frequently at odds with the society they inhabit, searching for the freedom of self. This being so, his novels have an impenetrable moral and psychological dimension. There is an explicit resistance in his novels, in particular in *Herzog*, to those who would instruct people in the uninviting absurdity of reality, who say that man is necessarily alienated, who tell us that the age of the moralised and personal self is finished. It is a state which enables Bellow to keep faith in the human being and in the possibility of his union with others.

V.2.4. Moral Resilience as a Mode of Resistance

While no claims are made to an exclusive Jewish quality in Herzog's moral and ultimately religious stamina-other philosophies and religions with which Bellow is familiar, such as Christianity, without a doubt have precepts in common with Judaism. Hence, Herzog's moral resilience cannot be understood outside in its Jewish context. For Herzog in order to overcome his moral distress, he has to be resilient to the forces that cause him such distress.

But the novel challenges both the condemnation of the individual and pessimistic attitudes with the thrust of a positive, life-affirming morality expressed through its protagonist. Both Moses Herzog and Eugene Henderson developed certain resilient methods in standing against their distress. As john

Clayton puts it that nearly all of Bellow's fiction asks one question: Can Man be saved?

In the world of Distraction, the world in which the ego, the social self-moves, the answer is NO. But there is always another world in a Bellow novel: it is a world of love, of search for the light of God and the will Of God, a world in which the person is no fool, or is a holy fool, in which the soul is worthy of salvation (Clayton,1971).

Bellow's protagonists finally reach the conviction through their experience that withdrawal from the world is not the answer and that some kind of involvement as a resilient step is required from the part of the individual in an attempt to understand his surroundings. A love for company and community can be included under the umbrella of resiliency which requires that man has to abandon the idea of retreating from community and more importantly to stop despising himself as inferior through assuming the role of victim.

V.3. Resistance in Pynchon's Novels

V.3.1. Oedipa's Resistance to her Hindrances

All along her journey of self-discovery, Oedipa has been stuck by many hindrances that turn her mission an impossible one. Oedipa must encounter entropy to make sense of all the clues she discovers. Hitherto, those clues both contribute information that aids her and complicate any resolution with their multiplicity" (Newman, 78). During her quest, Oedipa does exactly what Maxwell's Demon does. (ibid, p.84) Like the demon, Oedipa "collects data on each and every one" (Pynchon, 72) and "connects the world of thermodynamics to the world of information flow" (Pynchon, 73). As Newman

describes it “the Demon does what Oedipa must learn to do: consciously resist entropy by sense-making to keep the world bouncing” (Newman, 84).

As Oedipa is drawn in by the mystery of the Tristero System, her quest starts. She drifts along, being directed, and does not have much influence on her discoveries, which are rather accidental at the beginning. Each episode is linked to the next, to which it without doubt leads Oedipa who lacks the ability of systematic research. (Pynchon, 76) She investigates as if she was “reading a book” (12), continuing “to spot the clues though never sure where they are” (13). Her actions are very spontaneous and motivated by instinct rather than by her intellect, following impulsive motives. As a result of this, the protagonist goes through “series of adventures, each constructed on the last” (Hite, 67) lacking any systematic concept.

Due to her “cultural conditioning” she is often deceived as the above mentioned behaviour occupies her with things that are not essential, but very puzzling to the reader as well as to Oedipa. (Madsen, 59) As soon as she asks specific and demanding questions, the men refuse to say anything further and withdraw. They only offer her the knowledge they want her to have, the information they consider as suitable for her. She is never given any useful information by purpose. On every occasion, she gets to know sensible and helpful facts and details, this happens unintentionally.

Owing to her cultural belief, Oedipa is even “unable to discover an alternative source of value external to the limited eschatology to which she has been educated” (60). This is one of the greatest hindrances to her quest, as it is one that comes from inside her and has long time ago been planted inside her by society. She cannot imagine or accept the ambiguity of her culture. Such

ambiguity resides in the discontinuities within her environment which she has to discover, and which leave "her poised between the signs that she tries to interpret and their culturally constrained potential for meaning" (60). These "cognitive obstacles" (64) weigh much more than the obstacles imposed upon her by her dominant male antagonists, as for example Driblette trying to discourage her (Pynchon, 52). what is more confusing is that as a result of her conditioning, Oedipa is to a certain extent apt to believe that she is suffering from ruthless mental illness, than to accept the recent reality of modern America.

Her quest is quite comparable to this game of Strip Boticelli. The game that Metzger proposes is more like the simple twenty questions than Botticelli Strip in the novel the game functions as metaphor indicating that the Tristero mystery will never lie open, naked and exposed, because there are always deeper layers to be unearthed.

Newman argues that, "Strip Boticelli becomes a metaphor for the unmasking quest pattern of the novel, Oedipa must fight entropy to make sense of all the clues she discovers, yet those clues both contribute information that aids her and complicate any resolution with their multiplicity" (Newman, 78). In articulating an anxiety about capitalistic culture, Pynchon's other novels depict the characters reactions to the capitalistic enterprise by enacting a method of resistance that involves a total ontological reorientation—an acknowledgement that not everything in life needs to be money-driven or assigned a certain value. Pynchon articulates a complex understanding of resistance to capitalism by demonstrating that the rhetoric and underlying

assumptions of capitalism tend to gain access to even the most banal interpersonal situations.

V.3.2. Odiapa's Progress from Losses and Gains

It is nonetheless quite noticeable that Oedipa learns a lot about herself. For example, she finds out that there is a life outside the suburb of Kinneret-Among-The-Pines, which is very dissimilar to her former false impression of life. There is a subculture beyond the culture she knew. It is of her advantage to be is less inexperienced and disillusioned as she appears to be when she starts her quests. There are no men any more to depend on. At present, she has to rely on herself and learn to make her own decisions without any assistance from these male "authorities". The sadness and the feeling of insecurity, which go along with this new consciousness, can be preferred to an unconscious of captivity in an ivory tower and the feeling of life passing unemotional like a movie. Her insecurity can be seen as the one that is always stated at a new beginning. All in all, Oedipa gains a new compassion, which represents the knowledge she has gained as well. By being self-confident and knowledgeable, she has developed a great awareness of herself. Now she is also able to perceive things from another point of view, sharing different attitudes with other people, and making the right decisions. (Madsen, 75)

What can be included under her most precious gains is that Oedipa finally finds America. This is the special heritage Pierce has given to her (Pynchon, 123). Contrary to what she had expected, she learns that there is more than just one truth to find, which in turn means that there is no ultimate truth. Depending on the system or construction of reality one believes in, there is more than one reality.

She did not know about the Tristero because this system did not exist in her consciousness. As a result of this, she has been living in a different world. It is rather an unfamiliar world where all the people she met were but the outcome of their own construction of reality. She finds out how implicated she has been all of the time, that she had lived a limited life (Madsen, 75). Oedipa can finally learn that her old image of America has been deconstructed, giving way to new impressions and a sense of ambiguity.

