CHAPTER ONE

CREATIVE ARTIST

We must rather adapt a view for which the term *Perspectivism*, seems sensible. We must be able to refer a work of art to the values of its own time and of all the periods subsequent to its own [Italics as in the Original]. . . .


This assertion of Austin Warren serves as a convenient parameter to gauge the range, scope, artistic creativity and purpose sense in the fictions of Anita Desai. In fact, it admirably and adequately qualifies her mind and art.

Anita Desai demonstrates her artistic capability for enclosing the old and the new. Anita Desai has richly contributed by her fictions to the strength, significance, growth, development, transcendence, relevance, wide reach, and consequence of Indian writing in English by an Indian woman, and by extension to world literature.

Anita Desai’s themes such as love, hatred, sex, alienation, the absurd conditions of life, psychic stresses and strains, and the secondary status of women and her crusade to redeem the women from their suspended state and show them the means to empower themselves through education and economic independence, are always creative and have vistas.

The flawless triumph of Anita Desai’s art lies in her creative ability adequately and admirably gives expression to her feelings, thoughts, and experiences in her literary products, and invest them with the balanced proportions, symmetry, perfection, cohesion, order and unity.
Anita Desai, the creative artist with verve and vitality, absorbs and expresses everything that she witnesses in the society and Establishment of her period. In a way, her fictions can be termed as so many revealing social documents, without the least trace of propaganda literature. They sound at times as protest literature, but never get reduced to the level of propaganda. As such, Anita Desai is affected by society and the Establishment, and she intends and wants her fictions to have social relevance and consequence. Moreover, she wishes that her literary works provide the necessary and needed correctives and the healthy and definitive prescriptions so that the society and the Establishment would mend and alter for the better.

In this context, it is apt to quote the assertion of Harry Levin [“Literature as an Institution”, Accent, Springs 1947, p. 7]:

"Literature is not only the effect of social causes; it is also the cause of social effects. . . ."

Austin Warren’s assertion [Theory of Literature, 1982, p. 102] deserves to be quoted and studied in conjunction with the pithy and pointed statement of Harry Levin:

"The writer is not only influenced by society; he influences it. Art not merely reproduces life but also shapes it. . . ."

So much so, the fictions of Anita Desai qualified by moral earnestness, intellectual intensities, and social expectations, prove to be a genuine and objective study of the society and the Establishment. The observation of William O’Connor is a pointer in this regard [An Age of Criticism: 1900-1950, 1952, p. 126]:

"Society becomes the work of art. . . ."
Moreover, two more assertions of Austin Warren [Theory of Literature, 1949, p. 209, and p. 105] deserve to be examined in conjunction with the assertions already quoted in this regard:

[Austin Warren’s first argument is] that literature can be used as a social document and literature can be made to yield the outlines of social history . . . literature is simply a mirror of life, and thus, obviously a social document . . .

Austin Warren’s other contention is:

The most immediate setting of a work of literature, we shall then recognize, is its linguistic and literary tradition, and this tradition in turn is encompassed by a general cultural “climate”. Only far less directly can literature be connected with concrete economic, political, and social conditions. Of course, there are interrelationships between all spheres of human activities . . .

It ought to be stressed that Austin Warren fails not to realize the validity of the argument that literature and society lie intertwined.

Thus, based on the assertions of Harry Levin, Austin Warren, and William O’Connor, the literary products of Anita Desai cannot be branded and dismissed as mere propaganda literature. On the other hand, they are real purposive art, and they succeed in achieving a reach that transcends time and space.
In this context, the observation of Terry Eagleton [Marxism and Literary Criticism, 1956, p. 27] is relevant:

To write well is more than a matter of “style”; it also means having at one’s disposal an ideological perspective, which can penetrate to the realities of man’s experience in a certain situation. . . .

In fact, Anita Desai, the Indian woman genius artist, through her fictions promotes a high level of mentation in the sensitive and perceptive readers, and persuades them to shed their individual ego and embrace the corporate ego, and thereby accept inter subjectivity as the way of meaningful life.

Incidentally, the literature of Anita Desai speaks directly to the mind and heart of the reader. It is precisely because ideas or mental pictures are the rough material of this writer. In representing reality she is absolutely limited by the very conditions of the art of writing and by the elements of fiction, to project the mental aspects of the external existence, which she portrays.

In fine, Anita Desai’s fictions reproduce external reality in its mental aspect. She employs the representation of the objective aspects of reality to assist in the presentation of this mental aspect. But then literature is not altogether objective, for there is a blend of the subjective element. In other words, the fictions of Anita Desai are mainly objective in character but there is a controlled infusion of subjectivism in her objective representation of life that she witnesses around herself in her period of life.

Anita Desai firmly believes that her mind transference is of real value and is of equal importance to objective reportage. As such one detects her mind transference in
her fictions. Again, the accent that this creative genius places is on high seriousness of absolute sincerity, and as such to present the greatest number of greater ideas. It is with such a perspective on the art of writing that one assesses the merits of Anita Desai as a creative artist. In fact, she projects herself as the representative and perfect spokesperson of the women and men of her time.

Anita Desai’s main focus is on the plights and predicaments, stresses and strains - - Sturm-und-Drang - - and the tensions and anxieties - - Angst - - and the struggles and sufferings, and the psychic traumas and hysterical conditions of women. Like Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and Lorraine Hansberry, the African American women artists, Anita Desai refers to the men who cause sufferings to women.

Furthermore, in delineating the male characters she bestows the same attention and care with which she projects the female protagonists. She talks of the male characters, who too suffer alienation, as some of her women characters do. For instance both Maya and Gautama in Cry, the Peacock experience alienation as an inevitable condition in their lives. She accurately identifies and classifies her male characters as the Wandering Heroes, the Suffering Selves, the Debased Selves, and some as Fatalists.

As such, Anita Desai draws the attention of women to be on guard against such male characters in real life. Hence, Anita Desai’s literature is helpful in guiding women readers to discover their inner strengths through self-definition and self-discovery. Above all she champions the cause of the women in their struggle for intellectual, moral, spiritual, economic, social, and political survival, and for their empowerment, and emergence as women capable of doing all that the males are capable of doing, if not better.
But then, the thesis concentrates also on how the male characters such as Gautama and Raman suffer alienation and existential peril because of the doings and life attitudes and approaches of women such as Maya, and Sita.

