FICTIONAL DEVICES

In preceding chapters so far we have studied the themes of Anita Desai’s different novels within the framework of society-individual relationship. In this chapter, the focus of our study will be Desai’s fictional devices in relation to her fictional works. Much has been written on the other aspects of Desai’s novels but inquisitively not as much of critical material is available on her fictional devices. Based on this assumption, an attempt is made to explore this aspect of Anita Desai’s fiction in this chapter.

The lexicon meaning of the word device is any method which is used to produce wanted effect. Device in fiction refers to all those noticeable forms of it which is generally taken to be the whole of it. As an artisan uses some methods and devices in fabricating a tapestry, in the same way a literary artist uses some fictional devices in creating a literary work. The word device in context of fiction has a wide range of meaning. It includes all tools, techniques and methods by use of which a writer explores the subject matter, expresses the ideas, conveys the meaning, enhances the story and evokes a desired effect or arouses a desired reaction in the reader. Both fictional elements and fiction techniques can rightly be called fictional devices. Simplistically, fictional devices include all that a writer employs for delivering his narrative. On a finer level, it involves symbolism, imagery, fictional sequencing, stream of consciousness, point of view, planning of chapter division, etc. Apart from that, language, characterisation, plot and dialogue are some other elements of fictional devices.

Gifted with unlimited creative imagination and artistic vivacity, Anita Desai divulges astounding range and profundity in her fictional world. Her experiment with non-traditional material and techniques gives her a distinct position among the Indian English novelists. Her novels are lyrical and based on the inner drama of human psyche. Her main concern in writing is quest for truth. She declares:

Writing is to me a process of discovering the truth — the truth that is, nine-tenth of the iceberg that lies submerged beneath the one-tenth visible portion we call reality. Writing is my way of plunging to the depths and exploring this underlying truth. All my writing is an effort to discover, to underline and convey the true significance of things. (Desai, 1972:348)
In order to present this submerged truth, she employs various fictional devices. Amongst the devices that are most prominently deployed by her is — the stream-of-consciousness technique, device of memory flashes, the varied bunch of images, metaphors, symbols and myths for bearing out the interior regions latent desires and dormant impulses of human psyche. She exploits even phonological pattern like alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, etc. It is not the theme, but the inner and outer rhythm of human psyche which is all important for Desai. She comments:

My novels don’t have themes — at least not till they are finished, published or read, do I see any theme. While writing, I follow my instinct, I follow flashes of insight, I veer away from or even fight anything that threatens to distort or destroy this insight, and somehow come to the end and look back to see the pattern of footprints on the sand. (Desai, 1978:4)

In her attempt of capturing the vibes of her characters, Desai directly engages the reader in the stream of a particular consciousness. We see a distinct inclination towards introversion in Anita Desai’s writing. Her novels are psychological dramas, surfacing an inner conflict through aesthetic objectivity. The novels of Anita Desai reveal her unique world view, but at the same time confirm to the existing tendencies in modern fiction. Her novels are technical innovations which combine features of both novel and lyrical poetry. Her narrative shifts the reader’s attention from men and events to a formal design. She herself prefers the word pattern to plot:

I prefer the world ‘pattern’ to ‘plot’ as it sounds — more natural and even better, if I dare use it, is Hopkins, word ‘inscape’— while plot sounds arbitrary heavy-handed and artificial — all that I wish to avoid. (Ram, 1977:101)

Language is an integral aspect of fictional devices. It is believed by many authors that language is a matter of choice. Every writer has his peculiar choice of language to make his unfolding effortless and unique. Joseph Conrad’s example is worth quoting here. He once wrote, “…my faculty to write in English is as natural as any other aptitude with which I might have been born. I have a strange and overpowering feeling that it had always been an inherent part of myself.
English was for me neither a matter of choice nor adoption….if I had not written in English, I would not have written at all” (Conrad, 2008:39). Similarly, Anita Desai has clearly given her expression to her reason for choosing English as the medium. She writes:

According to the rules laid down by the critics, I ought to be writing half of my work in Bengali and the other half in German. As it happens, I have never written a word in either language…. I did not choose English in a deliberate and consciousness act… I would say, perhaps it was the language that chose me. But I am not aware of any act of choice. I started writing English at the age of seven and have been doing so for thirty years now without stopping to think why. (Desai, 2008:19)

Anita Desai feels “free to employ, simply, the language of interior” for delineating the inner turmoil of her characters. She believes “when two characters meet, they use this type of language – the language of their thoughts, their interior selves – which has nothing to do with geography and can be written in any language” (ibid.21). In this chapter, the twelve novels of Anita Desai have been analyzed with reference to fictional devices. The study would be of Desai’s fictional devices by taking each of her novels in chronological order.

Anita Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock* as a novel is both poetic and intensely evocative. It is the story of a woman in which her sufferings are very often wrought upon our feelings. The narrative attempts to unfold Maya’s personality and character through her encounter with realities both “within” and “without”. As a very sensitive soul Maya, the protagonist, is caught in a crisis of irreconcilable realities. The novel is rich in description and presented in the form of interior monologues, reminiscences and reveries. “The novelist uses the device of imagination and its various shades, such as fantasy, reverie, dream, and still more complex states of consciousness as nightmares, illusions, delusions, hallucinations. The traditional devices of impressionism, expressionism, imagism and symbolism are also used” (Tripathi, 1986:11).

The novel has three parts to it. Part I and III can be considered as the prologue and the epilogue of the novel and are written in epic style following the third-
person universal observer technique that gives the novelist omniscience. Part II of the book which forms the middle of the plot happens to be the major portion or the main story. It is in first person autobiographical narrative form told by Maya, the protagonist. Though in the beginning, the depiction is impersonal and uncomplicated yet progressively leads us to understand the dilemma of Maya’s psyche and as the novel arrives at its culmination, the reader is totally draped with her argument. The first person narration full of rhetorical questions is direct address to the reader, inviting his judgment on events. As a result, the reader feels drawn towards Maya:

Why should I love him? I wish I did not! But then, what is it there for if not to feel sorrow? There never lived a bird that did not know a storm, a stone, a wound. And I, an adult, thinking woman, had no more right to happiness than I had been taught, by Gautama, to regard as a privilege. (Desai, CTP, 2010:167)

Desai’s use of the device of ‘interior monologue’ gives vocal reverberation to the thoughts flowing through Maya’s psyche. In absence of mutual sharer of her fear and agonies, she seems to be talking to herself. Her monologues continue for pages giving an impression of fervent soliloquies. The reader feels himself absolutely sheathed by the impact of impassioned monologues:

The man had no contact with the world, or with me. What would it matter to him if he died and lost even the possibility of contact? What would it matter to him? It was I, I who screamed with the peacocks, screamed at the sight of rainclouds, screamed at their disappearance, screamed in mute horror. (146)

The novelist reveals subtle, floating feeling and thoughts of Maya’s psyche by employing stream of consciousness technique. Prof. Maini rightly says, “Cry, the Peacock is a story rendered through the consciousness of Maya and her agonized idiom” (Maini, 1984:120). Whereas this technique helps in delineating interior landscape of Maya’s consciousness with autobiographical narrative, somehow it hampers the growth of her character. Maya’s stream of thoughts is beautifully captured by the novelist when she receives a letter sent by her brother Arjuna from New York. Here is an example:
When he left – that final time, for good – there was no void; he was merely absent, and one did not feel an absence, not Arjuna’s whose presence itself was so half-hearted, and barely felt... ‘He is gone’, father had said, holding the letter in his hand like an empty cage from which a bird had escaped – a bird once beloved, but for so long known that one had grown too used to it to count it beloved any more... ‘Gone’, I had repeated, with momentary anguish... If I was a partridge, plump, content, he was a wild bird, a young hawk that could not be tamed, that fought for its liberty. (111-13)

Through the device of memory flashback, Desai manages Maya to live in the present and the past. We also enjoy a corresponding feeling through absorption in her psyche. There is flashback within flashback when she recollects her dream-like childhood. She recalls fondly her childhood days as the happiest days of her life: “As a child, I enjoyed, princess-like, a sumptuous fare of the fantasies of the Arabian-Nights...” (41).

Anita Desai’s narrative mode soars into poetic heights in tune with the intensity of perception in this novel. Her flowery-poetic language full of images and fascination renders poetical recitation to the delicate vibration of Maya’s thoughts. Maya’s self-pity, agony in ecstasy and trepidation are revealed when after so much heat of summer, the dust storm comes:

Had it come? I ran to the window, the balls of my feet turned to truckles. No, this was a beginning and not an end. Storm. Motion. Speed. Living. I beat upon the window as the dancer, waiting to go on stage, pounds the earth with uncontrollable feet once the hypnotic drumming begins. What agony in ecstasy, what pain in magnificence. I moaned luxuriously, straining my body towards the maniac motion, hot and furious, coming cloud upon cloud, obliterating vision, obliterating, for that period, life – the life of dying things, of dropping plants, of screaming trees, making room for the truly eternal that would emerge thereafter. (156)

Through her chiseled language and pruned style, Desai fetches antithetical vision to the narrative. The dream world of Maya’s childhood is completely different from the real world of Gautama’s house after marriage. Maya’s childhood ‘world is like a toy’, which she says, “specially made for me, painted in my favourite colours, set moving to my favourite tunes” (35). After marriage her life is completely changed. She reaches in a world “that knew no pain” (24), where
“one did not speak of love, far less of affection. One spoke — they spoke — of discussions in parliament, of cases of bribery and corruption revealed in government” (43). Then, Maya’s doting father is entirely different form Maya’s mother in law. Maya says about his father, “I think that he is like a silver oak himself with his fine, silver-white hair brushed smoothly across his bronzed scalp” (37). Conversely, Gautama’s mother is “…like some busy rhinoceros charging through the forest, to her dispensary, or her crèche…” (44). Similarly, Gautama’s character is juxtaposed with that of Maya. Gautama is dry type of person who oftenly quotes Bhagwad Gita while Maya is too much in love with life.

