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Muhammad Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* As Postmodern Fiction

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This article analyzes *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* as a metafiction historiography, postmodern parody and pastiche. It deconstructs the prevalent stereotype about General Zia's regime. This article provides a postmodern interpretation of *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. It reveals the dominant characteristics of postmodernism which are exhibited in the novel. The use of intertextuality is evident through parody, Pastiche and self-reflexivity. Like all postmodern narratives this text undermines the value of all high sounding abstractions like neutrality and objectivity. The narrative voice is skeptical of all moral and political judgments, and in a playful manner figures out the imaginative possibilities behind General Zia's controversial death. The tale is narrated through the postmodern perspective as it is replete with various examples of black humor, pastiche, historiographic metafiction and magical realism.

Postmodernism stands for broad range of concepts and ideas. It re-conceptualizes history and promotes cultural Pluralism. Postmodernism is viewed as indefinable term. It eliminates the monopoly of any monolithic truth and becomes skeptical of all accounts. Postmodern works celebrate the fragmentation and trauma of modern existence and often lack neatly tied ending. Post Modernism stands for a wide range of attitudes both in literary and cultural production. It disputes the traditional and important way of theatrical performance and criticizes aesthetic elitism. Postmodern art employs different features and techniques to represent the postmodern imagination. It is notoriously hard to generalize postmodernism. All postmodern literary works share some common characteristics. Intertextuality is a central facet of any postmodern art form, "in which works of art or literature frequently refer to each other through parody or pastiche". In the parody, "a work is imitated with playful irony, whereas pastiche openly imitates a work in parliamentary procedure to make use of its original work." (Bjornsson 5) Self-reflexivity is a dominant postmodern characteristic in which a literary work explicitly refers to itself in order to reflect how aware it is of its own constructive nature. Postmodern works use irony and imitation to challenge tradition. Intertextuality evokes irony, another integral characteristic of Postmodernism.

This article provides a postmodern interpretation of *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* by Muhammad Hanif. It lets out the prevailing features of the postmodernism which are presented in the novel. The use of intertextuality is evident through parody, Pastiche and self-reflexivity. Like all postmodern narratives this text undermines the value of all high sounding abstractions like neutrality and objectivity. The narrative voice is skeptical of all moral and political judgments, and in a playful manner figures out the imaginative possibilities behind general Zia's controversial death. The tale is narrated through the postmodern perspective and is replete with various examples of Black Humor, pastiche, historiographic metafiction and magical realism.

Hanif's use of intertextuality is perhaps better exemplified in its repeated imitations of other literary works or styles, what the theorists of the postmodern label as pastiche. In his essay "Postmodernism", Jameson describes pastiche as a key feature of postmodern cultural production. Pastiche, Jameson claims, is a sort of blank parody – mimicking without the satiric impulse that is identified with parody (Bjornsson 22) Intertextuality evokes irony, another integral characteristic of Postmodernism.

LOSS OF HISTORICAL REALITY

James challenges the thought in his article, 'Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism' that history could ever be presented. He claims that historical reality could not be represented in writing, claiming that the historical novel "can no longer represent the historical past, it can only represent our idea and stereotypes about the pasts." (Jameson 79) In Postmodern era historical past is represented "not through its content but through glossy stylistic means, conveying 'pastness' by the glossy qualities of the image." (Jameson 75) Postmodern art forms imitate the old dead style through pastiche. Baudrillard discusses the same idea of the loss of the real in 'Simulacra and Simulation'. He argues that in postmodern world the distinction between real and imagined is blurred. He describes postmodern condition as hyperreal, and postmodern world consists of simulation of realities and hyperrealities. Signs do not depict reality but refer to other signs.