In fact, Anita Desai opens in the hearts and minds of the perceptive readers a stronger sense of social justice, and a more Christ-like humanity. And it is precisely because she believes in the social justice track for both men and women. And the knowledge of Anita Desai of the sufferings and struggles of men and women is comprehensive and perceptive in character.

Tracing the major attributes of patriarchy, Adrienne Rich writes [Of Mother Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution, 1976, p. 57]:

Patriarchy is the power of the fathers, a familial, social, ideological, political system in which men - by force direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labour determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female I everywhere subsumed under the male. . . . Under patriarchy, I [Adrienne Rich] may live in purdah or drive a truck. . . .

Only with the approval of the male and to the extent that patriarchy is willing to accede, a woman can enjoy anything of privilege or influence. This has led to the pessimistic depiction of women as the innocent, passive, and powerless victims of male violence. Kate Millet’s argument [Sexual Politics, 1971, p. 25] is:

The social control of women in a free society was not carried out through a rigid authoritarian system of force. Rather, it took place by means of
the engineering of consent among women themselves. Instead of being openly coerced into accepting their secondary status, women were conditioned into embracing it by the process of sex-role stereotyping. . . . From early childhood, women were trained to accept a system which divided society into male and female spheres, with appropriate roles for each, and which allocated public power exclusively to the male sphere. . .

There is always the tendency to hurt and insult the female because of her biological inferiority. The history of patriarchy presents a variety of cruelties and barbarities: the suttee executions in India, the crippling deformity of foot binding in China, the lifelong ignominy of the veil in Islamic countries, or the widespread persecution of sequestration, the gynaecium, and purdah.

Phenomenon such as clitoroidectomy, clitoral incision, the sale and enslavement of women under one guise or another, involuntary and child marriages, concubinage and prostitution still take place- - the first in Africa and the latter in the Near and Far East, and the last generally.

With such a clear knowledge of what patriarchy has devised and designed for women and the persistent female psyche operating at the level of submissiveness, servility, and inferiority, Anita Desai portrays the male and female characters in her fictions.

This research study also concentrates on how the male characters Gautama and Raman suffer because of certain un-understanding women such as Maya and Sita, and how circumstances force men to suffer at the hands of fate, or adverse conditions, and how certain men turn into debased individuals, and how situations compel certain men
to leave their home and move to foreign places in search of jobs or better education. The resultant factor is disruption and disharmony.

With a thorough knowledge of the male mind and the female psyche she delineates the male and female characters in her eleven fictions quite convincingly and persuasively. It must also be said to her credit that because of her Indian origin she is able to suffuse her eleven fictions with Indianness. The characters are Indian, the *milieu* described in her fictions are mostly from India, and the prevailing atmosphere is Indian, and the language is chaste English that captures the varying flavours of Indianness. This deep-seated awareness of everything Indian can be traced to her Bengali father and Gujarathi husband. Incidentally Anita Desai was born in Mussoorie, India, in 1937 to a Bengali father and a German mother.

Anita Desai had a rich school education, at Queen Mary’s Higher Secondary School, Miranda House, New Delhi, and later on her collegiate education at the University of Delhi. She has put her power of observation of even the minutiae of men and matters, gathered knowledge, language mastery, language skills, verbal brilliance, writing capacities, and a style of expression uniquely and originally her own to create great and crafted works of art.

Being a mother of four children she has had the optimum taste of motherhood. And her own personal knowledge of what it is to be a woman, and the awareness of the plights and predicaments of other women surface time and again in her eleven fictions. Moreover, her awareness of the mind workings and actions of men around her get reflected in the male characters delineated by her.
Anita Desai has earned for herself a healthy niche in the annals of Indian writing in English. She has firmly established her reputation as one of the outstanding creative fictionists. As a remarkable Indian writer in English, she has won several prestigious literary awards. Mention may be made of her being the recipient of the Guardian Award for Children’s Fiction for her work, *The Village by the Sea*, and the National Academy Award for *Fire on the Mountain*.

Anita Desai has emerged as a significant Academe. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in London. She is a Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She enjoys teaching assignments at British and American Universities. It must be noted that the pioneers of Indo-Anglican novels like Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, R. K. Narayanan dealt with social upheavals. And Mulk Raj Anand is identified as the Father of Left Oriented literature in India. And Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, and Kushwant Singh tried their hands on topics such as East-West encounter and spiritualism. But Anita Desai shifts the literary interest from the external world to the innards of the individual. The focus is on the states of mind, and not on mirroring the Indian society. In fact, Anita Desai’s best literary efforts are to capture the atmosphere of the mind, and directly involve the reader in the flow of a particular consciousness.

In this context, S. P. Swain’s observation is worth recording here [“Traditions and Deviation - - A Study of Anita Desai’s Novels”, in *The Novels of Anita Desai: A Critical Study*, 2000, pp. 102, and 103]:

... they [the fictions of Anita Desai] are deeply moving in their existential and socio-psychic import. Microcosm of man’s endless
struggle for survival, they voice the anguished ennui of the caged bird that symbolizes the modern man. Emblem of remonstrance and psychic protest, they strive for the protection and preservation of their dignity and self esteem in a patriarchal society. Indignantly promiscuous and inordinately self-conscious, they long for mutual understanding and reciprocation of love and respect. . . . This inner world of sensibility rendered through splendid poetic prose gives a peculiar poetic quality to Desai’s novels. . . .

At this juncture a brief critical survey of her eleven novels becomes necessary to underscore her literary pre-eminence as one of the distinguished Indian Writers in English. Anita Desai’s *Voices in the City* [1965] is a fascinating novel. It describes the corrosive effects of city life upon an Indian family. Brought up in luxury by an over indulgent mother, Nirode settles down in Calcutta and becomes absorbed into its bohemian life, while his elder sister Monisha, lives out a servile existence within the rigid confines of a traditional Hindu family. Their younger sister arrives from the country and becomes involved with an artist. The outcome of this affair and the dreadful decision Monisha eventually takes, make this fiction a doubly haunting and a consummate work of art.