The novel is replete with the use of imagery. The entire scene of astrologer’s reference is filled with the insect images which suggests Maya’s obsession with sensuality and death. In sheer desperation to protect her from the onslaught of an evil prophesy, Maya becomes alert like “a cobra spreading its hood at the first faint sound of approaching danger” (104). It is interesting to note the reversal of roles as Maya, the trapped prey, becomes the predator now, identifying herself with the erstwhile enemy: “I wondered why, from the very beginning, it had never occurred to me that it might be Gautama’s life that was threatened” (137). This image is functional as it warns the reader of the inherent cruelty in the seemingly fragile and lovable Maya and foretells the future crime.

The imagery of birds, plants, fruits and flowers portrays luminous sensation and pleasant emotions of Maya. The positive and negative attitude of bird, plant and animal imagery are reinforced by a colour symbolism of white and dark. Black incorporated into animal imagery depicting negative emotion, and the white colour is incorporated into bird and flower imagery to describe her vibrant feelings. There are references of various flower images like Bougainvillea, Night Queen etc. These blooming flowers instead of attracting Maya through their beauty seem to portend only their impending end by the evening. Then the image of the male and female papaya trees in the garden clearly reveals Maya’s desire of sexual union. The novelist beautifully divulges her contemplation before the reader thus:
... I contemplated that, smiling with pleasure at the thought of those long streamers of bridal flowers that flow out of the core of the female papaya tree and twine about her slim trunk, and the firm, wax-petalled blossoms that leap directly out of the solid trunk of the male.....Besides, If I could pleasure in contemplation of the male papaya, how much more food for delight in this male companion, surely. (80)

Desai has employed many dance images in this novel. The first powerful dance image is that of the ‘Kathakali’ dancer:

It was the mad demon of Kathakali ballets, masked, with heavy skirts swirling, feet stamping, eyes shooting beams of fire. It was a phantom gone berserk, and, from a body of absolute white, assumed terrible colours, rose out of realms of silence into one of thunderous drumming. (29)

The image of cabaret dance obtains a truly remarkable importance when placed side by side with that of the bear dance changing the frenzy of Maya's subconsciousness into a contemporary reality. These cabaret dance and bear dance indirectly present the cruel exploitation in society. Accordingly these should not be treated as sacred dance images; these are, in fact, victim-and-victimizer images which are used on an experimental level. Another dance image in the novel is the familiar dance of Shiva which mythologically signifies the dance of death. In this novel, it is “a symbol of liberation” a way out of the embarrassing existentialist predicament in which Maya finds herself.

The unforgettable thematic dance image of the peacocks figured in chapter three and later on referred to in chapter six, part II, of this novel, is in fact the most pungent of all the images. The title of the novel too refers to this very thrilling dance of the peacocks at the advent of the monsoon: “‘Pia, pia’ they cry. ‘Lover, lover, Mio, mio, - die, I die’” (82). In fact, lovelorn ecstatic cry of the peacock runs parallel to the main thread of the story. The cry which inauspiciously suggests the ecstasy of life has the finality of death. Gautama, through a father-substitute for Maya, is also her lover who wretchedly fails not only to feel the intensity of her innermost craving but also to listen to the pathetic cry of her anguished soul, and thus when she commits suicide in the end she, in a way, symbolically substantiates the agonized cry of the peacock.
Thus, Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock* ideally deals with the psychological consciousness of the female protagonist and is aptly illustrated amidst detail images, monologues and flashbacks. The novel is rich in its use of fictional devices, which lends opulence and beauty to the narrative.

Desai’s next novel *Voices in the City* is apparently a very realistic depiction of the plight of a Bengali family in a state of disintegration in the metropolis of Calcutta. But on the symbolic level, the novel deals meticulously with the existential dilemma of its characters who try to come to terms with various vicissitudes of life as the infertile and dreary atmosphere of the ‘monster’ city of Calcutta encroaches harshly on their sensibilities. The novel explores convincingly the inner weather of youthful despair and is permeated by the existential angst.

The plot of the novel is made up of four unequal parts: Part I, Nirode; Part II, Monisha; Part III, Amla; Part IV, Mother. The section division of the novel refers to the four characters of the novel. The entire novel except part II is presented using third-person universal observer technique. Part II of the novel is shifted to the documentary narrative device with Monisha in first person as a diarist biographer.

The novel abounds in images that externalize the internal to make the abstract concrete. The novel begins with an image scene, the very first line of which describes the train in subjective as well as objective terms:

> The train began to pant, as though in preparation for a battle, sending jets of white stream violently into the night sky and on the platform people loitered in various attitudes of nervousness, impatience and regret, turning now and then to the lights at the head of the platform, waiting for them to change. (Desai, VITC, 2009: 7)

This above symbolic vision has a connotive value and implies an apt ambiance for impending action of the novel. The struggle of the train on the platform indicates the conflict of the individual against life.
The most significant and mysterious image in the novel is that of the city of Calcutta which functions as an active agent, pressing upon the multitudinous voices of its citizens, reducing most of the population – both male and female – to insects. The title of the novel, which itself is an illustration of fictional device, is connected with this city image. The city of Calcutta is seen as a perpetual Wasteland — it has an air of emotional, intellectual and spiritual stagnation; anyone who wishes to come out of this stagnation is seen as a rebel and is reduced to the plight of an insect or some other dreadful creature of Nature. The characters indulge themselves in activities that lead them nowhere. The image of the city of Calcutta as a pus-filled boil goes a long way in portraying the misery of its inhabitants. The novel is strewn with memories and images of faith, ugliness, sordidness, misery, poverty, darkness, decay, death and disintegration. It is almost as if the characters are being prayed on by a very strong predator. The “monster city” successfully kills one prey – Monisha, while it leaves the remaining two — Nirode and Amla — badly mauled and shattered, creating an impact.

Apart from this, the novel has other images like that of the ‘kangaroo with an empty pouch’ to show Monisha’s infertile state, that of Kalimpong as beautiful mountain resort with fine flowers, fruits garden and nature’s bliss far from the city of Calcutta. Another image is that of fallen horse in the race course attacked by countless birds:

> It was the descent of the birds who had risen, crying in triumph, from the trees, risen like a fine-woven net against the opalescent sky and, net-like, descended on the flailing horse, poured and swarmed about it, with beating wings and tearing claws, to jab and tear, jab and tear at the feast for which they had waited. (230)

The foreboding death of horse symbolically prepares the emotional climate for Monisha’s end. Then, there is the image of window bars which is emblematic of Monisha’s chained and caged condition:
Through the thick iron bars I look out on other walls, other windows—other bars. When we are left to ourselves in this room and the vision of many red-soled feet ebbs away, sound breaks in with coherence. A black, bitter, terrifying sound that repeats and repeats itself like the motif of a nightmare. (109)

The paramount symbol in the novel is that of Nirode’s mother as Kali, which symbolizes creation as well as destruction. She is both the dealer of birth and death. The calm and detached attitude of his mother at Monisha’s death makes Nirode believe:

‘She is kali,’ he cried, ‘Amla, I know her now. She is Kali, the goddess and the demon are one. When I was driving through the city with her and I saw the sky darken, and people put on lights in her honour and heard them wail and chant and I knew at once then, that she is Kali. She has watched the sacrifice and she is satisfied. Don’t you see, Amla, the satisfaction on her lips? See how still and controlled her lips and hands are because she has at last seized and mastered death, she has become Kali — (252).

Throughout the novel symbolism of black and dark regarding scenes, characters and their experiences has been the dominant feature. We have references to the dark and black colour in ‘dark wintry evening’, ‘dark warehouses’, ‘dark doorways’, ‘great black wave’, ‘black squalor of the grimed city’. Black has been accentuated occasionally with a streak of white. The dark colour, obviously signifies a purposeless journey in life culminating in death. It also projects the stifling atmosphere of the household of Monisha’s in laws, who ‘have indoor minds, starless and dark’.

Anita Desai has used vibrant, supple and spontaneous language in the novel to achieve the human effect. She resorts to a subtle device of expression which is explicational rather than implicational. Sometimes she experiments with diction and style. The grammatical structure is temporarily suspended and the impression created is that of telegraphic language: “Eyeless angels, odourless lilies, bloated doves with their beaks missing” (19). Through such phrases, Desai attempts to give verbal form to Nirode’s thoughts. The narration contains all the ugliness, unhappiness and despair; the images chosen appropriately go a long way in expressing the characters’ inner thought process.
Thus, psychological depiction, supple language, subtle expression and symbolism are some of the important fictional devices that have been used by Anita Desai in *Voices in the City*.

*Bye-Bye, Blackbird* is Anita Desai’s third novel. Alienation at different levels forms the theme of the novel. It explores the lives of the outsiders seeking to forge a new identity in alien society. The novel has been said to be the novel of closest to Desai’s personal experience as immigrant. Her revelation of the unconscious threads of human mind gives the structural unity to the novel.

The novel is divided into three parts. Part I ‘The Visitor’ consisting of two chapters introduces Dev’s arrival and disenchantment in England, contrary to Adit’s deep rooted fascination for English life. Part II entitled ‘Discovery and Recognition’ includes three chapters and illustrates the changed perception of Dev for England. Adit also recognizes his alienation amidst foreigners in this part. Part III ‘Departure’ contains three chapters and describes Adit’s nostalgia and departure to his homeland with his wife Sarah. This division is related to the content of the novel. And this is yet another fictional device used by Anita Desai to express her theme more systematically and effectively.

