

“PARADISE”: A SCHISM BETWEEN PREMODERN, MODERN AND POSTMODERN CULTURAL CONCEPTION

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***ABSTRACT**-The objective of this research paper is to trace the elements of pre-modern, modern and postmodern cultural practices in Ruby, the isolated all-black town which is the setting of the book “Paradise” (Morrison, 1997), while delimiting the definition of the three concepts as theoretical basis for “cultural practices”. After successfully tracing the simultaneous presence of all three cultural conceptions the paper reports on how this mix of cultures turns into schism and contributes towards the main conflict of the book and causes the extraordinary events which follow because of the rift between the three cultures. The paper also discusses the postmodern concepts of “metanarratives” and “magic realism” in relation to “Paradise”. Morrison’s use of both modern and postmodern literary conventions is also traced to further support the claims of this research.*

Key Words: *Pre-modern, Modern, Postmodern, Metanarratives, Mini-narratives, Magic Realism.*

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Written by Toni Morrison, the first black woman to have received Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993, “Paradise” (1997) is a breathtaking lyrical depiction of the search for Heaven on Earth and beyond. It is the story of a Utopian all-black town of “Ruby” and the “Convent” with its crumbling existence situated miles away in the deserted stretch of waste land surrounding Ruby. It is a bleak picture of the events and individuals accompanied by the ancestral scars of past slavery, self-righteousness, deep rooted prejudices, stubborn adherence to outdated cultural norms, rejection, sexism, racism and the parallel resistance to and for the change.

Postmodernism has been forever an elusive term that is capable of elucidating multiple contemporary cultural changes (Featherstone, 2007). From a methodological perspective, it can be employed as a tool to diagnose cultural and personal issues of today with focus on identity, social change and its consequences (Nicholson, 2013). Postmodernists are almost always reluctant to name any determining factor as a single major cause of any crisis, and invariably challenge the grand ideologies of dominant cultures at various levels including politics (Hutcheon, 2003). There is, for postmodernists, no privileged position given to any single ideological stance, no unproblematic position or a theorized agency from which to speak about social practices which are all “constitutive of complex systems” of representation (Cilliers, 2002). And above all there is no acceptance of any kind of political agenda or transformative resistance among the postmodernists. But that rejection of any ideology itself appears to be an ideology which hardly any postmodernist would acclaim. Modern and postmodern cultures are linked as “regimes of signification” in terms of economic and societal changes of the present era (Lash, 2014), with postmodernism playing the part of a manufactured, constructive artifact (McHale, 2012).

This paper is an attempt at tracing the simultaneous presence of the cultural aspects of pre-modern, modern, and postmodern ideas and practices, and the struggle which leads to dissatisfaction, death and destruction, within the single community of

Ruby and its “strange neighbours” as the point of major conflict. This paper treats all three “cultural conceptions” as a distinct but somewhat conjunctive yet clashing sets of ideologies. The analysis aims to discuss that how the main conflict within the novel is the result of the struggle between the three cultures and its proponents.

1.1. Relation between Modernism and Postmodernism

The pre-modern beliefs in a central power, an authoritative figure such as God had already started crumbling in vogue of the modern belief in Individualism, Reason, Rationality, logo-centrism and the search for novelty brought about by the Enlightenment culminating in the establishment of nation states after the World War (Toulmin & Toulmin, 1992) pushing the people to question the world order itself. Whereas some scholars define postmodernism as a new trend, or a space for political and social change (McRobbie & Mcrobbie, 2003) others hold a different view, that is; postmodernism is an extension of modernism, that it “is not a phase beyond modernity but represents the most advanced, and possibly final, stage of modernity” (Delanty, 2000). Postmodernism as culture stands to argue the assumption that there still is a world which is better than the modern world (Lemert, 1997). Fredrick Jameson (Jameson, 1991) treats postmodernism as an historical period, cultural phenomena and intellectual trend. Industrialization and capitalism caused the modern trends to emerge which were in consequence rendered inappropriate for the “fragmented” societies of the postmodern era, hence the rise of secularism and eclectic approach. So, if pre-modern, modern and postmodern are to be treated as periods in history, then “postmodernism has something to do with the breaking apart of modernism” (Lemert, 1997).