The protagonist in *The Crying of Lot 49* tries to escape as she is not able to cope with the banality of her universe any longer. Lacking any intensity or real feelings, Oedipa thought of withdrawal. As Hite argues, Oedipa's quest is, "grounded in a hyperbolically banalized world" (Hite, 73). Her quest is thus a "birth passage" (73) for a new life. Oedipa who is heading for a change is "directed toward transcendence" (73) which she finally reaches stating that her legacy was America. Her quests helped her reform her image of America. Although she did not find any ultimate truths, she was able to find different concepts of life, different interpretations of America, diverse attitudes and ideologies, and finally had access to new interpretations of American history. She comes across a very disappointing reality, that of poor individuals outside the bright and glittering city centres and the welcoming environs. Her knowledge had been increased, although she is not able to cope with all this yet, and although she is at the moment not in a position to use the knowledge she has gained. She did not find any alternative for her lost religious belief. Even if Oedipa's gains surpass her losses, she was not able to conceive the worth and value of her gains. Her blindness of measuring thing the right way is due mainly to her inferior ideas and method of weighing things. Yet, Oedipa

might be convinced that she has lost something, now that she does not know any more what to believe in. Her conceptions of reality have all stumbled and there is nothing to replace the loss. She has the possibility to do without a religious symbol to fix her hopes on, and she will similarly be able to live without the lie of the American Dream which she has once believed in.

There is a hope for the future that she might not return to her conventional suburban life, audacious to live a life free from male dominance and the bondage of marriage. She will never again have to endure the "lifeless repetition" (Newman, 73) of her former daily routine again. As her relationship to Mucho comes to an end, there is a possibility that she will soon look for another different kind of relationship. In case this will not work, she might be able to do without any male assistance at all. She is not likely to pick up her former "Rapunzel-like role" (Quilligan, 112) again. After the experiences she has made during her investigations, caring for her husband has become a duty of minor and secondary attention. This will surely not be a sufficient aim for her any longer. Oedipal was determined not to return back to her past habitual duties of a dominated housewife.

William Styron's fiction is filled with thematic concerns, but human suffering surely has dominated his novels from *Lie Down in Darkness* (1951) to his last novel *Sophie's Choice* (1979). His works are a practical register of the natural shocks that flesh is heir to a young woman, tortured by her intolerable family, driven to suicide; the brutal rape and murder of a girl in the midst of the suffering and nastiness of the most wretched of the earth's poor; the prolonged physical torment of a needless military exercise; the mental

agony of slavery; and, finally, the ultimate modern symbol for suffering—the horrors of the concentration camp.

Styron's *Set This House on Fire* can be considered as the best example of physical suffering and the best metaphor for the nature of man's empty and unbearable relationship with the universe. It has been concluded that it is not necessary for Styron's characters to fall upon the thorns of life in order to bleed; others may fall, and they will ache in sympathy.

The real mental and emotional anguish of Styron's central characters, however, is surely the product of their own actions. It is not shocking, but personal, and it derives from their deep sense of alienation. For Styron's characters, alienation manifests itself not in the vague confusion of Bellow or the metaphysical meditation of Pynchon, but in a conscious, grief-stricken sense of separation and loss that applies to man and to God. His characters are fully and actively, aware of a pervasive emptiness in their lives. By all means, their reactions to this meaninglessness cannot be compared to the passivity of existential acceptance, but of powerful emotional longing and searching.

In the case of Cass Kinsolving in *Set This House on Fire,* the sense of alienation is compounded by a self-abusive guilt complex that leaves him "caught in an endless circle of self-loathing and venom and meanness" (STHF, 255). His obsession with this guilt compels him to drink thinking that by drinking he will be able to drown it. For the first part of the novel the guilt obscures his realization of his personal isolation. His real problem and the source of his pain is his inability to accept a commitment to other people, particularly his devoted wife, Poppy. It is only when he can accept

commitment and rejects his own guilt for other people's pain, that he will be able to find a kind of integrity and peace.

With *The Confessions of Nat Turner,* the anguish of alienation takes on political and social manifestations, not to mention historical one. Styron's Nat is cut off by being caste from the white world to which he is intellectually drawn, and from the black world by education, sensitivity, and particularly by his felt need to create himself in the mould of a visionary hero and leader, a role that forcibly leads to isolation. Like Cass Kinsolving, Nat is unable to accept a morally unconscionable world. In his rejection of that world, Nat isolates himself from the earth crowded life of humanity, immoral though much of it is, that might have brought him peace. Caught between his hatred of the whites for inflicting the atrocity of slavery and his loathing of the black condition, Nat is absolutely alone, and that loneliness is agony. The emotional pain of Peyton Loftis is alienation from family. Cass suffers from a self-destructive guilt brought on by self-hatred and contemplation of man's unfruitful condition. Nat Turner's pain is isolation from all mankind.

In *Set This House on Fire,* Styron studies the modern condition of man and his world. This condition is described by Styron according to an existential characterization of existence. The world of his novels is depicted as a lonely and bleak realm where man finds no external means of support. As a result of these conditions, man struggles aimlessly. The reason for this unpredictable behaviour is that man relies too heavily on finding guidance from the outside world. Styron graphically describes the harsh existential world and man's reactions to such bleak existence. Styron develops his images even to encompass the more positive aspect of the existential existence.

According to existential philosophy, man lives in a lonely and devastatingly unstructured world. His isolated predicament is commonly described with the depletion of a scene where man is seen being thrown onto the earth by some invisible hand and then being left to shift for himself without the support of any benevolent force. Styron joins the positions taken by many modern novelists when he studies this problem of the existential experience. In his novels, Styron portrays such a world of desolate isolation, and then he describes man's reactions to this isolated situation.

Unlike the nihilistic or atheistic branch of the existential school, Styron suggests positive ways of dealing with life's dilemmas. He does not agree that life offers a "no exit" alternative or, in other words, that man's life is hopeless and frustrating. Instead, man has a very important choice that he can make, one that would provide him with the strength that he needs to challenge the unwanted forces of the world. He can affirmatively elect to find support and courage from within himself. Paul Tillich labels such an affirmative option "the courage to be". Styron implicitly notes in his novels that this lack of divine presence is an inborn state of being. His characters obviously suffer traumatically from the loss of such guidance and security.

It is therefore understandable that man finds it difficult to adjust to this cold age of the machine, and that he feels lost and alienated in such a mechanistic environment. In *The Courage to Be*, Paul Tillich notes that there are two types of nightmares which confront modern man. One nightmare deals with an entrapping narrowness which threatens to suffocate its victim. The other is concerned with a vast and dark emptiness into which the person falls.