The novel has a unit of tone as third-person story telling device is employed with the novelist as the universal observer. The artistic skill of the novelist lies in harmonizing the plot and action with poetry which not only renders unity to the narrative but poetic atmosphere as well. Firstly, the poetry occurs in chapter I of the novel when Dev shows his hatred for England and Adit utters his adoration and exhilaration for the country. Adit sings the following ditty in cheerfulness sentimentally, strolling towards the High street:

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Pack up all my cares and woe,
Here I go, singing low,
Bye-bye, Blackbird.
Where somebody cares for me,
Sugar is sweet and so is she,
Bye-bye Blackbird. (Desai, BBB, 2006:21)
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This poem appears another time in chapter V but put across different experience of Adit this time. The feel of excitement and delight of first illustration is absent, and here it is replaced by the mood of anguish and disenchantment. The following lines suggest gradual changes that take place in Adit. Feeling discomfort among strangers in England, he sings softly:

Here no one can love or understand me,
Oh! What hard luck stories they all hand me.
Make my bed and light the light,
I’ll arrive late tonight.
Blackbird, bye-bye. (129)

This poem is again cited in the end of the novel, where the ultimate significance of these lines is realized. The novel ends with these lines:

Make my bed and light the light,
I’ll arrive late tonight.
Blackbird, bye-bye. (224)

This poem has a structural significance and therefore appears in the novel at certain interval. The changed perception of Adit, his disenchantment from his chosen country and his ultimate realization to return back to his country is revealed through this poem. The title of the novel ‘Bye-Bye, Blackbird’ is also from the poem itself which connotes the return of the blackbird to its permanent nest at last. Anita Desai has also used folk poetry and nursery rhymes in the novel. For instance:

The north wind doth blow
And we shall have snow,
And what will poor Robin do then? (23)

We find another poem in chapter II when Adit shows his carefree attitude to live life for the moment; contrary to his complicated worrying friend Dev. Adit hums the following lines:

For every evil under the sun.
There is a remedy or there is none.
If there is one, seek till you find it,
If there is none, never you mind it. (50)
There are several other illustrations of the poems in the novel. Anita Desai’s use of poetic device in the novel, apart from providing poetic spirit gives imaginative flavours of beauty to the narrative.

Anita Desai attains a good blend of humour and satire now and then in the novel. The satire is more sarcastic rather than subdued. The novelist has made a satirical dig into Indian’s obsession and undue fondness for the European way of life. Dev makes laugh of Adit by passing this comment:

And you were just telling me you belonged to the class Macaulay wrote about and helped create — a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. (153)

Another ironic dig is made by the novelist by pointing out the babu obsession with England among Indians. In the beginning of the novel, Adit’s behaviour hints at this sort of affection. Adit hums the following lines unconsciously and sarcastically:

O England’s green and grisly land,  
I love you as only a babu can. (128)

Anita Desai’s language and style is subtle, rich and suggestive enough to convey emotions and feelings of the characters in the novel. She gives expression to Dev’s feeling in English countryside using language full of connotation and affluent aroma:

Dev, sighing, felt these droplets of sound and smell drip, drip, drip into him like drops of golden syrup, filling him with an intense sweetness that ached through his whole body, made it throb and illuminated it with delight so that, supine and half-asleep as he was, he was as brilliantly alive and receptive as an insect on a twig, its antennae trembling with latent adventure. (155)

Desai has used more Indians words in this novel than she did in any of her earlier ones. The use of these native words evoke Indian atmosphere in the novel. They are: *puja, namak haram, gup-shup, kalapani, kurta, halwa, Samadhi* etc.
Though the novel is weak in fictional devices in comparison to other novels of Desai yet it stands apart from rest of her novels. The novel justifies Desai’s forte of poetic sensibility.

Anita Desai’s next novel Where Shall We Go This Summer is divided into three well organized parts. Part I ‘Monsoon 67’ begins in present with the arrival of Sita on the island of Manori. This part deals with Sita’s abnormal emotional and mental state, her fear of troubles of ensuing childbirth and her escape from mainland to the island to stop the biological process of delivery magically. The incidents in entire part I are described in third-person universal observer technique. In Part II entitled ‘Winter 47’ story moves twenty years back in winter depicting the reminiscences of Sita’s childhood. The artistry lies here in unfolding later action earlier and earlier action later in the novel. Part III ‘Monsoon 67’ again comes back in present in continuation of part I and its action. Moving through doubts and rejection in first part of the novel, Sita arrives at the stage of acceptance in Part III.

The three equal parts of the novel form the pattern of the thesis, antithesis and synthesis. In these parts Sita’s psyche moves through the process of doubt, rejection and acceptance. Finding the structure of novel conspicuously alike to that of Virginia Wolf’s To the Lighthouse, Vimala Rao comments:

The action of the first section takes place on the island of Manori, in the present time of Sita’s life, that of the second in her past, and the third in what she has accepted as her future. The manipulation of time and space to depict the extraordinary inner consciousness of Sita is especially reminiscent of Woolf in To the Lighthouse. (Rao, 1978: 46)

The novel uses the device of fantasy to reinterpret reality. The atmosphere of the Manori island is magical and enigmatic. There is a magnificence and mystery in the personality of Sita’s father. His protective figure, experiments and magical healings on the island seems to have magic and mystery in them. There are several references of the magical cures by Sita’s father on the island which
substantiate the elements of fantasy in the novel. Besides, Sita’s desire to keep her baby unborn by escaping to the island also has an element of fantasy in it:

She had come here in order not to give birth…Yet she had arrived, she was on the island, in order to achieve the miracle of not giving birth. Wasn’t this Manori, the island of miracles? Her father had made it an island of magic once, worked miracles of a kind. (Desai, WSWGTS, 2005:28)

Another important device that Anita Desai has used in the novel is the use of poetry. In the last section of the novel, Desai quotes her favourite poet C.P. Cavafy’s poem. These lines import philosophical viewpoint to the novel and come as a revelation to Sita. She compares herself with her husband in courage and finds he is rather superior who believes “Life must be continued, and all its business.” The first part of the poem is for an individual like Raman, who accepts the responsibilities of life as it comes:

To certain people there comes a day
When they must say the great Yes or the great No.
He who has the Yes ready within him
reveals himself at once, and saying it crosses over
to the path of honour and his own conviction.

She realizes that if her husband has the courage to embrace the reality “she too had courage of being coward.” Her being find utterance in these lines of Cavafy’s poem:

He who refuses does not repent. Should he be asked again, he would say No again. And yet that No —
the right no — crushes him for the rest of his life. (127)

By the end of the novel, a revelation comes to Sita that one cannot cling to illusion forever and reality is to be accepted for survival. Therefore, she too has no other alternative but to accept. There is one more poem cited in the novel by the novelist and it is a poem of D.H. Lawrence. Sita has been trying to remember the lines of this poem for so long and finally she recollects them. This poem is highly suggestive which stresses the instinct for life and procreation:

The wild young heifer, glancing distraught,
With a strange, new knocking of life at her side
Imagery and symbols play a significant role in the art of Anita Desai’s fiction. She has used these fictional devices in this novel too. In the novel, Bombay is a symbol of reality whereas island of Manori epitomizes the world of fantasy. Being imaginative and poetic, Sita is exhausted living amidst reality and rationality. She retreats to the magic island feeling it a sort refuge, a protection. Sita embraces illusion rather than reality on the island. The other most important imagery is that of sea in the novel. For Sita, the sea epitomizes vastness and tranquility that can envelope her traumatize being: “Then there would be the sea — it would wash the frenzy out of her, drown it. Perhaps the tides would lull the children, too, into smoother, softer beings” (91). The life in Bombay is visible through the images of violence and destructions in the novel. The clamour of shouts and accusations in the street, battle scene, the fight of Sita’s offspring and Menaka’s insensitive act of tearing painting and plucking buds, are some of the images that exemplify destruction of the city life. Then, the fine bird imagery is that of eagle and crow images the plight of Sita as a wounded eagle in the midst of cruel society represented by crows. Sita is frightened seeing all this destruction around her and feels hopeless for her ‘fish-foetus’. As the novel recounts:

Holding her breath, she admitted that destruction may be the true element in which life survives; and creation merely a freak, temporary, and doomed event. (50)

The life on the island is represented through the images of sea, sunshine, colours, palm trees and flowers. Through these tender, beautiful and sensuous images of nature, the novelist portrays poetic sensibilities and microscopic sensitivity of Sita.
Thus, the novel is another discovery in the ingenious craftsmanship of Anita Desai. Skilful correlation of past and present experience, determines the poetic design of the novel.

Desai follows a triptych structure in her next novel *Fire on the Mountain* also. The novel falls into three sections, each further divided into several short chapters of unequal length. Part I titled ‘Nanda Kaul at Carignano’ runs into ten chapters. This section deals with the lonely life of Nanda Kaul in Kasauli. Part II ‘Raka comes to Carignano’ introduces Raka in Nanda’s life at Carignano and contains twenty one chapters. Part III ‘Ila Das leaves Carignano’ is divided into thirteen chapters. This section presents the tragic end of Ila Das, a childhood friend of Nanda Kaul. The structural unity, as suggested by the section captions is offered by Carignano, Nanda Kaul and Raka, running counter to one another complemented by that of Ila Das who also provide unity of structure. The entire novel revolves around the existential angst experienced by the woman protagonists, Nanda Kaul. In this novel, “the story element is very thin and there is practically no action except for the tragic end” (Indira, 1994: 96).

The novelist employs device of flashback and interior monologue in narrating the story of the novel. Anita Desai unfurls Nanda’s past in the form of long interior monologues punctuated by authorial interruptions. Soon through several interior monologues enacted in Raka’s subconscious mind, the reason for the abnormality in her is unfolded. The sudden shift from the interior monologue about her bitter past to the present observation of the jackal crying, the latter superimposed on the former brings out Raka’s predicament.

