CHAPTER-V

RELEVANCE OF MALIK'S HUMANISM IN POSTMODERN CONTEXT

V.1. Precursors of Postmodernism

The philosophical modernism at issue in postmodernism begins with Kant's "Copernican revolution," that is, his assumption that we cannot know things in themselves and that objects of knowledge must conform to our faculties of representation (Kant 1964). Ideas such as God, freedom, immortality, the world, first beginning, and final end have only a regulative function for knowledge, since they cannot find fulfilling instances among objects of experience. With Hegel, the immediacy of the subject-object relation itself is shown to be illusory. As he states in The Phenomenology of Spirit, "we find that neither the one nor the other is only immediately present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time mediated" (Hegel 1977, 59), because subject and object are both instances of a "this" and a "now," neither of which are immediately sensed. So-called immediate perception, therefore, lacks the certainty of immediacy itself, a certainty that must be deferred to the working out of a complete system of experience. However, later thinkers point out that Hegel's logic pre-supposes concepts, such as identity and negation (Hegel 1969), which cannot themselves be accepted as immediately given, and which, therefore, must be accounted for in some other, non-dialectical way. The later nineteenth century is the age of modernity as an achieved reality, where science and technology, including networks of mass communication
and transportation, reshape human perceptions. There is no clear distinction, then, between the natural and the artificial in experience. Indeed, many proponents of postmodernism challenge the viability of such a distinction *tout court*, seeing in achieved modernism the emergence of a problem the philosophical tradition has repressed. A consequence of achieved modernism is what postmodernists might refer to as de-realization. De-realization affects both the subject and the objects of experience, such that their sense of identity, constancy, and substance is upset or dissolved. Important precursors to this notion are found in Kierkegaard, Marx and Nietzsche. Kierkegaard, for example, describes modern society as a network of relations in which individuals are leveled into an abstract phantom known as "the public" (Kierkegaard 1962, 59). The modern public, in contrast to ancient and medieval communities, is a creation of the press, which is the only instrument capable of holding together the mass of unreal individuals "who never are and never can be united in an actual situation or organization" (Kierkegaard 1962, 60). In this sense, society has become a realization of abstract thought, held together by an artificial and all-pervasive medium speaking for everyone and for no one. In Marx, on the other hand, we have an analysis of the fetishism of commodities (Marx 1983, 444-461) where objects lose the solidity of their use value and become spectral figures under the aspect of exchange value. Their ghostly nature results from their absorption into a network of social relations, where their values fluctuate independently of their corporeal being. Human subjects themselves experience this de-realization because commodities are products of their labor. Workers paradoxically lose their being in realizing
themselves, and this becomes emblematic for those professing a postmodern sensibility.

We also find suggestions of de-realization in Nietzsche, who speaks of being as "the last breath of a vaporizing reality" and remarks upon the dissolution of the distinction between the "real" and the "apparent" world. In *Twilight of the Idols*, he traces the history of this distinction from Plato to his own time, where the "true world" becomes a useless and superfluous idea (Nietzsche 1954, 485-86). However, with the notion of the true world, he says, we have also done away with the apparent one. What is left is neither real nor apparent, but something in between, and therefore something akin to the virtual reality of more recent vintage. The notion of a collapse between the real and the apparent is suggested in Nietzsche's first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche 1967a), where he presents Greek tragedy as a synthesis of natural art impulses represented by the gods Apollo and Dionysus. Where Apollo is the god of beautiful forms and images, Dionysus is the god of frenzy and intoxication, under whose sway the spell of individuated existence is broken in a moment of undifferentiated oneness with nature. While tragic art is life-affirming in joining these two impulses, logic and science are built upon Apollonian representations that have become frozen and lifeless. Hence, Nietzsche believes only a return of the Dionysian art impulse can save modern society from sterility and nihilism. This interpretation presages postmodern concepts of art and representation, and also anticipates postmodernists' fascination with the prospect of a revolutionary moment auguring a new.
anarchic sense of community. Nietzsche is also a precursor for postmodernism in his genealogical analyses of fundamental concepts, especially what he takes to be the core concept of Western metaphysics, the “I.” On Nietzsche’s account, the concept of the “I” arises out of a moral imperative to be responsible for our actions. In order to be responsible we must assume that we are the cause of our actions, and this cause must hold over time, retaining its identity, so that rewards and punishments are accepted as consequences for actions deemed beneficial or detrimental to others (Nietzsche 1954, 482-83; 1967b, 24-26, 58-60). In this way, the concept of the “I” comes about as a social construction and moral illusion. According to Nietzsche, the moral sense of the “I” as an identical cause is projected onto events in the world, where the identity of things, causes, effects, etc., takes shape in easily communicable representations. Thus, logic is born from the demand to adhere to common social norms which shape the human herd into a society of knowing and acting subjects.

Post modernism refers to cultural and intellectual phenomenon to the production, consumption and distribution of symbolic goods. Intellectually, it is the forsaking of “foundationalism”; the view that science is built on a firm base of observable facts, in the philosophy of science. As Grey Woller says, “postmodernism is about deposing the trinity of enlightenment- reason, nature and progress- which presumably triumphed over the earlier trinity(1997, 9).” For postmodernists, Nietzsche’s genealogy of concepts in “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” (Nietzsche 1979, 77-97) is also an important reference.
In this text, Nietzsche puts forward the hypothesis that scientific concepts are chains of metaphors hardened into accepted truths. On this account, metaphor begins when a nerve stimulus is copied as an image, which is then imitated in sound, giving rise, when repeated, to the word, which becomes a concept when the word is used to designate multiple instances of singular events. Conceptual metaphors are thus lies because they equate unequal things, just as the chain of metaphors moves from one level to another. Hegel’s problem with the repetition of the “this” and the “now” is thus expanded to include the repetition of instances across discontinuous gaps between kinds and levels of things. In close connection with this genealogy, Nietzsche criticizes the historicism of the nineteenth century in the 1874 essay, “On the Uses and Disadvantage of History for Life” (Nietzsche 1983, 57-123). On Nietzsche’s view, the life of an individual and a culture depend upon their ability to repeat an unhistorical moment, a kind of forgetfulness, along with their continuous development through time, and the study of history ought, therefore, to emphasize how each person or culture attains and repeats this moment. There is no question, then, of reaching a standpoint outside of history or of conceiving past times as stages on the way to the present. Historical repetition is not linear, but each age worthy of its designation repeats the unhistorical moment that is its own present as “new.” In this respect, Nietzsche would agree with Charles Baudelaire, who describes modernity as “the transient, the fleeting, the contingent” that is repeated in all ages (Cahoone 2003, 100), and postmodernists read Nietzsche’s remarks on the eternal return accordingly.
Nietzsche presents this concept in *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche 1974, 273), and in a more developed form in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche 1954, 269-272). Many have taken the concept to imply an endless, identical repetition of everything in the universe, such that nothing occurs that has not already occurred an infinite number of times before. However, others, including postmodernists, read these passages in conjunction with the notion that history is the repetition of an unhistorical moment, a moment that is always new in each case. In their view, Nietzsche can only mean that the new eternally repeats as new, and therefore, recurrence is a matter of difference rather than identity. Furthermore, postmodernists join the concept of eternal return with the loss of the distinction between the real and the apparent world. The distinction itself does not reappear, and what repeats is neither real nor apparent in the traditional sense, but is a phantasm or simulacrum. Nietzsche is a common interest between postmodern philosophers and Martin Heidegger, whose meditations on art, technology, and the withdrawal of being they regularly cite and comment upon. Heidegger's contribution to the sense of de-realization of the world stems from oft repeated remarks such as: “Everywhere we are underway amid beings, and yet we no longer know how it stands with being” (Heidegger 2000, 217), and “precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence” (Heidegger 1993, 332). Heidegger sees modern technology as the fulfillment of Western metaphysics, which he characterizes as the metaphysics of presence. From the time of the earliest philosophers, but definitively with Plato, says Heidegger, Western thought has conceived of being as the presence of beings, which in the modern world has come to mean the availability of beings for use. In fact, as he writes in *Being
and Time, the presence of beings tends to disappear into the transparency of their usefulness as things ready-to-hand (Heidegger 1962, 95-107). The essence of technology, which he names “the enframing,” reduces the being of entities to a calculative order (Heidegger 1993, 311-341). Hence, the mountain is not a mountain but a standing supply of coal, the Rhine is not the Rhine but an engine for hydro-electric energy, and humans are not humans but reserves of manpower. The experience of the modern world, then, is the experience of being’s withdrawal in face of the enframing and its sway over beings. However, humans are affected by this withdrawal in moments of anxiety or boredom, and therein lies the way to a possible return of being, which would be tantamount to a repetition of the experience of being opened up by Parmenides and Heraclitus.

Heidegger sees this as the realization of the will to power, another Nietzschean conception, which, conjoined with the eternal return, represents the exhaustion of the metaphysical tradition (Heidegger 1991a, 199-203). For Heidegger, the will to power is the eternal recurrence as becoming, and the permanence of becoming is the terminal moment of the metaphysics of presence. On this reading, becoming is the emerging and passing away of beings within and among other beings instead of an emergence from being. Thus, for Heidegger, Nietzsche marks the end of metaphysical thinking but not a passage beyond it, and therefore, Heidegger sees him as the last metaphysician in whom the oblivion of being is complete (Heidegger 1991a, 204-206; 1991b, 199-203). Hope for a passage into non-metaphysical thinking
lies rather with Hölderlin, whose verses give voice to signs granted by being in its withdrawal (Heidegger 1994, 115-118). While postmodernists owe much to Heidegger’s reflections on the non-presence of being and the de-realization of beings through the technological enframing, they sharply diverge from his reading of Nietzsche. Many postmodern philosophers find in Heidegger a nostalgia for being they do not share. They prefer, instead, the sense of cheerful forgetting and playful creativity in Nietzsche’s eternal return as a repetition of the different and the new. Some have gone so far as to turn the tables on Heidegger, and to read his ruminations on metaphysics as the repetition of an original metaphysical gesture, the gathering of thought to its “proper” essence and vocation (Derrida 1989). In this gathering, which follows the lineaments of an exclusively Greco-Christian-German tradition, something more original than being is forgotten, and that is the difference and alterity against which, and with which, the tradition composes itself.

Prominent authors associated with postmodernism have noted that the forgotten and excluded “other” of the West, including Heidegger, is figured by the Jew (Lyotard, 1990, and Lacoue-Labarthe 1990). In this way, they are able to distinguish their projects from Heidegger’s thinking and to critically account for his involvement with National Socialism and his silence about the Holocaust, albeit in terms that do not address these as personal failings. Those looking for personal condemnations of Heidegger for his actions and his “refusal to accept responsibility” will not find them in postmodernist commentaries. They will, however, find many departures from Heidegger on Nietzsche’s philosophical significance (Derrida 1979), and many instances
where Nietzsche's ideas are critically activated against Heidegger and his self-presentation.

V.II. Postmodernism: An Overview

The term "postmodern" came into the philosophical lexicon with the publication of Jean-François Lyotard's *La Condition Postmoderne* in 1979 (English: *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1984), where he employs Wittgenstein's model of language games (Wittgenstein, 1953) and concepts taken from speech act theory to account for what he calls a transformation of the game rules for science, art, and literature since the end of the nineteenth century. He describes his text as a combination of two very different language games, that of the philosopher and that of the expert. Where the expert knows what he knows and what he doesn't know, the philosopher knows neither, but poses questions. In light of this ambiguity, Lyotard states that his portrayal of the state of knowledge "makes no claims to being original or even true," and that his hypotheses "should not be accorded predictive value in relation to reality, but strategic value in relation to the questions raised" (Lyotard, 1984, 7). The book, then, is as much an experiment in the combination of language games as it is an objective "report." On Lyotard's account, the computer age has transformed knowledge into information, that is, coded messages within a system of transmission and communication. Analysis of this knowledge calls for a pragmatics of communication insofar as the phrasing of messages, their transmission and reception, must follow rules in order to be accepted by those who judge them. However, as Lyotard points out, the position of judge or legislator is also a position within a language
game, and this raises the question of legitimation. As he insists, “there is a strict interlinkage between the kind of language called science and the kind called ethics and politics” (Lyotard, 1984, 8), and this interlinkage constitutes the cultural perspective of the West. Science is, therefore, tightly interwoven with government and administration, especially in the information age, where enormous amounts of capital and large installations are needed for research. Lyotard points out that while science has sought to distinguish itself from narrative knowledge in the form of tribal wisdom communicated through myths and legends, modern philosophy has sought to provide legitimating narratives for science in the form of “the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth, “ (Lyotard, 1984, xxiii). Science, however, plays the language game of denotation to the exclusion of all others, and in this respect it displaces narrative knowledge, including the meta-narratives of philosophy. This is due, in part, to what Lyotard characterizes as the rapid growth of technologies and techniques in the second half of the twentieth century, where the emphasis of knowledge has shifted from the ends of human action to its means (Lyotard, 1984, 37). This has eroded the speculative game of philosophy and set each science free to develop independently of philosophical grounding or systematic organization. “I define postmodern as incredulity toward meta-narratives,” says Lyotard (Lyotard 1984, xxiv). As a result, new, hybrid disciplines develop without connection to old epistemic traditions, especially philosophy, and this means science only plays its own game and cannot legitimate others, such as moral prescription. The compartmentalization of knowledge and the dissolution of epistemic
coherence is a concern for researchers and philosophers alike. As Lyotard notes, "Lamenting the 'loss of meaning' in postmodernity boils down to mourning the fact that knowledge is no longer principally narrative" (Lyotard, 1984, 26). Indeed, for Lyotard, the de-realization of the world means the disintegration of narrative elements into "clouds" of linguistic combinations and collisions among innumerable, heterogeneous language games. Furthermore, within each game the subject moves from position to position, now as sender, now as addressee, now as referent, and so on. The loss of a continuous meta-narrative, therefore, breaks the subject into heterogeneous moments of subjectivity that do not cohere into an identity. But as Lyotard points out, while the combinations we experience are not necessarily stable or communicable, we learn to move with a certain nimbleness among them.

Postmodern sensibility does not lament the loss of narrative coherence any more than the loss of being. However, the dissolution of narrative leaves the field of legitimation to a new unifying criterion: the performativity of the knowledge-producing system whose form of capital is information. Performative legitimation means maximizing the flow of information and minimizing static (non-functional moves) in the system, so whatever cannot be communicated as information must be eliminated. The performativity criterion threatens anything not meeting its requirements, such as speculative narratives, with de-legitimation and exclusion. Nevertheless, capital also demands the continual re-invention of the "new" in the form of new language games and new denotative statements, and so, paradoxically, a certain
paralogy is required by the system itself. In this regard, the modern paradigm of progress as new moves under established rules gives way to the postmodern paradigm of inventing new rules and changing the game. Inventing new codes and reshaping information is a large part of the production of knowledge, and in its inventive moment science does not adhere to performative efficiency. By the same token, the meta-prescriptives of science, its rules, are themselves objects of invention and experimentation for the sake of producing new statements. In this respect, says Lyotard, the model of knowledge as the progressive development of consensus is outmoded. In fact, attempts to retrieve the model of consensus can only repeat the standard of coherence demanded for functional efficiency, and they will thus lend themselves to the domination of capital. On the other hand, the paralogical inventiveness of science raises the possibility of a new sense of justice, as well as knowledge, as we move among the language games now entangling us. Lyotard takes up the question of justice in Just Gaming (Lyotard, 1985) and The Differend: Phrases in Dispute (Lyotard, 1988), where he combines the model of language games with Kant’s division of the faculties (understanding, imagination, reason) and types of judgment (theoretical, practical, aesthetic) in order to explore the problem of justice set out in The Postmodern Condition. Without the formal unity of the subject, the faculties are set free to operate on their own. Where Kant insists that reason must assign domains and limits to the other faculties, its dependence upon the unity of the subject for the identity of concepts as laws or rules de-legitimizes its juridical authority in the postmodern age. Instead, because we are faced with an irreducible plurality of judgments and “phrase regimes,” the faculty of judgment itself is brought to
the fore. Kant’s third *Critique*, therefore, provides the conceptual materials for Lyotard’s analysis, especially the analytic of aesthetic judgment (Kant, 1987). As Lyotard argues, aesthetic judgment is the appropriate model for the problem of justice in postmodern experience because we are confronted with a plurality of games and rules without a concept under which to unify them. Judgment must, therefore, be reflective rather than determining. Furthermore, judgment must be aesthetic insofar as it does not produce denotative knowledge about a determinable state of affairs, but refers to the way our faculties interact with each other as we move from one mode of phrasing to another, i.e. the denotative, the prescriptive, the performative, the political, the cognitive, the artistic, etc. In Kantian terms, this interaction registers as an aesthetic feeling. Where Kant emphasizes the feeling of the beautiful as a harmonious interaction between imagination and understanding, Lyotard stresses the mode in which faculties (imagination and reason,) are in disharmony, i.e. the feeling of the sublime. For Kant, the sublime occurs when our faculties of sensible presentation are overwhelmed by impressions of absolute power and magnitude, and reason is thrown back upon its own power to conceive Ideas (such as the moral law) which surpass the sensible world. For Lyotard, however, the postmodern sublime occurs when we are affected by a multitude of unpresentables without reference to reason as their unifying origin. Justice, then, would not be a definable rule, but an ability to move and judge among rules in their heterogeneity and multiplicity. In this respect, it would be more akin to the production of art than a moral judgment in Kant’s sense. In “What is Postmodernism?,” which appears as an appendix to the English edition of *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard addresses the
importance of avant-garde art in terms of the aesthetic of the sublime. Modern art, he says, is emblematic of a sublime sensibility, that is, a sensibility that *there is* something non-presentable demanding to be put into sensible form and yet overpowers all attempts to do so. But where modern art presents the unpresentable as a missing content within a beautiful form, as in Marcel Proust, postmodern art, exemplified by James Joyce, puts forward the unpresentable by forgoing beautiful form itself, thus denying what Kant would call the consensus of taste. Furthermore, says Lyotard, a work can become modern only if it is first postmodern, for postmodernism is not modernism at its end but in its nascent state, that is, at the moment it attempts to present the unpresentable, “and this state is constant” (Lyotard 1984, 79). The postmodern, then, is a repetition of the modern as the “new,” and this means the ever-new demand for another repetition.