In *Voices in the City*, the fictionist captures a vivid picture of India’s social transition. The style of expression in this fiction is lucid, highly controlled and tight, and un-dramatic. Her imagistic power acquires an ambiguous and terrible power and the words hold down the events forcibly.
Her next fiction, *Fire on the Mountain* [1977] brings into confrontation the young Raka and the old, Nanda Kaul. It is a gripping and moving story told in a cool and clear prose. It is a perfectly accomplished fiction. The main character Nanda Kaul has chosen to spend her last years high up in the mountains. There, free from the demands of a busy life, she arranges her thoughts in a tranquil setting. Her great grandchild, Raka, comes to join her. She is a thin, fragile, secretive girl. And Nanda Kaul deeply resents her intrusion in her otherwise peaceful life in the mountains. With the help of Raka, who has the capacity to change things, Nanda Kaul discovers new needs deep within herself. When the violence explodes, she faces the truth.

And the next fiction, *Cry, the Peacock* [1980] is a very significant work. With a sense of place Anita Desai creates a well-crafted fiction, which has the likeness of a stained glass landscape with details of images, colours and odours. It is poetic prose that is employed as the medium in this fiction. *Cry, the Peacock* is an outstanding and compulsive fiction authored by a sensitive artist. With vivid imagination and excellent powers of description and remarkable narrative skill, Anita Desai traces the story of a young girl, Maya, who is obsessed by a childhood prophecy of disaster, which cannot be averted. The author builds up an atmosphere of tension as torrid, and oppressive as a stifling Indian summer, both in the colourful crowded cities and the strangely beautiful countryside. This is also of marital discord imbued with a strong streak of neurotic fantasy. The domineering attitude of the male character, Gautama, is exactly delineated. He invites alienation on himself by his thoughts and actions.

Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of Day* [1980] is a wonderful fiction about silence and music, and about the partition of a family, as well as a nation. Against the wide canvas
of momentous political and social changes in India, the writer depicts in fine detail the lives of one middle class Hindu family.

Bim, a plain and competent woman lives in Old Delhi caring for Baba, her retarded younger brother. She assumes the role of the keeper of the family. Tara, the beautiful young sister, comes home on a visit. On her return from India, she leaves as the wife of a diplomat. Her older brother, Raja, who longed to be a poet and a hero, marries a Muslim and becomes a successful businessman. The story revolves around these three. And the sisters, Bim and Tara, explore their lives from the Partition riots of 1947 to the present. In this fiction reality and illusion are perceived through the subtle filter of time and memory. This fiction is an exquisitely written story of an Indian family confronting the problematic world and the breakup of the illusions of the sisters and their brother.

The fiction, *The Village by the Sea*, [1982], by Anita Desai, is an exquisite novel marked by details and piercing feeling. It is about Hari and Lila of a small fishing village called Thul. It has remained in all its pristine purity unaffected by the sophisticated strains of urban life of the twentieth century. Thul was still ruled by the age-old seasonal rhythms. The family of Hari and Lila is down on its luck, and passes through financial doldrums, mainly because of their drunkard father and seriously ill mother. It is a state of gloomy poverty that is captured in this fiction and the sufferings of the child-hero, Hari.

Anita Desai’s *Where Shall we Go this Summer?* [1982] deals with the identity crisis of Sita, the protagonist of the novel. Her husband is insensitive, which brings her to a state of psychic depression. But her sufferings to a certain extent are those that she
invites on herself and in the process involves her husband Gautama also to suffer the same plights and predicaments.

This fiction, *Where Shall we Go this Summer?* is an intense story of a sensitive wife torn between the desire to abandon the boredom and hypocrisy of her middle class and ostensibly comfortable existence, and the realization that the bonds that bind her to it cannot be broken. It is a skilful dramatization of an unusual life situation of an anguished woman, and a suffering man. The fictionist presents the story with insight, with clarity of vision, and in a flawless style.

*In Custody* [1984] by Anita Desai is a memorable novel, beautifully accomplished, and well crafted. The fiction is resonant and realistic. *In Custody* projects Deven, the protagonist, who at the suggestion of his friend Murad, decides to leave his shapeless town of Mirpore and go to Delhi to meet the greatest living Urdu poet. He goes with dreams of becoming famous and great after meeting Nur. But he turns only disillusioned. But the argumentation of *In Custody* is to turn frustration into a triumphing state.

Anita Desai’s *Bye Bye Blackbird* [1985] deals with Dev and Adit, the expatriates whose relationship with their parent country is one of hate and love. These immigrants have a hard time in England, their adopted country.

Many blackbirds - - Indian immigrants in England - - are either partially rejected or totally turned away, for East is East and West is west and the twin can never meet. But this does not end the flow of immigration.
In *Bye Bye Blackbird* Adit is faced with the dilemma of whether to stay in London or return to India. Finally he conquers his indecisiveness and decides to return to India. This decision brought him emancipation from all the mental conflict, pain and predicament he was passing through as an expatriate in London.

Hugo Baumgartner, the central character in Anita Desai’s *Baumgartner’s Bombay* [1988] is a wandering Jew all his life. *Diaspora* - - displacement, disorientation, resettlement, and reorientation, nostalgia, cultural divide, and the sufferings and struggles are very much part and parcel of the life of a Jew and Baumgartner is no exception.

From the agonizing scenes of his childhood in Berlin, through his spell in business in Calcutta, and then Bombay, Baumgartner does not belong. He is too dark for Hitler’s society, and he is too fair for India. And Baumgartner remains a foreigner - - a *firanghi* - - wherever he goes.

Anita Desai’s next novel, *Journey to Ithaca* [1995] is quite entrancing in character. It explores the ambiguous nature of divine and profane love. Matteo, the hero, leaves his home on the Italian lakes to search for a spiritual enlightenment in the ashrams of India. Practical, down to earth Sophie accompanies him but does not find the mysterious Mother as inspiring a guru as he does. As Matteo worships at the Mother’s feet and Sophie struggles for his love, the fiction unfolds the Mother’s own story. The Mother traces her story from her Egyptian childhood in the early part of the twentieth century, her joining an Indian dance troupe in Paris, Venice, and New York, and to her arrival and search for divine love in India. This fiction, *Journey to Ithaca* is tightly structured. It is evocative and is rich with the sounds, sights, and smells of Italy and
India. It draws the reader into the heart of the most untranslatable of human experience.