2. “PARADISE”

“They shoot the white girl first” are the words which introduce the reader to the world of Morrison’s “Paradise” (Morrison, 1997); people of colour have always been the target of the worst forms of racism, slavery and horrendous torture throughout the human history. But in this book the conventional binary opposition of

racism is reversed. It also deals with the racism within a single race, the black versus black dichotomy, and that hate touches the heights of such selfishness and callousness that even the word of God, the scripture, fails to influence them as they are driven only by the history of Ruby. Thus, Morrison attempts to present an alternate view of the world, a different kind of narrative, a different dichotomy to provide an opportunity of exploring the issue of “race” from another lens and to ultimately prove that whether black or white, the establishment of fixed power structures demands suppression of the marginalized; of the mini-narratives; and of the subjectivity of interpretations. On a simplistic level “Paradise” appears to be a “good versus evil” story in which women represent all that is good and almost all the men are evil. A deeper level of irony underlies this dichotomy. Women being the marginalized group tend to have postmodernists airs, especially the convent’s women are the symbol of change, variation and a voice against all the pre-modern notions the men of Ruby practice and preach to keep the community static and controlled.

2.1. Pre-modernism in “Paradise”

The origins of this story lie in the U.S. slavery (1619–1865) followed by the Reconstruction (1867–1877). Thus, the elements which formulate the foundations of this all-black community are based on “rejection” their forefathers faced not only at the hands of “whites” but also by the people of their own colour. So, it should not be surprising that the black founding fathers of Haven retained the pre-modern values of collectivism, humanism, and egalitarianism which succored them during slavery (Mbalia, 2004). Under the consciousness of being the true heirs of the founding fathers, the elder men of Ruby, the new fathers, leave no stone unturned to keep the social practices and culture of not so pre-modern era’s Ruby as like the values of their not even modern forefathers as possible. This is evident from the signification attached to the Oven (p. 6). The placement and replacement of that oven make it a symbol of pre-modern conception of central authority. Loyalty to religion and the final authority of God is yet another characteristic of the pre-modern culture being vigorously defended and promoted by the New Fathers, and they are more than

willing to go all lengths to secure their way of interpreting God, morality, normativity and even everyday human behaviour and actions. They even justify their financial ventures as if they are in league with what God wants done with the money they control as if God Himself is their “silent business partner.” (p. 143). Their persecution of the women living in the Convent is the extreme manifestation of the kind of control they are used to exercise over their own families and fellow Ruby people at large. The elders believe that “they are protecting” the women and children of Ruby but in fact “they are maiming them” argues Minser (p. 306).

Absence of public transport, television, cinema, national newspaper, diners, police, public phones and even gas stations (p. 12) is evidence that how much the Fathers are keen on keeping their town isolated from the outside cultural influences. The convent, though quite postmodern in its outlook, is no exception to this rule of Ruby’s New Fathers with no newspapers no radio allowed there as well (p. 41), hence the absence of media culture in the community. And the elders are rather jubilant and proud of this forced isolation from the outside world which keeps their pre-modern notions in practice in a town which exists in an era and such a country which is marked for its rapidly changing cultural trends under the influence of post modernistic notions.

That is the reason that people like Minser and Convent women face resistance by the Fathers. Ruby, to Billie Delia, is a “backward non-place” run by men whose lust “to control” is so “out of control” that they have “the nerve” to dictate “who could live” and “where” and who could “not” (p. 308). The verdict for the punishment inflicted on the Convent women for not making these “sacrifices”, for keeping up with the outside culture, for choosing not to need men, for being independent and “fun lovers”, “lively” and “unarmed” (p.308) is so final in its nature that Ruby’s elders forget their personal differences to destroy the violators of their pre-modern codes (p. 10).

2.2. Modernism in “Paradise”

The ongoing struggle between the exploited down and out lower class and the ruling upper class who owns the banks, the land and factories is a characteristic of modern capitalist societies. Although Ruby’s elders are proud that they too, like Haven people, follow the pre-modern notion of Collectivism and never deny each other anything, but the capitalist exploitation and competition is very much a part of their community. Paradise is not only about the “race” issue, it is not confined to colour alone that people get chosen and ranked in Ruby. For example, the black raced Fleetwoods are humiliated when the Morgans have an upper hand in Arnette/K.D. row because a solution would endanger the very future of the “Morgan money.” (p. 55). Later the Pooles and other poor families are set as the target for newly married Arnette and K.D. to exploit and downplay by their show of wealth. The conflict explicates itself when Sweetie Fleetwood asserts that her child will not be buried on Morgan land. The economic system of Ruby is an inverse imitation of the system of “white rule” having the similar negative foundations of racism, sexism, religious prejudices, oppression of the young and lust for money. While running away from slavery, the New Fathers themselves have created the modern form of slavery in Ruby. Moreover, the resistance to change that the young face at the hands of Ruby’s elders, who use the modern conceptions of Progressivism as a metanarrative to maintain their Capitalistic hegemony, the ultimate violence against the Convent women; and the resistance to all fragments of mini-narratives; lays bare the ugly truth that the elders of Ruby believe themselves to be better than the “white man” but in truth “they imitate him.” (p. 305).