The three authors attempt to show the practical impossibility of trying to fight life, suggesting instead the wisdom of the alternative - acceptance of reality. There is no merit in attempting a "five-cent synthesis" as Herzog puts it, or in trying to control every eventuality, which is what reduces the two protagonists to a total inability to cope. These writers have broken the barriers of the established pattern used by the earlier writers. They have shown in their works that there are channels for hope instead of despair. Nevertheless, they have painted it with their local terms and circumstances. Their works show a great concern and interest in the predicament of man's resistance. In this regard, Foley suggests that "the way to survive in this postmodern world is to accept and embrace chaos as an integral part of existence—finding solace in its absurdity." (Babalola, 3)

The central characters in the six analyzed novels are subject to disintegrating forces over which they appear to have little control. Included under this victimization are discernment of and rebellion against that condition. Indeed, perception of and rebellion against the forces which threaten depersonalization are the identifying marks of the tragic and comic responses in the works of these writers.

The two significant novels by Styron explore the nature of man—in terms of how he understands himself and in terms of his relationship to family, community and universe in the twentieth century climate. In his novels, Styron reveals a vision of man separated from his familiar values and unable to return to them. It is a vision of an individual who struggles to maintain his values and aspirations in a world of mere surface, order and harmony. To live or to survive

demands man's adjustment both to a world without a predetermined or continuing order, and to a world not necessarily concerned with his welfare.

Fragmented as they appear, the protagonists emerge from their manner of adaptation to their world- a world which includes not only the immediate social context made explicit by their actions or reactions, but by their understanding of their place in the universe as well. This adaptation begins with the protagonists' limited perception of themselves, their world and the demands made upon them by that world. It grows more complex as they search within and beyond themselves for an understanding of the problems that confront them.

Both novels endeavour to assess the human condition from the point of view of the modern isolated and confused individual. As a result of their continuous quests they arrive at a decision that exhibits the affirmation of William Styron's Cass and Nat. With varying degrees of enthusiasm and defiance, they choose 'being' instead of 'nothingness.'

Furthermore, examination of individual characters caught at different stages in the quest, illustrates the difficulties of their struggle required for overcoming their different dimensions of alienation. From what have been observed, it is concluded that the six novels strongly confirm the value of human existence. And that reality is coloured by the protagonists' paranoia and hallucinations that even friends and relations become persecuting enemies. The six novels take a comprehensive view of those evils inherent in the human condition, implying that evil lies not only within man nor within social institutions, but within both.

V.3.3. Slothrop's Resistance to Entropy

One of the vital themes of this novel is entropy. By entropy is meant the degree of disorder or randomness in the system. Scientifically speaking, entropy is also a measure of the number of possible arrangements the atoms in a system can have. In the case of Sothrop's actions and behaviour, entropy is a measure of uncertainty or randomness. Entropy becomes a necessity when there is a lack or absence of check of one's actions. Simply put, entropy is a measure of disorder and affects all aspects of our daily lives. In fact, one can think of it as nature's tax. The direct consequence of these disorders which are left unchecked disorder will increase over time. Slothrop's accumulation of randomness and disorder lead to unmanageable situation creating thus a total chaos in Slothrop's life. Pynchon presents this theme through a machine, called 'Maxwell's demon', invented by a mad scientist named John Nefastis. Physicist James Clark Maxwell came up with the thought. Basically, 'Maxwell's demon' is a "machine" that violates the second law of thermodynamics which says that entropy always increases with time but by inventing this machine, he claims that it can violate the second law. In this case, he explains how the 'Maxwell's demon, a machine, works. According to Nefastis, this machine can only be operated by a "Sensitive," who would be able to separate the heat molecules with his or her ability to move the molecules with the help of their mind and concentration. Nefastis goes on to assert that "Entropy is a figure of speech, then?' Sighed Nefastis, "a metaphor. It connects the world of thermodynamics to the world of information flow." (Pynchon, 85)

Maxwell's theory was that this experiment shows how the second law of thermodynamics could possibly be violated and entropy avoided. Entropy means disorder of a system. Among the themes present in this novel, entropy is the strangest one. Pynchon presents this theme to make reader understand that Oedipa has to function as the 'Demon' for the Tristero, which she runs after.

V.4. Resistance in Styron's Novels

V.4.1. Redemption as a Mode of Resistance

In each of his two discussed novels Styron's depicts a tragic hero overwhelmed with tragic events which has occurred in the past, before the present action of the novel begins. In the case of *Set This House on Fire*, it was after Mason Flagg's mysterious death; and with regard to *The Confessions of Nat Turner* it was after Nat Turner's bloody and unsuccessful insurrection.

Cass may be redeemed and delivered from his tormenting evil, only after realizing himself, after going through what Jung has termed the "Individual process". This process deals with the creative progression of man towards a contented identity; it is a chase for self-realization through which a human being becomes an individual. In *Set This House on Fire*, Cass's life is devoted to realize this psychological process. This makes him first of all to detect the guilt, the source of evil and then the exorcism of its suffocating oppressiveness. While asserting about the problem of guilt and its significance to tragedy Karl Jaspers observes, "Tragedy becomes self-conscious by understanding the fate of its characters as the consequence of guilt, and as the inner working out of guilt itself. Destruction is the atonement of the guilt"

At the end of the novel Cass becomes, in the words of Jaspers, "the tragic hero—man heightened and intensified ... fulfilling himself in goodness and concealing out his own identity in evil" (56). It is vital to acknowledge that, in this particular novel Styron has gone back for inspiration to the seventeenth century poet John Donne, while prescribing for malaise that is typical of the twentieth century. The major theme of this novel is highlighted with concerns with God, the individual's estrangement and alienation from God, and his eventual arrival to faith. The novel seems an allegory of a

dark night of the soul or a pilgrim's progress, in which Cass comes to understand, and then to cast off, the evil part of his nature and arrive at redemption.

Structurally, the novels instigate a search for guilt and responsibility and possible redemption. That search is carried on through intense and long-lasting suffering by both Cass Kinsolving, and Nat Turner. Being always a powerful but ambiguous force, guilt, creates much of the suffering in the novels, and seems in all of them to shift from particular individuals to the world at large—a world characterized by a shared guilt which intensifies individual suffering and diminishes individual action. Styron depicts the world's climate as non-human, non-heroic. In *The Confessions*, it is characterized by various kinds of slavery, including the actual institution of slavery which holds both whites and blacks in bondage. Moreover, technology, in particular, betrays and enslaves Styron's characters.