Historiographical Metafiction

Linda Hutcheon in her 'Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction' describes historiographic meta-fiction as "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages--- it always works within conventions in order to subvert them." (Hutcheon 5) She further argues that "Meta fiction is a text that self-consciously draws attention to its status as an artifact and questions the relationship between reality and fiction." (42) The novel revolves around General Zia's regime and tries to resolve the mystery of his death. Its relation with the truth is difficult to determine. The narrative voice retells Zia's story from a different angle and subverts the traditional notions about his regime. It challenges the traditional way of representing Zia as dictator with heroic qualities, He appears more of a caricature. His decisions are driven by lust and insecurities. He uses religion to befool the nation. The narrative voice tries to give a glimpse of his inner thoughts. In *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* Hanif fictionalizes the history and blurs the binary opposition between the truth and falsehood, thus he mingles history and fiction. Historiographic metafiction both "installs and blurs the line between fiction and history" and there is "simultaneous and overt assertion and crossing of boundaries" in a highly self-conscious way. (Hutcheon 113)

The writers of historiographic metafiction mostly create stereotypical characters. These stereotypes are just caricatures and usually lack individual characteristics. Even in the novel, some of the characters are peripheral figures, subaltern others that do not occupy important places in the mainstream history but Zia regime is presented through their angles. Historiographic metafiction refers to the works which fictionalize the actual historical events or figures. Hanif fictionalizes different events of Zia regime. The actual events are blended with a touch of fictionality very expertly and Hanif weaves the events in a gripping manner. It catches the readers off guard in the very beginning and do not let them lose their interest. The novel gives a fictional colour to the actual events of history.

The plane crash which took the lives of Zia and U.S Ambassador to Pakistan, Arnold Raphael and Brig Gen Herbert M Wasson, head of the US military mission to Pakistan, is presented as a prediction made by the “problematic verse.” The novel is based on a conspiracy plot which seems to be designed by the evil hand of fate. After the crash of the helicopter that was carrying Zia and other people, a soldier goes to the desert, in order to get a clue about his dearth. When he finds the evidence and bends to pick up that, he encounters a copy of the Holy Book. The page that was opened at that time was about Jonah inside the whale.

The story of crow is fictional. The crow acts as an element of fate, which is responsible for destroying “four fifteen-hundred horsepower engines of Pak One.” “The crow leaves his sanctuary in the mango orchard and flies towards his “destination”, “He tucks his right wing under his body and goes into a lazy circle to turn back” but instead of going back or away from Pak One, “suddenly the crow finds himself somersaulting through the air, hurtling towards a giant metal whale that is sucking in all the air in the world” Finally , “The crow hurtles through the engine, spins with the intake cycle and is sucked into a side duct; his tiny shriek is drowned out by the roar of engine.” (357)The hit of the crow eventually fulfills Akhtar’s plans. The result is quite visible, the pilot takes notice that “the pressure needle monitoring his port engine suddenly dips and the air conditioning is switched on automatically.”(360) Hussain, in his article reveals the mystery of the crash, he says, “The longer the tragedy goes unexamined in any rigorous, if not conclusive, way, the more internally contradictory and bizarre the story becomes.”(1) The entrance of fictional elements and fictional characters makes the tale exciting. The blend of functionality with ironic narrative makes the novel worth reading.

Hanif exaggerates that episode in which Joanne takes General Zia’s interview, she wears “push up bra”. She imagines that the nation of one hundred and thirty million is looking at the photo and ridiculing her. Nobody of course would be bothered about the famous foreign reporter, she guessed.

She was a professional, she was an American, she could wear what she liked. If she had to wear push-up bras and low-cut dresses to get interviews with presidents, well, she was getting paid to do it. And as for him?she didn’t really know the masses thought of him, but he was surrounded by people who would tell him that it was all conspiracy on the part of the newspaper, that the picture had been doctored and the editor should be put on trial in a military court for publishing obscene material.(Hanif 124)

The climax is based on fictitious scenes.. The painted picture of the crash around which the whole story revolves proves that the story is historically meta-fictionalised.