Anita Desai’s recent fiction, *Fasting, Feasting* [1999], is full of wit and sensuality, farce and deep pathos. It cuts right to the heart of family life in two different cultures. The story revolves around Uma, the plain daughter. She fails to outgrow her home and family. She stays within the confines of her family surrounded and smothered by her godlike, overbearing parents, and by her younger sister Aruna, who is ambitious and who enters into a successful marriage.

Arun is the male heir of the family, who experiences the rigors of fatalism. Across the world in Massachusetts, where Arun goes as a student he finds a different cultural pattern. It is bewildering and full of terror for the young Indian adolescent far from home. Two different ways of assuaging human hungers, desires and appetites are revealed in this subtle, sharp and poignant story, *Fasting, Feasting*.

Fasting distils India and feasting captures America. This fiction, *Fasting, Feasting* ranges from the hub of a close knit Indian household, with its traditional obligations and impositions, its overpowering warmth and sensual response, to the cool centre of an American family, with its freedoms, freezers and paradoxically self-denying, self-indulgence. In both there are victims and survivors.

Thus, this brief critical survey amply testifies to the fact that Anita Desai is an outstanding fictionist. Like Vladimir Nabokov, who denied any knowledge of Kafka or Freud, Anita Desai denies the importance of theories in the shaping of artistic imagination. She argues that a work of art should grow from within, form the writer’s inner beckoning and compulsion.
Anita Desai’s statement is worth quoting here [Quoted in Bhaynakar’s *The Novels of Anita Desai: A Critical Study*, 2000, p. 107]:

I [Anita Desai] think theories of the novel are held by those of an academic or critical turn of mind, not the creative. A writer does not create a novel by observing a given set of theories . . . he follows flashes of individual vision, and relies on a kin of instinct that tells him what to follow, and what to avoid, how to veer away from what would be destructive to his vision. It is these flashes of vision, and a kind of trained instinct that leads him . . . not any theories.

At this point, it is noted that the critical theories of Freud, Jung, Lacan, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Albert Camus, Malcolm Bowie, Lewis Feurer, Ostrom, Warfield, Wallace, and Beerboom are traceable in the fictions of Anita Desai.

To begin with, interestingly Freud pays chivalrous compliment to the female arguing that the woman is the most beautiful thing that the world can offer. And the woman is the ideal of womanhood and motherhood. This is the sentiment expressed either directly or in a veiled manner by the male characters in the fictions of Anita Desai.

Nature has determined woman’s destiny through beauty, charm, and sweetness. It is an acknowledged fact that woman submitted willingly to the social and sexual subjection of pairing. The women constantly longed for relief by the right of chastity. The notion of sexual resistance, the defence of integrity with frigidity, or the preservation of independence through chastity are common themes in a male dominated society.
Chastity, or even negative attitudes towards coitus, which accompany frigidity, operated as patriarchal, social, and psychological stratagems to limit or prohibit a woman’s pleasure in sexuality. But then they could also be transformed into protective feminine stratagems in a refusal to capitulate to patriarchal force - - physical, economic, or social.

The effect of patriarchal social condition upon women with regard to their sexual lives has had enormous and even anomalous results. One marvels at the proof of the power of socialization to culturally restrain women in all respects.

Patriarchy tends to convert a woman into a sexual object. This is precisely the manner in which the male characters look upon the women. But the woman does not enjoy sexuality, which is agreed to be her fate. Instead, she is made to suffer for and be ashamed of her sexuality. Women have been confined to the cultural level of animal life providing the male with sexual outlet and exercising the animal functions of reproduction and care for the young.

Thus, the female has had sexuality visited upon her as a punishment in a way of life, which, with few exceptions, and apart from maternity, did not encourage her to derive pleasure in sexuality and limited her to an existence otherwise comprised mainly of menial labour and domestic service. By and large, pregnancy and childbirth were continually referred to, in the patriarchal set up, as biological infirmities. The entire burden of childcare and housework was thrust upon women, frequently alone, as paternal responsibility was so often neglected.

At this juncture, the influence of Freud on the male psyche concerning woman deserves to be examined analytically, and at great length. And the male world relies on
Freud for their assumptions and presumptions of the biological condition of woman. Analyzing the effect of Freud’s work on the relationship between sexes Kate Millet argues thus [Sexual Politics, 1971, p. 178]:

Although generally accepted as a prototype of the liberal urge toward sexual freedom, and a signal contributor toward softening puritanical inhibitions upon sexuality, the effect of Freud’s work, that of his followers, and still more that of his popularizers, was to rationalize the invidious relationship between the sexes, to ratify traditional roles, and to validate temperamental differences. . . .

The argument of Viola Klein is so very pertinent and it reads well in conjunction with the observation of Kate Millet, [The Feminine Character: History of an Ideology, 1946, p. 101]:

It was expressed in inferiority feelings, in contempt for their own sex, in revolt against their passive role, in envy of man’s greater freedom, in the ambition to equal man in intellectual or artistic achievements, in strivings for independence . . . and in all sorts of devices to make up for the social disadvantages of not being a man. . . .

Through his clinical work Freud was able to observe women suffering from two causes: sexual inhibition [sometimes sufficiently great as to bring on severe symptoms, even hysteria], and a great discontentment with their social circumstances. In general his tendency was to believe the second over dependent upon the first, and to recommend on female sexual fulfilment a panacea for what were substantial symptoms of social unrest within an oppressive culture.
Freud did not accept the female patient’s symptoms as evidence of a justified dissatisfaction with the limiting circumstances imposed on the women by society, but as symptomatic of an independent and universal feminine tendency. As such, the postulation is that females are incomplete or imperfect males with the male being accepted as the norm and the female as the “other”. Incidentally, the first things the children notice is that the mother has breasts while father has none. Freud’s further elaboration on this point is quite relevant here [“Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinctions Between the Sexes”, 1925, p. 19]:

After a woman has become aware of the wound to her narcissism, she develops like a scar, a sense of inferiority. When she has passed beyond her first attempt at explaining her lack of a penis as being a punishment personal to herself and has realized that sexual character is a universal one, she begins to share the contempt felt by men for a sex which is the lesser in so important a respect. The female first blames her mother who sent her into the world so insufficiently equipped, and who is always held responsible for her lack of a penis. . . .