V.4.2. Intimacy as a Mode of Resistance

In order to escape the fear of loneliness, estrangement, and displacement, Styron's protagonists take of intimacy as a mode of resistance. Intimacy in the view of psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan is described "as mutual satisfactions achieved through and yet beyond sex. I still find that some people imagine that intimacy is only a matter of approximating genitals one to another...Intimacy...requires a type of relationship which I call collaboration, by which I mean clearly formulated adjustments of one's behavior to the expressed needs of the other person in the pursuit of increasingly Identical—that is, more and more nearly mutual—satisfactions."(Britannica, the new encyclopaedia)

In William Styron's novel, *Set This House on Fire*, Cass Kinsolving turns to sex in the hope of working out his very frustration. Realizing, in the depths of his mind, that this is the road to nowhere, he turns to alcohol to help cover up the emptiness which is the fruit of his search for intimacy. The only person Cass feels comfortable is Peter Leverett (the narrator) with whom he feels free to confess anything. One day he shares with him the incident which was the turning point in his life—the re-direction of his quest. His moment of truth comes after he and his wife have moved to Paris, another step in the odyssey that has compelled him to be ever on the move. After months of artistic stagnation, he sets out on a psychological and alcoholic binge that culminates in almost supernatural vision. In relating the incident he refers to his first sexual experience when he was only seventeen years old. It was with a young Jehovah's Witness whose name was Vernelle Slatterfield; "A Messalina in the guise of a vestal virgin!" He states,

> I was a failure, because one single caress of her hand brought me down against her blubbering in delirium. And spent. . . . And Lord, her words! I'll never forget her words! ... 'Why, you pore silly. Look down there! Look at what you done! Why the divine spirit just flowed right on out of you. (STHF, 255)

For Styron's protagonists, alienation manifests itself not in the vague confusion of Bellow, or in the metaphysical meditation of Pynchon, but in a conscious, agonized sense of separation and loss that applies to man and to God. Peter, Cass, and Nat struggle painfully and actively, aware of a pervasive emptiness in their lives. Their reactions to this emptiness are not those of passive existential acceptance, but of powerful emotional longing and searching.

Under the umbrella of intimacy one can include sex which functions as a mode of resistance in both Bellow's and Pynchon's novels. It is used as an affirmation of masculine existence. Also, it is only after Nat is able to recall the love Margaret felt for him that he is able to face death courageously. Nat's memory of his relationship with Margaret enables him to feel close to her, to communicate with her, despite his alienation from all other people and from God.

For Nat to discover that it was Margaret's love which had given meaning to his existence is enough to renew his faith because he believes that love can show the way to God. He goes to the gallows, defeated in his efforts to correct the evils of slavery, but triumphant in another sense; for he believes that Margaret's love will show him the way to God.

He mentions her in a final expression before going to the gallows, "I would have spared her that showed me Him... Until now I had almost forgotten his name... I turn in surrender... Even so, come, Lord Jesus..." (CNT, 428) In this context, Leslie Paul says:

> Sex and love do not inevitably run together, and in many of its manifestations sex, perversion, and murder gallop as dangerously together as any troika of wild horses... literature testifies that man seeks in vain outside his moments of orgasm, for meaning, hope and identity. (*The Writer and the Human Condition*, 1967)

His Confessions show a human situation where man dwells in the face of death,—tense, despairing, and doubtful, plagued by spiritual alienation, moral confusion, and sexual tension.

Styron's Confessions projects a characteristically Southern view of slavery and reflects Styron's belief that the United States slave system had "dehumanized the slave and divested him of honour, moral responsibility, and

manhood." In the novel, most of the slaves are characterized as sub-human, docile "Sambos." Styron's Nat describes them as follows: "... it is a painful fact that most Negroes are hopelessly docile..." (8)

V.5. Conclusion

It has been the purpose of this chapter to describe the modes of resistance employed by the protagonists in an attempt to overcome their different types of alienation. All six novels portray a protagonist in a difficult, life-changing situation that leads to reconsideration of his present life and a subsequent quest for a better future. Even if the main theme is identical in many respects, and all protagonists finally find their answers, the circumstances of the quest as well as the mode of resistance of each protagonist diverge.

The protagonists have gone through different changes in their process of transformation. In the first two novels written by Bellow, Eugene Henderson has progressed from a 'pig figure' into 'lion figure'. As for Moses Herzog, he has progressed from a lonely 'creature' into a fulfilled, happy, satisfied man after he has abandoned and transcended inferior ideas and accepted reality and love as the ultimate solution. With regard to Pynchon's two novels, Oedipa Maas has evolved from a typical housewife into an enlightened woman in a patriarchal society. Tyrone Slothrop follows nearly the same path and in his process of transformation he measures his uncertainty and randomness, rejects the scientific dry mood of his existence, and embraces the humanist, emotional mood. In the case of Styron's two novels, the two protagonists have to break societal codes in their process of transformation. Both of them choose murder but later bitterly regret and felt the guilt which compelled them to seek redemption.

All six protagonists reach the confirmation that withdrawal from the hostile, cold machine age will not solve their dilemmas. It is rather through confrontation, resilience, responsibility, and redemption that one can surmount one's fears, uncertainty, doubts, obstacles, which have made of him an alienated. Oedipa has to resist her hindrances if she wants to free herself from her bondages. In order for Slothrop lead a normal, human life, he has to rid himself from the ache of scientific progress. Herzog and Henderson alienation could be overcome not by their withdrawal from their universe, but by facing reality and embracing it as an integral part of their lives. This can be achieved through being resilient to the world problems. Cass Kinsolving's and Nat Turner's solutions to their guilt could be solved through moral responsibility and redemptive qualities.

GENERAL

CONCLUSION

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to discuss and examine the protagonists trying to re-establish their links with society, nature and the spiritual world in six novels. These six novels are linked with one another by a few recurrent motifs that have been strongly suggested and dealt with in detail. They include a strong condemnation of the growing materialism of postmodern society and its destructive effect on humanistic and spiritual values. Man's pre-occupation with the question of death, is seen as threatening and challenging in the first four novels and as a mystery that instigates serious metaphysical quest in the last two novels. Thanks to his intellectual capacities, man attempts to solve the mystery of life, its materialistic as well as spiritual obstacles and imbroglios. All these motifs have been combined to help Bellow's, Pynchon's, and Styron's protagonists find their place in the universe they dwell in. It is worth noting that in every type of alienation there is a hole between the individual's self and the actual world, one's inner self and the external self.

The protagonists in the selected novels suffered the effects of alienation imposed by a capitalistic, materialistic–oriented society. This is quite evident especially in post wars era where individuals experience the effects at varying degrees, facing changes in their lives emanating from the same conditions. All are forced to a quest for meaning and truth, even if the modes of resistance differ from one character to the other. They finally reach affirmation of identity, confirmation of ethical codes and more importantly are capable of finding meaning to their very existence.The six are seen as making statements about man's place in society, in nature, in the spiritual world, about human destiny and human limitations.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Alienation is one of the most dominating themes in the fiction of Saul Bellow, Thomas Pynchon, and William Styron. With their unique imaginative strength, they have conceived large number of individual characters, who are alienated from themselves, from other, from their society, from nature, and from God.