First, there is the thunder of 78 tons of metal and fuel and cargo propelled by 4300 horsepower engine colliding, skidding, against the hot desert sand... the desert receives a shower of metal and flesh and sundry objects. The plane coughs out its secrets: wallets with children’s smiling pictures, half-finished letters to mistresses, flight manuals with emergency procedures marked in red, golden uniform buttons with crossed swords insignias, a red sash with the army, navy and air force logos sails through the air... (Hanif 361-62)

MAGICAL REALISM:

Magical realism is another postmodern trait that is employed in the novel. Most importantly Zia’s attitude towards the Holy book, he takes it as a book of omen. As the text tells, “After eleven years he was feeling creeping habit setting in. for he had started consulting the Holy book daily as if it was not the word of God but his daily horoscope on the back page of the Pakistan times.”(34) In spite of having read modudi and knowing that the book should not be used in worldly affairs. He reads it the way he likes. Novel narrates the incident in a way that “on 15 June 1988” Zia, encounters “the verse 21:87” that triggers fear in him. All his fears turn out to

be true in the end. This whole episode carries a magic realist touch. The verse also triggered a security alert that confined General Zia to his official residence, the army house. Two months and two days later he left the army house for the first time, and was killed in an airplane crash. The nation rejoiced and never found out that General Zia's journey towards death had started with the slight confusion he experienced over the translation of a verse on that fateful day. (Hanif 30) Whenever Zia had a confusion regarding the translation of the verse, he again "picked up another volume of Quran from the shelf anyway, closed his eyes, opened the book at random and moved his finger on the pages in front of him with his eyes shut." He wishes for something good but when he opens his eyes, he finds, "LA ILAHA ILLA ANTA SUBHANAKA INNI KUNTU MINAZZALIMEEN." (33)

This happening of the verse getting opened two times on the same day that "triggered fear in Zia" informs him about his forthcoming death. (364) The officer finding some clue of Zia's death at the scene notices a copy of Quran, which is opened in the middle and remained intact even after the blast. Before he kisses the Quran and closes it carefully he reads the verse on the page that is open in front of him and tries to recall a half remembered story about an ancient prophet. The novel narrates another magical realist event, the crow who gives company to blind Zainab becomes the cause of airplane crash. The narrative voice humorously narrates the incident, It is a well-known fact that most curses don't work. As the text tells, "The only way they can work is if a crow hears a curse from someone who has fed him to a full stomach and then carries it to the person who has been cursed." (214) That day while feeding the crow, Zainab was informed by the jailor that she would be shifted to some new place where she would not be able to give interviews. She protested first by saying that, "I want to live here. I want to die here" but when her protest was over ruled and jailer told her that "the guilds have come from the President", she set off. "

Blind Zainab who had listened in silence when a lecherous judge sentenced her to death, she Who had not given her tormentors the satisfaction of a scream, she who had spent her life Thanking God and forgiving His men for what they did to her: Zainab screamed and Zainab cursed. (214)

Zainab's curses the general, "May worms eat the innards of the person who is taking me away from my home. May his children not see his face in death." (214) The novel reveals that the crow was destined to touch Pak One. "The crow is wondering why he has left his sanctuary in the mango orchard", writes Hanif, who is making the crow fly towards his "destination" more than anything else. We find out that, "He tucks his right wing under his body and travels in a lazy circle to turn backwards" but instead of moving backwards or away from Pak One, Suddenly the crew finds himself somersaulting through the air, hurtling towards a giant metal whale that is sucking in all the air in the world... the crow hurtles through the engine, spins with the intake cycle and is sucked into a side duct; his tiny shriek is drowned out by the roar of the engine. (360) The novels provide some beautiful and gripping moments; when the crow, in spite of being startled by the roar of aero plane, keeps on slumbering, the text creates the reader feel as if the Crow is taking orders from fate and he does not fix up even when the security clearance plane comes. But he collides with the airplane that is carrying the delegation of the Army. Later when Pak One flies into the air the crow starts its flight as well.