Genealogy and Subjectivity

The Nietzschean method of genealogy, in its application to modern subjectivity, is another facet of philosophical postmodernism. Michel Foucault’s application of genealogy to formative moments in modernity’s history and his exhortations to experiment with subjectivity place him within the scope of postmodern discourse. In the 1971 essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Foucault spells out his adaptation of the genealogical method in his historical studies. First and foremost, he says, genealogy “opposes itself to the search for ‘origins’ (Foucault, 1977, 141).” That is, genealogy studies the accidents and contingencies that converge at crucial moments, giving rise to
new epochs, concepts, and institutions. As Foucault remarks: “What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity” (Foucault, 1977, 142). In Nietzschean fashion, Foucault exposes history conceived as the origin and development of an identical subject, e.g., “modernity,” as a fiction modern discourses invent after the fact. Underlying the fiction of modernity is a sense of temporality that excludes the elements of chance and contingency in play at every moment. In short, linear, progressive history covers up the discontinuities and interruptions that mark points of succession in historical time. Foucault deploys genealogy to create what he calls a “counter-memory” or “a transformation of history into a totally different form of time” (Foucault, 1977, 160). This entails dissolving identity for the subject in history by using the materials and techniques of modern historical research. Just as Nietzsche postulates that the religious will to truth in Christianity results in the destruction of Christianity by science (Nietzsche, 1974, 280-83), Foucault postulates that genealogical research will result in the disintegration of the epistemic subject, as the continuity of the subject is broken up by the gaps and accidents that historical research uncovers. The first example of this research is *Histoire de la folie à l’age classique*, published in 1961, translated in abridged form as *Madness and Civilization*, in 1965. Here, Foucault gives an account of the historical beginnings of modern reason as it comes to define itself against madness in the seventeenth century. His thesis is that the practice of confining the mad is a transformation of the medieval practice of confining lepers in lazar houses. These institutions managed to survive long after the lepers disappeared, and thus, an institutional structure of confinement was
already in place when the modern concept of madness as a disease took shape. However, while institutions of confinement are held over from a previous time, the practice of confining the mad constitutes a break with the past. Foucault focuses upon the moment of transition, as modern reason begins to take shape in a confluence of concepts, institutions, and practices, or, as he would say, of knowledge and power. In its nascency, reason is a power that defines itself against an other, an other whose truth and identity is also assigned by reason, thus giving reason the sense of originating from itself. For Foucault, the issue is that madness is not allowed to speak for itself and is at the disposal of a power that dictates the terms of their relationship. As he remarks: "What is originative is the caesura that establishes the distance between reason and non-reason; reason's subjugation of non-reason, wresting from it its truth as madness, crime, or disease, derives explicitly from this point (Foucault, 1965, x)." The truth of reason is found when madness comes to stand in the place of non-reason, when the difference between them is inscribed in their opposition, but is not identical to its dominant side. In other words, the reason that stands in opposition to madness is not identical to the reason that inscribes their difference. The latter would be reason without an opposite, a free-floating power without definite shape. As Foucault suggests, this free-floating mystery might be represented in the ship of fools motif, which, in medieval times, represented madness. Such is the paradoxical structure of historical transformation. In his later writings, most notably in The Use of Pleasure (Foucault, 1985), Foucault employs historical research to open possibilities for experimenting with subjectivity, by showing that subjectivation is a formative power of the self, surpassing the structures of
knowledge and power from out of which it emerges. This is a power of thought, which Foucault says is the ability of human beings to problematize the conditions under which they live. For philosophy, this means “the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known (Foucault, 1985, 9).” He thus joins Lyotard in promoting creative experimentation as a leading power of thought, a power that surpasses reason, narrowly defined, and without which thought would be inert. In this regard, Foucault stands in league with others who profess a postmodern sensibility in regard to contemporary science, art, and society. We should note, as well, that Foucault’s writings are a hybrid of philosophy and historical research, just as Lyotard combines the language games of the expert and the philosopher in The Postmodern Condition. This mixing of philosophy with concepts and methods from other disciplines is characteristic of postmodernism in its broadest sense.

Productive Difference

The concept of difference as a productive mechanism, rather than a negation of identity, is also a hallmark of postmodernism in philosophy. Gilles Deleuze deploys this concept throughout his work, beginning with Nietzsche and Philosophy (1962, English 1983), where he sets Nietzsche against the models of thinking at work in Kant and Hegel. Here, he proposes to think against reason in resistance to Kant’s assertion of the self-justifying authority of reason alone (Deleuze, 1983b, 93). In a phrase echoed by Foucault, he states that the purpose of his critique of reason “is not justification but a
different way of feeling: another sensibility” (Deleuze, 1983b, 94). Philosophical critique, he declares, is an encounter between thought and what forces it into action: it is a matter of sensibility rather than a tribunal where reason judges itself by its own laws (Kant, 1964, 9). Furthermore, the critique of reason is not a method, but is achieved by “culture” in the Nietzschean sense: training, discipline, inventiveness, and a certain cruelty (Nietzsche, 1967b). Since thought cannot activate itself as thinking, Deleuze says it must suffer violence if it is to awaken and move. Art, science, and philosophy deploy such violence insofar as they are transformative and experimental.

Against Hegel, Deleuze asserts that while dialectic is structured by negation and opposition within a posited identity, “difference is the only principle of genesis or production” (Deleuze, 1983b, 157). Opposition occurs on the same logical plane, but difference moves across planes and levels, and not only in one direction. Furthermore, where Hegel takes the work of the negative to be dialectic’s driving power, Deleuze declares that difference is thinkable only as repetition repeating itself (as in Nietzsche’s eternal return), where difference affirms itself in eternally differing from itself. Its movement is productive, but without logical opposition, negation, or necessity. Instead, chance and multiplicity are repeated, just as a dice-throw repeats the randomness of the throw along with every number. On the other hand, dialectic cancels out chance and affirms the movement of the negative as a working out of identity, as in the Science of Logic where being in its immediacy is posited as equal only to itself (Hegel, 1969, 82). For Deleuze, however, sensibility introduces an aleatory moment into thought’s development, making accidentality and contingency conditions for thinking. These conditions upset logical identity
and opposition, and place the limit of thinking beyond any dialectical system. In *Difference and Repetition* (1968, English 1994), Deleuze develops his project in multiple directions. His work, he says, stems from the convergence of two lines of research: the concept of difference without negation, and the concept of repetition, in which physical and mechanical repetitions are masks for a hidden differential that is disguised and displaced. His major focus is a thoroughgoing critique of representational thinking, including identity, opposition, analogy, and resemblance (Deleuze, 1994, 132). For Deleuze, “appearances of” are not representations, but sensory intensities free of subjective or objective identities (Deleuze, 1994, 144). Without these identities, appearances are simulacra of an non-apparent differential he calls the “dark precursor” or “the in-itself of difference” (Deleuze, 1994, 119). This differential is the non-sensible *being* of the sensible, a being not identical to the sensible, or to itself, but irreducibly problematic insofar as it forces us to encounter the sensible as “given.”

Furthermore, any move against representational thinking impinges upon the identity of the subject. Where Kant found the representational unity of space and time upon the formal unity of consciousness (Kant, 1964, 135-137), difference re-distributes intuitions of past, present, and future, fracturing consciousness into multiple states not predicable of a single subject. Intensive qualities are individuating by themselves, says Delueze, and individuality is not characteristic of a self or an ego, but of a differential forever dividing itself and changing its configuration (Deleuze, 1994, 246, 254, 257). In Nietzschean
fashion, the "I" refers not to the unity of consciousness, but to a multitude of simulacra without an identical subject for whom this multitude appears. Instead, subjects arise and multiply as "effects" of the intensive qualities saturating space and time. This leads Deleuze to postulate multiple faculties for subjectivity, which are correlates of the sensible insofar as it gives rise to feeling, thought, and action. "Each faculty, including thought, has only involuntary adventures," he says, and "involuntary operation remains embedded in the empirical (Deleuze, 1994, 145)." Subjectively, the paradox of the differential breaks up the faculties' common function and places them before their own limits: thought before the unthinkable, memory before the immemorial, sensibility before the imperceptible, etc. (Deleuze, 1994, 227).

This fracturing and multiplying of the subject, he notes, leads to the realization that "schizophrenia is not only a human fact but also a possibility for thought (Deleuze, 1994, 148)", thus expanding the term into a philosophical concept, beyond its clinical application. The dissolution of the subject and its implications for society is the theme of Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, which Deleuze published with Félix Guattari in 1972 (English 1983). The book, in large part, is written against an established intellectual orthodoxy of the political Left in France during the 1950s and 1960s, an orthodoxy consisting of Marx, Freud, and structuralist concepts applied to them by Louis Althusser and Jacques Lacan. Deleuze and Guattari argue that this mixture is still limited by representational thinking, including concepts of production based upon lack, and concepts of alienation based upon identity and negation. Furthermore, the Oedipus concept in psychoanalysis, they say, institutes a theater of desire in which the psyche is embedded in a family
drama closed off from the extra-familial and extra-psychic forces at work in society. They characterize these forces as “desiring machines” whose function is to connect, disconnect, and reconnect with one another without meaning or intention. The authors portray society as a series “territorializations” or inscriptions upon the “body without organs,” or the free-flowing matter of intensive qualities filling space in their varying degrees. The first inscriptions are relations of kinship and filiation structuring primitive societies, often involving the marking and scarring of human bodies. As an interruption and encoding of “flows,” the primitive inscriptions constitute a nexus of desiring machines, both technical and social, whose elements are humans and their organs. The full body of society is the sacred earth, which appropriates to itself all social products as their natural or divine precondition, and to whom all members of society are bound by direct filiation (Deleuze, 1983b, 141-42). These first inscriptions are then de-territorialized and re-coded by the “despotic machine,” establishing new relations of alliance and filiation through the body of the ruler or emperor, who alone stands in direct filiation to the deity (Deleuze, 1983b, 192) and who institutes the mechanism of the state upon pre-existing social arrangements. Finally, capitalism de-territorializes the inscriptions of the despotic machine and re-codes all relations of alliance and filiation into flows of money (Deleuze, 1983b, 224-27). The organs of society and the state are appropriated into the functioning of capital, and humans become secondary to the filiation of money with itself. Deleuze and Guattari see in the capitalist money system “an axiom of abstract quantities that keeps moving further and further in the direction of the deterritorialization of the socius (Deleuze, 1983a, 33),” which is to say that capital is inherently
schizophrenic. However, because capital also re-territorializes all flows into money, schizophrenia remains capitalism’s external limit. Nevertheless, it is precisely that limit against which thinking can subject capitalism to philosophical critique. Psychoanalysis, they say, is part of the reign of capital because it re-territorializes the subject as “private” and “individual,” instituting psychic identity through images of the Oedipal family. However, the Oedipal triangle is merely a representational simulacrum of kinship and filiation, re-coded within a system of debt and payment. In this system, they insist, flows of desire have become mere representations of desire, cut off from the body without organs and the extra-familial mechanisms of society. A radical critique of capital cannot therefore be accomplished by psychoanalysis, but requires a *schizoanalysis* “to overturn the theater of representation into the order of desiring-production (Deleuze, 1983b, 271).” Here, the authors see a revolutionary potential in modern art and science, where, in bringing about the “new,” they circulate de-coded and de-territorialized flows within society without automatically re-coding them into money (Deleuze 1983a, 379). In this revolutionary aspect, *Anti-Oedipus* reads as a statement of the desire that took to the streets of Paris in May of 1968, and which continues, even now, to make itself felt in intellectual life.

**Deconstruction**

The term “deconstruction,” like “postmodernism,” has taken on many meanings in the popular imagination. However, in philosophy, it signifies certain strategies for reading and writing texts. The term was introduced into
philosophical literature in 1967, with the publication of three texts by Jacques Derrida: *Of Grammatology* (English 1974), *Writing and Difference* (English 1978), and *Speech and Phenomena* (English 1973). This so-called "publication blitz" immediately established Derrida as a major figure in the new movement in philosophy and the human sciences centered in Paris, and brought the idiom "deconstruction" into its vocabulary. Derrida and deconstruction are routinely associated with postmodernism, although like Deleuze and Foucault, he does not use the term and would resist affiliation with "-isms" of any sort. Of the three books from 1967, *Of Grammatology* is the more comprehensive in laying out the background for deconstruction as a way of reading modern theories of language, especially structuralism, and Heidegger's meditations on the non-presence of being. It also sets out Derrida's difference with Heidegger over Nietzsche. Where Heidegger places Nietzsche within the metaphysics of presence, Derrida insists that "reading, and therefore writing, the text were for Nietzsche 'originary' operations, (Derrida, 1974, 19)" and this puts him at the closure of metaphysics (not the end), a closure that liberates writing from the traditional logos, which takes writing to be a sign (a visible mark) for another sign (speech), whose "signified" is a fully present meaning. This closure has emerged, says Derrida, with the latest developments in linguistics, the human sciences, mathematics, and cybernetics, where the written mark or signifier is purely technical, that is, a matter of function rather than meaning. Precisely, the liberation of function over meaning indicates that the epoch of what Heidegger calls the metaphysics of presence has come to closure, although this closure does not mean its termination. Just as in the essay "On the Question of Being" (Heidegger, 1998,
Heidegger sees fit to cross out the word “being,” leaving it visible, nevertheless, under the mark, Derrida takes the closure of metaphysics to be its “erasure,” where it does not entirely disappear, but remains inscribed as one side of a difference, and where the mark of deletion is itself a trace of the difference that joins and separates this mark and what it crosses out. Derrida calls this joining and separating of signs difference (Derrida, 1974, 23), a device that can only be read and not heard when differance and difference are pronounced in French. The “a” is a written mark that differentiates independently of the voice, the privileged medium of metaphysics. In this sense, differance as the spacing of difference, as archi-writing, would be the gram of grammatology. However, as Derrida remarks: “There cannot be a science of difference itself in its operation, as it is impossible to have a science of the origin of presence itself, that is to say of a certain non-origin (Derrida, 1974, 63).” Instead, there is only the marking of the trace of difference, that is, deconstruction. Because at its functional level all language is a system of differences, says Derrida, all language, even when spoken, is writing, and this truth is suppressed when meaning is taken as an origin, present and complete unto itself. Texts that take meaning or being as their theme are therefore particularly susceptible to deconstruction, as are all other texts insofar as they are conjoined with these. For Derrida, written marks or signifiers do not arrange themselves within natural limits, but form chains of signification that radiate in all directions. As Derrida famously remarks, “there is no outside-text” (Derrida, 1974, 158), that is, the text includes the difference between any “inside” or “outside.” A text, then, is not a book, and does not, strictly speaking, have an author. On the contrary, the name of the author is a signifier
linked with others, and there is no master signifier (such as the phallus in Lacan) present or even absent in a text. This goes for the term “différence” as well, which can only serve as a supplement for the productive spacing between signs. Therefore, Derrida insists that “différence is literally neither a word nor a concept (Derrida, 1982, 3).” Instead, it can only be marked as a wandering play of differences that is both a spacing of signifiers in relation to one another and a deferral of meaning or presence when they are read.

How, then, can différence be characterized? Derrida refuses to answer questions as to “who” or “what” differs, because to do so would suggest there is a proper name for difference instead of endless supplements, of which “différence” is but one. Structurally, this supplemental displacement functions just as, for Heidegger, all names for being reduce being to the presence of beings, thus ignoring the “ontological difference” between them. However, Derrida takes the ontological difference as one difference among others, as a product of what the idiom “différence” supplements. As he remarks: “différence, in a certain and very strange way, (is) ‘older’ than the ontological difference or than the truth of Being (Derrida 1982, 22).” Deconstruction, then, traces the repetitions of the supplement. It is not so much a theory about texts as a practice of reading and transforming texts, where tracing the movements of différence produces other texts interwoven with the first. While there is a certain arbitrariness in the play of differences that result, it is not the arbitrariness of a reader getting the text to mean whatever he or she wants. It is a question of function rather than meaning, if meaning is understood as a
terminal presence, and the signifying connections traced in deconstruction are first offered by the text itself. A deconstructive reading, then, does not assert or impose meaning, but marks out places where the function of the text works against its apparent meaning, or against the history of its interpretation.

Hyperreality

Hyperreality is closely related to the concept of the simulacrum: a copy or image without reference to an original. In postmodernism, hyperreality is the result of the technological mediation of experience, where what passes for reality is a network of images and signs without an external referent, such that what is represented is representation itself. In Symbolic Exchange and Death (1976) (English 1993), Jean Baudrillard uses Lacan’s concepts of the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real to develop this concept while attacking orthodoxies of the political Left, beginning with the assumed reality of power, production, desire, society, and political legitimacy. Baudrillard argues that all of these realities have become simulations, that is, signs without any referent, because the real and the imaginary have been absorbed into the symbolic. Baudrillard presents hyperreality as the terminal stage of simulation, where a sign or image has no relation to any reality whatsoever, but is “its own pure simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1994, 6).” The real, he says, has become an operational effect of symbolic processes, just as images are technologically generated and coded before we actually perceive them. This means technological mediation has usurped the productive role of the Kantian subject, the locus of an original synthesis of concepts and intuitions, as well as
the Marxian worker, the producer of capital through labor, and the Freudian unconscious, the mechanism of repression and desire. "From now on," says Baudrillard, "signs are exchanged against each other rather than against the real (Baudrillard, 1993, 7)", so production now means signs producing other signs. The system of symbolic exchange is therefore no longer real but "hyperreal." Where the real is "that of which it is possible to provide an equivalent reproduction," the hyperreal, says Baudrillard, is "that which is always already reproduced" (Baudrillard, 1993, 73). The hyperreal is a system of simulation simulating itself. The lesson Baudrillard draws from the events of May 1968 is that the student movement was provoked by the realization that "we were no longer productive" (Baudrillard, 1993, 29), and that direct opposition within the system of communication and exchange only reproduces the mechanisms of the system itself. Strategically, he says, capital can only be defeated by introducing something inexchangeable into the symbolic order, that is, something having the irreversible function of natural death, which the symbolic order excludes and renders invisible. The system, he points out, simulates natural death with fascinating images of violent death and catastrophe, where death is the result of artificial processes and "accidents."

But, as Baudrillard remarks: "Only the death-function cannot be programmed and localized (Baudrillard, 1993, 126)," and by this he means death as the simple and irreversible finality of life. Therefore he calls for the development of "fatal strategies" to make the system suffer reversal and collapse. Because these strategies must be carried out within the symbolic order, they are matters of rhetoric and art, or a hybrid of both. They also function as gifts or sacrifices, for which the system has no counter-move or equivalence.
Baudrillard finds a prime example of this strategy with graffiti artists who experiment with symbolic markings and codes in order to suggest communication while blocking it, and who sign their inscriptions with pseudonyms instead of recognizable names. "They are seeking not to escape the combinatory in order to regain an identity," says Baudrillard, "but to turn indeterminacy against the system, to turn indeterminacy into extermination" (Baudrillard, 1993, 78)." Some of his own remarks, such as "I have nothing to do with postmodernism," have, no doubt, the same strategic intent. To the extent that postmodernism has become a sign exchangeable for other signs, he would indeed want nothing to do with it. Nevertheless, his concepts of simulation and hyperreality, and his call for strategic experimentation with signs and codes, bring him into close proximity with figures such as Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida.

Postmodern Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, the science of textual interpretation, also plays a role in postmodern philosophy. Unlike deconstruction, which focuses upon the functional structures of a text, hermeneutics seeks to arrive at an agreement or consensus as to what the text means, or is about. Gianni Vattimo formulates a postmodern hermeneutics in *The End of Modernity* (English 1988), where he distinguishes himself from his Parisian counterparts by posing the question of post-modernity as a matter for ontological hermeneutics. Instead of calling for experimentation with counter-strategies and functional structures, he sees the heterogeneity and diversity in our experience of the world as a hermeneutical
problem to be solved by developing a sense continuity between the present and the past. This continuity is to be a unity of meaning rather than the repetition of a functional structure, and the meaning is ontological. In this respect, Vattimo’s project is an extension of Heidegger’s inquiries into the meaning of being. However, where Heidegger situates Nietzsche within the limits of metaphysics, Vattimo joins Heidegger’s ontological hermeneutics with Nietzsche’s attempt to think beyond nihilism and historicism with his concept of eternal return. The result, says Vattimo, is a certain distortion of Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche, allowing Heidegger and Nietzsche to be interpreted through one another (Vattimo, 1988, 176). This is a significant point of difference between Vattimo and the French postmodernists, who read Nietzsche against Heidegger, and prefer Nietzsche’s textual strategies over Heidegger’s pursuit of the meaning of being. On Vattimo’s account, Nietzsche and Heidegger can be brought together under the common theme of overcoming. Where Nietzsche announces the overcoming of nihilism through the active nihilism of the eternal return, Heidegger proposes to overcome metaphysics through a non-metaphysical experience of being. In both cases, he argues, what is to be overcome is modernity, characterized by the image that philosophy and science are progressive developments in which thought and knowledge increasingly appropriate their own origins and foundations. Overcoming modernity, however, cannot mean progressing into a new historical phase. As Vattimo observes: “Both philosophers find themselves obliged, on the one hand, to take up a critical distance from Western thought insofar as it is foundational; on the other hand, however, they find themselves unable to criticize Western thought in the name of another, and truer,
foundation” (ibid., 2). Overcoming modernity must therefore mean a Verwindung, in the sense of twisting or distorting modernity itself, rather than an Überwindung or progression beyond it.