According to this concept, the modern human being undergoes a sense of dislocation, living in a chaotic and fragmented world. As a result, it gives the impression that it is progressively harder for the human person to be able to find order and meaning in life. It follows from what has been analyzed and demonstrated in the six twentieth century American novels: Bellow's *Henderson the Rain king*, and *Herzog,* Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot49,* and *Gravity Rainbow*, and Styron's*, Set this House on Fire*, and *The Confessions of Nut Turner*, of course with a special attention to their final chapters, how the concept of "alienation" has actually been used to refer to completely incongruent experiences in the manner explained above.

Each of the protagonists whom that have been studied here makes this search by himself, employing these means directly or indirectly. The important point is that the world that surrounds each of them does not change. It is the individual and his attitude towards it that has to undergo a change in order that the individual may relate with. For instance, Bellow shows the practical impossibility of trying to fight life, suggesting instead the good judgment of the option which is the acceptance of reality. As Herzog puts it, there is no advantage in attempting a "five-cent synthesis", or in trying to control every possible event, which is what reduces the protagonists to a total inability to cope with their surroundings.

The authors discussed in this thesis are just a few of those who adopt the absurd realist style in their novels. According to Harris and Galloway, writers such as Salinger, Bellow, Updike, Heller, Vonnegut, Barth, Pynchon, and Styron have been considered as contemporary writers of absurdism. In Galloway's *The Absurd Hero in American Fiction*, and Harris' *Contemporary American Novelists of the Absurd*, the focus is more on the portrayal of existentialist concepts like alienation and the absurdity of human existence in the novels of these authors.

The focus of absurd realist authors, as discussed in this thesis, explores the idea that the contemporary individual lives in an existential universe, where the meaning and purpose of life seems lost. Consequently, human beings are forced into a state of isolation and alienation as they struggle to find a purpose for life. However, the concepts of isolation and alienation, as portrayed by absurd realists, differ from that of existentialists. While existentialists view alienation as an innate, inescapable aspect of human existence which holds back the individual from finding meaning in an absurd life; absurd realists see it as the conflict between the individual and his environment. To use the words of Albert Camus "the absurd is born" out of the confrontation between the human needs for happiness and for reason, and the unreasonable silence of the world. Apart from the multi-layered themes in their works, absurd realists present a world where "suffering, pain, bewilderment, and the absence of cause and effect constitute the substantive matter of a reality" Countless number of writers of such absurd novels attempts to present an understanding of this desperate situation that infuses the modern society, providing insights into how one can adjust to this new way of life.

In Bellow‘s *Henderson the Rain King*, and *Herzog.* Henderson is a flagrant example of man’s encounter with primitive Africans and its real attack and harsh criticism of the so-called civilized Western world. The second analysed novel, *Henderson the Rain King*, has tackled the same theme–a protagonist searching for truth. Nevertheless, in the case of Eugene Henderson, the protagonist comes from a wealthy Protestant background and his position in society is rather stable and secured. Nonetheless, the fact that he is financially secure does not provide him with psychical stability. The feeling of being unbalanced obliges him to sublimate his dissatisfaction by breeding pigs, drinking alcohol, playing the violin, and finally with an escape to Africa where he desires to find his suppressed self. Moses Herzog exemplifies man’s victimization and his quest for belonging. In chapter three, Pynchon’s turns his protagonists into detectives in their attempts to unveil the secrets beneath the postal system. In chapter four, Styron’s protagonists’ alienation may be more ascribed to the relationship between the individual’s past and the present conditions which is referred to as an “obstructed relationship”.

This thesis has also shown the three authors’ strong belief in man’s capacity to solve his predicament into which “civilization” with its emphasis on the scientific view of the phenomena has put him. Bellow’s, Pynchon’s, and Styron’s protagonists are determined to make a conscious commitment with society and nature that surround them. Only such commitment will give their life meaning and purpose.

All novels have portrayed a protagonist in a difficult, life-changing situation that leads to reconsideration of his present life and a subsequent quest for truth. Even if the main theme is identical in many respects, and all

protagonists finally find their answers, the circumstances of the quest as well as the point of view of each protagonist holds opposing views. According to the three authors the six protagonists alienation is explicitly social and implicitly enormous, their efforts to identify themselves in society constitutes a major theme of the six novels. All six novels have foreshadowed modern themes of frustration, isolation, inescapable conditions of life in big cities.

It is concluded from what has been discussed that there is not an easy or mechanical transition from alienation to self-realization. Especially in present-day society, man finds it impossible to return from his condition of alienation to integration with his world and with himself. The condition of alienation and its causes are all discussed in Marx's critique of capitalism. Karl Marx believed, however, that in a system based on capitalist commodity production, man's efforts to struggle against his alienation and to become reintegrated are most likely to be frustrated and predestined to be unsuccessful.

By the end of six narratives, each author tries to provide an answer to the following question: Can alienation be overcome? Those who consider estrangement as innate in human existence will of course deny that it can be dominated by man's action. For them, it is preeminent that the individual resign himself to his state of alienation, instead of pursuing the ineffective dream that it is up to him to change his condition.

Although the selected novels belong to different backgrounds, cultural and historical contexts, they have been a good vehicle in their demonstration of how man's connectedness with nature highlights postmodern phenomena of identity crisis, disintegration, alienation, and deterioration of ethics. Nature in the six novels have also asserted itself as man's 'place', companion, solace,

and refuge from a swiftly changing American society during the 1950s and 1960s in which the heavy grip of capitalism and consumerism was felt.

The thesis has also aimed at finding out links between postmodernism and ecocriticism, indicating that the protagonists' attempt to accomplish connectedness with nature is an influence of the postmodern common sense of the erosion of moral codes, identity crisis, and alienation. And in order to evade this influence, there are two channels through which the protagonists have resolved to escape this state of alienation and estrangement. On the one hand, they saw the necessity of learning to live without pleasure. They needed to go back to the original state of their childhood and recaptured their former condition, more natural and less involved in social life. In other words, they needed to experience a process of adaptation and acceptation.

The three authors' works are radically different from the great novels of the American tradition. Their novels follow the pattern of absurd realism as they exhibit chaos and paranoia that pervade contemporary society. They have embarked on the same question of how to live the good life does not end with the question "what is the good life?"

It is hoped that the research has arrived at showing the three authors as novelists deeply engaged in universal problem, worried about the destiny of humanity, a fact that places them among the major contemporary writers. They have also portrayed the hostile environments, and apparently absurd worlds. But the three authors have dealt in a different way with this mode of existentialism showing a positive attitude among the protagonists at the end of their novels. Although their protagonists are entrapped by the forces of modern

complexities, they refused to resign themselves to alienation and isolation. Instead, they struggled to maintain a sense of human dignity.