Five miles from where the generals stand, the crow hears the roar of an aeroplane approaching. Startled out of his full-stomached slumber, the crow flutters its wings in panic, then gets distracted to a mango rotting on the branch above him and decides to continue his nap for a little longer. (336)

The crow shakes off his sleep when he picks up the sound of his actual victim approaching. The explosion was caused by the very ominous entrance of the crow. It entered and

it ruined that plane. Like other postmodern characteristics, magical realist elements are also in abundance. It is not difficult to trace the postmodern sensibility in the novel.

MINI NARRATIVE AS A SYMBOL OF ANTI-AUTHORITATIVE STANCE AND REJECTION OF MONOLITHIC REALITY

All postmodern elements are used together to breakdown traditions, postmodern art is anti-establishment and anti-authoritative in nature, “many of postmodernism’s features stem directly from a disdain of both aesthetic and political authorities that are in the practice of imposing norms.” It is a reaction against “authoritarian hierarchization of culture by subverting conventions, blurring previously distinct boundaries and rejecting traditional aesthetic values.” (Hutcheon 5) Postmodernism is a struggle against hierarchy.

In his essays ‘The Postmodern Condition’ and “what is postmodernism?” Lyotard argues that in postmodern world knowledge has become a commodity. Knowledge is a mean of power which is communicated through narratives. He criticizes the tendency of presenting grand narratives as absolute truths, the truths that are beyond any kind of criticism. “In a culture driven by grand narratives, the ideology of the predominant regime eventually has a monopoly on knowledge” which Lyotard opposes by calling for “a new world of knowledge based on mininarratives.” (61) Mini narratives reject epistemological hierarchy and do not claim to possess any universal truths. Lyotard announces that “the grand narrative has lost its credibility.” (37) Thus mini narratives offer more liberating expressions. The novel re-tells the reality of Zia Regime through different angles. Different mini narratives represent different angles of reality.

REJECTION OF MONOLITHIC REALITY

Postmodernist texts reject one-sided truth and are skeptic of the presence of any absolute reality. Postmodernist narratives deconstruct the hegemony of a monolithic truth and believe in presenting its various versions. Thus they present counter truths and create liberating spaces through which marginalized perspectives could be heard. Postmodernism like Feminism challenges binaries. As Thornham mentions in ‘postmodern and Feminism.’ That instead of the concept of universal man or woman, then, both feminism and postmodernism offer different definitions of existence and power. (44) Alice Jardine argues in Feminism /Postmodernism that all standpoint theorist believe in this concept that all marginalized and subjugated subjects always provide new angle of visions which are absolutely different from privileged versions. They provide new knowledge, “they also produce less distorted, less rationalizing, less falsely universalizing account.” (qtd in Thornham 49) The aim of this is to develop “an account of the world which treats the alternative perspective not- as subjugated as disruptive knowledge, but instead as primary and capable of constituting a different world.” (49)

The text re-tells the story of blind Maryam from a unique perspective. It gives voice to the blind rape victim who suffered silently for a crime she has not committed. It addresses the blind spots in the history that preferred to remain silent on her perspective. Thus by deconstructing the established truth of a patriarchal society it unveils her inner thoughts, her angle, and her version of truth which seems to contradict the established one. Thus, it documents the long lost story of rape and exploitation that is omitted from the pages of history. As Khalid says, “postmodern narrative valorizes the marginal and critiques the social arrangements of power, questioning the mastery, objectivity and impersonality of the master narrative.” (43) The text blurs the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity and believes in presenting truth

from multiple angles. It refuses to stress on singular and fixed truth and brings on different accounts. In history, Zainab has been refused a voice; her account is missing, her truth is missing. She has never been given an opportunity to speak up her mind, Hanif recaptures that missing voice in his text. Like Postmodern Historiographic Metafiction, the writer appears to believe in the “multiplicity and dispersion of truth”(Hutcheon 108) and seems excessively concerned with the truths of marginalized others.