2.3. Postmodernism in “Paradise”

Postmodernism views art and literature as a “social sign” which is unavoidably and inevitably “enmeshed in other signs in systems of meaning and value” (Hutcheon, 1989). But postmodernists being the voice against “totalization” cannot, unlike other “isms” such as feminism and post-colonialism, declare patriarchy or colonization as the sole underlying metanarrative or ideology that rules all the aspects

of the systems of domination and hegemony. Postmodernists only “de-oxify” the prevailing public opinion, consensus or in the words of Ronald Barthes “the voice of nature” (Hutcheon, 1989). Postmodernists such as Lyotard emphasize the “incapacity of theory” (Browning, 2000) and language itself is “inadequate” in essence (Fischlin, 2013). Because all the theories are in effect formed out of ideologies which in turn are established through the grand narratives and these grand or meta narratives are repudiated by Lyotard to promote the postmodern acceptance of differences, and variety (Browning, 2000) in the form of mininarratives. But the irony lies in the fact that even the critique against these grand narratives cannot, itself, be extricated from the all-encompassing meta-narratives. And that is why postmodernism lacks a sound theoretical base, since Lyotard’s incredulity regarding the metanarratives means that no ideology can be acceptable because even ideology itself is formed out of discourses, the metanarratives, and Lyotard himself was aiming at producing a postmodern theory of political action (Williams, 2013). Thus, to trace the postmodern elements and to expose the underlying metanarrative or ideologies that rule all the aspects of the systems of domination and hegemony in “Paradise”, the following sections deal with the various aspects of domination systems and the “small narratives”.

2.3.1 Metanarratives

Jean-Francois Lyotard defines postmodernism as “incredulity towards metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1984). This means increasing skepticism (Browning, 2000) towards all the overarching grand narratives of modernism based on totalizing universal and institutional truths. The “hegemonic discourses” (Place & Winter, 2013) of these grand narratives are employed as a tool by those in power to legitimize their illegitimate cultural practices and control over the marginalized groups of society. To expose and explicate these meta-narratives, the “petit recites” or “small stories” must be considered by the postmodernists. Postmodern literature aims at contesting the

metanarratives of the “cultural dominants” such as the discourse of patriarchy; capitalism; social class; history; universality of truth; morality; war; humanism; heroism; religion; Progressivism; Life and Death; and above all the cultural dominance of race and ethnicity in today’s global world (Kaufmann, 2004). It does so by incorporating the mini-narratives in its discourse. And that, precisely, is what Morrison has attempted to do in this book.

2.3.1.1 Metanarratives of History and Race

The New Fathers based Ruby on the totalizing metanarratives of racism and history, “with each misfortune” they became stiffer and relied heavily on the “Unembellished stories” of past “told and retold” (p. 14). It is almost as if they had no stories to tell of their present because “past heroism” was more than enough “to live by”, and as if instead of children they desired “duplicates” of Ruby’s “grands and great grands” (p. 161). These metanarratives are how they control and legitimize all their dictatorial actions and assumptions. The fickle nature of these metanarratives is exposed when Patricia Best attempts to document “The town’s official story” (p. 188). She starts searching for the answers to some uncomfortable questions such as who the women with generalized second names were or no second names at all, and why in Morgan’s Bible there was a heavy ink blot “next to Zechariah’s name” (p. 188). In search of answers she faces resistance from Ruby’s men and women alike, except a few like Soane. Her own father keeps quite on certain issues, it is only the children or the very old “Grandmothers” who like to “reminisce aloud” and Patricia learns about the “orphans” the “lost children” aged between twelve years who on seeing Ruby’s forefathers in caravans “asked to join” and the two toddlers whom those forefathers “simply snatched” (p. 189). She learns that her mother was not given a proper burial place due to her skin colour and above all she learns how to secure the bloodlines and to not let anyone marry an outsider they have had “crooked” practices such as ‘takeovers’: a young widow or a helpless young girl would be sent by her

patriarch to “take over” the house of a single man related to her by blood (p. 197). Disgusted with the hypocrisy of their metanarratives of racial purity Patricia yells “Did they really think they could keep this up? The numbers, the bloodlines, the who fucks who?” (p. 217). Resultantly, she drops her files and “sheets of paper” of Ruby’s history “into the flames” (p. 216).