While Vattimo takes post-modernity as a new turn in modernity, it entails the dissolution of the category of the new in the historical sense, which means the end of universal history. “While the notion of historicity has become ever more problematic for theory,” he says, “at the same time for historiography and its own methodological self-awareness the idea of history as a unitary process is rapidly dissolving (ibid., 6).” This does not mean historical change ceases to occur, but that its unitary development is no longer conceivable, so only local histories are possible. The de-historicization of experience has been accelerated by technology, especially television, says Vattimo, so that “everything tends to flatten out at the level of contemporaneity and simultaneity (ibid., 10).” As a result, we no longer experience a strong sense of teleology in worldly events, but, instead, we are confronted with a manifold of differences and partial teleologies that can only be judged aesthetically. The truth of postmodern experience is therefore best realized in art and rhetoric. The Nietzschean sense of overcoming modernity is “to dissolve modernity through a radicalization of its own innate tendencies, says Vattimo (ibid., 166).” These include the production of “the new” as a value and the drive for critical overcoming in the sense of appropriating foundations and origins. In this respect, however, Nietzsche shows that modernity results in nihilism: all values, including “truth” and “the new,”
collapse under critical appropriation. The way out of this collapse is the moment of eternal recurrence, when we affirm the necessity of error in the absence of foundations. Vattimo also finds this new attitude toward modernity in Heidegger's sense of overcoming metaphysics, insofar as he suggests that overcoming the enframing lies with the possibility of a turn within the enframing itself. Such a turn would mean deepening and distorting the technological essence, not destroying it or leaving it behind. Furthermore, this would be the meaning of being, understood as the history of interpretation (as "weak" being) instead of a grounding truth, and the hermeneutics of being would be a distorted historicism. Unlike traditional hermeneutics, Vattimo argues that reconstructing the continuity of contemporary experience cannot be accomplished without unifying art and rhetoric with information from the sciences, and this requires philosophy "to propose a 'rhetorically persuasive', unified view of the world, which includes in itself traces, residues, or isolated elements of scientific knowledge (ibid., 179)." Vattimo's philosophy is therefore the project of a postmodern hermeneutics, in contrast to the Parisian thinkers who do not concern themselves with meaning or history as continuous unities.

Postmodern Rhetoric and Aesthetics

Rhetoric and aesthetics pertain to the sharing of experience through activities of participation and imitation. In the postmodern sense, such activities involve sharing or participating in differences that have opened between the old and the new, the natural and the artificial, or even between life
and death. The leading exponent of this line of postmodern thought is Mario Perniola. Like Vattimo, Perniola insists that postmodern philosophy must not break with the legacies of modernity in science and politics. As he says in *Enigmas*, "the relationship between thought and reality that the Enlightenment, idealism, and Marxism have embodied must not be broken" (Perniola, 1995, 43). However, he does not base this continuity upon an internal essence, spirit, or meaning, but upon the continuing effects of modernity in the world. One such effect, visible in art and in the relation between art and society, is the collapse of the past and future into the present, which he characterizes as "Egyptian" or "baroque" in nature. This temporal effect is accomplished through the collapse of the difference between humans and things, where "humans are becoming more similar to things, and equally, the inorganic world, thanks to electronic technology, seems to be taking over the human role in the perception of events (ibid., viii)." This amounts to a kind of "Egyptianism," as described by Hegel in his *Aesthetics* (Hegel 1975, 347-361), where the spiritual and the natural are mixed to such a degree that they cannot be separated, as, for example, in the figure of the Sphinx. However, in the postmodern world the inorganic is not natural, but already artificial, insofar as our perceptions are mediated by technological operations. Likewise, says Perniola, art collections in modern museums produce a "baroque effect," where "The field that is opened up by a collection is not that of cultivated public opinion, nor of social participation, but a space that attracts precisely because it cannot be controlled or possessed (Perniola, 1995, 87)." That is, in the collection, art is removed from its natural or historical context and creates a new sense of space and time, not reducible to linear
history or any sense of origin. The collection, then, is emblematic of postmodern society, a moment of its "truth." Furthermore, Perniola insists that baroque sensibility is characteristic of Italian society and culture in general. "The very idea of truth as something essentially naked," he says, "is at loggerheads with the Baroque idea, so firmly rooted in Italy, that truth is something essentially clothed (ibid., 145)." This corresponds to a sensibility that is intermediate between internal feelings and external things. "The Italian enigma," he says, "lies in the fact that the human component is equipped with an external emotionality that does not belong to him or her intimately, but in which they nonetheless participate (ibid., 145)." To account for this enigmatic experience, the philosopher must become "the intermediary, the passage, the transit to something different and foreign (ibid., 40)." Hence, philosophical reading and writing are not activities of an identical subject, but processes of mediation and indeterminacy between self and other, and philosophical narrative is an overcoming of their differences. These differences cannot be overcome, in Hegelian fashion, by cancelling them under a higher-order synthesis, but must be eroded or defaced in the course of traversing them. In *Ritual Thinking*, Perniola illustrates this process through the concepts of transit, the simulacrum, and ritual without myth. Transit derives from a sense of the simultaneity of the present, where we are suspended in a state of temporariness and indeterminacy, and move "from the same to the same"; the simulacrum is the result of an endless mimesis in which there are only copies of copies without reference to an original; and ritual without myth is the repetition of patterns of action having no connection to the inner life of a subject or of society. Thus, Perniola sees social and political interaction as
repetitive patterns of action having no inherent meaning but constituting, nonetheless, an intermediary realm where oppositions, particularly life and death, are overcome in a to-and-fro movement within their space of difference.

To illustrate these concepts Perniola refers to practices associated with Romanism, particularly Roman religion. "Ritual without myth," he says, "is the very essence of Romanism (Perniola, 2001, 81)." It is a passage between life and death via their mutual simulation, for example, in the labyrinthine movements of the ritual known as the troiae lusus. These movements, he says, mediate between life and death by reversing their pattern of natural succession, and mediate their difference through actions having no intrinsic meaning. Unlike Vattimo's project of constructing meaning to overcome historical differences, Perniola's concept of transit into the space of difference is one of "art" in the sense of artifice or technique, and is not aimed at a synthesis or unification of opposing elements. In this respect, Perniola has an affinity with the French postmodernists, who emphasize functional repetition over the creation of meaning. However, as Perniola's notion of ritual without myth illustrates, the functional repetitions of social interaction and technology do not disseminate differences, but efface them. This is clear in his account of the ritualized passage between life and death, as compared with Baudrillard, who calls for strategies introducing the irreversibility of death into the system of symbolic exchange. In this respect, Perniola's postmodernism is strongly aesthetic, and remains, with Vattimo, in the aesthetic and historical dimensions of experience.
Habermas's Critique

The most prominent and comprehensive critic of philosophical postmodernism is Jürgen Habermas. In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Habermas, 1987), he confronts postmodernism at the level of society and "communicative action." He does not defend the concept of the subject, conceived as consciousness or an autonomous self, against postmodernists' attacks, but defends argumentative reason in inter-subjective communication against their experimental, avant-garde strategies. For example, he claims that Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida and Foucault commit a performative contradiction in their critiques of modernism by employing concepts and methods that only modern reason can provide. He criticizes Nietzsche's Dionysianism as a compensatory gesture towards the loss of unity in Western culture that, in pre-modern times, was provided by religion. Nietzsche's sense of a new Dionysus in modern art, moreover, is based upon an aesthetic modernism in which art acquires its experimental power by separating itself from the values of science and morality, a separation accomplished by the modern Enlightenment, resulting in the loss of organic unity Nietzsche seeks to restore via art itself (Habermas, 1987, 81-105). Habermas sees Heidegger and Derrida as heirs to this "Dionysian messianism." Heidegger, for example, anticipates a new experience of being, which has withdrawn. However, says Habermas, the withdrawal of being is the result of an inverted philosophy of the subject, where Heidegger's destruction of the subject leads to hope for a unity to come, a unity of nothing
other than the subject that is now missing (ibid., 160). Derrida, he says, develops the notion of difference or "archi-writing" in similar fashion: here, we see the god Dionysus revealing himself once again in his absence, as meaning infinitely deferred (ibid., 180-81). Habermas also criticizes Derrida for leveling the distinction between philosophy and literature in a textualism that brings logic and argumentative reason into the domain of rhetoric. In this way, he says, Derrida hopes to avoid the logical problem of self-reference in his critique of reason. However, as Habermas remarks: "Whoever transposes the radical critique of reason into the domain of rhetoric in order to blunt the paradox of self-referentiality, also dulls the sword of the critique of reason itself" (ibid., 210). In similar fashion, he criticizes Foucault for not subjecting his own genealogical method to genealogical unmasking, which would reveal Foucault's re-installation of a modern subject able to critically gaze at its own history. Thus, he says, "Foucault cannot adequately deal with the persistent problems that come up in connection with an interpretive approach to the object domain, a self-referential denial of universal validity claims, and a normative justification of critique (ibid., 286)." Habermas's critique of postmodernism on the basis of performative contradiction and the paradox of self-reference sets the tone and the terms for much of the critical debate now under way. While postmodernists have rejected these criticisms, or responded to them with rhetorical counter-strategies. Lyotard, for example, rejects the notion that intersubjective communication implies a set of rules already agreed upon, and that universal consensus is the ultimate goal of discourse (Lyotard, 1984, 65-66). That postmodernists openly respond to Habermas is due to the fact that he takes postmodernism seriously and does not, like other critics,
reject it as mere nonsense. Indeed, that he is able to read postmodernist texts closely and discursively testifies to their intelligibility. He also agrees with the postmodernists that the focus of debate should be upon modernity as it is realized in social practices and institutions, rather than upon theories of cognition or formal linguistics as autonomous domains. In this respect, Habermas’s concern with inter-subjective communication helps clarify the basis upon which the modernist-postmodernist debates continue to play out.

Comparisons with modern literature

Both modern and postmodern literature represent a break from 19th century realism, in which a story was told from an objective or omniscient point of view. In character development, both modern and postmodern literature explore subjectivism, turning from external reality to examine inner states of consciousness, in many cases drawing on modernist examples in the *stream of consciousness* styles of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, or explorative poems like *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot. In addition, both modern and postmodern literature explore fragmentariness in narrative- and character-construction. *The Waste Land* is often cited as a means of distinguishing modern and postmodern literature. The poem is fragmentary and employs pastiche like much postmodern literature, but the speaker in *The Waste Land* says, “these fragments I have shored against my ruins”. Modernist literature sees fragmentation and extreme subjectivity as an existential crisis,
or Freudian internal conflict, a problem that must be solved, and the artist is often cited as the one to solve it. Postmodernists, however, often demonstrate that this chaos is insurmountable; the artist is impotent, and the only recourse against "ruin" is to play within the chaos. Playfulness is present in many modernist works (Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* or Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, for example) and they may seem very similar to postmodern works, but with postmodernism playfulness becomes central and the actual achievement of order and meaning becomes unlikely.

Shift to Postmodernism

As with all stylistic eras, no definite dates exist for the rise and fall of postmodernism's popularity. 1941, the year in which Irish novelist James Joyce and English novelist Virginia Woolf both died, is sometimes used as a rough boundary for postmodernism's start. The prefix "post," however, does not necessarily imply a new era. Rather, it could also indicate a reaction against modernism in the wake of the Second World War (with its disrespect for human rights, just confirmed in the Geneva Convention, through the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Holocaust, the bombing of Dresden, the fire-bombing of Tokyo, and Japanese American internment). It could also imply a reaction to significant post-war events: the beginning of the Cold War, the civil rights movement in the United States, postcolonialism (Postcolonial literature), and the rise of the personal computer. Some further argue that the beginning of postmodern literature could be marked by significant publications or literary events. For example, some mark the
beginning of postmodernism with the first performance of *Waiting for Godot* in 1953, the first publication of *Howl* in 1956 or of *Naked Lunch* in 1959. For others the beginning is marked by moments in critical theory: Jacques Derrida’s “Structure, Sign, and Play” lecture in 1966 or as late as Ihab Hassan’s usage in *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* in 1971.

Post-war developments and transition figures

Though Postmodernist literature does not refer to everything written in the postmodern period, several post-war developments in literature (such as the Theatre of the Absurd, the Beat Generation, and Magical Realism) have significant similarities. These developments are occasionally collectively labeled “postmodern”; more commonly, some key figures (Samuel Beckett, William S. Burroughs, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar and Gabriel García Marquez) are cited as significant contributors to the postmodern aesthetic. The work of Jarry, the Surrealists, Antonin Artaud, Luigi Pirandello and so on also influenced the work of playwrights from the Theatre of the Absurd. The term “Theatre of the Absurd” was coined by Martin Esslin to describe a tendency in theatre in the 1950s; he related it to Albert Camus’s concept of the absurd. The plays of the Theatre of the Absurd parallel postmodern fiction in many ways. For example, *The Bald Soprano* by Eugène Ionesco is essentially a series of clichés taken from a language textbook. One of the most important figures to be categorized as both Absurdist and Postmodern is Samuel Beckett. The work of Samuel Beckett is often seen as marking the shift from modernism to postmodernism in literature. He had close ties with modernism because of his
friendship with James Joyce; however, his work helped shape the development of literature away from modernism. Joyce, one of the exemplars of modernism, celebrated the possibility of language; Beckett had a revelation in 1945 that, in order to escape the shadow of Joyce, he must focus on the poverty of language and man as a failure. His later work, likewise, featured characters stuck in inescapable situations attempting impotently to communicate whose only recourse is to play, to make the best of what they have. As Hans-Peter Wagner says, “Mostly concerned with what he saw as impossibilities in fiction (identity of characters; reliable consciousness; the reliability of language itself; and the rubrication of literature in genres) Beckett’s experiments with narrative form and with the disintegration of narration and character in fiction and drama won him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. His works published after 1969 are mostly meta-literary attempts that must be read in light of his own theories and previous works and the attempt to deconstruct literary forms and genres.[...] Beckett’s last text published during his lifetime, *Stirrings Still* (1988), breaks down the barriers between drama, fiction, and poetry, with texts of the collection being almost entirely composed of echoes and reiterations of his previous work [...] He was definitely one of the fathers of the postmodern movement in fiction which has continued undermining the ideas of logical coherence in narration, formal plot, regular time sequence, and psychologically explained characters.” “The Beat Generation” is a name coined by Jack Kerouac for the disaffected youth of America during the materialistic 1950’s; Kerouac developed ideas of automatism into what he called “spontaneous prose” to create a maximalistic, multi-novel epic called the Dulouz Legend in the mold of Marcel Proust’s
Remembrance of Things Past. "Beat Generation" is often used more broadly to refer to several groups of post-war American writers from the Black Mountain poets, the New York School, the San Francisco Renaissance, and so on. These writers have occasionally also been referred to as the "Postmoderns" (see especially references by Charles Olson and the Grove anthologies edited by Donald Allen). Though this is now a less common usage of "postmodern", references to these writers as "postmodernists" still appear and many writers associated with this group (John Ashbery, Richard Brautigan, Gilbert Sorrentino, and so on) appear often on lists of postmodern writers. One writer associated with the Beat Generation who appears most often on lists of postmodern writers is William S. Burroughs. Burroughs published Naked Lunch in Paris in 1959 and in America in 1961; this is considered by some the first truly postmodern novel because it is fragmentary, with no central narrative arc; it employs pastiche to fold in elements from popular genres such as detective fiction and science fiction; it is full of parody, paradox, and playfulness; and, according to some accounts, friends Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg edited the book guided by chance. He is also noted, along with Brion Gysin, for the creation of the "cut-up" technique, a technique (similar to Tzara's "Dadaist Poem") in which words and phrases are cut from a newspaper or other publication and rearranged to form a new message. This is the technique he used to create novels such as Nova Express and The Ticket That Exploded.
Magic Realism is a technique popular among Latin American writers (and can also be considered its own genre) in which supernatural elements are treated as mundane (a famous example being the practical-minded and ultimately dismissive treatment of an apparently angelic figure in Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings”). Though the technique has its roots in traditional storytelling, it was a center piece of the Latin American “boom”, a movement coterminous with postmodernism. Some of the major figures of the “Boom” and practitioners of Magical Realism (Gabriel García Marquez, Julio Cortázar etc.) are often listed as postmodernists. This labeling, however, is not without its problems. In Spanish-speaking Latin America, modernismo and posmodernismo refer to early twentieth-century literary movements that have no direct relationship to modernism and postmodernism in English. Finding it anachronistic, Octavio Paz has argued that postmodernism is an imported grand récit that is incompatible with the cultural production of Latin America. Postmodernists such as Salman Rushdie, Italo Calvino, and Gunter Grass commonly use Magical Realism in their work. Along with Beckett and Borges, a commonly cited transitional figure is Vladimir Nabokov; like Beckett and Borges, Nabokov started publishing before the beginning of postmodernity (1926 in Russian, 1941 in English). Though his most famous novel, Lolita (1955), could be considered a modernist or a postmodernist novel, his later work (specifically Pale Fire in 1962 and Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle in 1969) are more clearly postmodern.

Postmodernism literature is not an organized movement with leaders or central figures; therefore, it is more difficult to say if it has ended or when it
will end (compared to, say, declaring the end of modernism with the death of Joyce or Woolf). Arguably postmodernism peaked in the 60s and 70s with the publication of Catch-22 in 1961, Lost in the Funhouse in 1968, Slaughterhouse Five in 1969, Gravity's Rainbow in 1973, and many others. Some declared the death of postmodernism in the 80's with a new surge of realism represented and inspired by Raymond Carver. Tom Wolfe in his 1989 article “Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast” called for a new emphasis on realism in fiction to replace postmodernism. With this new emphasis on realism in mind, some declared White Noise in 1985 or The Satanic Verses in 1988 to be the last great novels of the postmodern era. However, with the continuing publication of many of the above mentioned authors, the success of younger postmodern writers (such as David Foster Wallace, Dave Eggers, Michael Chabon, Noah Cicero, Zadie Smith, Chuck Palahniuk, Neil Gaiman, Jonathan Lethem), and with publications such as McSweeney's, The Believer, and The Onion, the declaration of the death of postmodernism is arguably premature. Amazon.com even described the Mark Z. Danielewski novel House of Leaves, published in 2000 as “post-postmodern” Linda Hutcheon claimed postmodern fiction as a whole could be characterized by the ironic quote marks, that much of it can be taken as tongue-in-cheek. This irony, along with black humor and the general concept of “play” (related to Derrida's concept or the ideas advocated by Roland Barthes in The Pleasure of the Text) are among the most recognizable aspects of postmodernism. Though the idea of employing these in literature did not start with the postmodernists (the modernists were often playful and ironic), they became central features in many postmodern works. In fact, several novelists later to be labeled
postmodern were first collectively labeled black humorists: John Barth, Joseph Heller, William Gaddis, Kurt Vonnegut, Bruce Jay Friedman, etc. It's common for postmodernists to treat serious subjects in a playful and humorous way: for example, the way Heller, Vonnegut, and Pynchon address the events of World War II. A good example of postmodern irony and black humor is found in the stories of Donald Barthelme; “The School”, for example, is about the ironic death of plants, animals, and people connected to the children in one class, but the inexplicable repetition of death is treated only as a joke and the narrator remains emotionally distant throughout. The central concept of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* is the irony of the now-idiomatic “catch 22”, and the narrative is structured around a long series of similar ironies. Thomas Pynchon in particular provides prime examples of playfulness, often including silly wordplay, within a serious context. *The Crying of Lot 49*, for example, contains characters named Mike Fallopian and Stanley Koteks and a radio station called KCUF, while the novel as a whole has a serious subject and a complex structure.