FRAGMENTATION

The novel depicts characters from diverse social backgrounds in order to represent different viewpoints. Multiple characters present different realities. Characters with different individual identities tend to bring forth contradictions in the novel’s message; it gives rise to the mood of objectivity instead of subjectivity. Christopher Norris describes the postmodern fragmentation as “an absolute break and irreparable break with the unified subject.” (qtd in McRobbu 28) The novel decanters the unified subject by focusing its subject matter on all kinds of people, also including those which previously shove into the background. It swiftly moves from one position to another, and records a number of dissident voices. The novel proposes a number of references from diverse background that together represent multifarious aspects of Pakistani society. (p.12)

This fragmentation is not confined to its subject matter, but is quite visible in its narrative frame. It dismantles the grand narrative and breaks it down into fragmented narrative. The narrative style is non-linear. The writer makes a rich use of plot-drift technique, by interjecting different non-related stories. The novel distrusts the concept of wholeness and completion generally associated with traditional stories. The novel turns away to provide any concrete moral message. It uses fragmentation to highlight the diversity of Pakistani society and the impossibility of establishing any moral authority in a pluralistic modern era. It rejects systems that seem to believe in absolute truths and moral authorities. The buried message under the highly satirical surface of *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* can be easily decoded. It seems to distrust authority. Most of the characters in the novel are those which are traditionally associated with authority such as politicians, policemen, soldiers and bureaucrat and ministers. Those authoritative figures are either incompetent or morally corrupt. They are just caricatures who seem to mimic the idea of authority. The novel puts a negative spin on its authoritative characters. They manipulate religious knowledge to get their own ends. Religious doctrines are metanarratives. They are misinterpreted. Zia claims as if he is the one who can read the spiritual truths. He ruthlessly controls knowledge and denies any other possible interpretation of the verses of the Holy Book. He can go to any extent to force that version of his truth. Zia claims to be the one who holds the strongest moral conviction and believes in the most concrete ethical system. He satirizes the misinterpreted religious metanarratives. These characters embody anti-establishmentarian tendencies. Religious doctrines are used as a mean to exploit masses. He uses brainwashing powers to blind the masses. Lyotard opposes this system of power in ‘The Postmodern Condition’ when knowledge becomes hierarchal, only ideas from a selective privileged group can become a part of the collective body of canonical knowledge. Thus authority encourages a totalizing system of knowledge which enables them to keep power. Metanarrative include the marginalized voices, and legitimized the knowledge the way they wish. The novel prefers mini-narratives to the homogenizing metanarratives.

PARODY

Like other postmodern narratives, this novel embraces intertextuality. It is full with rich implicit and explicit references to the cultural icons from the yesteryear and the present. It parodies well-known historical figures. Most of the characters are laughable stereotypes. These stereotypes are uniquely represented in postmodern narratives; the cases of parody often seem to give an aspect of their real selves in order to present their stereotypical personality. Although the novel deals with the present, the past compromise a significant portion of its parodies and pastiche. Historical references are parodied and assimilated into the narrative. The epoch of the 1980s is created through stereotypical images. Jameson's theory of passing of historical reality is really significant in this respect. It is difficult to comprehend the original past. It can only be comprehended through the aid of certain images which are present in the media, movies, books and magazines, etc. Past is limited to these images, "history comes to be conceived in superficial forms and our understanding of the past ends up being based on an image of an image." (24)

Historical figures lack individuality and are more of clichés instead of actual people. The past is revived and revisited with the help of recycled images of history. Hanif retells Zia's story by mingling the facts with the illusion. The novel tells a semi-fictional explanation of that period. Numerous allusions to the past and present are incorporated into the novel. In such instance, the reader will decipher their referents as the real things, and automatically sort out the genuine from the fictional in their minds. But once readers have made the association with the realness, the writer alters those realistic referents in order to prepare the reader who is uncertain of the legitimacy of that realness. Thus, it becomes difficult to decipher the real from the ureal.