On this argument of Freud, Kate Millet offers a pertinent remark by way of refutation, [Sexual Politics, 1971, p. 187]:

Confronted with so much concrete evidence of the male’s superior status, sensing on all sides the depreciation in which they are held, girls envy not the penis, but only what the penis gives one social pretensions to.
Freud appears to have made a major and rather a foolish confusion between biology and culture, anatomy and status. It is still more apparent that his audience found such confusion serviceable. . . .

Convinced that the connection between the penis and intellectual life is unquestionably organic, Freud maintains that the intellectual superiority of the male constitutionally linked with the penis is close to an ascertainable fact for Freud a rock bottom of remarkable comfort. It is her self-despair over the defect of her castration, which gives rise to the well-known shame of women. Freud designed shame as a feminine characteristic, *par excellence*. Its purpose, in his view, is simply to conceal her hapless defect. As among the primitives, so today, the woman hides her parts to hide her wound.

When Freud suggests that modesty in women was originally designed for concealment of genital deficiency, he is willing to describe pubic hair as the response of nature herself to cover the female fault. As such in all these respects in the psychic field of a woman the biological factor is at the rock bottom. It ought to be stressed that the whole weight of responsibility and even of guilt is now placed upon any woman unwilling to stay in her place.

The theory of penis envy shifts the blame of her suffering to the female for daring to aspire to a biologically impossible state. Any hankering for a less humiliating and circumscribed existence is immediately ascribed to unnatural and unrealistic deviation from her genetic identity and therefore her fate.

A woman, who resists femininity, feminine temperament, status, and role is thought to court neurosis, for femininity is her fate as anatomy is destiny. In so evading
the only identity nature has granted her, she courts nothingness. This is precisely the
state of mind of Maya in *Cry the Peacock*, and it is because of her neurotic condition
she suffers and she perforce involves Gautama also to suffer likewise.

In a marginally different manner, the same can be said of Sita in *Where Shall We
Go This Summer?* She suffers from neurosis and she makes Raman also suffer loneness
and misery. Freud defined the libido as masculine regularly and lawfully of a masculine
nature whether in the man or woman. He argued that culture was inimical to
sexuality. His argument was that if one was to devote oneself to higher pursuits, one
must renounce, or at any rate, sublimate sexuality.

Since by Freud’s definition, women have very low libido, they cannot pursue
civilization. The male, whose higher libido equips him for reaching higher reaches,
must show the temptations afforded by the female and go on to loftier goals.

Freud entrusted not only human culture but also the preservation of the human
race to the male. His argument runs thus [“Psychology of Women”, 1993, p. 131]:

> Nature has paid less careful attention to the demands of female function
> than to those of masculinity . . . the achievement of the biological aim is
> entrusted to the aggressiveness of the male, and is to some extent
> independent of the cooperation of the female. . .

The point that is made here is that the whole balance of male sexual aggression
toward the female is hereby subsumed under a huge abstract force only concerned with
the continuation of the species. This attitude gave rise to a whole battery of military
diction, which psychology has ever since employed to describe sexuality as surrender,
dominance, and mastery. Once again it is useful to quote Freud [“Psychology of Women”, 1993, p. 131]:

The male pursues the female for the purpose of sexual union, seize
hold her and penetrates into her . . . by this you have precisely reduced
the characteristic of masculinity to the factor of aggressiveness. . . .

In Freud’s view the three most distinguishing traits of female personality were, passivity, masochism, and narcissism. Even here, one can see a certain merit in the Freudian paradigm taken as pure description. The position of women in patriarchy is such that they are expected to be passive, to suffer, and to be sexual object.

In fact, the women are socialized into such roles. Freud, therefore, proceeded to define feminine as constitutional passivity, masochism and narcissism. He also prescribed it as the norm not only of general development, but also of healthy development. It is further argued that passivity and masochism are interrelated. Masochism is female; femininity is masochistic. In this context, it ought to be noted that the lust for pain is an expression of femininity, a concept, which can be supported on biological and constitutional grounds.

Furthermore, it can be argued that this pain is the nature of a female sexual experience. Sexual excitation arises as an accessory effect of a large series of internal processes as soon as the intensity of these processes has exceeded certain quantitative limits. An excitation of physical pain and feelings would surely have this effect. And narcissistic men improve upon their love object; narcissistic women persist in an inferior form of affection, not rising to the altruism of object love.
Freud’s *magnum opus* is *The Interpretations of Dreams*. It deals with the puzzling problems of dream life, which had baffled previous investigators, and the complex mechanisms at work in the manufacture of dreams, but also with the structure and the mode of functioning of the deeper layers of the mind the unconscious.

Freud’s most detailed study is what he called the primary and secondary systems of the mind. He showed how fundamentally different was the mode of functioning in these and how complicated and fateful are the relations and interactions between the two.

The mental mechanisms of the primary system are an integral part of psychoanalytical theory. The most important are those called repression, condensation, displacement, inversion, and secondary elaboration. It is these mechanisms that enable unacceptable wishes, drives, or impulses to find indirect gratification.

The theory of disguised wish fulfilment was one of Freud’s most valuable contributions to psychology. Through it he replaced the older association psychology by a truly dynamic conception of the mind.

Freud found that the content of the unconscious differs as much from consciousness as do its characteristic mechanisms. It is essentially of an infantile origin and here Freud threw a light on the inner nature of the young child’s mind that startled and repelled the world.

Freud maintained that hidden layers in the child’s mind are animated by sexual and hostile motives concerning its parents. A typical example is the *Oedipal Complex*, consisting of sexual desire toward the parent of the opposite sex and jealous and hatred.
of the rival. Freud even held the view that the child had erotic sensations from the beginning of life, at the breast itself.

In the book, entitled, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, there is the study of the many kinds of imperfect mental functioning, such as forgetting, slips of the tongue and pen, mislaying of objects, and so on. The conclusions Freud expressed are now widely accepted more than any other of his theories. The book is a serious contribution to the theory of determinism, since it showed that many apparently accidental and meaningless acts, and many ascribed simply to free will, are motivated by hidden and conflicting wishes unrecognized by the subject. Concerning Dora’s case history, Freud evolved a technique, which instead of concentrating on the symptoms one by one, ranged over them more freely. In a Paper, entitled, “Heredity and the Aetiology of Neurosis” Freud observes thus [Quoted in *Freud*, 1991, p. 128]:

. . . everything that has to do with the clearing up of a particular symptom emerges piecemeal, woven into various contexts, and distributed over widely separated periods of time. . . .