The purity of race, racial hatred, and its significance for the sheer survival of the community is also a mainstream metanarrative of the people of Ruby. No blacks are allowed inside the town, the founding fathers, the 8-R (“eight-rock” was the name given to them due to their dark blue-black skins) are the only prestigious families in Ruby. Roger Best, although belongs to one of the founding families yet he is not respected because he married a non-black. Addressing her dead mother who died because no man was ready to drive her to hospital Patricia says “Mama, I know” they “despised Daddy” because he married a “wife of racial tampering” (p. 197). But the people of Ruby have their own story, the metanarrative, to legitimize their inhumane negligence of a dying non-black woman. Ruby, the 8-rock sister of Morgans, whose name was chosen to name the new town, died on “the waiting room bench” as no doctor was willing to help a “black” woman, and after her death her brothers learned that for Ruby the nurse tried “to reach a veterinarian” (p. 113). Though things have changed outside Ruby yet the “elders” of Ruby keep recounting this story while denying help each time a “white” needs it from them. These overarching metanarratives have portrayed the white men to “ten generations” of Ruby as villains, “every cluster of whitemen” appears as “a posse”, being alone “Out There” equals “being dead” (p. 16).

2.3.1.2 Metanarratives of Womanhood and Morality

The men of Ruby have a strong hold over women’s desires and actions in the name of love and care because they are proud that unlike black field-slave women, who worked just as hard as men and were not treated differently from men and had

no conception of being the weaker fair-sex, Ruby's women never worked on fields. Women's opinion holds no value in Ruby, the Heaven on Earth, because they are "just women" and what their opinion is "easily ignored" by the brave men of Ruby who are already en route "to Paradise." (p. 202). Women are never a part of decision making about any serious matter be it their own lives, as Arnette's father claims, that he is "her father" so he will "arrange her mind." (p. 61) about her child and marriage. But when things come to a deadlock, Arnold shifts the blame and responsibility to his wife saying she "is the key" because "Women" are invariably "always the key" (p. 61). Behind naming the town after a woman lies the irony that it was the "death" of a woman that gave the women a *representation*. And even in death Ruby cannot alone be the center of attention, by naming it Ruby, the Morgans mourned their sister and honoured the brother-in-law "who didn't make it back." (p. 17).

Billie Delia, being the target of jeering, because all the metanarratives of morality and womanhood go against her attitude and skin colour, voices her own mini-narratives to counter the metanarrative of the significance whole town attaches to K.D. and Arnette's wedding. To her, the real issue is not the bride's reputation or the baby's life but "about disobedience" of a mere "woman" who broke the metanarrative of morality and had a child outside marriage, so her father and the grandfathers of her illegitimate child are like "the stallions" continually battling for the control of "the mares and their foals." (p. 150). According to the rules it is the mother and not the father of the illegitimate child who must go to church and confess and beg pardon for fornication. The Convent has been a safe Haven for the women as well as for men, whereas it is only the women (with the exception of Arnette) consider it the "most peaceful place on earth." (p. 182), the men once done with what it has to offer are ready to forget the "real" to promote the metanarratives which suit their own purposes and agendas. So, Steward tells K.D., after Gigi kicks him out of Convent, that it's no more than a brothel lacking merely "a red light" hanging "in the window." (p. 114). Deek has "benefited" from the love and innocence of Connie, Menus has recovered from his drinking and dejection under Convent's roof, Fleetwoods' owe

them thanks for taking care of the stray Sweetie. But keeping in view the grand narrative the convent women are the “Bodacious black Eves” utterly “unredeemed by Mary” (p. 18).