SATIRE AND IRONY

Hanif goes on to explicate the story of Joanne Herring with the tinge of irony and exposes Zia's double standards. The journalist who writes "Zia-ul-Fuck rather than Zia-ul-Haq" gives deep insight into the mind of "The man of faith" who bans all the female judges and news reporters who does not accept to wear dopattas on their heads, himself turns out to be a womanizer. Through his ironic and satiric description, Hamid depicts how Zia camouflages his lust. Zia justifies his affair with Joanne by calling her "Mujahid, an ally" in his mission. But conceiving of her as a Mujahid, he could not help imaging about her "luscious lips, she blow dried hair" and above all "the heart shaped diamond necklace that nestled between her breasts." (122) Nish (2012) argues that "this book is funny in a dark, sarcastic way . . . gallows humor you might say". The novel playfully draws our attention towards the story of Joanne and Zia. The door opened and a swirl of sandalwood perfume, peach colored silk and mauve lipstick came at him, cooing, 'your Excellency. Welcome to the fine city of Lufkin.' ... Then as Joanne lunged towards him, the self-control that had helped him survive three wars, one coup and two elections vanished. He left the table same height without her heels. Her left breast pressed lightly against the strain of his safari suit and General Zia closed his eyes, his chin resting on the satin bra strap on her shoulder. For a moment the first lady's face flashed in front of his eyes. He tried to think of other things: moments from his glorious career; his first handshake with Ronald Reagan; his speech at the UN; Khomeini telling him to take it easy. (123)

The narrative voice ironically describes Zia's relationship with his first lady. She was greatly disturbed when she saw the picture she realized that General Zia had gone beyond his limit in that affair. "There was no mistaking this" Zia was flying to "Texas and sitting there ogling their tits". She realizes that "under all that talk of piety and purdah, there is a red blooded

man who can't resist a peek". First Lady could see herself as the victim , she looked at the picture, she felt as if picture in the newspaper had Zia and Joanne along with an unseen presence. She feels as if "the nation of one hundred and thirty million" is feeling pity for her.(124-25)

BLACK HUMOUR

According to Robert Macfarlane (2008) "The jokes start early in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and they keep on coming. There are times when the novel feels just a touch too fond of its own one liners. Satire is, after all, a comic mode that asks to be taken seriously." (1)

There are shocking scenes in the Hanif's novel, and the shock that they deliver is greater because they occur as interludes to the comedy. The subplot of Joanne and Zia and the twist of this subplot towards the first lady is one such episode in the novel is a paramount example of black humor. First lady gets wild and says out, "I'll gouge these eyes out", she hissed, looking at the photo. "I'll make mincemeat out of your old prick, you bastard." (125) Black humor keeps on adding up. The First Lady does not yield the most expected response, like pulling the newspaper aside. In fact, she tries to forget the incident and feels pity for the man who "at the age of sixty three, with five titles before his name and a nation of one hundred and thirty million people to answer to, he was flying over floozies from Texas and then sitting there ogling their tits." (Hanif 126)

The light hearted irony and black humor reaches at its peak when the novel demystifies the case of blind Zainab. Here The narrative voice becomes satiric. The cruelty of Zia regime is fully exposed. The incident tears off the so called mask of "the man of faith" and lays bare his true expression. Zainab, a blind woman, "was born without corneas". Her "milk white eyes" were a validation of her innocence in them. But the barbarity of the dictator came to its highest height when he, through his so called judges, sentenced the blind woman to death for the offenses she had not entrusted. He turns out to be "a mullah with the instincts of a corrupt tax inspector" by deciding to exercise the cruel treatment of stoning that helpless creature to death. The law does not resolve to hang her, but to stone her to death and this "new law" is proposed by Zia himself. He turns on his frustration on a blind rape victim. The law refuses to believe in the story she offers at times and again, "It was drab but they had flashlights. They were three of them. At that place might have been another one outside the threshold. They smelled of car petrol, their hands were soft so they were not peasants. They tied my hands; they hit me when I asked to let me go in their mothers', sisters' names. They were animals." (Hanif 213) In her case the victim is punished instead of the victimizers. Zia, having called to Mecca and having consulted the Qazi there, was stern on his decision regarding Zainab. On the other hand Zainab was perplexed on account of her stoning to death. "Stoning?" she asked after she was sentenced. 'like they do to the devil in Mecca during haj? They have been doing it to him for centuries and they haven't been able to kill him. How are they going to kill a healthy woman like me?' (Hanif 214) She was unable to understand the logic behind the punishment. It rather confuses her, "Why would anyone want to kill a poor blind woman?" was her recurring answer to all the excitement that her lawyer and other woman's groups outside the jail were creating about her death sentence."(Hanif 212)