The newly discovered characteristic of neurosis that led Freud to revise his technique consisted in two phenomena, occurring on somewhat different levels.

First, there was the over determination of symptoms. From the early days Freud has acknowledged this phenomenon, but it was the scale on which it operated, the degree to which the mind was conservative, for which he was quite unprepared, and which eventually won for him such recognition that he suggested that, if once one could lay hold of the main symptom, then the whole analysis might be needed to explain it.
The second phenomenon was what is meant as the residual character of the neurosis: what remains to the neurosis over and above the symptoms. In this context, Freud addresses the layman with a detailed exegesis on the subject of symptoms in his *Introductory Lectures* [Quoted in *Freud*, 1991, p. 129]:

. . . the symptoms constitute the essence of a disease and its cure consists in the removal of the symptoms. Physicians attach importance to distinguishing the symptoms from the disease and declare that getting rid of the symptoms does not amount to curing the disease. But the only tangible thing left of the disease after the symptoms have been got rid of is the capacity to form new symptoms. For that reason we will for the moment adopt the layman’s position and assume that to unravel the symptoms means the same thing as to understand the disease. . . .

Freud was constantly learning that the formation of new symptoms during the course of an analysis provided new and invaluable insight into the nature of the neurosis.

Secondly, Freud identifies the unraveling of symptoms and the understanding of disease. Richard Wollheim remarks, [*Freud*, 1991, p. 130]:

Indeed, if we look at those elements which Freud did think necessary for the understanding of the symptoms - - desires and beliefs or, in the language of psychoanalysis, impulses, phantasies and amnesia - - we can see not merely that he [Freud] accepted the residual character of the neurosis, but also what he considered this residue to contain in. . . .
The Rat Man case is a pointer in this regard. A patient had experienced a lingering shock when he heard from his friend of the Chinese method of torture. According to this Chinese method of torture a pot was strapped on to the criminal’s buttocks, filled with rats, and the rats then bored their way into his anus. The patient was overwhelmed after listening to this Chinese method of torture.

The patient immediately found himself imagining the torture applied to the two people dear to him of whom one was his lady and the other was his father. The next few days were consumed by his trying at once to carry out, and to evade, certain very complex and ultimately incoherent instructions, which he imposed upon himself as a sanction, or as a means of averting the fulfilment of the thought or phantasy.

In Freud’s overall diagnosis, the Rat Man can be seen as the victim of two general conflicts: the first between his father, or his father’s wishes, and his lady, the second between love and hatred - - a conflict which qualified his relations with both the major figures of his life - - his lady and his father. Richard Wollheim argues to the point thus [Freud, 1991, p. 130]:

First, the Rat Man’s hatred of his father was in origin tied to the belief, or better the phantasy, of his father as an interferer on his sexual desires: a phantasy, which found its epitome in the one occasion when as a child he was beaten by the father. . . .

Secondly, there was the Rat Man’s own violence of character, which invariably him from awareness of his father’s anger, which might have been the object of his fear, to anger or hatred on his own part in response to his father’s. For these two reasons, then, the fear of his father that the
Rat Man might naturally have experienced when his desires turned towards his lady, became associate with, or transformed into, hatred. And so the two overall conflicts find a point of union. . . .

Indeed, the neurosis lies in the structure as in the elements that it contains. Thus the theories of Freud concerning neurosis, human psychology, and the biological conditions of the male and the female are better applied to analyze Maya’s neurotic sufferings, and the consequent sufferings of Gautama in *Cry the Peacock*, and the paranoid state of Sita sufferings, and the resultant sufferings of Raman in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* as portrayed by Anita Desai in her fictions.

Freud regarded Jung as his outstanding disciple and collaborator. Jung was convinced that consciousness develops out of prior unconscious psyche that continues to function together with or apart from conscious awareness. His view of personality held that in addition to the ego, the aware “I” of the conscious mind there is both a personal unconscious of the individual’s own repressed memories, thoughts and feelings and a basic collective unconscious shared by all mankind. The latter finds expression in the emotionally charged symbols, images and themes that emerge spontaneously in fantasies, dreams, delusions, and myths, which vividly express and reflect basic human urges and experiences.

Jung held that evolutionary history had established deep psychic predispositions with great power to stir men’s imaginations and influence their actions. These inherited tendencies are basic ways of apprehending and responding that are unconscious but find conscious representation in various potent images and ideas.
Jung called these fundamental forms of the collective unconscious archetypes or primordial images and investigated how they repeatedly emerge in various guises in dreams, in childhood, and adult fantasies, in the delusions of the insane, and in fairy stories, myths, and religions.

Although archetypal images appear in many forms - as persons, or supernatural figures, Jung held that the archetypes themselves are limited in number. Some major archetypes include birth, death, rebirth, power, magic, unity, the hero, the child, God, the demon, the old wise man, the earth mother, and the animal.

The hero archetype, for example, is often found in conjunction with the imagery of the sun's course and the transition from day to night, impressed in the human mind from time immemorial. This pattern is found worldwide in various myths of a god-hero born from the sea, who mounts the chariot of the sun. In the west, a great mother who devours him as the evening comes awaits him. In the belly of the dragon he travels the midnight sea and after a combat slays the dragon and is born again.

Jung was convinced of human bisexuality. He designated man's feminine archetype the anima and the woman's archetype the animus. These archetypes not only cause each sex to manifest characteristics of the opposite sex, they also act as collective images that influence the perceptions, misperceptions, and fantasies regarding the other sex.

Jung viewed man as striving for individuation, or self-realization, a psychic wholeness reconciling the tension of complimentary opposites in his personality. Among the opposed tendencies are introversion versus extraversion, which
respectively direct attention to inner and outer worlds; sensing and intuiting as ways of knowing; and feeling versus thinking as ways of evaluating.

Exaggeration of any of these psychological types, or orientations, in ego-consciousness causes its opposite to become more powerful in the unconscious, and psychic wholeness requires their creative synthesis through personal transformations and self-discovery.

This centring process, or full realization and harmonious unification of the self, is integrated by the *soidisant* transcendent function, symbolized by the *mandala*, an ornamental circular figure generally divided into four symmetrical sections - - a recurrent form in religious art.