Gathered together, these fictional narratives have presented a group of absurd characters whose distorted, fragmented vision of reality has separated them from society, contributing to their alienation. Their vision of life is undoubtedly not the most ample one in order to survive in the real world, when the absurd world allows them no possible escape. External as well as internal factors constitute the source of their estrangement.

Herzog, for instance, finds it difficult to accept that his family and friends have such a superficial, negative attitude in life. There is a possibility for him to stumble on some kind of meaning and accomplish an order in his future life.

Styron's *The Confession of Nat Turner*, on the other hand, treats the individual as living in a world which does not allow him to fulfil his "spiritual" needs. In the end, however, this individual succeeds in ordering his experience and maintaining some kind of human dignity.

The six novels are concerned with thwarted protagonists, and by revealing a particular type of alones out of the postmodern world. In *Herzog* as in *Henderson the Rain King*, the protagonists are literally different from the rest of the universe they inhabit; and are therefore separate from it. Conversely, in *Set This House on Fire*, and in *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, the protagonists choose to withdraw from society.

The three authors display the fragmented postmodern conditions by shifting perspectives, including textual gaps, unpleasant plots and disjoint narratives. Pastiche seems to be the most common technique used by the tree writers who

expose the disconnection and confusion inherent to the postmodern condition through both style and subject matter.

Some characters become alcoholic, and think that through drinking they can escape from the bondage imposed by the hostile world. The fact proves the opposite. Alcohol widens the gap and instead of connecting them with the world, it separates and distances them from others.

The three writers started their literary career in the 1940s, as new writers who found that an existentialist mode of writing has been dominating the literature of the period, especially American literature. Most modern novelists like William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Samuel Becket, Gustave Flaubert, and James Joyce, to name a few, have accepted the general spirit of existentialism for granted. They showcased modern life as a bitter, uncontrollable and full of perils. Swimming against the tide, the three postmodern writers revolutionized the traditional mode of the modernist existentialists' formula which they regard as being destructive and pessimistic in nature. Throughout their protagonists, they argue that humans have an instinctive awareness of eternal virtue such as truth, love and beauty. They feel some mysterious weight constantly pressing them.

The protagonists' situations and experiences are quite similar to *The Myth of Sisyphus* that all their labours are like those of Sisyphus pushing the stone up the hill only to watch it roll back down again. In *The Myth of Sisyphus* Camus states the futility of existence. Sisyphus is condemned to roll a rock up a hill, but when he reaches the summit the rock will roll back to the bottom again. In the view of Camus, human existence is pointless and all his endeavours are meaningless. Contrary to Camus, the three writers believe that their

protagonists can find meaning to their existence by never giving up. Instead of surrendering; their protagonists have to try more than once. It is observed that their novels are marked with signs of hope at the end. This is an affirmation that there is a total rejection of the traditional codes of existentialism. Rather, it is noticed in their novels that regardless of all the flaw backs, the protagonists' strength, finally have rediscovered the faith in their human endeavour. They possess the ability to love all.

The six stories end with redemptive visions of humanity. It has been observed that there is a kind of rebirth of the protagonists. The powerful endings of the six novels show the six protagonists as successful in the long run. It is rather an affirmation that in a heartless world based, driven by money culture, man is the lone person who retains his humanity. More importantly, it is a confirmation of how an individual learns to conquer his anxieties, fears, anger, and self–isolation, how one can admit his thirst for love, for company, for community and friendship, through his moral and social responsibility to others.

In each novel the protagonist moves towards some kind of enlightenment; something is resolved at the end, and correspondingly at the end of the sequence of the six novels the affirmations made are much more positive than at the beginning. The protagonists progress a little further. What can be inferred from the examined novels, then, is that the protagonists need to progress from self-delusion, doubt, false hope, fear, insecurity, hatred, and passivity, to the realisation that life is what one makes it.

To put it in a nutshell, modern man's struggle with the problem of alienation looks endless. His inability to adjust himself with his surroundings

impelled him to enter into a cruel and brutal battle with a world fuelled by bewilderment and disintegration. In a world changing at a fast pace man seems victimized at all levels. In the view of many sociologists, man is a solitary, a stranger in this world, and so he remains up to the end. However, he can improve his conditions, and make his life worth living, by being on familiar terms with the otherness of other individuals. He should try to understand his own nature, and with self-understanding there would come better and better understanding of his environment and of his fellow men. With understanding would result an acceptance of the world as it is, and also of the differences which exist between man and man. He could then live in harmony with his fellow men, as well as with nature, despite the obstacles which divide him from the two. The latter can be achieved only through faith, courage and determination. Man must accept the human condition and try to make the most of it to solve, if not all of the world's mysteries, at least the very essential. It is indeed, a struggle in life for meaning that the American individuals are desperately missing in their present time. This meaning would in a sense contribute to the social stability and tranquility of mind.

Last, but by no means the least, it is hoped that the present thesis has arrived at confirming the hypotheses set above and has managed to provide answers to the research questions mentioned earlier. It is also the hope of the researcher to open new horizons for further studies/researches about the theme of alienation in post wars American narratives.

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APPENDICES

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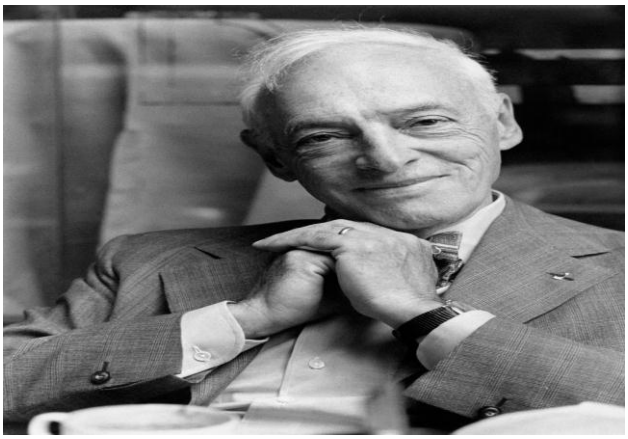
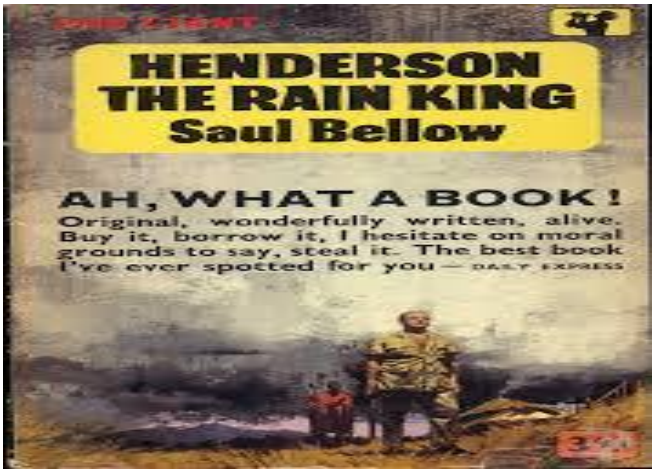
<u>Appendix 1</u>: Short Biography of Saul Bellow