PASTICHE

Black humor and satire are not the only postmodern elements which are used again and again in Hanif's novel. The story does equip other postmodern elements as well. Pastiche, as it

is elaborated, is a work of art that imitates the previous happenings with the intent of satire. The novel narrates the era of late 1980s. It is the tale of Jonah-the Zun-nus. The prophet, who had rested in the belly of a whale and then came out alive after forty days,. Zia identifies himself with him. . General Zia according to his usual routine opens up a chapter in holy book and starts reciting. As soon as he starts reciting he encounters that “problematic verse” about Jonah and the conflict starts. “Before morning prayers on 15th June 1988, General Mohammed Zia UL-Haq’s finger hesitated on the verse 21:87 while reading the Quran, and he spent the rest of his short life dreaming about the innards of the whale.”(30) This version makes him imagine something about future.“The verse also triggered a security alert that confined him to the Army House. Two months and two days later he left the Army House and was killed in an airplane crash. The nation rejoiced and never found out that General Zia’s journey towards death had started with the slight confusion, he experienced over the translation of a verse on that fateful day.”(30) Namely that “problematic verse” was about Zun-Nus and the whale. The novel pastiches an incident from history.He pastiches the tale by letting Zia imagine himself in Jonah’s place.The translation of that verse which Zia read was:“And remember Zun-nus, when he departed in wrath: he imagined that We had no power over him! But he cried through the depths of darkness, ‘There is no god but Thou: glory to Thee: I was indeed wrong!’”(30) Hanif, using pastiche as a tool, lays bare before us the troubled mind of Zia who was obsessed with the thought that at which point he was wrong. He gets obsessed with the incident and rereads it several times. He compares his life with The prophet’s life and the similarities haunt him all the time.“The General knew the story of Jonah well. The fact that Jonah was Zun-Nus here did not disconcert him. He knew Jonah and Zun-Nus were one and the same, a frustrated prophet who walked out on his clan, ended up in whale’s belly, then chanted this verse over again till the whale spat him back out, alive and well.”(31) At this moment he begins to imagine his upcoming death. Eventually a plane crash became the cause of his death; his death has become the most controversial topic, the whole world talked about it and forgot in no time

The link between the story of Jonah and Zia is completely well established by the author and he brings out both the stories with the intent of satire. The inner trauma of General Zia is reflected in the passages related to this story. The novel retells several episodes from history. The funeral of Indra is one such event. Zia shudders when he sees the funeral ceremony and imagines his own end. As the text tells,

A shudder ran through General Zia. Indra had been gunned down by her own military bodyguards while taking a stroll in her own garden. General Zia had to travel to India to see her funeral where he witnessed at first hand the abomination that was the Hindu religion. They built a pyre of wood, poured some melted butter over it and then Indira Gandhi’s own son lit the flame... The General thanked ALLAH for giving them Pakistan so their children didn’t have to witness this hell on earth every day.(p.73)

The episode about Indira’s murder and her last ceremonies is a vivid example of pastiche in the novel.

CONCLUSION:

The novel depicts various prominent features that are mostly associated with post-modernism. Such as self-consciousness, fragmentation, parody, pastiche, intertextuality, hyperrealism, multi layered irony and anti-authoritarian stance. The novel represents postmodern sensibility.

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