Though Jung was often criticized for obscurity and mysticism he is universally acknowledged as a profound psychological theorist. Jung’s theories concerning bisexuality - - man’s feminine archetype, *anima* and the woman’s masculine archetype, *animus*, and his psychological theories concerning archetypes are employed as evidences to substantiate the arguments concerning the male and female characters as depicted by Anita Desai in her fictions.

Lacan is identified as the Psychoanalyst and Structuralist Theoretician. His controversial application of the principles of structural linguistics to the psychoanalytic theory of Freud prompted renewed interest in Freud’s theories and provoked a schism in the psychoanalytic community. Lacan had an abiding interest in investigating linguistic evidence of unconscious mental processes.
Lacan postulated that the unconscious has the same organization as language itself. His unorthodox analytic methods and his rejection of therapy as a goal of psychoanalysis alienated many of his colleagues.

Lacan’s theories are deliberately designed to provide Freudian analysis with a structuralist foundation. Lacan developed his own triadic style of thinking and this is seen as a complement to Freud’s way of thinking. It is an attempt to extend psychoanalytic discussion into a fully inter-subjective dimension. Malcolm Bowie makes a pointed observation, [Lacan, 1991, p. 91]:

The Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real are not mental forces, personifiable on the model-builder’s inner stage, but orders each of which serves to position the individual within a force-field that traverses him. The term order itself has for Lacan a number of important connotations. It suggests that a hierarchical arrangement of classes is taking place, as in a botanical or zoological taxonomy, that internal principles of similarity and congruence govern membership of each class; that higher classificatory levels have superior cognitive status; and that from some undetected source a series of orders or commands is being used to the theorist. But although Lacan’s three orders often seem to be seeking the approval of natural science, they are as firmly centred upon mind-stuff as Freud’s three agencies had been: it is only in the interaction of minds that various related orders begin to acquire explanatory depth....
Just as a physicist would not be content with a theory of super strings that worked well in San Francisco but badly in Los Angeles, or well on earth but badly on Neptune, so Lacan expects the permutations of his triad - - *The Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real* - - to be enlightening across the entire range of human classes, societies and cultures.

At moments, moreover, the three orders slip their human moorings altogether, and become warring principles in a grandiose cosmological allegory. The pertinent observation of Malcolm Bowie is worth recording here [Lacan, 1991, p. 91]:

Again like the *id*, the *ego*, and the *super-ego*, Lacan’s Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real have an air of undisguised ambition about them. Indeed within the human sphere no limitations are placed upon their warrant. They can be used to pinpoint the forces of conflict in all kinds and conditions of men and women, and are available for the study of ordinary mental functioning no less readily than for the treatment of neurosis and psychosis. . . .

Thus, Lacan’s theories along with that of Freud and Jung are taken to analyze, evaluate, and interpret the male and female characters as portrayed by Anita Desai in her fictions.

At this juncture, it ought to be emphasized, that when Anita Desai applies the theories of Freud, Jung, and Lacan to project her characters and her viewpoints, she does so with great artistic maturation and writer’s perfection.
The theories of Jung and Lacan are useful in analyzing the neurosis of the female characters and the resultant sufferings of the male characters and the alienated state, and the wandering impulse and the id inclinations of the male characters. Moreover, other critics are examined to maintain the focus on the male characters and their state.

In fact, Anita Desai is acknowledged by renowned critic to have gained artistic maturation as a fictionist of excellence, significance, relevance, and consequence. This artistic genius has struck artistic maturation by virtue of her hard labour at her writing desk, sincere commitment to write well and perfectly and fittingly and to her cerebration.

In this context the statement of Patricia Waugh is worth quoting [Metafiction, 1972, p. 201]:

The logic of everyday world is replaced by forms of contradiction and discontinuity, radical shifts of context, which suggest that “reality” as well as “fiction” is merely one more game with words. . . .

And to play with words like a Vladimir Nabokov, Edward Estlin Cummings, and John Barth the writer must be endowed with a brilliant brain and a brilliant soul, as Walt Whitman has put it [Preface to Leaves of Grass, 1985, p. 12], remarkable word power, and admirable writing capacities, and Anita Desai possesses all these qualities in rich measure.

It is only through hard labour and sweat that Anita Desai has attained higher level of sophistication in writing. Understandably, her fictions are not meant for casual
browsers. Only elitist and perceptive readers could delve deep into her mature art products. The simple reason is that this woman writer is a demanding artist.

Anita Desai expects reader participation on her own terms and not on the terms of the readers. And as stated earlier the readers cannot afford to be casual browsers to grasp at her studied level of argumentation. Only erective and critically oriented readers could better appreciate her mature fictions.

The maturity of Anita Desai is gauged against four parameters. In the first place, her mature thinking enables her to deal with the plights and predicaments of her female protagonists from the Freudian psychoanalytical perspectives, and the different natures of the male characters from the Jungian archetypal patterns, and Lacan’s triadic design of the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real.

Secondly, Anita Desai reveals her mature thought processes and writing capacities in delineating her characters as rounded perfections. There is the upward trend as far as characterization is concerned. There is a marked growth in the characters portrayed from the early characters to her later characters.

In the third place, the maturation of Anita Desai is gauged from the point of Bildungsroman characteristics.

Finally, in the fourth place, Anita Desai and her art products are judged against the Kunstelroman properties.

The goal of Anita Desai, the woman genius-artist, is to turn into a mature writer, and as an astounding creative self. She has achieved a great measure of success in this dual regard. She could achieve literary pre-eminence among the Indian writers writing
in English, and strike artistic maturation at the thematic level and in her range of characterization only by applying her mind to the single-minded purpose of creating great and lasting works of art.

Anita Desai could blossom into a mature artist mainly because she has been able to employ her powers of imagination, inborn talents, inspiration, and apt modes of expression in a combined manner for creating aesthetic artefacts. Understandably then, a high level of mentation marks the art products of Anita Desai.

In fact, she has employed her art tools with functional variations and valuations. In fine, through verbal mastery, language manipulation and maximization, linguistic experimentation, innovative forms and technical devices of excellence, Anita Desai has gained recognition as a creative self. In this context, one takes into account the pertinent argument of Richard Chase, [“The Fate of the Avant Garde”, P R, xxiv, 3 (Summer 1957), 363]:

. . . the health culture depends upon its recurring impulse to experimentation, its search for radical values, its historical awareness, its flexibility, and its receptivity to experience. . . .