Anita Desai resorts to the effective employment of imagery and symbolism in the novel. Like a wild animal newly caged, Raka keeps prowling barefoot in her room, looking at the stone heaps. She is not interested in flowers or playing as children of her age normally tend to do. By using two reptile images successively in a span of two pages, and by a suggestive hint about Raka’s lack of interest in play and flowers, Desai impliedly establishes that there is something weird about her. Raka feels drawn by scenes of devastation and failure. Immediately after her arrival at Carignano, on witnessing a fire in the forest, she becomes obsessed
with forest fires for they seem to her the empirical manifestation of her inner conflict. The fire created by her is the result and manifestation of her existential angst to destroy the old and meaningless to make room for the new and significant. It is an affirmation of her search for values in an otherwise futile existence. An atmosphere of solitary introspection is created with the help of several images. Desai’s predilection for prey-predator imagery abounds in this novel also. When Nanda receives a call from Ila Das:

…Nanda Kaul turned her head this way and that in an effort to escape. She watched the white hen drag out a worm inch by resisting inch from the ground till it snapped in two. She felt like the worm herself, she winced at its mutilation….Still staring at the hen which was greedily gulping down bits of worm, she thought of her husband’s face and the way he would plait his fingers across his stomach…(Desai, FOTM, 2008: 23)

This prey-predator image of hen pecking at a worm is suggestive of Nanda Kaul’s present inner turmoil. Her past suffering at the hands of the adulterous husband and her present awareness about the harsh realities of life are both successfully established by this image. Another important image employed recurrently in the novel is that of the pine tree that stands burnt and alone, which is often an object of attraction for Nanda Kaul: “She was grey, tall and thin … she fancied she could merge with the pine tree and be mistaken for one. To be a tree, no more and no less, was all she was prepared to undertake” (4). Nanda’s sense of identification with the pine trees suggests her desire for absolute stillness and withdrawal from life. The image of the charred pine tree is repeatedly employed in the novel. Raka is reminded of the futility of existence while she looks at the lonely hills and charred pine trees.

Anita Desai herself affirms that the novel in which she has attempted the closeness of man and beast, earth and vegetable is Fire on the Mountain. Imagery alone makes it possible and, in the process, the novel gains a richer texture and greater depth. Images of ugly and evil animals like jackals and wolves are recurrently used creating an animal imagery that reinforces the thematic concern of the play, namely the tragedy of human life. By making use of the images of insects’ birds, and animals like mosquitoes, lizard, owl, eagle,
and jackals, Desai hints the reader of the impending tragedy. “The significant house imagery, the images of plants, colour, atmosphere and moon – all contribute to the textual density and symbolic centrality of the novel” (Indira, 1994: 96).

Another important aspect of this novel’s fictional device is its symbolism. There are several symbols that deepen the philosophic implications of the novel. To start with, Carignano, Nanda Kaul’s present abode, is symbolic of the loneliness and barrenness of human life in general and of Nanda Kaul in particular. The eagle symbol, like the house symbol, is repeatedly used in the course of the novel to highlight the quest of Nanda. The sight of the eagle flying high, makes Nanda long to be able to soar like the bird:

An eagle swept over it, far below her, a thousand feet below, its wings outspread, gliding on currents of air without once moving its great muscular wings which remained in repose, in control. She had wished, it occurred to her, to imitate the eagle – gliding, with eyes closed. (21)

This longing for soaring above the reach of deterministic confines is the hallmark of Raka’s characters. To emphasize this aspect, the novelist employs the eagle symbol while describing Raka’s walk to the Monkey Point. “She was higher than the eagles, higher than Kasauli and Sanawar and all the other hills…” (67). Thus, Nanda Kaul’s wish and Raka’s attempt merge in the eagle-symbol which denoted their existential angst and quest for values. The symbolic implication of the forest fire is reinforced by the title of the novel, ‘Fire on the Mountain’. The mountain symbolizes Nanda Kaul and the fire is symbolic of Raka’s wild nature.

Like other novels, Anita Desai has used the device of poetry in Fire on the Mountain too, and this time it is a poem by Hopkins:

I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea. (63-64)

This poem has some connection with the character of Nanda Kaul who quotes it. It signifies her desire to be away from the humdrum of life, to a heaven of nature far from the maddening crowd. The same effect is achieved by introducing an allusion to a passage from The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon which begins with a title ‘When a Woman lives Alone’.

Thus, Desai has made effective use of fictional devices to portray the subterranean emotions and profound psychological expression of different characters in the novel.

Anita Desai’s novels are known to be well organized, and Clear Light of Day is no exception. Her novels are usually divided into either three or four parts, and Clear Light of Day is divided into four unnamed parts like four acts of drama. The division often conveys symbolism and meaning. Desai takes liberty with chronology and there is a constant intermingling of past and present with a hint of the foreboding future in the novel. I section of the novel deals with the present time, and we are introduced to the characters as they are now. The II and III section are retrospective and the novelist goes back to the events of the past including the childhood and years of adolescence of the Das children. In the IV and last section of the novel, the characters find themselves in the present again, but now with a profound realisation which they lacked in the first chapter. Bim, who has struggled with anger and bitterness, now realises that she has to make peace with herself and the ghosts from her past in order to live a full and meaningful life. By shifting between present and past time, between ‘now’ versus past memories, moments of importance are revealed slowly. Section II and III are an example of the device of the flashback like cinema-films of today. Through this device of flashback, the novelist interrupts the narration of the story by going back in time, and brings to our notice certain events which had taken place before the commencement of the story of the novel. Though the series of incidents are rendered by the novelist in the novel yet she has not adhered to chronology and ventured to entwine a refreshing pattern of reality.
Anita Desai has made use of the device of interior monologue and stream of consciousness to unravel the hidden thoughts, feelings and emotions of her characters in this novel. At various points in the course of the novel, we come across brief passages in which the thoughts passing through the mind of Bim, Tara, Raja, Mira-masi and even of Bakul have been described. Here Anita Desai gives us quite a detailed account of the memories and thoughts which pass through Bim’s mind. In the mood of introspection, Bim has a revelation:

….Bim could see as well as by the clear light of day that she felt only love and yearning for them all, and if there were hurts, these gashes and wounds in her side that bled, then it was only because her love was imperfect and did not encompass them thoroughly enough, and because it had flaws and inadequacies and did not extent to all equally. She did not feel enough for her dead parents, her understanding of them was incomplete and she would have to work and labour to acquire it. (Desai, CLOD, 2007: 257-58)

The process of interior monologue continues, and it is in the course, she reads dying words of Emperor Aurangzeb:

Many were around me when I was born, but now I am going alone … Strange that I came with nothing into the world, and now go away with this stupendous caravan of sin!(261)

Pondering over these words during introspection tears moved down from her eyes. She feels a strong urge to jettison all the burden of bitterness, which she has been carrying for years.

Poetry is a recurring motif in this novel and it too serves as unifying device from the structural point of view. First, the poetry appears in the form of two epigraphs, drawn from the poems of Emily Dickinson and T.S. Eliot. Here is an epigraph by Emily Dickinson:

Memory is a strange bell —
Jubilee and Knell —

and other by T.S.Eliot:

See, now they vanish,
The faces and places, with the self which, as
it could, loved them,  
To become renewed transfigured, in another pattern.

These epigraphs highlight the theme of the effect of the remembrance of things past on the chief protagonist. To Tara, the memories are a “jubilee”, a source of earnest joy, while to Bim, they strike like the “Knell” of sorrow, suggesting their temperament alienation.

Begin with the song of **koels**, the novel ends with the song of a young disciple Mulk and his aged **guru**. Listening to this song of Mulk’s **guru** in the final section of the novel, Bim is reminded of a line from T.S. Eliot’s **Four Quartets**; “Time the destroyer is time the preserver”(284). This line conveys the real message of the play to us about time the destroyer being also the preserver in specific terms. There are number of passages in the novel illustrating the poetical, and occasionally the lyrical, quality of Anita Desai’s prose. The whole account of Aunt Mira’s care of the Das children, the games which the children played, the account of Raja and Bim’s excursions to the melon-fields and their recital of poetry to each other, illustrate this quality. Here is a specimen of this kind of prose:

_Suddenly she stopped with a shout: she had spied something under the rose-bushes — a gleam of pearly white. Perhaps a jewel, a ring: Tara was always expecting to find treasure, to make her fortune, discover herself a princess._ (163)

Anita Desai uses imagery and symbolism as a way of creating order in her novels. Her protagonists associate their emotions and feelings with the buds, flower petals, birds, animals and insects around them. The most evocative among the images in the novel is that of well which becomes emblem of death and a blind passage. The tragic death of cow by drowning in the well is symbolic of the death and destruction of the old traditions and cosmic system. The death of cow would be a constant reminder for Mira-masi. Just as the holy cow dies, Mira-masi dies.

It is interesting to notice that the colour of the scum in the well is green. Green is said to represent the need for healing and reconciliation within oneself. Bim’s
journey in becoming a whole person is all about coming to terms with memories that haunt her from her childhood. Desai’s use of “the house” imagery is at the center which signifies dust, dullness and decay. She skilfully synthesizes the image of house with the lives of the Das family. The house is associated with sickness, dust, and disorder. And for that reason, the “grey” color is described again and again.