To combine, or “paste” together, multiple elements. In Postmodernist literature this can be an homage to or a parody of past styles. It can be seen as a representation of the chaotic, pluralistic, or information-drenched aspects of postmodern society. It can be a combination of multiple genres to create a unique narrative or to comment on situations in postmodernity: for example, William S. Burroughs uses science fiction, detective fiction, westerns; Margaret Atwood uses science fiction and fairy tales; Umberto Eco uses detective fiction, fairy tales, and science fiction, and so on. Though pastiche commonly refers to the mixing of genres, many other elements are also
included (metafiction and temporal distortion are common in the broader pastiche of the postmodern novel). For example, Thomas Pynchon includes in his novels elements from detective fiction, science fiction, and war fiction; songs; pop culture references; well-known, obscure, and fictional history mixed together; real contemporary and historical figures (Mickey Rourke and Wernher Von Braun for example); a wide variety of well-known, obscure and fictional cultures and concepts. In Robert Coover’s 1977 novel *The Public Burning*, Coover mixes historically inaccurate accounts of Richard Nixon interacting with historical figures and fictional characters such as Uncle Sam and Betty Crocker. Pastiche can also refer to compositional technique, for example the cut-up technique employed by Burroughs. Another example is B. S. Johnson’s 1969 novel *The Unfortunates*; it was released in a box with no binding so that readers could assemble it however they chose. Metafiction is essentially writing about writing or “foregrounding the apparatus”, making the artificiality of art or the fictionality of fiction apparent to the reader and generally disregards the necessity for “willful suspension of disbelief”. It is often employed to undermine the authority of the author, for unexpected narrative shifts, to advance a story in a unique way, for emotional distance, or to comment on the act of storytelling. For example, Italo Calvino’s 1979 novel *If on a winter’s night a traveler* is about a reader attempting to read a novel of the same name. Kurt Vonnegut also commonly used this technique: the first chapter his 1969 novel *Slaughterhouse Five* is about the process of writing the novel and calls attention to his own presence throughout the novel. Though much of the novel has to do with Vonnegut’s own experiences during the firebombing of Dresden, Vonnegut continually points out the artificiality of
the central narrative arc which contains obviously fictional elements such as aliens and time travel. Similarly, Tim O’Brien’s 1990 novel/story collection *The Things They Carried*, about one platoon’s experiences during the Vietnam War, features a character named Tim O’Brien; though O’Brien was a Vietnam veteran, the book is a work of fiction and O’Brien calls into question the fictionality of the characters and incidents throughout the book. One story in the book, “How to Tell a True War Story”, questions the nature of telling stories. Factual retellings of war stories, the narrator says, would be unbelievable and heroic, moral war stories don’t capture the truth. Linda Hutcheon coined the term “historiographic metafiction” to refer to works that fictionalize actual historical events or figures; notable examples include *The General in His Labyrinth* by Gabriel García Márquez (about Simón Bolívar), *Flaubert’s Parrot* by Julian Barnes (about Gustave Flaubert), and *Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow (which features such historical figures as Harry Houdini, Henry Ford, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, Booker T. Washington, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung). John Fowles deals similarly with the Victorian Period in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*. In regards to critical theory, this technique can be related to *The Death of the Author* by Roland Barthes. The common technique in modernist fiction is fragmentation. The non-linear narratives are central features in both modern and postmodern literature. Temporal distortion in postmodern fiction is used in a variety of ways, often for the sake of irony. Historiographic metafiction (see above) is an example of this. Distortions in time are central features in many of Kurt Vonnegut’s non-linear novels, the most famous of which is perhaps Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse Five* becoming “unstuck in time”. In *Flight to Canada*,
Ishmael Reed deals playfully with anachronisms, Abraham Lincoln using a telephone for example. Time may also overlap, repeat, or bifurcate into multiple possibilities. For example, in Robert Coover’s “The Babysitter” from Pricksongs & Descants, the author presents multiple possible events occurring simultaneously—in one section the babysitter is murdered while in another section nothing happens and so on—yet no version of the story is favored as the correct version. Fredric Jameson called postmodernism the “cultural logic of late capitalism”. “Late capitalism” implies that society has moved past the industrial age and into the information age. Likewise, Jean Baudrillard claimed postmodernity was defined by a shift into hyperreality in which simulations have replaced the real. In postmodernity people are inundated with information, technology has become a central focus in many lives, and our understanding of the real is mediated by simulations of the real. Many works of fiction have dealt with this aspect of postmodernity with characteristic irony and pastiche. For example, Don DeLillo’s White Noise presents characters who are bombarded with a “white noise” of television, product brand names, and clichés. The cyberpunk fiction of William Gibson, Neal Stephenson, and many others use science fiction techniques to address this postmodern, hyperreal information bombardment.

Perhaps demonstrated most famously and effectively in Joseph Heller’s Catch-22 and the work of Thomas Pynchon, the sense of paranoia, the belief that there’s an ordering system behind the chaos of the world. For the postmodernist, no ordering system exists, so a search for order is fruitless and
absurd. *The Crying of Lot 49* by Thomas Pynchon has many possible interpretations. If one reads the book with a particular bias, then he or she is going to be frustrated. This often coincides with the theme of technoculture and hyperreality. For example, in *Breakfast of Champions* by Kurt Vonnegut, the character Dwayne Hoover becomes violent when he's convinced that everyone else in the world is a robot and he is the only human. Dubbed maximalism by some critics, the sprawling, canvas and fragmented narrative of such writers as Dave Eggers has generated controversy on the “purpose” of a novel as narrative and the standards by which it should be judged. The postmodern position is that the style of a novel must be appropriate to what it depicts and represents, and points back to such examples in previous ages as *Gargantua* by François Rabelais and the *Odyssey* of Homer, which Nancy Felson-Rubin hails as the exemplar of the polytropic audience and its engagement with a work. Many modernist critics, notably B.R. Myers in his polemic *A Reader's Manifesto*, attack the maximalist novel as being disorganized, sterile and filled with language play for its own sake, empty of emotional commitment—and therefore empty of value as a novel. Yet there are counter-examples, such as Pynchon’s *Mason & Dixon*, or James Chapman’s *Stet*, where postmodern narrative coexists with emotional commitment. Literary minimalism can be characterized as a focus on a surface description where readers are expected to take an active role in the creation of a story. The characters in minimalist stories and novels tend to be unexceptional. Generally, the short stories are “slice of life” stories. Minimalism, the opposite of maximalism, is a representation of only the most basic and necessary pieces, specific by economy with words. Minimalist
authors hesitate to use adjectives and adverbs and they never use meaningless
details. Such authors force readers to take an active role in the creative process;
instead of providing every minute detail, the author provides a general context
and then allows the reader’s imagination to shape the story. Literary
minimalism is represented by Samuel Beckett, E. Hemingway, Ezra Pound
etc. Fiction which is based on and combined with fact. Notable examples are
Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*, Norman’s Mailer’s *Armies of the Night* and
Alex Haley’s *Roots*. It can be applied to historical novels which combine a
great deal of period fact with fictional treatment or to novels which
incorporate actual living personalities (e.g. the President of the USA, the
British Prime Minister etc.) in a narrative about recent events which pertain to
historical fact. Fabulation is a term used to describe the anti-novel. It appears
to have been introduced by Robert Scholes in *The Fabulators*. Fabulation
involves allegory, verbal acrobatics and surrealistic effects. This style can be
represented by Salman Rushdie’s *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*.

Interdependence of literary texts based on the theory that a literary text is not
an isolated phenomenon but is made up of a mosaic of quotations, and that any
text is the "absorption and transformation of another." One literary text
depends on some other literary work. It is represented in Tom Stoppard’s play
*Rosencrantz and Guildestern are Dead*. Another genre, where the central
strand of the action purports to be the work’s own composition, although it is
really “about” something else — as Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* is about
the composition of India after independence. Often the writing is a metaphor
for constructing a world. The poiooumenon has a long prehistory (hardly a
tradition), going back through Beckett’s trilogy and Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus*
to Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, but it is preminently a postmodernist genre. After Nabokov's dazzling *Pale Fire*, indeed, it became a dominant form: perhaps a quarter of the more ambitious novels of the seventies featured work in progress. Even the most considerable writers have felt obliged to attempt the genre, like Lessing in *The Golden Notebook*, Fowles in *Mantissa*, and Golding in *Paper Men*. Influenced more or less directly by literary theory, the poiomunenon is calculated to offer opportunities to explore the boundaries of fiction and reality—the limits of narrative truth. Literary work marked by the use of still, sharply defined, smoothly painted images of figures and objects depicted in a somewhat surrealistic manner. The themes and subjects are often imaginary, somewhat outlandish and fantastic and with a certain dream-like quality. The effects could be powerful. Some of the characteristic features of this kind of fiction are the mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic of bizarre, skilful time shifts, convoluted and even labyrinthine narratives and plots, miscellaneous use of dreams, myths and fairy stories, expressionistic and even surrealistic description, arcane erudition, the element of surprise or abrupt shock, the horrific and the inexplicable. It has been applied, for instance, to the work of Luis Borges, the Argentinian who in 1935 published his *Historia universal de la infamia*, regarded by many as the first work of magic realism. The Colombian novelist Gabriel García Marquez is also regarded as a notable exponent of this kind of fiction—especially his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The Cuban Aleo Carpentier is another described as a “magic realist.” John Barth, the postmodernist novelist who talks often about the label “postmodern”, wrote an influential essay in 1968 called “Literature of Exhaustion” and in 1979 wrote “Literature of
"Literature of Replenishment" in order to clarify the earlier essay. "Literature of Exhaustion" was about the need for a new era in literature after modernism had exhausted itself. In "Literature of Replenishment" Barth says, My ideal Postmodernist author neither merely repudiates nor merely imitates either his twentieth-century Modernist parents or his nineteenth-century premodernist grandparents. He has the first half of our century under his belt, but not on his back. Without lapsing into moral or artistic simplism, shoddy craftsmanship, Madison Avenue venality, or either false or real naïveté, he nevertheless aspires to a fiction more democratic in its appeal than such late-Modernist marvels as Beckett's *Texts for Nothing*... The ideal Postmodernist novel will somehow rise above the quarrel between realism and irrealism, formalism and 'contentism,' pure and committed literature, coterie fiction and junk fiction.. Many of the well-known postmodern novels deal with World War II, one of the most famous of which being Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. Heller claimed his novel and many of the other American novels of the time had more to do with the state of the country after the war: The antiwar and anti government feelings in the book belong to the period following World War II: the Korean War, the cold war of the Fifties. A general disintegration of belief took place then, and it affected *Catch-22* in that the form of the novel became almost disintegrated. *Catch-22* was a collage; if not in structure, then in the ideology of the novel itself ... Without being aware of it, I was part of a near-movement in fiction. While I was writing *Catch-22*, J. P. Donleavy was writing *The Ginger Man*, Jack Kerouac was writing *On the Road*, Ken Kesey was writing *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Thomas Pynchon was writing *V.*, and Kurt Vonnegut was writing *Cat's Cradle*. I don't think any one of us even knew
any of the others. Certainly I didn’t know them. Whatever forces were at work shaping a trend in art were affecting not just me, but all of us. The feelings of helplessness and persecution in *Catch-22* are very strong in Pynchon and in *Cat’s Cradle*. Novelist and theorist Umberto Eco explains his idea of postmodernism as a kind of double-coding: I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows that he cannot say to her “I love you madly”, because he knows that she knows (and that she knows he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still there is a solution. He can say “As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly”. At this point, having avoided false innocence, having said clearly it is no longer possible to talk intimately, he will nevertheless say what he wanted to say to the woman: that he loves her in an age of lost innocence. Novelist David Foster Wallace in his 1990 essay “E Unibus Pluram” makes the connection between the rise of postmodernism and the rise of television with its tendency toward self-reference and the ironic juxtaposition of what’s seen and what’s said. This, he claims, explains the preponderance of pop culture references in postmodern literature: It was in post-atomic America that pop influences on literature became something more than technical. About the time television first gasped and sucked air, mass popular U.S. culture seemed to become High-Art-viable as a collection of symbols and myth. The episcopate of this pop-reference movement were the post-Nabokovian Black Humorists, the Metafictionists and assorted franc-and latinophiles only later comprised by “postmodern.” The erudite, sardonic fictions of the Black Humorists introduced a generation of new fiction writers who saw themselves as sort of avant-avant-garde, not only cosmopolitan and
polyglot but also technologically literate, products of more than just one region, heritage, and theory, and citizens of a culture that said its most important stuff about itself via mass media. In this regard one thinks particularly of the Gaddis of *The Recognitions* and *JR*, the Barth of *The End of the Road* and *The Sot-Weed Factor*, and the Pynchon of *The Crying of Lot 49*. ... Here's Robert Coover's 1966 *A Public Burning*, in which Eisenhower buggers Nixon on-air, and his 1968 *A Political Fable*, in which the Cat in the Hat runs for president. Hans-Peter Wagner offers this approach to defining postmodern literature: Postmodernism ... can be used at least in two ways – firstly, to give a label to the period after 1968 (which would then encompass all forms of fiction, both innovative and traditional), and secondly, to describe the highly experimental literature produced by writers beginning with Lawrence Durrell and John Fowles in the 1960s and reaching to the breathless works of Martin Amis and the “Chemical (Scottish) Generation” of the fin-de-siècle. In what follows, the term ‘postmodernist’ is used for experimental authors (especially Durel, Fowles, Carter, Brooke-Rose, Barnes, Ackroyd, and Martin Amis) while “post-modern” is applied to authors who have been less innovative. Modern, overloaded individuals, desperately trying to maintain rootedness and integrity...ultimately are pushed to the point where there is little reason not to believe that all value-orientations are equally well-founded. Therefore, increasingly, choice becomes meaningless. According to Baudrillard (1984: 38-9), we must now come to terms with the second revolution, “that of the Twentieth Century, of postmodernism, which is the immense process of the destruction of meaning equal to the earlier destruction of appearances. Whoever lives by meaning dies by meaning (Ashley 1990).”
Ryan Bishop, in a concise article in the *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology* (1996), defines post-modernism as an eclectic movement, originating in aesthetics, architecture, and philosophy. Postmodernism espouses a systematic skepticism of grounded theoretical perspectives. Applied to anthropology, this skepticism has shifted focus from the observation of a particular society to the observation of the (anthropological) observer. Postmodernism concentrates on the tensions of difference and similarity erupting from processes of globalization: the accelerating circulation of people, the increasingly dense and frequent cross-cultural interactions, and the unavoidable intersections of local and global knowledge.” Postmodernists are suspicious of authoritative definitions and singular narratives of any trajectory of events.” (Bishop 1996: 993). Post-modern attacks on ethnography are based on the belief that there is no true objectivity. The authentic implementation of the scientific method is impossible. According to Rosenau, postmodernists can be divided into two very broad camps, Skeptics and Affirmatives. Skeptic Postmodern are extremely critical of the modern subject. They consider the subject to be a “linguistic convention” (Rosenau 1992:43). They also reject any understanding of time because for them the modern understanding of time is oppressive in that it controls and measures individuals. They reject Theory because theories are abundant, and no theory is considered more correct that any other. They feel that “theory conceals, distorts, and obfuscates, it is alienated, disparated, dissonant, it means to exclude, order, and control rival powers” (Rosenau 1992: 81). Affirmatives postmoderns also reject Theory by denying claims of truth. They do not, however, feel that Theory needs to be abolished but merely
transformed. Affirmatives are less rigid than Skeptics. They support movements organized around peace, environment, and feminism (Rosenau 1993: 42): "The Postmodern would be that which in the modern invokes the unpresentable in presentation itself, that which refuses the consolation of correct forms, refuses the consensus of taste permitting a common experience of nostalgia for the impossible, and inquires into new presentations—not to take pleasure in them, but to better produce the feeling that there is something unpresentable." It attacks many of the modern age traditions, such as the "Grand" Narrative or what Lyotard termed the Meta(master) narrative (Lyotard, 1984). In contrast to the ethnographies written by anthropologists in the first half of the 20th Century, Lyotard states that an all-encompassing account of a culture cannot be accomplished. Jean Baudrillard is a sociologist who began his career exploring the Marxist critique of capitalism (Sarup, 1993: 161). During this phase of his work he argued that, "consumer objects constitute a system of signs that differentiate the population" (ibid., 162). Eventually, however, Baudrillard felt that Marxist tenets did not effectively evaluate commodities, so he turned to postmodernism. Rosenau labels Baudrillard as a skeptical postmodernist because of statements like, "everything has already happened....nothing new can occur, “ or “there is no real world (Rosenau, 1992: 64, 110).” Baudrillard breaks down modernism and postmodernism in an effort to explain the world as a set of models. He identifies early modernity as the period between the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, modernity as the period at the start of the Industrial Revolution, and postmodernism as the period of mass media (cinema and photography). Baudrillard states that we live in a world of images but images
that are only simulations. Baudrillard implies that many people fail to understand this concept that, "we have now moved into an epoch...where truth is entirely a product of consensus values, and where 'science' itself is just the name we attach to certain modes of explanation (Norris 1990: 169)." Derrida (1930 - ) is identified as a poststructuralist and a skeptical postmodernist. Much of his writing is concerned with the deconstruction of texts and probing the relationship of meaning between texts (Bishop 1996: 1270). He observes "a text employs its own stratagems against it, producing a force of dislocation that spreads itself through an entire system. (Rosenau 1993: 120)." Derrida directly attacks Western philosophy's understanding of reason. He sees reason as dominated by metaphysics of presence. He agrees with structuralism's insight, that meaning is not inherent in signs, but he proposes that it is incorrect to infer that anything reasoned can be used as a stable and timeless model (Appignanesi, 1995: 77). "He tries to problematise the grounds of reason, truth, and knowledge...he questions the highest point by demanding reasoning for reasoning itself, (Norris, 1990: 199)." Foucault (1926- 1984) was a French philosopher who attempted to show that what most people think of as the permanent truths of human nature and society actually change throughout the course of history. While challenging the influences of Marx and Freud, Foucault postulated that everyday practices enabled people to define their identities and systemize knowledge. Foucault's study of power and its shifting patterns is one of the foundations of postmodernism. Foucault is considered a postmodern theorist precisely because his work upsets the conventional understanding of history as a chronology of inevitable facts. Alternatively, he depicts history as under layers of suppressed and
unconscious knowledge in and throughout history. These under layers are the
codes and assumptions of order, the structures of exclusion, that legitimate the
epistemes by which societies achieve identities (Appignanesi 1995: 83). In her
work “Primacy of the Ethical” Scheper-Hughes argues that, “If we cannot
begin to think about social institutions and practices in moral or ethical terms,
then anthropology strikes me as quite weak and useless.” (1995: 410). She
advocates that ethnographies should be used as an act of reflection and human
liberation because she feels that “ethics” make culture possible. Since culture
is preceded by ethics, therefore ethics cannot be culturally bound as argued by
anthropologists in the past. These philosophies are evident in her other works
such as, “Death without Weeping.” The crux of her postmodern perspective is
that, “Anthropologists, no less than any other professionals, should be held
accountable for how we have used and how we have failed to use
anthropology as a critical tool at crucial historical moments. It is the act of
“witnessing” that lends our word its moral, at times almost theological,
challenge the status quo. Hamburger holds that we have to choose between
sub-modern Marxism and the capitalist paradigm of narrative. Thus, Derrida
uses the term ‘post deconstructive discourse’ to denote the role of the reader as
writer. Realism suggests that the collective is part of the defining characteristic
of reality, but only if truth is distinct from sexuality; otherwise, Sontag’s
model of submodern Marxism is one of “Lacanist obscurity”, and hence
intrinsically a legal fiction. It could be said that Derrida promotes the use of
modern deconstruction to read and modify sexual identity. Baudrillard uses
the term ‘realism’ to denote the bridge between society and class. Therefore,
Debord suggests the use of sub modern Marxism to attack sexism. The main theme of la Tournier’s essay on realism is a self-justifying reality. If one examines realism, one is faced with a choice: either reject sub dialectic theory or conclude that reality is capable of intent. Thus, Sontag’s critique of realism holds that sexuality, surprisingly, has objective value. Sartre promotes the use of Batailleist ‘powerful communication’ to deconstruct society. “Class is meaningless,” says Debord; however, according to von Junz, it is not so much class that is meaningless, but rather the failure of class. But the figure/ground distinction intrinsic to Stone’s JFK emerges again in Heaven and Earth, although in a more mythopoetical sense. An abundance of discourses concerning the genre, and some would say the Rubicon of pretextual art exists. Derrida promotes the use of realism to analyse and read class. But Debord uses the term ‘Foucaultist power relations’ to denote not narrative as such, but post narrative. Realism holds that the goal of the writer is deconstruction, given that truth is equal to language. Thus, Bataille suggests the use of neocapitalist dialectic theory to deconstruct class divisions. Sartre uses the term ‘realism’ to denote a self-fulfilling whole. However, the main theme of Buxton’ model of the postcapitalist paradigm of reality is the common ground between art and sexual identity. In Platoon, Stone reiterates Batailleist ‘powerful communication’; in Heaven and Earth, he deconstructs sub dialectic theory. The characteristic theme of the works of Stone is the genre of semantic society. However, the premise of Batailleist ‘powerful communication’ suggests that the media is fundamentally unattainable. The main theme of Porter’s essay on realism is not, in fact, theory, but sub theory. Therefore, Bataille uses the term ‘sub dialectic theory’ to denote the bridge between
reality and class. Marx's model of Batailleist 'powerful communication' holds that language is capable of significant form, but only if the premise of capitalist neodialectic theory is valid. However, the subject is contextualised into that which includes sexuality as a reality. Lyotard uses the term 'realism' to denote the role of the observer as artist. Thus, the fatal flaw, and some would say the defining characteristic, of Batailleist 'powerful communication' prevalent in Gibson's *All Tomorrow's Parties* is also evident in *Neuromancer*. The characteristic theme of the works of Gibson is a mythopoetical whole. Art is part of the futility of truth, but rather the absurdity, and thus, the economy of art. Therefore, any number of dematerialisms concerning the textual paradigm of narrative may be found. Bataille promotes the use of realism to modify society. It could be said that if Batailleist 'powerful communication' holds, we have to choose between Baudrillardist hyper reality and the pre-cultural paradigm of consensus. Derrida's critique of Batailleist 'powerful communication' implies that reality, somewhat paradoxically, has objective value. Nevertheless, in *Idoru*, Gibson analyses realism; in *Pattern Recognition*, however, he denies Batailleist 'powerful communication'. The main theme of Dahmus's essay on realism is the role of the reader as writer. Postmodernism is a complicated term, or set of ideas, one that has only emerged as an area of academic study since the mid-1980s. Postmodernism is hard to define, because it is a concept that appears in a wide variety of disciplines or areas of study, including art, architecture, music, film, literature, sociology, communications, fashion, and technology. It is hard to locate it temporally or historically, because it's not clear exactly when postmodernism begins. Generally, Modernism is a movement that started with the intentions
of breaking the dominating and dominant conventions of the nineteenth century art, literature and culture, the most important among them being Realism: "Postmodernism is to be seen not as a break with modernism but rather as a logical cultivation of the premise of modernist movement. The ultimate futility of art, which informs postmodernism, was already implicit in the arguments put forth by Romantics and the moderns alike for elevating art to the status of surrogate religion. (A.S.D Pillai, 35)." The realist movement was considered a mode, not about reality but the nemesis of it, looking at art and life in a special way as though there was a direct correspondence between the two. Experimental reality that was common to all and existed outside the text was the foundation for the realists: "The theoretical premise of realism is that art should eschew the idealist metaphysics of romanticism and portray instead things as they are, in the sense of portraying objectively and concretely the observable details of actual life (Allison, Lee, 5)." They strongly argued that it is the fundamental responsibility of fiction to represent it as it is; thereby showing truth. They believed that perception must be pure and the facts in the novel should speak for themselves. Authorial comments and reader manipulations are unnecessary. They long for mirroring the world to show the truth. For the postmodernists "there is no longer even the pretence that reality can be directly mirrored by the novel, although several of them take great delight in playing with this notion. Reality is purely linguistic construct and if any meaning takes place it is of linguistic structures (Allison Lee, 25)." Postmodernism tended to indicate a new periodisation. Lyotard used it as social, artistic or cultural condition, not pertaining to any form of art or literature alone. Jeremy Hawthorne uses it in three ways: (1) to refer to
non-realist and non-traditional literatures and art of the post-second World war period. (2) to refer to literature and art which take certain modernist features to extreme levels and (3) to refer to aspects of more general human condition in the 1960's which have an all embracing effect on life, culture, ideology and art.(110). The term “postmodernism” first entered the philosophical lexicon in 1979, with the publication of The Postmodern Condition by Jean-François Lyotard. I therefore give Lyotard pride of place in the sections that follow. An economy of selection dictated the choice of other figures for this entry. I have selected only those most commonly cited in discussions of philosophical postmodernism, five French and two Italian, although individually they may resist common affiliation. Ordering them by nationality might duplicate a modernist schema they would question, but there are strong differences among them, and these tend to divide along linguistic and cultural lines. The French, for example, work with concepts developed during the structuralist revolution in Paris in the 1950s and early 1960s, including structuralist readings of Marx and Freud. For this reason they are often called “poststructuralists.” They also cite the events of May 1968 as a watershed moment for modern thought and its institutions, especially the universities. The Italians, by contrast, draw upon a tradition of aesthetics and rhetoric including figures such as Giambattista Vico and Benedetto Croce. Their emphasis is strongly historical, and they exhibit no fascination with a revolutionary moment. Instead, they emphasize continuity, narrative, and difference within continuity, rather than counter-strategies and discursive gaps. Neither side, however, suggests that postmodernism is an attack upon modernity or a complete departure from it. Rather, its differences lie within modernity itself, and postmodernism is a
continuation of modern thinking in another mode. Finally, a summary of Habermas's critique of postmodernism has been included, representing the main lines of discussion on both sides of the Atlantic. Habermas argues that postmodernism contradicts itself through self-reference, and notes that postmodernists presuppose concepts they otherwise seek to undermine, e.g., freedom, subjectivity, or creativity. He sees in this a rhetorical application of strategies employed by the artistic avant-garde of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an avant-garde that is possible only because modernity separates artistic values from science and politics in the first place. On his view, postmodernism is an illicit aestheticization of knowledge and public discourse. Against this, Habermas seeks to rehabilitate modern reason as a system of procedural rules for achieving consensus and agreement among communicating subjects. Insofar as postmodernism introduces aesthetic playfulness and subversion into science and politics, he resists it in the name of a modernity moving toward completion rather than self-transformation. Toynbee used the term to refer to the phase of western history predominated by irrationalism and helplessness. In Britain and in America Postmodernism was considered in 1980's as an intersection of cultural, political and historical forces. Patricia Waugh clarifies it as: "Postmodernism now expresses the sense of a new cultural epoch, in which distinction between critical and functional knowledge of breakdown as capitalism in its latest consumerist phase invades everything including the aesthetic, the post-colonial world and the unconscious remaining no oppositional space. At this time, the term becomes inflected with a kaleidoscope of meanings drawn from those human sciences variously engaged in the production in the theoretical palimpsest
were the specific aesthetic origins of the term are almost entirely obscured(5).