In Ruby, they are struggling to keep the moral ideals and the Enlightenment principles in practice at the cost of the “real” and the “truth” they themselves preach, thus exposing their hypocrisy regarding how they deal with the immoral activities of Deek and K.D with Connie and Gigi respectively. On the other hand, for convent’s women morality is personal, the question of morality, truth, rationality and principles is just a matter of personal standpoint and interpretation, only “Lies not allowed” whereas every truth, no matter how grim, “is okay.” (p. 38)

2.3.1.3 Metanarratives of Life and Death

Ruby, the “town of Immortals” is suspicious of anyone having to do with “Death” because except for Patricia’s mother and Ruby, nobody has ever died “in Ruby” (p. 199). They believe their elders have made a deal with God to keep the “Reaper” out of the town. Each time one of them dies outside the town instead of simply mourning the dead they keep telling themselves that if only the dead person had stayed inside Ruby he would certainly have stayed alive. But the town itself is named after a death, thus complicating the interplay between life and death in the novel. It is the women living in Convent who forward a mini-narratives, an alternate view of life and death, more like *life in death* and *death in life*. The intricate relation between life and death as understood and practiced by these women takes on another form of postmodern convention of art, namely, *Magic Realism*.

2.3.2 Magic Realism in “Paradise”

Magical realist writings comprise miracles, ghosts, disappearances, strange atmosphere and extraordinary talents but without any trace of the normal conception about magic, because in real magic conjuring it is illusionary as if something extraordinary came to be but in *magic realism*, it is assumed that an extraordinary event really did take place (Bowers, 2005). “Paradise” is permeated with references to the magical realist events and descriptions. It is dominantly the Convent’s women

who are associated with such events, but Ruby's people are no exception either. For example, Dovey's meeting with her mysterious "Friend" and her dream-meeting with him when she dreams of washing his hair and on waking, she finds "her hands were wet" (p. 287). Above all, the "small man" who guided the Big Papa and his followers to the new town, whom they saw walking and followed to the spot, gradually dissolved into thin air "as they watched" (p. 98). Inside Convent Mavis hears the voices of her Dead twins and believes that they love Arnette's dead "baby" (p. 182). Connie never questions the reality of her twins, but Sweetie says, "she heard noises" like that of "little babies crying" and thinks that Convent women have supernatural "powers" (p. 275). Another magically real event occurs when Consolata is "tricked" by Lone, against her will and belief, into "raising the dead" (p. 242) Scout. Connie also prolongs the life of her mother, who herself is able to see "everything" in the whole "universe." (p. 47).

In order to rid the Convent women of their pasts scars, Consolata guides them to draw templates of themselves on the cellar floor, each woman is then instructed to remain within the outline of her template and "the loud dreaming" begins, they step "easily" into each other's dreams, they understand "the dreamer's tale" and "began to begin." (p. 264). The night before the "raid" the "sweet rain" arrives. Consolata starts dancing and the rest of the "holy women", now with shaved heads, quickly join her. The irresistible rain washes their past away. The death of the women, after the raid, stays a mystery; no one knows how, where and when their bodies vanish. Roger Best goes to "prepare" the dead bodies but finds "No bodies. Nothing" in the whole building, even Mavis' "Cadillac was gone." (p. 292). Minser and Anna find no trace of the murdered women, but in the garden of the Convent both of them see either a door or a window, and neither of them can decide what they saw or sensed and what did that "window" or the "door mean?" and what will happen "if you entered?" (p. 305). Later presiding over Save-Marie's funeral, when Minser bows to gaze at the coffin, he sees that same "window" of "neither life nor death" (p. 307). Billie Delia

wonders: “When will” those murdered women “return?” with their “blazing eyes”, and “war painted huge hands” to destroy “this prison” which calls “itself a town” (p.

308). In the final chapter “Save-Marie” all the women are described as meeting their loved ones, revisiting, finding, healing, forgiving and reuniting with their past and the people in it. It never becomes clear whether the women are spirits, ghosts, dead or alive, and what work “in Paradise” is demanded of those women before which “they will rest” (p. 318). Consolata whose dead body people had seen and touched is also shown reuniting with yet another magically real figure Piedade (p. 318). The setting again is ambiguous, if it is Paradise then why is there trash on the beach? If it is not Paradise, then how come Connie is alive?