The novel is filled with sounds and smells, and as one reads it is impossible not to hear ‘the koels in the morning, and the dog barking in the night, and the mosquitoes singing and singing’. These sounds and smells function symbolically on different levels in order to stress the importance of certain events. Mynah birds are heard throughout the novel, often where one needs a break from an awkward silence:

Bim said nothing. In the small silence a flock of mynahs suddenly burst out of the green domes of the trees and, in a loud commotion of yellow beaks and brown wings, disappeared into the sun. (15)

The image of dog is also brought to sight whenever there is an unbearable silence or whenever Bim needs an excuse to get out of an unwanted situation. After her first date with Dr. Biswas Bim desperately wants to go home, and her dog, Begum, is her rescue. The insects and mosquitoes symbolize the feelings that Bim has from time to time for the people around her and the constant responsibilities of taking care of these people. Mosquitoes are not very visible but they tend to concentrate around one’s ears, becoming almost unbearable to listen to. Bim feels at one point that the mosquitoes are: “…like the thoughts of the day embodied in monster form, invisible in the dark but present everywhere, most of all in and around the ears, piercingly audible” (238).

*Clear Light of Day* falls into a regular pattern of evoking many creative moods. It is most successful novel in several ways, chief of them being the fictional devices.

In *Village by the Sea*, Desai makes a dive from the psychic obsessional world to a sane, jovial life of health, hope and regeneration. Like *Voices in the City* and *Clear Light of Day*, Desai has employed the family motive in this novel too, but
here in a more primitive and elemental manner. The entire family has a collective fate of joy and pain, poverty and prosperity. Unlike Desai’s other novels, the plot of this novel is based on substantial and unyielding human action namely the heroic struggle of Hari and Lila, which is serious and significant. The plot is divided into thirteen chapters with Hari in quest of a release from Thul, his earning of money in Bombay and return, and the prospect of upcoming economic independence. In the novel the attention is focused alternately on Bombay then on Thul. Mostly the story is revealed through the eyes and mind of Hari. The domination of Hari’s point of view not only gives unity to the plot but also a novelty of viewpoint which reminds us of Mark Twain’s Huckleberry’s Finn.

Anita Desai uses her favourite fictional device of description of scene and incident to carry through the narrative in this novel. She portrays nature not only as a spring of sensuous pleasure but as a fundamental entity. In chapter first the most beautiful and vital picture of nature is evoked by Desai. Here is an example of lyrical miniature in prose:

She walked down to the sea with the small basket….filled with flowers she had plucked from the garden around their house – scarlet hibiscus blooms, sweet-smelling spider lilies and bright butter-yellow allamanda flowers. When she came to the edge of the sea…waded out into the waves that came rushing up over her feet and swirling about her ankles in creamy foam. She waded in till she came to cluster of three rocks. One of them was daubed with red and white powder. It was the sacred rock, a kind of temple in the sea…just then the sun lifted up over the coconut palms in a line along the beach and sent long slanting rays over the silvery sand… (Desai, TVBTS, 1984: 1-2)

The mode of narration is adopted with the writer as omniscient observer. She adopts the traditional historic or epic mode of narration in the novel. The narrative here is direct and charming and gives one the impression of an old primitive ballad narrating the adventures of adolescent Hari and his sister to pull the family out of the mire poverty. Desai has not employed high-sounding, big metaphorical words here as she does in her other novels. As the subject matter of the novel is simple the style and diction used is also plain, lucid and without any tangle of psychoanalysis and details. The novelist minutely delineates picture of Hari’s house that reflects scarcity and poverty of the worst types:
The hut should have been re-thatched years ago—the old palm leaves were dry and tattered and slipping off the beams. The earthen walls were crumbling. The windows gaped, without any shutters. There was no smoke to be seen curling up from under a cooking pot on a fire, as in the other huts…. (5)

The device of stream of consciousness has also employed by the novelist to give us a glimpse of the inner working of Hari’s mind. She dexterously subordinates them to the general need of objective description. Crushed by poverty, Hari dreams of going to Bombay and earn money. Desai beautifully peeps into the mind of Hari using stream-of-consciousness technique:

While Hari lay awake, listening to their deep, even breathing and the deeper, louder breathing of the sea outside, he thought about the boats that sailed there so freely and could go to Bombay, to Africa, to Arabia if they liked. If only he could sail away in one of them— even if only to Bombay. Bombay! He stared out of the window at the stars that shone in the sky wondered if the lights of the city could be as bright, or brighter. It was a rich city: if he could get there, he might be able to make money, bring home riches, pieces of gold and silver with which to dazzle his sisters. (44 - 45)

From the viewpoint of characterization, the novel is significant. Most of the characters are two dimensional but very much alive and unforgettable. There is growth in Hari’s character in true sense. In the beginning of the novel he is a helpless young boy groping in the dark, but by the end he becomes a successful caretaker of his father, mother and sisters. Hari’s father is an incurable drunkard stinking with toddy always. His economic difficulties and other worries made him habitual drinker. He becomes a changed man at the end of the novel and seems repentant for his omissions and commissions.

Thus, set against the backdrop of seemingly timeless coastal Indian fishing village, this novel demonstrates Anita Desai’s depth and genius. She has imparted representative qualities in the novel with humanistic outlook.

Anita Desai’s next novel *In Custody*, apparently gives the impression of a pretty straightforward storyline unfolding the struggle of a college lecturer, Deven. But the study of various fictional devices used in the novel, offers a profound insight
into the implication of the narrative and highlights the depth, richness and intricacy of the novelist’s revelation.

From the viewpoint of fictional devices, first thing is to be taken in to consideration is the title of the novel which is really suggestive and has several layers of meaning. The title is reinforced by the cage imagery which keeps recurring in the novel. The central vision of the title is that in taking somebody into custody; one has also to surrender oneself to other’s custody. In taking Nur’s poetry into safe custody, Deven himself pulled in custody of Nur. The other connotation is that Deven is in custody of social values and realities, from which there is no escape. When Deven goes to Delhi, the city of promises and glory, he feels quite surprised. Anita Desai narrates:

one could so easily and quickly free oneself from what had come to seem to him not only the entire world since he had no existence outside it, but often a cruel trap, or prison, as well, an indestructible prison from which there was no escape. (Desai, IC, 1994: 19)

But ironically, he is not aware that he is landing himself into another maze. The city images Deven’s imprisonment. Reaching Nur’s abode, he realizes that he is only in another cage. Kunjabala Goel, a reputed critic, rightly says “while Mirpore represent reality, Delhi becomes symbolic of fantasy” (Goel, 1989:96).

*In Custody* is the only novel, where Desai does not use the device of flashback or memories to depict psychological time. However, there is an interesting phenomenon at work in the novel with regard to time. Desai attempts to use spatial instance in some scenes in the novel. The spatial point of view corresponds to the viewing position in visual arts. It focuses on the idea of representing into words the simultaneity of perception as in sketchy canvas. An illustration form the text in this context facilitates to figure out the remark:

‘Yes, yes, yes—Murad-bhai –is coming? I sent him an invitation too.’
‘He didn’t tell me’, Deven cried, stabbed to the heart by the thought that Murad had deceived him once again…. ‘Murad-he-had an invitation?’ he stammered. ‘Yes, yes, yes-I told him to bring you along…’ ‘to listen to Imtiaz-bibi’… ‘Imtiaz Begum’, called a voice from the audience, ‘you are like a star fallen into the well of the courtyard from which we have come to fetch water. When will you
quench our thirst? Give us the star poems. Will you give us the star poems tonight?’ ‘I can recite nothing—nothing—until my accompanists have had enough refreshments and decide to come out,’ she called back… ‘So, had your last drink to help you survive this evening?’ she teased them…

Someone brought a silver box of betel nuts and leaves—the smile Imtiaz Begum gave was as sudden and swift as if scissors had cut it through her face, snip-snap, and the teeth were stained red besides…. Her audience tittered and she threw them a contemptuous look…. Deven looked anxiously at the poet who was shifting uneasily about in the cane chair, making it creak. (80-81)

This passage moves on to narrate Deven’s trance which is broken by ‘Wah! Wah!’ to continue again. Here Desai not merely renders a vista of encompassing crowd in a situation but also provides the reader an access into Deven’s psyche. The simultaneity of perception is not just external but internal as well. Her skill hence in this novel in employing the device of spatial time is curiously her own. Her opinion on the art of writing is worth referring, “A writer does not create a novel by observing a set of theories — he follows flashes of individual vision” (Ram, 1977:100).

Desai makes use of the device of background description chiefly description of landscape in the novel. This device apart from focusing on the backdrop, ventures the mood of the characters through a skilful selection of colour and detail. As ‘Carignano’ in Fire on the Mountain symbolizes the psyche of Nanda and Raka with its bleak landscape, so does Mirpore with its dullness and barrenness reflect Deven’s own personality. A series of negative images characterize the description of the town and the landscape to evoke the very sense of desolation and aridity of the places. Mrs. Desai illustrates the town in these words:

Although it lacked history, the town had probably existed for centuries in its most basic, most elemental form. Those shacks of tin and rags, however precarious and impermanent they looked, must have existed always, repetitively and in succeeding generations, but never fundamentally changing and in that sense enduring. The roads that ran between their crooked rows had been periodically laid with tar but the dust beneath was always present, always perceptible. (19)
Here we come across the emblematic existence of Deven. Neither has he had any momentous past nor any succeeding aim for future. There are innumerable people in the town who live a life of anonymity without having any background and history. The reference to ‘dust’ becomes metaphor, an image characterizing Mirpore which is symbolic of the dull arid life of Deven. As Viney Kirpal says: “Dust with its connotations of unproductivity, sterility and death is more real to the people of Mirpore than soil, associated with vitality, creativity and growth” (Kirpal, 1986:127-28). Deven is never able to see any beauty or comfort even in the landscape. The nastiness of his physical existence is paralleled by the callousness of the milieu that he observes on his way to Delhi. As the novel recounts:

Deven stared out at the white dust and the yellow weeds, the leafless thorn trees, the broken fences, isolated tin and brick shacks and the scattered carcasses of cattle that littered the landscape and yet rendered it more bleak and more bare under the empty sky. (27)

F.A. Inamdar points out that “it is analogous with his paralytic spirit. The wasteland outside correlates with the wasteland of his mind” (Inamdar, 2004: 330). Anita Desai uses the device of background descriptions peculiarly to give tangible stroke to the process of Deven’s defeat and his awareness of reality. Deven’s encounter with reality beautifully pictured through natural scenery by the novelist:

He walked up the path. Soon the sun would be up and blazing. The day would begin, with its calamities. They would flash out of the sky and cut him down like swords. He would run to meet them. He ran, stopping only to pull a branch of thorns from under his foot. (204)

The inner resolution of Deven is seen to envelop itself with exquisiteness and magnificence of nature. This beautiful reflection of landscape with its colour and light mirrors the regenerated spirit of Deven.