Postmodernism in Literature and Art

In considering postmodernist aesthetic practices in parallel with the postmodern lack of political consensus, Lyotard invokes "the lack of consensus of taste." Instead these aesthetic practices are characterized by an affirmation of their multiplicity. None needs to be defined by any given form, however multiple or fragmented, as was the case in modernist aesthetics, and as would be demanded from art by the consensus of modernist taste. By contrast, postmodernist aesthetic practices may adopt any form, outlook, or agenda, new or old, and allow for other (than postmodernist) practices and alternative approaches. The postmodernist aesthetic is thus defined by the (political) sense of this multiplicity of practices. Continuing the narrative experiments of the modernists, the first generation of postmodernists, American and British writers of the 1960s and 1970s "metafiction" (Kurt Vonnegut, John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, John Fowles, and Angela Carter), produced texts that simultaneously questioned and violated the conventions of traditional narrative. Similarly the postmodernist Language poets (Lyn Bernstein, Charles Hejinian, and Bob Perelman), inspired by the linguistic experiments of modernism and the new ideas of poststructuralism, deployed a fractured, systematically deranged language aimed at destabilizing the systems (intellectual, cultural, or political) constructed through language. The fragmentation, intertextuality, and discontinuity that characterize so much of experimental modernist and postmodernist literature find a kind of fulfillment
in the inherently fragmented, intertextual, and discontinuous form of "hypertext," a computer-generated Web text with multiple branching links. Another hallmark of postmodern literature, and of postmodern art in general, is the erosion of the boundaries between "high," elite, or serious art and "low," popular art, or entertainment. Decidedly serious literary works now make use of genres long thought to belong only to popular work. A related phenomenon is the development of numerous hybrid genres that erode the distinctions, for instance, between literature and journalism, literature, biography, autobiography, and literature and history. The emergence and proliferation of feminist, multiethnic, multicultural, and postcolonial literature since the 1970s is, however, the most dramatic and significant manifestation of the de-centering and de-marginalization defining both postmodernity and postmodernism. In the 1970s and 1980s, American and European literature underwent an immense transformation as writers who had traditionally been excluded from literary canons—women and ethnic and racial minorities—moved from the margins to the centers of the literary world. There are counterparts to this phenomenon in history and anthropology, which have seen a proliferation of histories from below and outside—histories of women, of children, of the working class. Postmodernism has gone from History with a capital H, to histories, small h. Postmodern fiction may be categorized as: (1) non-fiction novel or reportage; (2) fabulation and (3) problematic novel. Novels of the first category are not at all novels but report or autobiographies where everything is revealed. In fabulation, popular myths and allusions are used to convey meanings and message. Problematic novels make the reader participate the aesthetic and philosophical problems that the writings of fiction
present today. But the categorization does not always work, a postmodern work may overlap the categorization. Postmodern life and literature are consumerist and materialistic. Centrelessness of Postmodernism creates the lack of guidance and that is why confusion looms large in society and the various facts of society like art, literature, communication and life in general. Postmodernism is a commitment in art in down to earth terms wherein utmost realism in literature has become its integral part. Postmodern literature wishes to translate into action or print in literature precisely the way we lead our lives. The concept of Postmodernism is Dionysian; an absolute liberation to the contemporary conditions and realities. It is a reactionary movement. With the institutionalization of “high modernism” in the mid-twentieth century and the increasing commercial appropriation and commodification of artworks, the modernist ideal of an artistic avant-garde, standing apart from mainstream culture, became increasingly obsolete. Postmodernist art has been, since its beginnings in the movements of the 1960s—Pop art, Fluxus, and feminist art—art that was inherently political and simultaneously engaged with and critical of commercial mass culture. All these movements are linked to the development of multimedia performance art and conceptual art, a term that designates art that is neither painting nor sculpture, art of the mind rather than art of the eye. The logical extension of this definition (following Marcel Duchamp) is that nearly anything, properly “framed” or designated as such, might be thought of as art. One of the most distinctive characteristics of postmodernist art is the dissolution of traditional categories of art and artworks, and the proliferation of new and hybrid forms that have broadened these categories to an unprecedented degree, even greater than encountered in
literature. The feminist art of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s challenged the institutionalized male bias and sexism of the art system in a wide-ranging critique that extended from the writing of art history and criticism, to museums and art galleries, to the predominance of the "male gaze" and the objectification of women in visual media throughout history, to definitions of art that excluded such traditionally female forms as quilts and weaving.

No doubt the logic of the simulacrum, with its transformation of older realities into television images, does more than merely replicate the logic of late capitalism; it reinforces and intensifies it (Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*.) Other strains of postmodernist art (from the 1980s to the early twenty-first century), which one might call "the art of simulacra," focus on the prevalence of the image (particularly the media image), technologies of reproduction, and strategies of appropriation of already existing works. It encompasses the work of a broad range of artists and movements, from the video and performance art of Nam June Paik, Laurie Anderson, and Bruce Nauman, to the photography of Cindy Sherman and the graphic art of Barbara Kruger. While reflecting many general aspects of postmodernism, the phenomenon and concept of postmodernist architecture have a particular specificity and complexity, in part because the term postmodernist architecture was given a specific meaning very early in the postmodern period. What characterizes postmodernist architecture most, however, is its diversity in spirit and in style, and the ways it defines itself, in each movement and project, in relation to this diversity. For some, the
quintessential expression of postmodernist architecture is the shopping mall, an enclosed city in which spatial disorientation seems to have been a deliberate, structural intention. Elsewhere this disorientation also takes on a temporal, historical form, as architects combine disparate elements from previous architectural eras and styles in the same building, an incongruous mixing that initially gave rise to the term postmodernist architecture. Philip Johnson’s AT&T headquarters in New York City, an austere, International-style skyscraper sporting a baroque Chippendale pediment, would be a postmodernist building in this earlier sense. For some architects, postmodernism was defined by the abandonment of modernist utopianism and a validation of vernacular architecture, as in Robert Venturi’s celebration of the “decorated shed” of commercial architecture. New computer-assisted design and computer-assisted manufacturing (CAD/CAM) technologies and high-tech materials have made it possible to break from the traditional architectural forms and create more free-form and sculptural edifices, such as Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. Although not as widespread or influential as other art forms, postmodern music and dance have nevertheless developed many of the key traits of postmodernism, sometimes in their most radical aspects, both building upon and working against such modernist figures as Arnold Schönberg, Igor Stravinsky, and Pierre Boulez in music, and George Balanchine, Martha Graham, and Merce Cunningham in dance. Radically experimental postmodernist composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen, Iannis Xenakis, and György Ligeti have gone beyond modernism in dislocating the classical harmonies and replacing them with ever more complex, nearly unmusical, sounds and noises. The same formal
experimentation can often be found in postmodernist dance. Postmodernist dance is, however, particularly characterized by the collapse of boundaries between “high” dance (classical ballet and modern dance) and “popular” dance (jazz dance, folk and tribal dance, ballroom dancing, break and line dancing, and Broadway musical choreography), as choreographers fused their various styles and movements. Among the most prominent representatives of the postmodern dance scene are Bill T. Jones, Twyla Tharp, and Mark Morris. Some choreographers have gone even farther afield, incorporating movements from the martial arts, sports, acrobatics, mime, games, and even the mundane physical activities of everyday life. These trends are found in postmodernist (classical) music as well, from the usage of elements of jazz and rock and roll to the incorporation of street or elevator noises. Dance, however, became quite literally more a part of the world, as choreographers developed architecturally inspired, site-specific works. At the same time, dance increasingly became a part of the broader forms of performance art and multimedia art, as choreography was linked to political concerns and combined with video, text, and other media. One might say that the choreography of postmodern dance is the choreography of postmodernism itself, its aesthetics and its politics, including its politics of aesthetics defined by the lack of a single consensus of taste. Postmodernism may be considered, largely consumerist and decentralized because of its reaction towards a society. In such a society the single figure is replaced by media, the attention is not on the single centre but on many factors. This decentralization leaves its marks everywhere. This is the beginning of postmodernism. It is relative, related to the age, as such, the age has its own mannerism. The past works on the present and conditions it. When
it is in the extreme, it is avant-garde and tries to settle scores with the past, destroying and defacing it. The past has an important role to play in the origin and development of Postmodernism. Postmodernism sees the present as a product of the past and comes to terms with it acknowledging our limitations and powers. Rather than rejecting the things, the postmoderns do not understand, they take seriously, which justifies the use of parody, and irony in them. These raises the fundamental questions about the nature and function of art, literature and society in general. Postmodernism is both cultural and literary. It challenges the ideas, at the same time accepts and projects them:

"Postmodernism is thus a phenomenon, literary and cultural that points to the collapse of the western liberal humanism and of literature and culture sustained by it (A.S.D Pillai, 23). During the early part of eighties, it came to have certain aesthetic features like playful irony, parody, self-consciousness, cynicism, fragmentation and pastiche. The fiction of this period "tells untenable stories, combining what ‘really’ happened and all that might possibly ‘happen’, suggesting how language can exist purely as itself, with no reference to content (Peter Brooker, 19).” It upsets the expectations and destabilizes any authoritative version of the world. Postmodern writings are interested in the deliberate shattering of the real by means of experimentation in language. They are often self-conscious, self-contradicting and self-undermining which criticizes and condones simultaneously. Parody is the great vehicle to express their mentality. They acknowledge the implication to the previous text, create through decoration and displace the centre from outside. Imagination in Postmodernism as in the case of romanticism prepares us to face a new world that is commercial, consumerist and decentred.
Consumerism has spread its wings everywhere resulting in hopelessness and degeneration. Technology has the upper hand while relationship is meaningless or has changed meanings, history is distorted, and we live an aimless, purposeless life. Chaos and anarchy are everywhere. Postmodern writers believe that there is no meaning in giving an illusion of life while life itself is illusory. They are ready to accept the fundamental instability and meaninglessness of the world without any correcting influence either in art or in literature which the earlier literature adhered to. They have a more celebrative attitude towards society and life in general and never try to change anything but accept them as they come in celebrative mood. The conclusion they draw is that "if one cannot prevent Rome from burning then one might as well enjoy the fiddling that is left open to one" (Hawthorne, 84). The result is the playfulness of the texts achieved at the expense of the reader. Treachery happens to be most important theme in twentieth century writings that withdraws information or cheats the reader of an expected resolution. The text (mostly in fiction) becomes metafictional i.e., fiction about fiction where the text breaks itself free from the illusion of fictiveness and comments upon the fictive nature and the method of composition. The characters converse directly with the reader, advise him on how to read the book, what interpretations to take etc. Pastiche also plays an important part in adding to the playfulness of the texts. It is an empty parody as a resultant of the emptiness of the world around. In Postmodern world, objects and even historical figures are reduced to mere linguistic phenomenon of the present. The surface and the deep meanings are made into one. Postmodernism is apocalyptic that dissolve the narrative, self and the represented world with nothing to replace them. It tells
about the decadence and the sense of doom gives us the feeling that we are at the end of an era with no picture of the future. Old values, materials and societies are breaking down without leaving any substitute. The face-mark of the postmodern individual is confusion, disillusion and a sense of despair. This degeneration and resultant decentralization leave their marks on the narrative, tone and style of postmodernism. The self-reflexiveness is destabilizing and the weariness and despair towards the society stand as an important feature of postmodernism. Patricia Waugh counters it saying that though it tells about fragmentariness, it is concerned with reconciliation and reintegration, but conscious of their impossibility. Thus, the lack of clarity is the face-mark of Postmodernism. The Postmodernists consider narrative as an imposition because their writer is trying to evoke an image of space outside the text while inserting a situation. These arguments undermine the centrality of things and try to dissolve the boundaries, which are conventional and generic. They give more importance to situatedness in language and see art as a bodily experience. As a result, the subject dies which means the end of individualism. The Postmodern idea of individuality is different. It believes that nobody has the unique private world and style to express himself/herself. The individual is within the system of new styles and world and at the same time outside that. Individuality is exerted through differences: "The assertion of individuality through differences and specificity is a constant in postmodern thought (Lee, X)". The concept of history has been changed in the hands of the Postmodern writers. The most important thing in the new conception is that "a greater awareness of the unreliability of all narrative whether purporting impulse to expose, the processes by which narratives are made. They share an
unwillingness to attribute too much to individuals, but instead examine the forces which shape the terms of individual actions (M. Alexander, 125).” They tell about the certainty of historical events, at the same time, point out the indeterminacy of these events. As a result, the readers are placed in an embarrassing situation and are not able to understand what is real. Leslie Fielder was the first man to use the term “Postmodernism” as a literary term in his essay “Cross the Border-close that Gap – Postmodernism.” According to him Postmodernism was the result of a movement against intellectual literature such as that of Eliot, Joyce, Yeats etc. and contains elements of popular culture largely than the modern ones. Classical allusions and myths gave way to popular allusions and myths, and illustrations from the world around are presented in such a way as could be understood by everyone. Postmodern myths are homespun myths taken from popular comics, science and pulp fiction. Heroes are no more Gods and Goddesses, fairies or kings. They are new boys, the media men and the machines. These popular elements are pleasing and they have a lasting influence. It could invariably be understood by the academicians and the cart-puller. The difference between the high and the low in art, critic, and reader are reduced to a minimum in this circle. To understand the meanings of these myths and allusions, the reader need not refer to a dictionary or an encyclopedia unlike fitting popular characters the vast philosophies are made clear, simple and contemporary.

The post-colonial world is marked by the range of ambivalent cultural moods and formations which accompany the periods of transition and
translation. It is both a moment of arrival changed with the rhetoric of independence and the creative euphoria of self-invention. This is a spirit which, Salim Sinai, the protagonist of Salman Rushdie describes the mythical sense of incarnation which attaches the coincidence of his birth and that of the new Indian nation: "For the next three decades, prophesized me, newspapers celebrated my arrival, politicos ratified my authenticity (Rushdie, 1982, 9)."

The period is fraught by the anxieties and fears of failure which attend the need to satisfy the historical burden of expectation: "I must work fast, faster than Scheherazade, if I am to end meaning something. I admit it, above all things, I fear absurdity (Ibid)" Nehru narrates the post colonial condition: "A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new; when an age ends; when the soul of a nation long suppressed finds utterance........(Ibid, 116)." But Jameson says that the celebratory cyborg of postcoloniality is plagued by "something like an imperative to grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, yet unimaginable, perhaps, impossible, dimensions (Jameson, 1991,39)." It is deluded in its hope that the architecture of a new world will emerge magically from the physical ruins of colonialism: "And the day oppression ceases, the new man is supposed to emerge before our eyes immediately (Memmi, 1968, 88)." The prefix 'post' elaborates the conviction "that it is both possible and necessary to break with tradition and institute absolutely new ways of living and thinking (Lyotard, 1992, p.90)." This sort of triumphant utopianism shapes its vision of the future and is informed by a mistaken belief in the immateriality and dispensability of the past: "this rupture is in fact a way of forgetting or repressing the past, that is to say, repeating it and not surpassing
Postcoloniality can be described as a condition troubled by the consequences of a self-willed historical amnesia and in its ability to elaborate the forgotten memories of this condition. Nehru hails Salim Sinai as the child of Independent India, the son of a reluctantly departing colonizer: “In fact all over India, the dream we shared, children were being born who were only partially the offspring of their parents (Rushdie, 1982, p. 188).” Postcolonial Indians refuse the guilt of unauthenticity and the desire to withhold the knowledge of his flawed genealogy. They reconcile themselves to the hybrid inadequacies of their own postcoloniality. The only way out for them to modify their postcolonial wisdom is thinking, rigorously about their past. The slave is now a dependent ‘thing’ whose existence is shaped by, and as, the conquering other: “I am possessed by the other: the other’s look fashions my body in its nakedness, causes it to be born, sculptures it, produces it as it is, sees it as I shall never see it. The other holds a secret – the secret of what I am (Sartre, 1969, 31)”. The slave figure in his “Being and Nothingness” makes the revolutionary pronouncement: “I lay claim to this being which I am; that is, I wish to recover it, or, more exactly, I am the project of my being (Ibid)”.

The publication of Said’s “Orientalism” in 1978 is commonly regarded as the principal catalyst and reference point for postcolonial theory. The text of this seminal work evolved within distinctly poststructural climate, dominated in the Anglo-American Academy by the figures of Foucault and Derrida. Gayatri Spivak became well-known in the field of literary criticism through her celebrated translation of Derrida’s “Of Grammatology” in 1977. Much of her subsequent work has been preoccupied with the task of dialogue and negotiation with and between Derrida and
Foucault. It is through poststructuralism and postmodernism and their deeply fraught and ambivalent relationship with Marxism that postcolonialism starts to distil its particular place of origin. Postcolonial alliance with poststructuralism has enabled it to gain a privileged foothold within the metropolitan academic mainstream. It has provided a more substantial impetus to the postcolonial studies project through its clear and confidently theorized proposal for a Western critique of Western civilization. Postcolonialism has inherited a very specific understanding of Western domination as the symptom of an unwholesome alliance between power and knowledge. Thus, in place of the predominantly economic paradigms of Marxist thought, postcolonialism has learnt to diagnose the material effects and implications of colonialism as an epistemological malaise at the heart of the western rationality. It has also learnt to be suspicious of the "problem of universalism / eurocentrism that was inherited in Marxist thought itself" (Chakravarty, 1993, 422). It was the recognition of this problem, which led to the engagement of the postcolonial historians in the subaltern studies collective to be receptive to the critiques of Marxist historians in particular to the "incredulity toward grand narratives" that French poststructuralist thinkers popularised in the English-language world in the 1980's (Ibid). ‘Humanism’ is a highly contentious term: “Christianity, the critique of Christianity, science, anti-science, Marxism, existentialism, personalism, National socialism, and Stalinism have each won the label “Humanism” for a time (Bernauer and Mahon, 1994, 141–2).” This various humanism are unified in their belief that the diversity of human experience has the possibility to discern a universal and given human nature and to find it revealed in the common language of rationality. Noam Chomsky,
Frederic Jameson and Jurgen Habermas have argued that humanism holds out the possibility of a rational and universal consensus between responsible individuals with regard to the conceptualization of a humane, progressive and just social order. Scholars make a distinction between Western humanism and the things man knows. Postcolonialism and poststructuralism/postmodernism have a deconstructive bias against the traditional humanities. However, its proposal for a non violent reading of the colonial past through an emphasis on the mutual transformation of colonizer and colonized and its blueprint for a utopian inter-civilizational alliance against institutionalized suffering is salutary. This turn to the rhetoric of past-nationalism seriously humanizes the world we have inherited. Postcolonialism is one of the offshoots of postmodernism. Postcolonial theorists argue that the literatures written only in English in erstwhile British should be considered as postcolonial literature leaving the rich literatures written in regional languages of India. This will lead to the travesty of truth. Literature written in any language including English in the former British colonies, seeking to assert national identity, describe the rituals, culture and tradition of their respective nation should be included in the category of postcolonial literature. The field of postcolonial studies is marked by a preponderant focus on which refers to "Literatures in English" which have accompanied the projection and decline of British imperialism. It is a bibliographic battle, between oppressive and subversive books. The textual offensiveness of colonial authority is met and challenged on its own terms, by a radical and discenting anticolonial counter textuality: "Just as fire can be fought by fire, textual control can be fought by textuality (Lawson & Tiffin 1994, 10)." Said's "Orientalism" treats European
colonialism as a ‘discourse’, as the project of representing, imagining, translating, containing and managing intransigent and incomprehensible ‘Orient’ through textual codes and conventions. Elleke Boehmer describes British Colonialism as a “textual takeover” of the non-Western world. (Boehmer, 1995, 19). She foregrounds imperial textual production as an attempt, through writing, to domesticate the alarming alterity of ‘recalcitrant peoples, unbreachable jungle, vast wastelands, huge and shapeless crowds’ (Ibid, 97). English Studies became incredibly the most substantial weapon in the colonial arsenal: “A discipline that was originally introduced in India primarily to convey the mechanics of language was thus transformed into an instrument for ensuring industriousness, efficiency, trustworthiness, and compliance in native subjects (Viswanathan, 1989, 93”). English Studies was instrumental in confirming the ‘hegemony’ or ‘rule by consent’ of European colonialism. The successful inauguration of this discipline in the colonized world has marked the juncture at which native population has come to internalize the ideological procedures of the colonial civilizing mission. Ashcroft develops this thesis in a more extravagant and metaphorical vein by foregrounding the textual invasion or ‘interpellation’ of colonized subjectivities. The eagerly assimilated English text is shown to spread the subtle infection of colonialist imperatives within the unsuspecting native body. The very “recitation of literary texts becomes a ritual act of obedience (Ashcroft et al. 1995, 426)”. In line of permitting students to pursue a mystified ‘love of Shakespeare’, postcolonial pedagogy undertakes to historicise the received curriculum and inherited literary affections to reveal “imperialism's shaping hand in the formation of English Studies
In colonial India, Gandhiji’s regular inventions against English education revealed a similar belief in the legitimate cultural primary of Indian literatures and languages. There has come a turn of shift from abrogation to appropriation i.e. from “unlearning English” to the project of “learning how to curse in the master’s tongue – a “Caliban paradigm.” Postcolonialism is caught between structure, totality, and fragmentation between Marxism and postmodernism or poststructuralism. It is one of the many discursive fields upon which the mutual antagonism between these competing bodies of thought is played out. Postmodern or poststructuralist commentators argue that postcolonialism also holds out, in its reflective modality, the possibility of thinking our way through. Postcolonial literature needs a properly romantic modality; a willingness to critique, ameliorate and build upon the composition of the colonial aftermath, a transformed and improved future as rejoinder of Times of India writes: “No, dear Rushdie, we do not wish to build a repressive India. On the contrary, we are doing our best to build a liberal India, where we can all breathe freely. But in order to build this India, we have to preserve the India that exists. That may not be a pretty India, but it’s the only India we have (Appignanesi & Maitland 1990, 209).”

The western world witnessed a rapid transformation after the Renaissance due to the forces of modernity, which had its impact upon the traditional civilizations of the East through Colonial transactions. It unleashed, perpetuated the transformations in the subject populations in the East under a hegemonic dispensation. It came to India after the British
colonization of the country in the middle of the eighteenth century, which continued up to the middle of the twentieth century. Some of the boons like expansion of literacy, organization of societies and politics around more secular, rational and democratic principles, industrial growth, better communication and transport made the British people more dynamic and vibrant, to embrace the progressivist ideology of modernity with full confidence. But the flipside of this ideology was felt acutely in India. There were experimentations in democratic and rational principles in government administration, the tentative steps towards industrialization, expansion of education, commerce, transport and communication. These developments were meant to serve the British commercial interest initially and their hegemonic and imperialist aspirations subsequently. People not only gave up the complacence of the past and tradition but also become doubtful and suspicious. On the one hand, modernity was hailed as the anodyne for the divisive politics and moribund cultural institutions and on other; it was seen as an instrument of standardization, which was violently suffering out all kinds of diversity. Postmodernism appears as a critique of the modernity and has advanced with a liberatory agenda for the erstwhile-colonized societies including India. Modernism was marked by the tendency - “make it new”, while Postmodernism is marked by a mood of radical indeterminacy and a tone of self-conscious skepticism towards previous certainties in personal, intellectual and political life. Postmodernism is satisfied with the surface as against the ‘depth’. The fascination for Postmodernism is the popular art forms, less elegiac mood and skepticism. Modernists writers tried to wrest a meaning from the world through myth, symbol or formal complexity, the
Postmodernist writers welcome absurdity or meaningless existence with an indifference, which combines resignation, fatigue and playfulness. Postmodern narrative is self-reflexive i.e., having double back on their own presuppositions, assumptions and the ways of telling the story. Jean Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard have provided the philosophical framework for Postmodernism in their famous books "The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (1984)" and "Simulation (1983)" respectively. Lyotard argues that the "truth claims" and assumed consensus on which a lot of history and its "grand narratives" stand are an illusion. The "grand narratives" are untenable and repressive and lack credibility. This delimits discourse and excludes or marginalizes voices that do not suit the dominant groups. To Baudrillard: "the real is defined, at present, in terms of the media in which it moves. The pervasive influence of images from television and advertising has led to a loss of the distinction between the real and the imagined, reality and illusion, the surface and the depth. Ihab Hassan equates Postmodernism with anti-elitism and anti-authoritarianism in his "Paracriticism (1975)." He visualizes art as communal, participatory and optional, and irony becoming self-consuming play. As a follower of Beckett, the theme of absence of centre is crucial to his work. Linda Hutcheon sees postmodernist fiction as subversive and complicit in her "A Poetics of Postmodernism (1989)". She places a lot of value on its parodic and self-critical mode, and sees the use of irony in a way different from the modernists used. She considers Postmodernist fiction as "historiographic metafiction" and envisions it as a mood, which self-consciously problematizes the making of fiction and history.
Conventions are used, abused and subverted in Postmodern works with irony and parody.

In the third world or developing countries, most of the time we end up being dictated to on what constitutes "reality" and "truth" in a single-superpower world. Consumerism and commodity fetishism have also contributed to our being largely at the receiving end of the postmodern condition. There is the "degree zero of contemporary general culture". The loss of the 'real' may seem to give legitimacy to a callous indifference to disaster and suffering. Baudrillard asserted that the Gulf-war never happened, that really took place, as a kind of "tele-virtual reality" is significant enough in present-day context. Our experience of a global civilization is forcing a kind of unavoidable relativism upon us. On the contrary, Postmodernism is a release from restrictive assumptions and elitist hierarchies which encourages popular cultures and makes us realize that the overall sense has become a market of realities. The ideas about origins, centre, presence and historical explanation have continually been undermined. In literary studies, the stance of post-modern critics and writers is characterized by a rejection of the values of eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought, most particularly by a rejection of the notions of rationality and objectivity and of the understanding of the self as a rational, unitary entity. Instead, post-modern thought emphasizes a form of subjectivity that is multiple rather than singular and fluid rather than static. Subjectivity, as used by post-modern thinkers, refers to a subjective sense of self that includes agency—the capacity for action—as distinguished from the
condition of an obliterated selfhood that results when an individual is objectified, made into an object to be possessed sexually, materially, or imaginatively by those who are culturally dominant. For the post-modernist, subjectivities (since subjectivity is not singular or fixed) are always in process; post-modernism, therefore, argues against the privileging of naturalized or essentialized positions and points. The most important ways in which post-modern thought has shaped queer theory are (1) in distinguishing between sex and sexuality; (2) in describing the tension between social construction (that is, culturally produced meaning) and essentialism (that is, biological determinism) as they apply to sex and gender; (3) in bringing to consciousness in the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered communities crucial issues concerning identity and identity politics; and (4) in exploring, in both life and the arts, modes of gender-bending and gender-performativity, understandings of gender that grow out of post-modern self-reflexivity. David Halperin has stated most clearly the crucial distinction between sex and sexuality: “Unlike sex, sexuality is a cultural production: it represents the appropriation of the human body and of its physiological capacities by an ideological discourse. Sexuality is not a somatic fact; it is a cultural effect.” Given this distinction, and the presumed essence of sex (or biology), a primary emphasis of queer theory has been an understanding and a recovery of the historical construction of sexuality. Through such a recovery, we have begun to identify and define the full range of homosexual behaviors and identities in their historical and geographical particularity. Historians of sexuality are attempting to locate the relatively recent (probably in sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Europe) emergence of homosexuality as an identity inscribed within a subculture. As
Edward Stein notes, "the categories of sexual orientation that we use in twentieth-century North America are culturally-bound categories" that we must not extend without great caution to other times or places because "in other cultures people do not see the gender or biological sex of a person's sexual object choice as revealing significant information about his or her erotic preferences." The example most often used to demonstrate this point is that of ancient Greece, where social status rather than object choice determined appropriate sexual behavior so that a power differential was maintained between sexual partners; thus, for male citizens, appropriate partners were no citizens, male or female slaves, and women and boys, not other male citizens. Before the emergence, then, of homosexual identity as we know it in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe, it was particular behaviors between members of the same sex—most often males—that were proscribed. It was considered sinful, or criminal, to participate in certain behaviors, but the persons so participating were not thought of as having identities coterminous with those behaviors. That is, they continued to be identified primarily as persons of a particular sex, class, race, occupation, and so on. Though the information available for English women before the nineteenth century is more scarce than that for men, it is possible to name some of the cultural constructions that governed female-female erotic relations. Terms like "tribades," "tommies," romantic friends, and Boston marriages denote some of the cultural constructs antedating the more recent "lesbians." Tensions between the (post-modern) adherents of social construction and the (more traditionalist) advocates of essentialism became acute in the late 1980s and have led to an ongoing discussion of the relative
influences of environment and biology in shaping homosexual identity. This discussion is a version of the more traditional dialogue about nurture and nature, now driven by the tools and methodologies of modern historiography and by sophisticated scientific studies of genes and DNA. The extent to which sexual identity is shaped by culture and variable from time to time and place to place and the degree to which it is biologically determined and therefore universal (or trans historical and transcultural) continue to be central to issues of identity politics within the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered communities, as well as in gay and lesbian imaginative literature and in queer theory. There is an increasing awareness among theorists of social construction that political essentialism—that is, the argument that there is a fixed gay or lesbian identity—has important utility in the real-world recognition of gays and lesbians as individuals in quest of equal rights and in the advancement of their status as responsible citizens of larger political communities. Alternatively, the impetus to find a “gay genre” and to establish a fixed, stable gay identity has yielded with increasing frequency to a more nuance comprehension of the convergence of environmental and biological influences. The respective proponents of social construction and essentialism are thus more frequently coming to value the utility of each other’s perspectives. Gay and lesbian writers and creative artists have begun seriously to explore the possibilities inherent in a post-modern understanding of gender and gender roles. Judith Butler argues in Gender Trouble that gender and gender roles are manifested as self-conscious performances. For Butler, gender roles are performances through which we negotiate social and sexual relations; they have meaning only within particular cultural contexts, and they are learned and articulated as
part of the cultural production of meaning. We see this understanding of gender as performance explored in director Jennie Livingston’s poignant film portrait of amateur black and Hispanic drag artists, *Paris is Burning* (1992), in which gender performance is the focus of a subset of contemporary gay subculture in New York. A literary example of self-conscious gender-play is the manipulation of first person narrative voice by Jeanette Winterson in *Written on the Body* (1992). In this novel, the author sets out deliberately to problematize the sex-gender dialectic by teasing the reader with the narrator’s fluid gender identity; though the narrator is in all likelihood female, Winterson is careful not to provide clear gender markings, in fact naming her Lothario, so that the nature and significance of gender identity are repeatedly interrogated. Even as much contemporary literature by gay men, such as David Leavitt’s *The Lost Language of Cranes* (1986), attempts a realistic portrayal of the emotional complexities of gay life in a heterosexual world, films by gay men have often proved to be more technically daring and intellectually exploratory. Films like *Queer Edward II* (1991) by the late Derek Jarman and Gregg Araki’s *The Living End* (1992) are notable examples of the current flourishing of a gay post-modern cinema, perhaps a late-century development following the earlier work of Pier Paolo Pasolini and Rainer Werner Fassbinder in Europe. A few younger gay writers use post-modern techniques to explore unorthodox subjects, as does the minimalist Dennis Cooper in his novels *Closer* (1990) and *Frisk* (1991), in which he uses a fragmented consciousness to explore the connections between self-destruction, death, and desire. Literature by lesbians, however, has more self-consciously adopted a post-modern and assertively transgressive stance in its representation of lesbian
culture and erotic life. Monique Wittig's novels, especially *Les Guérillères* (1985), Sarah Schulman's novels *After Dolores* (1989) and *Empathy* (1992), the fiction of Jeanette Winterson, the poetry of Olga Broumas, and the mixed-genre work of Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, for instance, may all be said to exemplify the formal experimentation and complex mixture of tones characteristic of postmodern culture. It is, of course, impossible to predict the future course of literary and artistic production by gay men and lesbians. But it is apparent that the comings of age of queer theory, queer politics, and the maturation of a self-conscious artistic and literary enterprise has been enabled by and have contributed meaningfully to post-modern culture. Habermas charges Foucault with 'performative contradiction' for superstitiously using the tools of reason. Jean-Francois Lyotard whose notion of postmodernity seems to be supported by another metanarrative (a residual Marxism?); Kellner suggest that there can be no theory without one.(1988,2-3.). Baudrillard's work on America can be read as a moral oilgrimage. He dismisses the the bad nostalgiaof Europe but finds only shallowness and superficiality in the New World. Jean-Francois Lyotard thinks that we are in the position of Aristotle's prudent individual, who makes judgements about the just and the unjust without the least correction(1985, 14). Foucault and Derrida, for all their disaccord, could be said to agree in the end on ethics deriving from the Greeks. In Faucault, this might be the imperative for 'self discipline', although as Roy Boyne observes, 'the resources of the logos are needed to give shape and direction to this power'(1990, 150). Jean-Francois Lyotard, Derrida and others often refer to the Jewish philosopher Emmanual Levinas, who insists that there can never be a theoritical justificationfor
ethics. They always come from outside, from the voice of the other. The idea is that the future is in human hands is confidently asserted. Thus, modern arrogance denied the divine and diverted all hope to human resources. Today, the human is being displaced, decentred, and the grip on the future seems to once more up for gerbs. While this opens the door to everything from Foucault's play of power to the age of Aquarius, it also renders more plausibly the possibility that Providence was not such a bad idea, after all. Perhaps postmodern apocalyptics will have to make space for a vision of a new earth, that antique agent of social change, and the original partner of final judgement.