Saul Bellow was born Solomon Bellows in 1915 in Lachine, Quebec to Russian-Jewish immigrants. He graduated from Northwestern University in 1937 with honours in anthropology. In 1939, Bellow embarked on his first novel, *Dangling Man* which was published in 1944. *The Victim* was published in 1947. Six years later, *The Adventures of Augie March* was published in 1953, and received the National Book Award for Fiction in 1954. In 1955, Bellow received a second Guggenheim Fellowship. In March 1964, *Herzog* was published in 1964 which won him the National Book Award for Fiction in 1965. *The Last Analysis* premiered on Broadway followed by *Under the Weather*, another play premiered in 1966. In 1968, *Mosby's Memoirs and Other Stories* was published. *Mr. Sammler's Planet* which was published in 1970, earned Bellow his third National Book Award in 1971. *Humboldt's Gift* was published the following year, and Bellow travelled to Israel to conduct research for *To Jerusalem and Back*. In 1976 Bellow was honoured with a Pulitzer Prize for *Humboldt's Gift* and the Nobel Prize in Literature. He also received a Gold Medal for Fiction from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the Emerson-Thoreau Medal from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The 1980s saw the publication of *The Dean's December* (1982), *Him with His Foot in His Mouth* (1984), *More Die of Heartbreak* (1987), *A Theft* (1989), and *The Bellarosa Connection* (1989). Later, he published *It All Adds Up* (1993) and *The Actual* (1997), and worked on three more novels: *All Marbles Still Accounted For* and *A Case of Love*, and *Ravelstein* (2000). Collected Stories (2001) was the final book published

during Bellow's lifetime. He died in Brookline, Massachusetts on April 5, 2005.

Appendix 2: Plot Summary of *Henderson the Rain King*



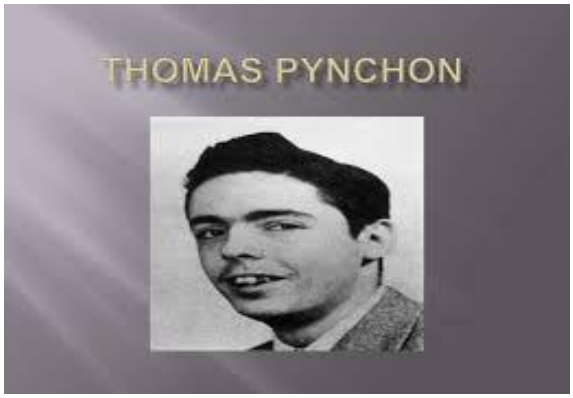
Saul Bellow's novel *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. The story is told from the perspective of Eugene Henderson, and his narrative recounts the period of his life when he travelled to Africa and the events that led him there. Despite being rich, having high social status, and physical prowess, he feels restless and unfulfilled. Theses lead to his alienation from himself, his society, the spiritual world. As a result, he heads into the heart of uncivilized Africa on a spiritual safari, a quest for the truth. With the help of his guide Romilayu, he encounters two tribes and experiences many things particularly with the king of the second, Dahfu, who brings him to terms with his own nature and to an understanding of reality. It is only in Africa that Henderson proves triumphant in a number of encounters which place him a God-like figure among the tribes and helps him overcome his forms of alienation.

Appendix 03: Plot Summary of Herzog

Herzog is a 1964 novel which won Saul Bellow the U.S. National Book Award for Fiction, and the Prix International. The novel is compressed into five days in the life of Moses E. Herzog who is having a midlife crisis following his second divorce. The novel tells the story of Moses Elkanah Herzog *Herzog* who loses faith in himself after being betrayed by people close to him such as his wife, his lawyer, and his psychiatrist, his aunt, whom he thought were the reason behind the destruction of his marriage and therefore the ruining of his life. Burdened by his crisis, disappointments he prefers the state of alienation rather the company of people. He begins writing letters to friends, acquaintances, public figures and philosophers, none of which he sends, in a quest to make sense of his situation.

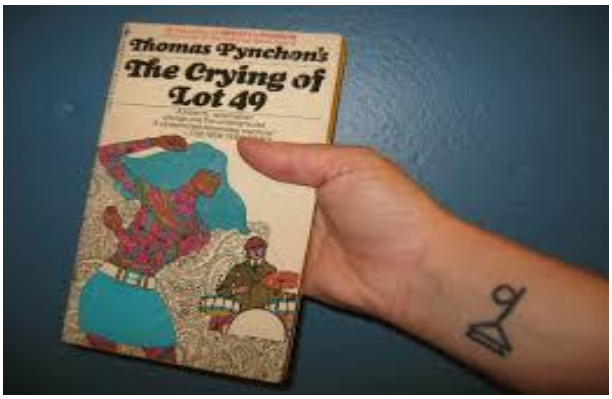
The novel has a narrative plot, but most of its important action takes place in the mind of Moses Herzog, its protagonist. Most of the letters Moses writes to family, friends, acquaintances, scholars, writers, and the dead, are never sent. These letters which make up much of the novel are meant for complaining and a source of solace.

Appendix 4: Short Biography of Thomas Pynchon



Thomas Ruggles Pynchon was born on May 8, 1937 in Glen Cove, Long Island NY. Both his fiction and nonfiction makes reference to other texts including the fields of history, science, and mathematics.His writingsencompass a vast array of subject matter, styles and themes, He graduated from Oyster Bay High School in 1953 and after that went to Cornell University on a scholarship, where he studied Engineering Physics. In 1955, he left Cornell for service in the Navy and returned in the fall of 1957, transferring to the College of Arts and Sciences. He graduated with a B.A. in June of 1959, with distinction in all subjects. Pynchon served two years in the United States Navy and earned an English degree from Cornell University. After publishing several short stories in the late 1950s and early 1960s, he began composing the novels for which he is best known: *V.* (1963), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973).For his most praised novel, *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon won the 1974 U.S. National Book Award for Fiction. His other novels include *Slow Learner* (1984), *Vineland (1*990),*Mason & Dixon* (1997), *Against the Day* (2006), and *Bleeding Edge* (2013).