Desai makes a considerable progress in the use of imagery in this novel too. Zoological imagery is artistically woven in the novel. Solely concerned with the inner weather of her characters, Desai is a painter of their kaleidoscopic and prismatic moods, their wills and conflicting choices. “In this novel the animal
imagery predominantly drawn from circus animals. It is significant in two ways: it explored the predicament of the characters as imprisoned creatures aspiring desperately for their freedom and secondly, men are as much starved and harassed as the animals. Never before in her novels do we find such thematic importance attached to this image nexus. Besides depicting ingratitude, unkindness and disruption of traditional human values and relationship, this imagery encompasses the universal and human predicament” (Inamdar, 2004:335). Deven’s wretched existence with his mordant wife makes him feel like “a caged animal in zoo”. He thinks his marriage, family and job has placed him in this cage. Imtiaz Begum is also described by bird imagery: “She was a bird in a cage that she longed for flight….the bars that held her were cruel and unjust, that her wings had been hurt by beating against them and only God could come and release her…” Deven describes her by saying, “monkey” who has learnt ‘her tricks” (82). Even the cycle rickshaw driver is depicted through circus imagery: “acrobatic as a monkey with a red cap, managed to swerve in time” (37). In describing Nur’s frame of mind animal imagery is one more time brought into play. When the poet looked at Deven, the animal imagery is called to mind: “A wrinkled eyelid moved, like a turtle’s, and a small quick eye peered out at Deven as if at a tasty fly” (42). Then we notice that the pigeons are ravenous for Nur’s flesh and blood:

The birds not only seethed around him but perched and teetered on his bald head and hands, furiously scrabbling with their hooked claws, raw and pink, and their glutinous beaks as if they would tear the flesh from his bones and devour it. (47)

Nur’s shabby and gloomy room gives the impression of animal life. His pig-like life, his grimy and voracious tendency of mind is hinted at by his wife: “Do you call that a poet, or even a man? ...You have reduced him to that, making him eat and drink like some animal, like a pig…” (59-60).

Following the chronological sequencing, the novelist makes use of third-person narrative. Like other novels of Desai, we also find references to poetry in this novel. The poems are recited by the poet Nur but to our utter surprise his own poetry is never cited rather it is Nur’s favourite English poets who are quoted.
The poets who quoted here are romantics Byron, Shelley and Keats and the excerpts of poems are from *Ode to the Westwind, Ode to a Nightingale* and *La Bella Dame Sans Merci*.

Thus, from the point of view of fictional devices *In Custody* is an exception that holds significance among all other novels of Desai. Anita Desai’s subtle handling with literary devices such as of colour, resonance, imagery, natural scenery and realistic narration not only prefigure the mental landscape of the protagonist but also signify true-life representation of societal panorama.

Anita Desai’s *Baumgartner’s Bombay* seems like a departure from the rest of her work in terms of style and content if not in terms of message. From the point of view of fictional devices the novel is reasonably momentous in its use of linguistic device, device of cinematography in its use of flashbacks and device of imagery. The previous novels have the abundance of imagery, metaphor, symbol and the hysteria of restlessness which are mostly absent in this novel. The critic Judie Newman also takes cognizance of the change:

> In *Baumgartner's Bombay*…. Desai departs from her previous practice, in order to interrogate the relation of discourse to history, the language of the interior to that of the outer world. (Newman, 2008:195)

The novel is not written in a chronological order. It is within the framework of the living present that the story of Baumgartner is told in flashback. The novel covers almost time of fifty years. In her previous novels, Anita Desai as a narrator explains, focalizes, and accounts. But this novel is written with very little authorial presence. Everywhere in *Baumgartner’s Bombay* outlines of facts are merely presented, and left to the reader. Shorter and longer chapters alternate nearly and foreseebly, the four shorter ones are covering the present, the three longer ones the past. The narrative begins in the present in postcolonial India at the moment after Baumgartner’s death and flashes back to his childhood in Germany before the Second World War. Anita Desai makes use of a distinct fictional devices in the novel which not only implement rhythm and pattern to her story but also mark the regular flashing from past to present in a zigzag
movement. Time and place continue to shift backwards and forwards to spin a historical web that implicates the present as the legacy of past.

The sequence of events is further reinforced by the device of poetic depiction that is punctuated through the snatches of German nursery rhymes and English songs. They appear almost invasive and can be found at specific moments when the plot accounts the commotion of Baumgartner’s bond with his parents and with his peers. Like auditory images they contrive the voyage of Baumgartner’s displacement that one begins in early childhood as he flounders to acculturate and identify himself with the German milieu. The German rhymes and the songs remaining untranslated, suggest a further distancing in the minds of the reader with significant gaps and imprints to be later developed in his adulthood. They also comment on the dark side of Baumgartner’s childhood that is crumbled down by the horror of Nazism. Desai’s poetic skill lies in harmonizing the narrative with overflowing beautiful songs in the novel. Here is a sentimental song that beautifully gives a picture of Frau Baumgartner’s precarious state of psyche:

The sweetness always ended in a quaver. It drew together and produced a teardrop. The teardrop hung suspended, glinting in the light from the window, and Hugo watched, mesmerized, waiting for it to explode and drop. Tear-drop, pear-drop. Silver-light, gold-flesh. And then – the fall. (Desai, BB, 2007: 38)

Her life becomes as ineffectual as her letters — cryptic, stereotyped and failing to ‘communicate’ passes into oblivion.

The novelist’s mastery of language, spoken as well as written, is well revealed in this novel. The subtlety of expression is seen at the very basic level of sentence construction – how word follows word to make a world. She can construct an entire universe in a couple of paragraphs, with an accumulation of sensory detail, such as this scene of Calcutta tenement during World War II:

There was always rows of supine bodies covered with white sheets so that they had appearance of corpses in their shrouds but were only people lying in rows outside the house and its once gracious, now decayed portico — those who slept in the day were labourers who
worked on night shifts, and those who slept at night were families that lived in the cracks and crevices of the building like so many rats, or lice, but came out for a little air after dark. (207)

Memory flashes are used here to penetrate past, present and also future. They take the form of the stream-of-consciousness device probing the past to supplement the plot and style. The force of the device of stream-of-consciousness here reveals Baumgartner’s consciousness jerking back to the past:

The campfire and the beer. The beer and the yodelling. The yodelling and the marching. The marching and the shooting. The shooting and the killing. The killing and the killing and the killing. (31)

Fear as a motive occurs again and again in this novel to ‘connect’ Baumgartner’s past with future. His instinct is to run and the narrative adequately portrays his fear flowing back from his past in these lines. One thought lead to another in the chain of consciousness to end in an ultimate scream “killing”.

There are number of stray images in Desai’s novel. The image of barbed-wire, an extension of the image of caged bird, occurs in the novel symbolizing the desperate, deserted and isolated life of Hugo, whose life seems cobwebbed and unsightly, like: “…the strands of — barbed wire wrapped around the wooden posts and travelling in circles and double circles around the camp” (134). On his way to India, Hugo pauses at Venice and is fascinated by the allure. Through an imagery of bird his mental state is brought out:

Cage upon cage blocking up a tall window above, filled with canaries that trilled and sang because a little light was shining on them from out of all the grey. (74)

Another insect imagery emblematic of his desperation and nightmarish fears is transported in the ant image:

…the columns of ants, each carrying a moist, soft, white egg into the dark cave in a crack between the floor and the wall. The trouble with such fascinating sights was their silence, their tedium, the endless repetition of forms and actions that blurred and turned into an endless labour of human forms – bent, driven into black caves from which they did not re-emerge. (143)
A depleted self of Hugo is enshrouded in his own isolation. The image of curtain is fetched by Desai to portray his alienation:

He felt his life blur, turn grey, like a curtain wrapping him in its dusty felt. If he become aware, from time to time, that the world beyond the curtain was growing steadily more crowded, more clamorous, and the lives of others more hectic, more chaotic, then he felt only relief that his had never been a part of the mainstream. (251-52)

The transcription of English is one more features of Desai’s fictional device in the novel. As the novelist analyses psychic depth of the characters, she tends to be situational and contextual. Baumgartner comes across a queer variety of English in India. He feels somewhat strange what kind of language he is hearing. Desai gives a realistic touch to verbal pattern in the novel. She masterly transcribes Indian pronunciation of English, “Ex-pawt! … Ex-pawt. Of course, ex-pawt. Germany, Europe. Shipping, timber- I know, I know” (105). Desai has also taken up the expressions of Hindi language, for instance, khana, barf, chai, jaldi, joota, chota, etc.

Thus, the harmony in the use of distinct fictional devices by Anita Desai established that the novel is a blending and binding of both interior landscape and outer vision.