3. RIFT BETWEEN PRE-MODERN, MODERN AND POST-MODERN CULTURES IN “PARADISE”

Identifying the elements and the presence of pre-modern, modern and postmodern cultures in “Paradise” has to a large extent established the view that this book’s main conflict revolves around the schism between three cultures that are either simultaneously present or are striving to take roots within a single town of Ruby and the Convent. The unrest in Ruby becomes the center of attention when some young people try to change the words written on the black lips of the Oven. Someone goes to the length of painting a fist “with red fingernails” on the “sacred” wall of the oven and the young people of Ruby refuse “to remove it” (p. 101). The elders see it as a disobedience and rebellion of an extreme degree and the mass criticism even public rebuke becomes the fate of the youth of Ruby who dare to speak against the centuries old traditions established and kept alive by the elders’ control and totalizing metanarratives. The conflict becomes more complicated because this change is not a simple extension of modernism into postmodernism. Ruby has a modern socioeconomic system but that is all the modernism it enjoys. Rest of the rules, the laws, and the practices are almost all of them based on pre-modern conceptions of cultural practices. In Ruby, there are some elders, some outsiders, some marginalized

people who do take the side of the youth of Ruby pushing towards a change from pre-modern to postmodern culture. But they are not as such powerful enough to defend all the young. All they can do is provide lip-service to the youth's cause. Thus, Anna protests the Morgan's attitude and supports Ruby's rebelling youth saying they need more "than what's here" (p. 117). Richard Minser struggles relentlessly to fill this growing gap between the generations and tries to side with the youth. He even tries to justify the view of the young to the elders, he pushes for open discussion, but the elders do not "want to discuss" they only know how "to instruct" (p. 84). And then there are Covent's women, living hardly "twenty miles away" (p. 8), in an isolated building with no men or traditions to rule them, "strange" but "harmless" and sometimes even "helpful" for they accept, without any questioning, "lost folks" or "whoever needed a rest" (p. 11) or seems to be trying to escape the clutches of a world they don't fit in. Women, who follow no rules of bloodlines, call their kidnappers their "mothers", shelter the runaway women, need no men, live where they want, eat what they like, wear or do not wear as they wish and kick the men out of their lives, their beds, their building whenever they want. For the men of Ruby these women are the devils who paint pornography on their cellar floor, hide the new born children, beat each other, dress inappropriately, give no importance to family life, follow their own multiple codes of conduct and believe in their own interpretations and relative truths, hence postmodern cultural practices.

All of this becomes too intolerable for the "Fathers" of Ruby who go against all the logic and reason to suppress whatever postmodern trends are emerging or are trying to emerge against the pre-modern conventions and modern capitalism of Ruby. Since all Ruby's New Fathers can do about their "rebellious" young ones, is to drive away or make drunkards like Menus, they are desperately in need of someone to make an example of, to prove the validity and force of their power, their rules, their traditions, their metanarratives, their control over the whole town. To show everyone that what their grandfathers had transmitted to them holds true in all situations and all times, that their conceptions of cultural and communal practices cannot be challenged

or changed by anyone no matter how sound the argument may seem for the change. Who is a better scapegoat than the helpless clueless women who threaten all that Ruby stands for? There is nothing more convenient than “other folks’ sins for distraction” (p. 159). Everything that threatens their pre-modern control is ultimately the fault of Convent women, including even the death of “white folks” who were denied help by Ruby. They even blame the women, who are no better than “sluts” and “Bitches. More like witches” (p. 276), for the births of Sweetie’s damaged infants.

Thus, nine men, well equipped guardians of Ruby on their way to Paradise, with a “twinned leadership” raid the Convent in early morning. It is evident that those women “have been taken by surprise”, no better than the “game” for the hunters of Ruby “they are panicked” and so with “God at their side” those “men take aim. For Ruby” (p. 18). The women try to resist and defend themselves, injuring some men they keep running and hiding. Later, Deek tries to save Connie but the bullet “enters her forehead” (p. 289). After some time is passed and the “loose” women are feared dead in long grass but cannot be traced, an argument ensues between the men who raided and the townspeople Lone brought along.

As if the violence itself was not sufficient to quench their thirst for acceptance, control and power, they “problematized” the interpretations of their vile actions during and after the raid. New metanarratives come into existence to yet again serve the purposes of the nine men and their families who took part in the raid. Each one of them has their own story to tell. Richard and Anna doubt the “convenient mass disappearance” of the women, Anna sees “the terribleness” of K.D.’s report, but instead of “pornography” and “Satan’s scrawl” which K.D. claims to have seen, she sees the “turbulence” of “trampled” women “trying to bridle” away from “the monsters” who have “slavered them.” (p. 303). The story Lone has to tell no one believes because after all she is a nin-8 rock, powerless old woman with no evidence, no dead bodies to support her account of the narrative. So Lone shut up and feels certain that God has “given Ruby a second chance.” (p. 297). Patricia, the desperate history writer who has claimed objectivity earlier has her own version of the story, so

far, the least reiterated narrative, the perfect mini-narratives, she has spurned in her own private thoughts, is that “nine 8-rocks” have murdered five “impure (not 8-rock)” women because they were women; “unholy”; “fornicators”; and maybe even “abortionists”; and above all, because being God’s chosen 8-R men, “they *could*” (p. 297).