Whatever may be one's literary creed and principles, one is always uncompromising when there is the question of humanity: "We respond to the call of the universal humanity despite our ethnical differences. This universal humanity is not unrefined essence of something, it has a historical evolution and development. It has included in itself the environment and culture of different countries of the world. We become sensitive, perplexed and remorseful despite our differences of culture and opinion. (trans. mine, Gohain, H. मानबातार संधानत, Jyoti Prokasan, Guwahati, 2001)."

While considering the relevance of Malik's humanism in postmodern context, the suggestion made by Nirmala Jain (Comparative Literature: The Indian Context in Comparative Literature: Theory and Practice, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1989, 82) has been kept in mind: "The Indian situation is still more complex. The Indian author has a rich heritage of ancient literature preserved against many odds. He is not only emotionally committed to this heritage, but it has also become an obsession with him, guarding him consciously or unconsciously from Western influence. His
philology has to be seen in the light of an East-West tension, that is, between the natural built-in resistance and assertion of the indigenous and the temptation and aura of the modern and glorious West. The whole question is somewhere linked with the crisis of identity. Hence, while defining the nature of the influence, it has to be borne in mind that the refraction and the metamorphosis which the influence undergo before they are reflected in another literature will be fundamentally different in this case from those in a one to one relationship between two or more literatures."

V.III.A critical assessment of Malik’s Humanism

Normally, it is difficult to pin down a novelist to a particular point of view. In case of Malik, however, there are sufficient evidences to ascertain his worldview. This sums up his philosophy of humanism as his close contact with the deprived classes of people of the society. His search for values that began with his discontent with the existing social, cultural, political and religious systems, results in formulation of what is called “new humanism”. He does not believe that he inherited much from the parents or by way of religious belief. He believed that compassion is the most essential virtue required of a human being. Tenderness is responsible for the human predicament in the modern world. Growing up during the British rule in India and writing both as a pre-independence and post-independence writer, Malik stands close to the multifarious manifestation of the historical struggle and social changes followed. Even after independence, there had been an encounter between the traditional value system of Assamese society and the
newly acquired European habits and knowledge. The colonial experience of Malik is a live experience to him and his novels and short stories are, therefore, directly or indirectly related to this. He wrote with a social commitment that is vitally connected with humanity that is functioning on the moral, social, cultural and aesthetic values of the people of Assam. He said: "Sometimes someone asks me, "You have become aged enough. Will you tell us what have enabled you to live such a long life?"

My simple answer: Human love has enabled me to live such a long life.

In fact, I have been amongst men, with men. I have been living in the world of human love. What I have written till date are the human affairs. I have sung the songs of pleasures and pangs of human life. I know my own limitations. So, my writing and singing are limited. Even if I have my enemies somewhere, I consider them to be my friends. I have been living but among human love. It is human love that has enabled me to live. That's why, I cannot defy love of others towards me even though my hope for living in this world ceases someday. It is for man that I have been writing, singing, weeping, smiling and have been living. It is human love that is the unbound source of my life—force.

I have traveled among many men of my own country and foreign countries. Wherever I had gone, I searched man and got the warmth of heart full human love. That is the precious and permanent storehouse of inspiration for my life.
I have only one aim in life – that I may live among men as a man, die as a man, and that at the time of departure from this world, I may take with me the love I have got from men in throughout my life – the token of love.

Throughout my life, I have longed for human love, I have got love. After my death, I shall long for nothing other than human love, love of the world.

With what, will you pay off the debt of life?

___ with death?

___ No, I shall pay off the debt of life with love, not with death. (trans. mine, Ma'lik, Diary, 14th January, 1998, ed. Hussain, Nikumani, 2008, 14)."

The first thing that strike the readers is that Malik has broadened the thematic range of Assamese novel. There are the Gandhian emphasis on the village centrism as well as on the city centrism of the postmodern era. The locale in Malik’s novels are both the village and the metropolis of our country. The world has become a global village and no culture or society is pure or insular at present. That is why, Malik takes character and situations both from inside and outside the country and develops them. In the postmodern era, love, sex, marriage or the failure of it are some of the leading themes in his novels and short stories. The description of love and sex is very bold and unconventional in his writings. Marriage as a social institution has lost sanctity and relevance in present day context which is exposed fully by Malik in his novels and short stories. Magic realism (realism plus fancy) has been used to an extent in his imaginative treatment of the plot and his use of poetic
language. There is a very marginal difference between fiction and reality in his novels like *Ruptirthar ja’tri, Dhanja Naratanu Bha’l* and *Dr. Arunabhar Asampurna Jtban†*. "Satjar Pathere, Santir Rathere, Mukfir Jayfatra- resembles to religion, its meaning and practice, various religious traditions an international cultural intermingling. The novelist provides the readers with a lot of information about ethics and practices. He brings out parallels among Hindu, Muslim and Jewish cultures. It is an event of Arab retold by an Assamese novelist. The novelist pursues indefatigably the historical character of the protagonist as a student of the social anthropology. The same approach was taken up in portrayal of the character of the protagonists of *Ruptirthar ja’tri* and *Dhanja Naratanu Bha’l*. In these novels, there are two sets of characters: historical and those belonging to the present, around whom he builds his fictional worlds. The thread of historicity unifies the two sets - a postmodern or postcolonial interpretation of events. Through these characters, Malik portrays a world where man lived with harmony with man, where the gulf existing between people of different races and of different cultures became meaningless as they met over the draw bridge of humanity. The pages devoted to that world spill over with light and colour - ordinary people bustle around laughing, talking and doing the most ordinary things. The protagonists - the Prophet, the Preacher and the Artist easily relate to this environment. These are worlds of happy people, a world with no racial conflict, no feeling of alienation or hopelessness. One turns to the Divine and "becomes an instrument of God." The all pervading presence of God, is the conviction of his life and it is this conviction that binds his novels together. The symbolic representation of river Dhanashiri in *Surujmukhir Svapna* suggests that the
river is the source of life as she is the source of fertility and God is the Ultimate Truth and ‘His is the Will’. Gulach’s struggle for existence makes it evident that the question of one’s life is not of success or failure, but for trying. These are the best examples of the novel of love, marriage, loneliness and search for identity.

Malik’s *A’dha' r Sila* is a novel of character. It deals with both the rural and urban life and the time is the World War – II. The cultural confrontation in this novel is not the East versus West, it is the confrontation between tradition and modernity, the social values and progress and the destructive Imperial power. On the face of it, the novel is a delicate study of the younger generation of the lower middle – class. The characters are observed with sympathy and insight and their development is related in a poetic idiom charged with feeling and richly strewn with revealing analogies which make ordinary family life both dramatic and significant. The novel displays in a high degree of aesthetic competence. The curse of evil motive in man and the issue of illegitimate children both pre-marital and post-marital that combines the skill with something more important, a creative idea. The imitating and sustaining conception has to be with the human experience which is both physical & spiritual, of an inner and outer life. It has its origin in our physical an biological life in which space & distance are felt as they increase and extent to be more and more dangerous. The hero suffers from the stigma of an ill – begotten child upon the space and distance society and tradition have imposed rituals of control, of which the most important are one’s house and its
surroundings. Samir's stigma is a social defect which makes it difficult for him to live at par with other individuals of his society. He never achieves that degree of autonomy that would enable him to work out a tolerable or even a tentative relationship between inner and outer worlds. He is "more sinned against than sinning". He is a wandering youth all his life. He lacks the sense of belongingness as his fatherhood is unknown and mysterious. Dr. Mahasin and Chenehi taught him to see the world in a new light. His commercial attitude towards this world has been changed by the love of Dr. Mahasin, Chenehi and her daughter Jinia. His negative approach towards the world was the social hatred he met in his childhood, while the love of these three characters has restored his mental balance and spiritual realization at the end of the novel.

Malik was convinced of the social commitment of a creative writer and held that art cannot be divorced from its social obligation. Malik's first novel "La Sa' Gu" (1964) deals with the proletariats, the neglected and the marginalized. Their upliftment is the sole purpose of the organization La, Sa', Gu. The organization struggles against the exploitation of the capitalists and against the conventions of society. The description of the first class and the third class compartment of passengers satirizes the baseless stratification of our social code. The novel is a successful attempt at debunking the selfish design of the privileged class. His "BanJui (1956)" was written on a rural background. The novel depicts that human heart is the source of love, neither good nor bad. The character of Golap is the amalgamation of both good and
bad – the real picture of human being. The story dates back to the time of World War-II. It depicts the picture of degeneration of human values. The world of the novel is village Charikoriya far away from the modern scientific and technological advancement. At the beginning of the novel, the novelist observed that liberal mind is necessary for changing the social disparity. Another novel “Rathar C̣akari Ghure (1950)” depicts the degeneration of the middle class, beginning of the new political movement in Assam and the supremacy of love. At the time of writing this novel, the novelist was a Marxist. The socialistic idealism of Bina inspired Kamal to come forward for the liberation of the common people and for building the social structure anew. Individual alienation is the subject matter of the novel. The novel at the end has become propaganda of socialism leaving all other social significance aside. “Mātir C̣aki (1959)” is a poetic novel. The novel is highly imaginative and portrays the poetic feelings of the novelist rather than his social concerns. The novel expresses that Radha has been looked down upon by the society as she is a harlot, but has a heart to take the responsibility of treatment of Joba who has been suffering from consumptions. “Mātir C̣aki” (the earthen light) is a symbol of purity or sacredness in Assamese society. It is less costly but warmly accepted in our society. Similarly, the hearts of the marginalized, poor and neglected people are of less significance but are pure and less corrupted, hence, of great potentiality. Malik’s “Chabighar (1958)” expresses the feelings and emotions of an actress named Rupa. She is the living example of success by dint of hard labour and strong determination. She can build many successful homes with happy hearts on the stage, but cannot build her own home in the real world because she is considered a bad woman, an actress. The
novel is a psychological analysis of the failure of Rupa finding her mate in her life and the social hatred towards her. Torture of Violet by the male shows the cruelty of a male – govern society towards the female members. “Jī yā Jurir Ghaṭāt (1960)” depicts the problem of unemployment of the time. The novelist has dedicated the novel to the names of the unemployed. Saleh, the hero kept the fact of his sexual diseases a guarded secret and steals the golden bracelet of his wife for his treatment. Bhola, a poor hotel boy helped him. Through the character of Saleh, Sara, Bhola and Champa, the novelist depicts the greatness of the heart of the lower – class people. The novel also depicts the evil practices like bribery, and surrendering of female bodies for obtaining a government service. The novel also discusses the problem of harlot in our society. The novel may be taken as a picture of the darker side of our society. Another novel “Kanthāhār (1960)” is written on the background of a village. This novel also gives us the picture of the lower class people. The novelist says that this “is a small story about a small man”. The novel describes the degeneration of the villages during the post-independent period at the root of which there is the economic problem. In contrast to this, we get the picture of the urban society in this novel, which is self-centred and materialistic. There is neither value – system nor cordiality among people. The gap between the rural and the urban life has been bridged through the character of Main and Nasim.

His “Surujmukhi r Svapna (1960)” gives us the picture of a Muslim village called Dalim Gaon on the bank of Dhanashiri. The characters like Tora are down-headed like the sunflower but their hearts are broad and uprising.
The novel brings an agricultural village into light. Through the character of Chandra, the village gets the slightest idea of the way of life in towns and cities. Chandra takes the initiative of establishing schools in the village, takes the initiative of the development of roads, spreading of woman-education, cultural development by building platforms in the village. In the words of the novelist, he is "the bridging force between two ages, the symbol of new social consciousness." The novel may be considered as a regional novel. The novel has beautifully portrayed the socio-economic problem of rural life. It may be called a milestone of Assamese novel. "Anja A' ka's Anja Tora' (1962)" gives us the picture of a selfless doctor, Raihan who has dedicated his life in the service of others. Perhaps, the novel depicts the character to show the broadness of human mind at the time when there was communal conflict in our society. "Rupti rthar ja' tri (in two parts, 1963 and 1965)" is the writer's bold step towards writing biographical novel. The first part deals with the twenty years of the artistic life of Jyoti Prasad Agarwala and his endeavour to establish the art of cinematography in Assam. In the second part, the artist has become a devotee of Mahatma Gandhi and has joined the struggle for freedom of India from British rule. The novel was planned to be written in three parts. The third part unfortunately remained unwritten. Another biographical novel of Malik is "Dhanja Naratanu Bha' l (1987)" written on the life of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva. This is a novel of discussion and is very popular one. He is not depicted as a superman in the novel. He is a man of flesh and blood. To consider man as man is his duty and his religion. To lead man to the right path is the duty of man. The novelist has become successful in giving the historical events a artistic turn by including a number of co-
incidents in the novel. "RaJani gandha r Cakulo (1964)" is Malik's another novel depicting the inner conflict of a married woman and the human quality of the common man. The novel may be called a psychological study. It is the story of the life of Parijat, the heroine, though there are some other incidents like the labour movement, the family life of Raibahadur Surjya Prasad etc. The novelist has skillfully depicted the natural weaknesses of a woman in the novel. The novel is a contrastive study on the nature of female mind through the characters of Parijat and Tagar, one belonging to the educated middle class and the other to the illiterate working class. Parijat lacks in womanhood, enjoys both pre-marital and post-marital sex. She is beautiful but is devoid of moral and ethical sense of her society. Tagar, on the other hand, is the live picture of Assamese womanhood, hard working, self respectful and sacrificing. The Academy Award winner novel "Aghari A'mai r Kahini (1969)" is a subjective novel. It has shown the influence of social degeneration, cultural and moral degradation upon individual. The novel has shown that human identity lies not in wealth and affluence but in mutual understanding and in our ability to respect man as man. Alternatively, we are all nomads. "U'i Ha' phalu (1971)" is a different type of novel of Malik. It is a humorous novel portraying the character of the village doctor, Kamarali. He is the only dependable source of treatment of diseases for the poor villagers. He is an honest doctor who always stands against the evildoers and works on as a social reformer. "Agnigarbha (1971)" is Malik's another novel where the woman - problems are depicted with poignancy. "Ei' Surija, Dukhan Nadi A' ru Ekhan Marubhu mi (1972)" is his another exceptional novel where the greatness of Indian classical music is shown. "Rupa' barir Palas (1980)" and
"Mai Marino NeJao Kija (1997)" are novels depicting the negative aspects of Assam Movement. "Jaya, Manika, Itija di (1968)" has depicted the darker side of society beautifully in ironical and humorous language. The novel shows Malik's social-consciousness and social commitment as a novelist. "Dr. Aruna bhar Asampurna Ji bani (1975)" is another bulky novel of Malik. The novel has shown a simple and normal course of love and its analysis. "Svapna Bhana (1985)" may be taken as a sequel to Malik’s "Surujmukhi r Svapna". It depicts the life in Dalim Gaon on the bank of Dhanashiri. The novel has shown that no remarkable change has come to the life of Dalim Gaon even after a period of twenty-three years. The ongoing scientific and technological progress of the contemporary world has little to do with our rural life and culture. Still it can hope for a new age and new generation. Humanism is the binding force and focal point in Malik’s novel. It is not the humanism of the enlightened period of the European world but an unbound love for human beings, irrespective of caste, creed and social position. It is love that will bind men into a single whole.