Anita Desai’s next novel Journey to Ithaca unlocks the sustaining deliberation needed for humankind. This novel definitely has made some defining and decoding movement in Anita Desai’s structural and visionary perspective. It is a manifestation of the wisdom of Oriental philosophy as she turns to Vedanta and Upanishads to convey her vision of spirituality. The narrative juxtaposes the past with the present; Matteo is introduced in the memory flashback of Sophie. Matteo’s story takes up the whole first volume of the novel blending past and present. In a retrospective narration, Matteo and Sophie recreates the west of the 1970 — the flight of young western people in India. The novelist uses the fictional devices of imagination and its various shades, such as trance, fantasy, illusion, transcendental vision. The traditional devices of symbolism, imagism, and expressionism are also used. The essential symbolic theme, the use of verbal
pattern rich in connotative power to reveal the complexity of subject and psychoanalytical device to record faithfully the inner-most cavern of individual psyche make the narrative exceptionally unique. Desai gives poetic expression to Indian philosophy of “niskama karma”. Thus, the whole narrative has a symbolic undertone that provides the novel its final meaning.

The entire structural design of the novel is divided into four balanced chapter and is outlined dexterously on a new device Prologue and Epilogue. The Prologue and Epilogue is fitting to design of narration. Apart from providing a new appearance in the plot model, it divulges the inner human purpose for elevated values in life. The novel begins with the poem Ithaca by C.P. Cavafy, which is indicative of its thematic trust and encapsulates the gist of the novel. The poet reminds us to “keep Ithaca fixed” in our mind but not to “hurry the voyage at all”. By quoting the poem, the author seems to suggest that what is important is not reaching the abode, but rather the journey itself as it is the journey which provides one with great illumination not the end of it.

The emblematic title of the novel is significant aspect of Desai’s fictional device. The title Journey to Ithaca has symbolic connotation. Ithaca is a symbol for unfulfilled human longings expressed in quest that yields lesson more valuable than Ithaca itself. The major characters in the novel Matteo, Laila and Sophie try to seek something elevated through their voyage; it is their quest that significantly matters for them than anything else in life. In the novel India emerges as Ithaca “a religious space” capable of offering some positive messages in spite of all its ambiguities. Ithaca has emerged through time as an archetypal image of homecoming, and has been widely used (from Tennyson’s Ulysses) by European writers as such. In the present novel, too, Ithaca emerges as an image of homecoming as the journey undertaken by the Mother and Matteo culminates in their returning to the spiritual home, that is their spiritual fulfillment.

Anita Desai also uses the device of symbolism and imagery to externalize the deep spiritual vision. The traveller characters dramatically and symbolically re-enact the spiritual adventures of the ancients in their quests for truth. Obsessed
with Truth and spiritual quest, Matteo passes through a series of failures but he pursues his goal single-mindedly, facing trials and tribulations until he reaches it surely. The series of failures, trials and tribulations and hardships of an extreme kind suggest the spiritual state of the pain and agony through which the soul must pass for its purification before it attains illumination, which is followed by a spiritual bliss. Then, the Mother symbolically emerges as an image of “Guru”, as it is she who brings about Matteo’s redemption. Through the story of the Mother and Matteo’s redemption, Desai has just symbolically represented the Oriental philosophy, for the dynamic and inspiring teachings of Upanishadic Vedanta, Bhagvat Gita and Buddhism are of the view that faith in or surrender to an incarnation or a prophet will bring about one’s redemption.

Further, we have the image of a lotus in the novel. The lotus imagery suggests purity and perfection, for though it blooms in the mud, remains perfectly undefiled. Like the lotus, the spiritually awakened human remains detached with the filthy materialistic world. This is why the Mother advises Matteo to be like a lotus flower, which is not wetted by water or stained by mud. The image of mountain symbolizes moral and spiritual superiority. The Mother attains the absolute peace and the ‘miraculous spiritual power’ at the mountain peak. After the Mother’s death, Matteo also selects a departure in the nature (mountain) for the absolute peace and attains illumination and miraculous spiritual power. In the final pages of the novel, imagery such as fire, rain, river and mountain are also employed by Anita Desai. Then the image of “crow” is of crucial significance in the novel. It appears for several times in the novel. Sophie finds Hotel Monaco a threatening menace – “all the crows in Bombay seemed to have gathered to huddle, shaking their bedraggled feathers and letting out caws of complaint at the season and their fate” (Desai, JTI, 2009: 50). During the monsoon season, the crows madden her with their cries “giving extra loud caws of indignation and outrage” (50). Earlier, when Laila comes over to India and is trapped in the cage-like flat in Bombay, under the threat of extinction and the spell of the fake Krishna, she too, finds the cawing harsh and it maddens her: “Outside black crows are fighting and screaming… They frighten me so, I stay indoors. But this is no refuge and I have no peace” (323). These incidents exhibit that the image of
crow is used by Desai to indicate the turmoil and restlessness within the minds of Laila and Sophie. It is interesting to note here that these frightening crows are silenced once their journey is complete. Thus, the image of crow, in the novel, signifies the discordant cawing within man. Once the enlightenment is attained, the crows can be silenced or even they appear “radiant with beauty”.

The novel has a unit of tone as third- person narrative device is employed with the novelist as the universal observer. The novelist’s mastery of language, spoken as well as written, is established. The language and style are elastic, dynamic and cope with all situations of subtle expression. When Matteo tells Sophie that the world is cut into two, the path of Joy and the path of Pleasure, which he read in *Katha Upanishad*, Sophie fails to decipher the real essence of this expression. For her, both are same:

Sophie’s lips felt dry, and she spoke through those dry lips, hoarsely. I can’t understand what you mean. The path of pleasure, the path of joy. To me, they are same, they are not separate. But I see that you are saying I am the fool, the one who takes the path of pleasure, and that you are the wise one. (38-39)

Desai’s rhythmical language with its subtleties and rich flavours of feeling is best seen in Laila’s lyrical utterance conveying the state of spiritual ecstasy:

    And all at once
    The Heavens burst into light and music
    of joyous celebration.
    The stars sang their jubilee
    The Moon its blessing gave.
    Fresh Himalayan winds blew
    From the Abode of Snow. (341)

Thus, *Journey to Ithaca* is an excellent literary work having grandeur of thought and art. The novel seems to have more than what most people able to see. It is indeed a remarkably fresh creation totally different from the other novels of Desai.

Anita Desai’s next novel *Fasting, Feasting* appears as a simple long story in a straightforward narrative structure. The first striking feature of the novel is its plot that laid bare in the most simple and lucid manner; without any trace of
complexity. The book is divided into two parts, with part I mostly describing the Indian theme — MamaPapa’s life in their quiet house with their children and part II dealing with the story of Arun in America. Third-person universal observer technique of narration is employed. In most of the cases the novelist seems to identify herself with every character and gives expression to everyone’s viewpoint, although she always keeps herself in the background. She does not employ the traditional stream of consciousness technique but in most of the description the characters’ viewpoint prevails. Thus, there is unit of tone and structures and yet at the same time an impression of variety within unity. The narrative is straight and simple although there is ruining back to past in the present without complication.

From the viewpoint of characterization, the novel is not very significant because it is marked by a thematic predominance and similarity of life spectacle both in India and America. The plot hinges round Papa and Mama whose identities are so blended that they are not shown as separate individuals. They are types and flat characters representing most of the Indian middle class parents and their lives. The character of Papa is predominant; Mama yields to him most often and does everything to suit his interest and pleasure. The entire narrative structure is built in concrete words which are mostly monosyllabic with simple diction and precise description.

Desai possesses a greater mastery over her linguistic and stylistic resources in the novel. Much like her use of language, Desai’s art of characterization is made through the same vivid and lucid structure of language. What strikes most in her presentation of characters is the fact that each one of the character comes alive and intimate; they appear full-blooded and living like the figures on the cinescreen and this is achieved chiefly through her language. The language and style are powerful enough to express every shade of meaning, even the lurid fits of Uma:

She had turned quite cold. She clenched her teeth together and bit her tongue so that the blood ran, lurid, scarlet. She began to roll on the floor, form side to side, throwing her head about and moaning....

(Desai, FF, 2008: 60)
Apart from the clarity of language, it is the device of contrast of time, situation and character that adds to the structural organization of the novel. Uma is sharply contrasted to the character of Aruna in her thinking, nature and sensibility to life. But it is chiefly in contrast of time that Desai appears to achieve great effect particularly when Papa describes his struggle of the early days:

Papa said, ‘We did not have electricity when we were children. If we wanted to study, we were sent out to sit under the streetlight with our books. During the examinations, there would be a circle of students sitting and reciting their lessons aloud. It would be difficult to concentrate on law because others were reciting theorems or Sanskrit slokas or dates from British history. But we did it — we passed our exams. (6)

Besides the device of contrast, her use of similarity also divulges her utter simplicity of diction. It shows her sense of meticulousness, exact approach and accuracy. Anita Desai’s description of Aruna’s marriage proposals along with her dress, choice of shade and in her manner, display her exceptional use of the similes mainly drawn form nature:

There were so many marriage proposals for Aruna that Uma’s unmarried state was not only an embarrassment but an obstruction. Here was Aruna visibly ripening on the branch, asking to be plucked: no one had to teach her how to make samosas or help her to dress for an occasion. Instinctively, she knew. The pale, pale pink sari, the slender chain of seed pearls the fresh flowers, the demure downcast turn of the eyes, the little foot in the red slipper thrusting out suddenly like a tongue, and the laughter low and sly. Mama watched and wondered, Papa humphed and hawed and scowled but Uma could see it was a façade and concealed a pleasure he would not allow himself to express. (87)

Along with this one may notice her use of syntax, the balancing of phrases and the forces of narrative texture that add much to the effect that Desai aims at arriving in her work. The quarrel scene between two families and the encounter between Harish’s mother and Uma’s father, very well reveal the force of narrative impact:

It consisted of Papa raving and ranting at one end, the mother-in-law screaming and screeching at the other, the brothers shouting and threatening in between, and the sisters-in-law clustering together to watch all the parties in a kind of bitter satisfaction. (96)
The words used belong to the mainstream of spoken and written English all over the world. The language is dynamic and supple capable of expressing all sorts of ideas—simple, mundane, lurid, tense, calm or traditional. As ideas expressed are simple and commonplace, the diction and imagery used to express them is also commonplace. Here is a glimpse when Ramu comes from Bombay and stretches himself on a chair:

Ramu lowers himself into a creaking basket chair and spreads out his legs and throws back his head. A mynah on the neem tree that overhangs the terrace is watching his movements and lets out a series of whistles as if in comment upon them. (46)

Like *Voices in the City*, the device of Dream is used by the novelist in this novel too. Uma’s sense of agony, a sense of irreparable loss and permanent shock which she willingly hides in order to remain true to her nature are chiefly noticed in her dream. Desai has very effectively rerecorded the account of dream thus:

….it was a day to remember. It was a day as all days ought to be, not just a single one in the whole year, a single one in a whole lifetime. If Uma was asked to paint a picture of heaven, then heaven would have paper lanterns hanging form the trees along the drive and around the school courtyard, pots of white and yellow chrysanthemums like great boiled eggs in freshly painted flowerpots on the veranda stairs. It would have Tiny Lopez’s band playing ‘Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer,’ and ‘Away in a Manger’ in a marquee on the netball field. (130-31)

The highly connotive title of the novel is an excellent illustration of Anita Desai’s creative acumen. J.P. Tripathi’s comment on the significance of the title is worth quoting here: “The most remarkable part of the novel is its vision of life. As the title of the novel shows, fasting and feasting equally meaningful or meaningless; they are just the same. The joy in feastings is as insignificant as the depression in fasting. The words feasting and fasting have a symbolic connotation. On the one hand they stand for self-indulgence and self-abnegation and on the other hand they stand for indulgence into any sensuous experience” (Tripathi, 2004:128).

To conclude, *Fasting, Feasting* is an excellent literary work marked by the typical simplicity and vividness of the style of Anita Desai.
Anita Desai’s recent novel *The Zigzag way* is a word map of her long established creative acumen. The novel is an impressive tag of a cultural creative hybrid. This time Desai transports us to the unexpected region of mythical lush Mexico promising another lavish taste of captivating landscape. From the viewpoint of fictional devices the novel is significant. The novelist has infused the devices of natural descriptions, emblematic language, imagery and capacious vision so as to bestow depth and meaning to the narrative. Anita Desai makes an analytic and interpretative exploration into the life and views of a distinct civilization with its recognizable historicity striking a neat balance between skilfully worked art and rhythmic life.

The third-person universal observer technique of narration is employed by the novelist. She puts the device of plot division to a more sophisticated and skilled use. First, she divides the whole plot into four parts like four acts of play. Then every part is divided into numerous chapters not uniformly. Part I entitled ‘Eric Arrives’ begins with the arrival of Eric in an inn in Mexico after a long journey from England. Through the device of memory flashes Eric’s immediate past as a research scholar, his ambivalent relationship with his girlfriend, motive of his quest followed by his trip with Em to Mexico are made known to us. The story again comes in the present with Eric’s encounter with Dona Vera in Mexico. In Part II ‘Vera Stays’, the novelist makes another daring experiment of employing flashback device to uncover Vera’s mystic past with full vivacity. The thoughts that pass through Eric’s psyche are revealed by the novelist using third-person universal observer technique. Psycho-analytical device is also used to unravel interior of Eric’s psyche in this part. Part III ‘Betty Departs’ introduces Betty Jennings’ youth, her marriage and adjustment with Davey in the strange land of Mexico using flashback device. Anita Desai gives momentum to the novel by intermingling human emotions of love and suffering in this part which makes the narration animated and vivid. Betty and Davey’s journey ends up guiding us to next generation, the life of Paul and Madeleine (Eric’s parents). Part IV entitled ‘La Noche de los Muertos’ comes back in the present to the Cathedral scene, where Eric discovers the grave of his grandmother on the Day of the Dead. The story ends bringing together the past and the present dramatically and effectively.
in a moment of powerful epiphany. The whole narrative shuttles back and forth between the past and the present. The action of the novel leaves the impression of being uneven and hotchpotch, perhaps because Desai intends to render the commotion conspicuously.

With chiselled prose, the flavour of *Cry, the Peacock and Fire on the mountain* is revised in this novel again with heavy but rich details of the mountains of Sierra Madre Oriental. The device of imagery plays a significant role in this novel. The descriptive images are deployed by the novelist in the novel to make the scenic beauty of Mexico’s landscape vivid with its varied sights, colours and mountains. When Eric stepped into plane to Mexico, the floated sight of Popocatepetl and seductive beauty of Mexico City caught him utterly by surprise. Then amidst Sierra Madre’s exotic valley and mountains, Eric found that: “This was no longer the Mexico of colour and romance, and yet its emptiness and petrifaction were undeniably Mexican too” (Desai, TZW, 2009: 42).

The kaleidoscopic images of Mexican landscape that Desai has brought to the scene symbolize the mental and emotional state of Eric’s psyche. When he traverses the township of Sierra Madre, he feels its emptiness indescribably Mexican. The peculiar forms of landscape are evocative of soullessness and joylessness. Here is a beautiful example of Desai’s fine artistic stroke when Eric has drawn close enough to the ghost town in search of Dona Vera:

…The first range of bullet – coloured mountains, a crater suddenly opened up in the earth as if a meteor had fallen and formed it; a wide, basin-like depression appeared which had not been visible from a distance. Around a still sheet of apparently shallow water, dry yacate grass waved and susurrated, responding to a breeze so imperceptible that nothing less delicate or sensitive could have detected it… Egrets and herons stood stock-still in the shallows as if they were roots or branches anchored to the clay below. Everything seemed fossilized except for the ripple of light that ran through the scene as it might in a mirage. (43)

The imagery of bird and insect are also used in the novel which gives the symbolic heights to the novel. The image of raw rocks, dark valley, scorpion,
rowing rooster, crow and braying donkey create an atmosphere of darkness and menacing emblematic of the miners’ dark and oppressed life in the novel. The ominous image of scorpion and owl that Betty sees are symbolic of her premonition of death. Seeing the image of scorpion: “…she could not tear herself away and watched, in horror, the scorpion raise its tail over its head and sting itself to death” (139). Then, there is the hooting of owl that works like an alarm for the miners to get ready to work in the mines. The hooting has two symbolic connotations; first, the working life of laborers in the mines is dark like death. Secondly, it prepares the background for Betty’s death. The central vision of the novel is associated with the keyword ‘zigzag’. Desai’s odd title refers, first to the zigzagging path that the miners follow step by step in a zigzag motion when coming to the surface, a route that makes it easier for them to breathe as they ascend. Secondly, Eric attempts to ‘enter his past, as if it were a mine’ following the zigzag ways of his journey.

From the viewpoint of characterisation the novel is significant as most of the characters in the novel develop or change. The character of Eric forms the hinge of the plot; the incidents, characters and their movement happen to be related with Eric and his ‘quest for past’. The growth of Eric’s character is seen in his transformation from an alienated and irritating scholar to wise and inspired individual of human nature and history. He evolves as a quester in the novel following the zigzag way of his journey all alone. The portrayal of Betty’s character gives momentum to the narrative. The language and style of the novelist is dynamic, supple, symbolic and capable of subtle expressions. Anita Desai uses the language of magical realism so as to express every shade of imaginings. The narrative of magic realism renders sentient reverberation to Dona Vera’s imaginings:

The armoire cracked open, waking her, and in the dark, Ramon the god appeared, no longer flesh, and blood but paint and mask and feathers, a wooden idol whose eyelids moved. They lifted, and the eyes that looked out were real and alive. They stared at her, lying on her bed, old and ugly and shrunken—because she too was real and alive. His wooden lips parted to smile but, instead of smiling, they uttered a caw. The lips were beaks, painted beaks that cawed. It was not Ramon but a zopilote pretending to be Ramon, and it was leading an army of zopilotes that was emerging from the armoire, two by two, in perfect formation. (85)
The emblematic language analyses the psychic depth of the characters giving the narration connotative significance. When Eric passes through the valley of Sierra Madre, he feels himself lost and directionless. The dark and desolately surroundings of the valley are symbolic of Eric’s psyche. Here is an example:

There was no sign of their destination; in every direction the dark stony land stretched out, the stands of maguey rising as stiff and grey as the stones themselves, and over it the sky and the light, both so immense that it did not seem there would ever be an end to them. (42)

Anita Desai transports the reader to the other world using the device of imaginative fancy in the novel. When Eric loses all his hope of finding the grave of his ancestors, for whom he has taken such a long journey, all of sudden he has a vision of Betty descending the stairs that leaves the reader fascinated and spellbound:

She was preceded by a fragrance that was as fresh as the breeze that was blowing freely, not the heavy perfume of copal, tallow candles and funeral flowers but a much lighter, more natural one, of herbs like lavender, rosemary and thyme, mountain herbs that seemed unlikely to be growing in that hostile rubble and stoniness.(181)

Thus, this uncanny and mesmerizing novel is rich in its sensuous atmosphere. Blending humour with pathos, and past with present, the gripping narrative winds through cultures and across time to paint a picture of love, revolution, and sacrifice.

After making a study of Anita Desai’s fictional devices, it is found that she has made a remarkable use of varied fictional devices in her fictional works for narrating the story effectively. Her use of various fictional devices in accordance with the demand of the subject is the main pillar of her art of fiction. The harmony of both themes and fictional devices lead to the making of her literary work.
Works Cited