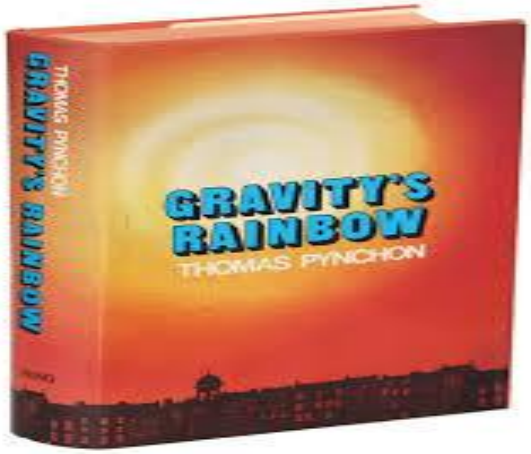
Appendix 5: Plot Summary of *The Crying of Lot 49*



Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*(1966), is a conventional postmodern text. It is a short and dense novel, sometimes referred to as a novella or a novelette. It is a complex text because plots are difficult to follow and the names are not easy to understand. The names are fragmented as well as meaningless. Society is not in order and communication is distorted. In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Pynchon described a woman's strange quest to discover the mysterious, conspiratorial Tristero System in a futuristic world of closed societies. The novel serves as a condemnation of modern industrialization.

The novel consists of six chapters which follow the model of the classic detective story. It has multiple characters, one protagonist and a third person omnipresent and at the beginning of the novel (very) intrusive narrator. Set in California in the early 1960s, most of the narration is limited to the mind of the protagonist Oedipa Maas who leads a normal housewife life with all its routines. She goes to Tupper-ware parties and pays regular visits to her psychiatrist. One day she learns she has been named executor of her former lover's will. The new assignment sends this California housewife into a deep existential crisis and on a transcendental journey of self discovery, manipulation and detective work. On the course of her journey of self discovery she gets in touch not only with the sunny side and the dark side of America, but, eventually also with her own being-in-the-world.

Appendix 6: Plot Summary of *Gravity's Rainbow*

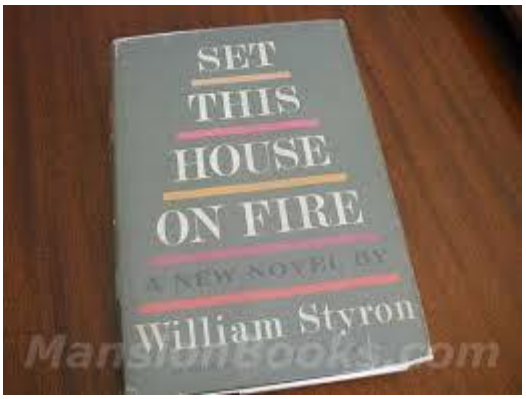


Thomas Pynchon's 1973 novel *Gravity's Rainbow* is one of the landmarks of American fiction. Set for the most part in Europe at the end of World War II, the narrative puts emphasis on the design, production and dispatch of V-2 rockets by the German military. In particular, it features the quest undertaken by several characters to uncover the secret of a mysterious device, the *Schwarzgerät* "black device", which is slated to be installed in a rocket with the serial number "00000." *Gravity's Rainbow* highlights the clash between high and low culture, between literary propriety and profanity, and between science and speculative metaphysics. The novel received the 1973 Nebula Award for Best Novel. Set in late World War II and its aftermath the novel focuses on a search for German "V-2" rockets, which were the world's first guided missiles, as well as the wartime atmosphere in London and the post-war atmosphere in Germany and France. The story revolves around the American Lieutenant Tyrone Slothrop and his quest to find one particular, mysterious rocket called 00000. In so doing, Slothrop's embarks on a search for his identity and the conspiracy surrounding his childhood and military career. The novel is dense in the great number of characters it includes, the subplots, historical flashbacks, and governmental-corporate conspiracies. The novels touches on many questions which do not only apply to World War II history but to the Vietnam War, the American civil rights movement, and other events that occurred while Pynchon was writing the novel in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Appendix 7: Short Biography of William Styron

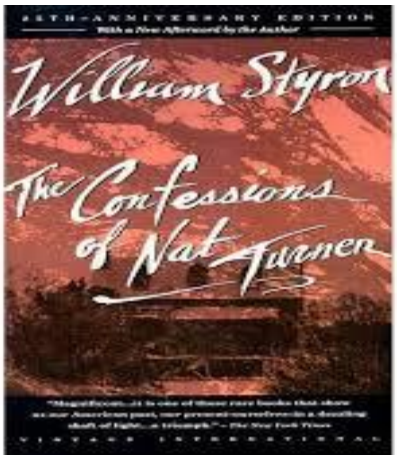
William Styron, was born June 11, 1925, Newport News, Virginia, U.S. he is an American novelist noted for his treatment of tragic themes and his use of a rich, classical prose style. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps. In 1947, he graduated from Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. During the 1950s, he was part of the community of American expatriates in Paris. In 1953, he became an advisory editor to *The Paris Review*. Styron's first novel, *Lie Down in Darkness* (1951), followed by his next work, *The Long March* (1956), which records a brutal forced march undertaken by recruits in a marine training camp. In 1960, he published *Set This House on Fire*, as complexly structured novel set mostly in Italy. Styron's fourth novel, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967), is a story of a historical incident, a slave rebellion led by the protagonist Nat turner in Virginia in 1831.Styron died in November 1, 2006, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts.

<u>Appendix 8</u>: Plot Summary *Set This House on Fire*



Set This House on Fire (1960), a novel set in Italy and the United States includes among its major themes the question of guilt and salvation. The story is a series of confessions which are told from the points of view of two characters Peter Leverett, and Cass Kinsolving. The story revolves around the protagonist painful sufferings caused by the events which led to the rape and murder of an Italian peasant girl with whom Cass was in love and the murder of the self-indulgent Mason Flagg. In this novel, William Styron demonstrates the impossible complexities of the problem of evil, of guilt and retribution. In this novel the protagonist embarks on a series of quests in an attempt to free himself from the guilt that haunts him and to find redemption.

Appendix 9: Plot Summary of *The Confessions of Nat Turner*



The Confessions of Nat Turner, in Styron's fourth novel published in 1967, which earned him the Pulitzer Prize. The novel is told from the perspective of the historical figure, Nat Turner, who led a slave revolt in Virginia in 1831. The novel is an account of a historical incident, a slave rebellion led by the title character in Virginia in 1831. Based on a transcript of Turner's testimony and told from his point of view, the novel sympathetically portrays a man who is denied happiness because of his degrading enslavement. Embittered and alienated, he undertakes a bloody revolt that ends in his capture and execution. As the title indicates the whole novel is based on the confessions of the protagonist Nat who has been alienated not only from the whites but even from the black community. In an attempt to surpass his alienation he embarks on many quests to reach connectedness with himself, his community, and with God. The novel was a "meditation on history" that explored the bloody tragedies of the era, even as it echoed with the civil rights struggles and social upheavals of the 1960s.