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***Lincoln in the Bardo*, by George Saunders, New York: Bloomsbury, 2017, Pp. 341, Price:Rs.599.**

**Reviewed by:**

**Feneena S. Mohamed**

**Assistant Professor**

**Union Christian College**

**Alwaye.**

*Lincoln in the Bardo* won the Man Booker prize(2017). It gained George Saunders , the American author , international acclaim. Saunders' *Tenth of December* received accolades. *The Guardian* states "Saunders's stories are always about humanity and the meaning we find in small moments , in objects or gestures. He paints painful portraits of domesticity, of families, of death." *Lincoln in the Bardo* marks his transition from a short story writer to a novelist.

It is often said that the work is experimental- with a new method of narration; fiction and history producing blurred boundaries; Lincoln as father than a President; the plot that shows a cemetery(Oak Hill) but a symbolic bardo. The kernel of the story is Willie Lincoln's death and Lincoln's visit to the crypt.

Saunders creates a moving tale of mourning and loss. He achieves it through willie, roger bevens iii, hans vollman and the reverend. Their non human existence is visible in textual space in small letters(willie,not Willie). They occupy a "sick- box" unwilling to accept their death. bardo is a fictional representation of Saunders's knowledge of human psyche , the adamancy of human nature to the point of foolishness. Why else should these creatures in the bardo, with putrefied bodies and disillusioned minds cling to the past?

The novel begins in the fictitious space called bardo where hans vollman recalls his marriage and thus starts a cacophony of voices to occupy the monotony and boredom of the cemetery. The stage is set for Abraham Lincoln's entry . Lincoln alone in the cemetery would reduce the narration to a monologue. The creatures in "sick-boxes" add ironical human quality to the cemetery with their own memories when they were alive. Lincoln's parental affection gives them a ray of hope that they are all worthy of love.

The novel is a happy union of Christian and Buddhist beliefs and mores. Buddhism provides the concept of bardo whereas willie's confinement in the "sick- box", the angels, the Judgement, damnation and salvation come from Christianity.

The abundance of Christian ideas in the novel contrast with the bardo in the title, hence bardo is more symbolic. It is a transitional stage of doubts and delusions; hesitation and horror. Willie's symbolic occupation of bardo corresponds with his physical presence in the coffin. Bardo is an extension of the creatures' earthly existence, with all the memories. It is also a place where one cannot tarry for long lest one be damned.

The writer divides the whole swathe of narration into the fictional/historical space and the bardo. He can thus bring together historical facts of the Civil War, Willie's fever and death and his subsequent struggle in the bardo. The horror of Willie's pitiable condition and the magnificent State Dinner hosted by Mrs and Mr Lincoln are portrayed with equal dexterity.

Linear narration is broken as first willie, the creature is shown through the occupants of the bardo. Willie's funeral procession unravels through "The Civil War Letters of Isabelle Perkins." Amusement at a child's entry soon wears off as children should not tarry. hans vollman and roger bevins iii put themselves to task with the help of the reverend, at one point they outwit the reverend. The reverend was trapped in the carapace as he tried to help willie.

willie lingers in the bardo hoping to meet his father again. elise traynor's condition or his own decaying body could not deter him. hans vollman and roger bevins iii co-habit Lincoln and persuade him to return to the crypt. willie's final exit, after he understands that he is really dead, add pathos .It motivates hans vollman and roger bevins iii to leave the place for good, but not before rescuing the traynor girl.

willie thus saves all of them from damnation. The novel accentuates the enigma surrounding death and Hereafter. It is a novel of compassion and a saga of parental love and loss.