But the raid and its following events are not without consequences. An incident of this scale is bound to have repercussions. Although the women, the symbol of postmodern culture are gone the traces they left on the minds of the people, especially on the less powerful marginalized people striving for change, are massive. Patricia deduces that maybe “Ruby is lucky” the “invisible evidence” of the raid is there to contradict her because “the consequences” (p. 299) of the raid were dire and profound. 8-Rock are forced to think how their divine and “blessed mission” devoured everything they have fought for and how they themselves have enacted the “terribleness” of the Whiteman’s “world they had escaped?” (p. 292). Deek realizes that he does not like his inhumane “self anymore” (p. 300), he strips himself of the proud “Morgan” attributes and walks barefoot to Minser’s house. With lacking words, he manages to convey the regret which made his existence despicable in his own eyes. He confesses to having “used” and wronged an innocent Convent woman without naming her. He confesses to his “short” period of adultery and the everlasting guilt that followed. He regrets becoming what his elders despised the most: the type of man who sets “himself up to judge”, destroys “the defenseless” and “the different” (p. 302).

Hence, whatever those Fathers were trying to avert by slaughtering the women had an inverse effect. The change from pre-modern culture to postmodern culture is what bothered them the most. Before the raid there were few people who voiced their protest their totalizing authority; singularity of truth; rigid social norms; and values, but after the raid the ones in power themselves disintegrate. The people who dared to question find a solid ground to criticize the pre-modernism and the inhumane intensity of the actions taken under its values at least in their own private domain of

restricted mini-narratives. “Whatever else”, thinks Anna, the writing on *the oven* is neither what the young says nor what the old believe, it is not “His Brow” the actual words are “Be the Furrow of *Her* Brow.” (p. 159). The change in authority’s structure is a signpost that although the old system of ultimate authority persists but it will not be alive for long.” (p. 306).

4. STRUCTURAL MAKEUP OF “PARADISE”: A REFLECTION OF HYBRID LITERARY CONVENTIONS

“Paradise” is such a book which demands rigour, involvement and active participation from its readers. The narration is not linear; it follows the *imagism* of the modern artists. Scattered throughout the book the reader must struggle to interrelate the incidents, their temporal sequence, their reliability and the identification of narrator to make sense of the main plot. All of this in addition to Magic Realism and presence of “small stories” in the background of meta-narratives makes “Paradise” a perfect postmodern work of art. But, contrary to most postmodern novels, it still has an identifiable main plot, distinct characters, a perfect symphony of events and their interrelation. Although the book’s ending and even its narration is open to interpretations, yet most of the readers do get a somewhat similar sense of the ideas it is trying to convey through its narration. All this works as an evidence to prove that “Paradise” is an exquisite amalgam of postmodern and modern literary conventions. The mix of cultural conventions, which appears to be the schism seemingly forming the main conflict in the book, paradoxically proves to be coherent in the structural makeup of the book.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this research paper was to trace the simultaneous presence of elements of three different yet conjunctive cultural eras, namely pre-modern, modern and postmodern, in “Paradise” and to prove that evidently this simultaneous presence

seems to be the main cause of conflict in the plot. Keeping in view the preceding sections of this paper it can be concluded that the relation between the three cultures is not as distinct as it appears to be. There are no clear-cut boundary lines between the consequences brought out by the “cultural shift” because of resistance to and for the change. One thing that can be stated beyond doubt is that all human endeavors have the capacity to produce unwitting results, to speak from a post-modernistic standpoint no single interpretation can be held as valid. Therefore, the schism between the three cultures and repercussions of that rift taken to extreme measures is bound to bring death and destruction for some whereas proving the catalyst for the forward push towards the desired change and cultural shift for others, at the cost of those who suffer.

“The only way to change the order.....was not to do something differently but to do a different thing.” (p. 125).

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CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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