Malik’s another dominating theme is the presentation of different facets of feminine experience, both oriental and occidental. Indian women suffer in different ways at the hands of men, in the hands of politicians, until a fall from grace brings retribution and self-recognition. The good women characters of Malik realize that India is rich in far different ways – in its cultural heritage, in its social and spiritual yearning, above all, its unbound respect for motherhood. Some are ambivalent female characters who resent
their husband's callousness and become the victim of circumstances. Again some others belonging to the lower-class who are forced to surrender to the pressure of the time and circumstances and take the evil path. Sometimes, Malik's women characters look at things from their point of views and play with men and are played with by men. 'Morality' is a dirty word for such characters, for they believe in enjoyment of life, throwing the norms of society out of window. They talk freely about their past as well as present love affairs, pre and post marital relationship with men of their choice. Within the framework of his novels, Malik can depict the breaking up of the institution of marriage. The new concept of marriage envisages complete sexual freedom with no notion of fidelity. In such a situation, men and women merely become partners in love. Economic freedom, promiscuity and uncontrolled passion resulting from the lust of the body make most of the characters vulnerable and resultant frustration engulfs them. Malik presents love, sex and quarrels within the ambit of his fictional framework. His use of language and his creation of new idioms are the charm of his novels. The important in his novels is not the unconventional themes but an unusual treatment of sensual opulence in an intimate conversational language. In case of a novel with a complex plot, it moves both ways, forward and backward, and thereby makes the narration difficult and complicated. Love is the core of his novels. The traditional society is treated as conservative and authoritarian and expressed in such a situation that the right to love a man is the woman's own choice and a birth right, and it should not be scattered in the name of religion, caste, colour and class. In this sense, Malik's novel can be read as postmodern novels aiming at
destroying the old power structure. The liberation from old bondage and tradition needs not only courage but also a new language. Malik has both, fit for postmodern use in fiction. His prose at once gives a 'made in village' stamp to Assamese novels and short stories. Contemporary reality and political scenario attract Malik without end. Love, sex and life, in the present context, are depicted with objectivity and as a result, the texts become worldly. He writes his novels and stories keeping in mind both the common and the elite readers at home and abroad. His novels are in the world, and about the world, hence, worldly. Malik has brought a revolution in the complete range of Assamese literature in the choice of humanitarian subjects and poetic language of expression. He has re-created contemporary Indian society with insight and justice. Therein lies the merit of Malik's fiction.

Malik started writing short stories before World War II. He can claim the authorship of the largest number of short stories in Assamese literature. Besides his collections of short stories, Malik's many stories were published in journals, newspapers and magazines. His stories are the bridging factors between the stories belonging to two periods of Assamese literature i.e., "Awā han" and "Rā mdhenu". Malik has excelled in depicting the sexual problems in his short stories. He has selected characters from different walks of life and portrayed them in his short stories. He is aware of the wide variety of human life and human experiences. Characters in his stories are men and women of the earth. His narration is characterized by long introductions and verbose descriptions. He has the artistic charmness as a storyteller. Stories dealing with
class struggle have a propagandist flavour in them. Malik's stories are famous for his social awareness. Many of the stories of Malik are satire and criticism of the evil nature of human being. His skill in writing stories is a picture of a development from romanticism to social consciousness. Despite his social commitment, his stories are free from propagandism. In his stories, humour has developed remarkably from its entry into stories in the hands of Bezbaruah, Holiram Deka, Mohi Chandra Bora and Roma Das. Malik can depict the political and social problem skillfully in his stories. Reconstruction of the society has become one of the chief concerns of his stories after World War -II. Malik is careful in plot construction and creation of environment in his stories. There is little narration but only aesthetic pleasure at the end of the story. Malik emphasized on the portrayal of events rather than on propagation. Maheswar Neog appreciates him for his appropriateness of language. He is unmatched in Assamese literature as a storyteller. Homen Borgohain admires him that there is vastness of subject matter and experience in his stories. There is the picture of the thief, the scoundrel, the whore, the driver, the bus conductor, by the side of the doctor and professors belonging to the upper strata of Assamese social life. For his portrayal of the different classes of human society, he is considered a storywriter, epical in scope. His stories show that he is spontaneous in his writing and less careful about form and presentation. Sometimes, he appears to be verbose. He may be compared with Poe. There is naturalness of language, attraction of description, force of imagination, minuteness of feelings, imagery, irony and aesthetic presentation of events in the stories of Malik.
Assamese short story holds mirror unto contemporary society of the time i.e. the postmodern Assamese society. Malik wrote on various aspects of life and society such as love, death, attitude to woman, corruption in public life, human relationship, and also on superstitions, and rituals that are prevalent in our society. The changes in our society in terms of urbanization and industrialization became a dominant theme in Malik's short stories. Some stories of him are rooted in our tradition and culture. Many others have psychological insight into human nature. Malik who has taken “all province” as his themes has broadened the horizon of Assamese short story. The undertone of irony in his stories is unmistakable. Similarly, suspense is an important ingredient of some of his stories. Malik explores many grey areas of human existence in the contemporary world and gives vent to the feelings of individuals in trying situations. The vocation of human agony in a dehumanized world is important in his stories. He probes deep into the dark recesses of human heart and sees not only the agony but also the desire to gratify the senses. His stories expose the hypocrisy of the so-called civilized men who can be savage in their lonely moments. Jealousy, poverty, greed and revenge motif can lead a man to lead a devilish life. He expresses the hollowness of the so-called modern sophisticated women who run away from their husbands and gratify their lust in hotel rooms or in a distant place. In a highly emotional tone, Malik describes these scenes in poetic language, in which a man and woman make love in an act of deception and self-deception.
Malik’s stories tell us about human condition and helplessness resulting in pain, agony and loneliness. His language is adequate to his thematic content above all; there is felicity of expression. There is a kin of poetic touch, that heightens the memorable and appeal of his stories. Malik sings in his stories, for the rhythm of his poetic-prose is highly commendable. It is an irony of fate that the most prosaic moment in his story becomes poetic. His verbose, mild and thought provoking sentences written in romantic and simple language attract the attention of the readers and make the stories interesting and lively. It seems that the poet in Malik never leaves Malik the storyteller. The endings of his stories are crystal but create whispers with the help of hints for multidimensional suggestions. Thus, it may not be wrong to say that his stories are out extension of his poetry. He dives deep into human psyche and creates characters of their own situations. His stories are deeply rooted in his birthplace in unmistakable terms. He portrays in many of his stories, hypocrites who preach one thing and practice another. Malik exposes such characters by unmasking them.

The world of Malik’s short stories is warm, palpable, and his characters are characterized by their chief intensity. There are hints and guesses, pathos and humour, subdued irony and gentle mockery that go well with the plot and the situation. He never spares people of dubious nature and reputation. While dealing with contemporary situation, he comes down heavily on those who corrupt the society and hoodwink the public, stories dealing with contemporary life and society where parents are cast away by
children or friends disown each other have atmosphere surcharged with subdued irony and become potentially mocking. The landscape in his stories is lively with the hills, rivers, tea gardens and the agricultural field. Malik depicts Assamese society minutely with its inhabitants, their culture and festivals, rituals and faith and prejudices and so on. In his stories, Malik creates India in her present situation and the characters with authenticity and conviction. He articulates the feelings of lower class and lower-middle class women in most of his novels, their predicament that they are victims of inequities; they are creatures of conventional morality. They are unfairly abused, misbehaved and ill treated by the male-govern society. Nevertheless, they believe in conformity and compromise for the sake of the retention of domestic harmony rather than revolt which might result in the disruption of familial concord. He portrays many female characters that are victims of poverty and are forced by their circumstances to enter into the prohibited business of body. Some of them appear to be curious that abandon their husbands and children and elope with their men of choice. In short, Malik's novels and short stories portray traditional housewives, the Indian mothers and the postmodern women of so-called liberal mind and social snobs. Many of his stories are woman-centred in which the thematic concerns are guilt, failure, sex and loneliness that is woman in her different roles, as wife, mother, daughter and as a human being in a society whose modes and conventions are rigidly conditioned by man. His women consciously suffer. They are full bodied individuals with a mind of their own, with courage to face facts even about themselves and yet conforming to set patterns of life etched out for Assamese women as identifiable as the wife next door. In other words,
women of Malik's fictional world are aware that they are victims of inequality but they prefer suffering to rebellion for familial harmony. Malik's stories reflect the social reality as it is, and not as it ought to be. He gives no facile solution to the problem. He is aware of the demands of the short story as an art form. His characters and situations are incisively sketched. His style is simple and spontaneous and can vary his narrative strategy according to the thematic need of the story. Assamese short story has come up age in both theme and technique and has broken new grounds in the hand of Sayed Abdul Malik.

V.IV. Relevance of Malik's Humanism

Malik may be considered a humanist in the twentieth century meaning of the term "Humanism" i.e., "a joyous service for the greater good of all humanity in this natural world and according to the methods of reason and democracy (Corliss, L., 1962, 9)." He is a humanist who followed in his action and thought, a particular path for a happy and useful life related with the dignity and worth of individual, his capacity for truth and virtue. He works for the whole community of man. His commitment as a novelist was to discover facts about man and his way of reasoning. He is uncommitted about religion and the traditional concept of God. Human interest is predominant in all the novels and short stories of Malik. There is a movement for survival and social justice of the minorities, the marginalized and the poor. Malik is a humanist par excellence, and has centred his world-view on man himself. The
sociological aspect of his humanism is that he tries to define close human relation between individuals, families and communities and their relation to larger impersonal groups through his novels and short stories. He emphasizes the notions of loyalty, piy, mutual service and love among people. The humanitarian appeal of his novels and short stories is felt and recognized by all the readers and critics alike. His novels and short stories display that an individual’s relations with the spirit of service and dedication should be guided by the principle of love and need. Malik’s conception of humanism is materialistic and historical and is based on the working class of society resisting the influence of upper classes and pinning hopes for progress of humanity, the development of human consciousness, organization of social forces and on the success of proletariat struggles. As a novelist, Malik believes in the power of intelligence and cultivation of social consciousness. He believes strongly in the creed of human decency, dignity and fellowship. Malik’s conception of humanism is moral without being empty moralizing. A genuine progressive morality cannot be separated from actual condition, contending forces and basic issues of a class-oriented society. Malik’s aims for a new socialistic order will bring about conditions and make both individual and the class become conscious of the new milieu. His novels and short stories express the attitude of individuals violating religious practices, social conventions and evince interest to some extent in social reform and political progressivism. They deal with the middle and lower class workers’ common interests and defend science and modern education. Malik’s humanism is a philosophy of the working class, either in origin or in intent. In fact, it explicitly repudiates any fact founded upon economic life but upon universal
ethical standards as binding upon all individuals because of their common human nature. It insists that the task of eradicating social evils be entrusted to all men of goodwill. It is consistent in its argument that a section of humanity should lead the rest to a better life. The leaders should be men of superior intelligence, goodwill, loving nature and kindness. The degeneration of society is exposed; the authorities in various fields are ridiculed for their preoccupation with the material and the worldly in exclusion of the spiritual and the humane. Malik affirmed the anthropocentric nature of truth, values and religion. His major focus in his novels and short stories is on life in this world of which we can be certain. He is free from ambiguity and reluctance. He believes that the means for changing the human conditions on earth are intelligence and skill. Malik has taken this life seriously. He believes that evil and suffering must be fought by man. Though he takes worldly life seriously, he does not deny the future. He considers that the application of human intelligence and skill will determine whether the human enterprise will be saved or lost. The simple fact of life is that man is his own messiah. That man's free will should be guided by intuition and he might strive for his own progress and the progress of his community without being hampered by theological or scientific determinism.

Malik tries to remedy the social malady through adequate perception and conception of the nature of man and man's relation to the universe. This is a kind of intellectual conservatism. Towards the end of his writing, Malik opposed romanticism and naturalism, one that places individual above society
without responsibility; the other debases the individual to the position of animals. He considers man as man separated from nature and the divine. He does not provide any dogma or philosophical theory, and is less concerned with reason than with common sense, and writes against fanaticism. His humanism is critical than constructive in socio-political terms of the existence of man. It is concerned with the nature of civilization, philosophy or religion but no substitute of either. His primary concern is values to merge out of the engulfing morass of self-centeredness and deep cultural, moral and spiritual crisis in which the world is rolling today. He knew it that the old world order is changing fast, and that European Renaissance has become a spent-up force. The mushroom growth of industries has ushered in an era of commercialism, colonialism and imperialism. This has eaten up the simple human values like love, justice, humanity, tolerance, sanity, truth and beauty. The growing universal chaos cannot be got rid of unless we evolve a fresh "code of conduct" for ourselves, based on tolerance, mutual trust, love and understanding. His novels and short stories are concerned this way or that way with self-consciousness, human dignity, rights, liberty and fraternity. He has a firm belief in democracy and progress, its optimism and idealism, its relevance to science and invention all fit into his humanistic worldview. He believes and advocates for the spirit of cosmopolitanism, international friendship and universal goodwill of man. He appreciated scientific knowledge and technological advancement but these should be made instruments of forcing man and enhance his life. Science and technology should be humanized and socialized and man should be educated to respond to the rapid changes. Man should be free and responsible individual. His stories lay the facts bare that
happiness and contentment lie in simplicity, service, sacrifice and mutual trust. That food, clothing and shelter are primary needs of human beings. But one should not indulge in any kind of crime and atrocity for securing one's primary need. He criticizes the foolish Indian imitation of the West. Culture has been shown in its wide ethnographic sense. It is a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, literature, laws, customs and conventions and many other capabilities and habits of man acquired as a member of society.

The progress in science and technology is responsible for intellectual advancement from ignorance and superstitions. Simultaneously, it has brought many uncertainties and fears by uprooting many of our moral, religious and cultural values of our society. We look upon human beings as complex machines and tend to dismiss question about values and reality as absurd and unintelligible. In the field of art and literature, postmodern writers and artists, thinkers and theorists have faced such a baffling situation. Postmodernism is marked by a mood of radical indeterminacy and a tone of self-conscious skepticism towards precious certainties, in impersonal, intellectual and political life. It is satisfied with the surface and does not strive for the depth. It has a fascination for the popular art form and its mood is less elegiac though it does not abandon the mood of alienation. It greets absurdity instead of meaning with an indifference, which combines resignation, fatigue and playfulness. It does not believe that language can reveal truth about the world. It can rather, hold the opposite view as everything is seen in linguistic terms: all explanatory – systems like history, religion etc. can be reduced to linguistic
formulas. They have persuasive powers rather than truth. This has led to the
trends such as reduction, randomness, multiplicity and absence of depth. But
literature has no value without accepting human values. Higher human Values
are the end and literature is only a means to achieve them. Literature must
respect not only the values of life but also all its intellectual pursuit: "Man has
been disciplined hitherto by his subjection to nature, Hoping emancipated
himself from this subjection, he is showing something to the defects of slave
turned master. A new moral outlook is called for in which the submission to
the power of nature is replaced by respect for what is lust in man. It is where
this respect is lacking that scientific technique is dangerous. So long as it is
present, science, having delivered man from bondage to nature can proceed to
deliver him from bondage to the slavish part of him (Russel, Bertrand, The
scientific Outlook, 278–79)."

Most of our traditional values and beliefs have been thrown away as a
result of the growth in scientific knowledge and technological advancement.
We know much about the atom, but are ignorant of the values needed for
leading a meaningful and peaceful life on earth. A sense of skepticism has
enveloped the conventional thinking and philosophers have began to think. It
is of no use to know the meaning of meaning rather than to chase illusory
ideas. Thus, the scientific outlook with its method of verification challenged
the claim of rationality of metaphysics, ethics and theology, and discounted
their ability to give a "higher" unified reality. This new philosophical trend of
logical positivism repudiates all metaphysics. That the world of matter is only
reality, whatever is capable of empirical verification is true, apprehension of values and enjoyment of beauty are irrelevant to the question of truth. Nevertheless, this sort of thinking will lead us to a state of chaos. In the words of Harold H. Titus, “without a strong sense of values and of direction, however, the human spirit tends to weaken and deteriorate. Technical devices can liberate men from drudgery and open new possibilities for cultural development. They can also have a dehumanizing effect and be potentially dangerous, if there is no self-discipline and dedication to enduring values (Titus Harold, Living Issues in Philosophy, 345).” In India, our ancient thinkers pondered over the value of faith. It is the faith in the higher order, values and Ultimate reality that can lead us to a prosperous and peaceful life and the tranquility of mind. The well-rounded individual, a whole man is an artist, a philosopher and a scientist. Human life is distinct from other forms of life and does involve the recognition of aesthetic and ethical values, which transcend the immediate requirements for mere existence. Human existence most often incurs certain position when science has to take the leave and philosophy has to take over. Literature deals with many of such moments of human crisis and can provide us with fruitful remedies aesthetically. Einstein, the great scientist of our age says, “we can only know the relative truth, the Real Truth is known to the universal observer (Jain G. R., Cosmology-old and new, xii).” One of the quests of human mind is for truth, the most legitimate and wholesome pursuit. It stands as something permanent to which man may project the mind’s craving. In Indian thinking, truth is God, the knowledge and the Infinite, the Ultimate Reality. Doing our duties, by being detached and passionless in Indian context, can approach this truth. Humanists think that it
can be obtained by rendering our service to man, by loving man and by doing maximum good to mankind. For them, human interests are above all the priorities of human life. Such a craving cannot be satisfied by the scientific truth that is a cold fact ready to be tested and proved. Truth is an object of subjective pursuit of mind for secure foothold. Such a pursuit can be fulfilled by the everyday eye and ear in experience of the whisper of a couple (husband and wife), of a father to a son, of a farmer to the customers, of the master to the servant and so on. The core of feeling, the mutual relation, the human bond defying an expression in words, the caressing lilt of a familial relationship which speaks more in silence than in words, all these express themselves in gesture rather than in words. Thus, Einstein says, "Science without values would be blind, values without science lame." Science is not everything. It has some evils of its own – specialization, fragmentation, facelessness, manipulation; the confusing of ends with means, pollution, industrial genocide etc. It is not wise to leave science in the hands of the scientists. Reassessing and reacting against science is a necessity, a higher science – the science of human whole. Thus, science and literature are not two but one: "The world that we know or try to know through our scientific explorations and experiences that too is the human world. That means that man feels man in accordance with his thought, ideas and intelligence (Thakur, Rabindranath, cited, Gohain, H., Ma' nabata'r Sandha' nat, Jyoti Prokasan, Guwahati, 2001)."

They are mutually inclusive. Man is a dweller in two realms – fact and value. To balance the abstract and the impersonal we need personal knowledge. There is a greater need for respecting the person. Man as the meeting ground of levels of reality needs both science and mysticism. A dynamic interplay
between intuition and analysis should not be beyond human capacity and the cultural horizon.

Dr. Dilip Borah elaborately discusses the problems of analyzing literary works in his essay “Sa’hitja Bic’rar Sam_ Kat_ (2005).” He points out that a large number of Western literary theories of the recent times have made the matter more problematic. In support of the point, he quotes Yue Daiyan: “The general tendency in the development of contemporary world literature is pluralistic and fluid, no stable ideological system and theoretical authority can emerge in contemporary Western society where various new theories crop up with an increasingly rapid frequency and last for increasingly short period. Moreover, the structures of theories are mostly based on theoretical hypothesis and are to certain extent, either isolated from the practice of creative writings or are ugainly phrases taken out of context to suit the purpose of these theoreticians.” However, Malik has done a worthwhile task in his novels and short stories by expressing human interest as his never-failing concern. He thinks globally as he observes man as man, not more nor less. While presenting the stories, he carefully maintains a strict adherence to the culture of the land like a true son of Assam. In other words, he presents the incidents and co-incidents in his novels and short stories locally. Hence, he has a national as well as a universal appeal and relevance as a humanist above time and literary creed.