In the case of Anita Desai it can be safely argued that all of her knowledge starts with her private sensations, ideas, feelings, and experiences, and sense data of her individual mind. It is her egocentric predicament.

To begin with the knowing mind of Anita Desai operates within the private circle of her private sensations, ideas, feelings, and experiences, and sense data. In fine, her individual mind is subject to sensations, ideas, attitudes, emotions, and beliefs as
received by her mind and fed into it. As such, reality is reduced to her mind being
governed by private sensations, ideas, feelings, and experiences, and sense data. But
Anita Desai emerges as a mature artist to underscore the fact that to be a creative writer
she has to shake of her personal self and accept the corporate self and at times the
transcendent self.

In fact, she finds ample reason in her personal ego being cancelled and annulled
by the corporate ego. All the same, Anita Desai argues that if sense qualities are private
and relative to the knowing subject, then the ethical and aesthetic values of goodness
and beauty, since they are resident in perceived notions and works of art, are similarly
subjective. Ethical questions, therefore, have tended to be framed in terms of individual
emotional response to a moral judgment rather than in terms of objective rightness or
wrong.

As stated earlier, Anita Desai realizes the importance of her private sensations,
ideas, feelings, experiences, and sense data, which are allowed to find expression in
socially accepted behaviour. But then Anita Desai is conscious of the fact that strong
aggressive impulses must be sublimated in group life. The reason is that society would
not accept and tolerate the strong impulsive behaviour of an individual.

It is the claim of Anita Desai that individuals must suppress their hostilities, and
their private sensations, ideas, feelings, experiences, and sense data altogether. If that is
not possible, then the individuals must express them in a manner that will appear
constructive or harmless to the welfare of other persons.
Anita Desai realizes that the social self or ego has the strength of its own, and motives that are sociably desirable, and ethically tenable, and therefore the social self does not depend upon the primitive id, or source of inspirational energy for her strength. On a higher level of personal development Anita Desai sees to it that her private hostile feelings and ideas find exact expression in righteous indignation over social injustices and evils.

At this point there is the need to define the term, character, in fiction. The term, character, refers to a personage in fiction, short fiction poem or drama. The term, character, also denotes the essential qualities and personality traits of a fictional or real individual. The ability to create compelling and believable characters is one of the hallmarks of the literary artist, such as Anita Desai.

It ought to be noted that a character in a work of fiction is realized in a number of ways. If the character is a flat character - - a two dimensional character - - then there is no artistic maturity seen in creating such a flat character. A flat character is known as a type character and is usually lightly sketched without much detail.

But the character in fiction should be a round character, a three dimensional character. A round character is generally a complex personality, given to poly urges. And is a fully realized individual. The chief character or a protagonist of a fiction is usually three-dimensional. His adversary, if any, is known as the antagonist.

It must be stressed that the male and female characters of Anita Desai measure themselves up to be graded as round characters. But then, she introduces some flat characters to offset her round characters.
Characterization in literature is the presentation of attitudes and behaviour of imaginary persons in order to make them credible to the critically oriented and perceptive reading public. Characterization is a unique feature of fiction. Criticism regards good characterization as an important criterion of excellence in fiction.

A fictionist may choose one of the three methods to present a character. The author may directly describe a character’s personality, as do omniscient fictionists, such as Henry Fielding in Tom Jones, or the writer may have the perceptive reader deduce the personality of a character from his actions, thus enabling the character to remain enigmatic. Or else, a novelist may present the inner workings of a character’s mind, showing the character’s psychological reactions to the situations in which he becomes involved. Examples of the later method of characterization are found in stream-of-consciousness fictions such as William Faulkner’s As I Lay Dying and The Sound and the Fury. And the male and female characters in Anita Desai’s fictions are psychic case studies just as Saul Bellow’s Herzog is.

A character may be drawn with a few marked personality traits or with a complex collection of them. The male and female characters of Anita Desai belong to both variety mentioned above. A character may also be either static, showing little change, or remain dynamic, that is, significantly affected by the events of the narrative. And Anita Desai’s male and female characters are quite dynamic in nature.

From this point onwards a brief analysis of Bildungsroman and Kunstelroman becomes necessary to better appreciate the fact that Anita Desai is a mature fictionist.
The essential generic characteristic of the *Bildungsroman* fiction is a concern with the portrayal of an individual’s *bildung*, where *bildung* denotes a harmonious self-maturation. *Bildungsroman* fictions are about the growth of the characters.

In fine, the development of the male and female protagonists is the immediate and ultimate concern. Michael Beddow offers a satisfactory definition, which is worth quoting here [*The Fiction of Humanity: Studies the Bildungsroman from Wieland to Mann*, 1982, pp. 170-171]:

. . . it [the *Bildungsroman* fiction] is an essential part of the heroes’ growth and self-discovery that they are separated from the familiar surroundings in which they were brought up and enter into an alien environment. Cut off from their original environment and not wholly at home in their new one, the various heroes are thrown back upon their own inner resources and have to place a good deal of reliance on their private values and aspirations. . . . The . . . *Bildungsroman* heroes have their development furthered by entering surroundings, which are profoundly different from those they have previously known, their awareness of the scope and import of the differences increasing as their experiences progress. . . .

Judged against these parameters of the *Bildungsroman* fiction it can be safely argued that Anita Desai’s novels are *Bildungsroman* fictions. Furthermore, *Bildungsroman* fiction deals with the growth in understanding by way of assimilating experience. The protagonist passes through successive stages of apprenticeship, which leads to his mastery in the art of living.
In a *Kunstelroman* fiction the protagonist grows through learning experiences and matures, and along with the protagonist the artist also grows through learning experiences in the art of writing, and ultimately matures as a splendid and superb artist. Anita Desai through the male and female characters in her fictions grows through the learning experiences and matures into a great and accomplished artist.

Anita Desai projects herself as an Omniscient narrator. But at times there is the blend of the authentic “I” and the imagined “I” as effectively achieved by Herman Melville in the very first classic, and immortal sentence “Call me Ishmael” in *Moby Dick*.

Anita Desai projects herself as an excellent narrator of events involving male and female characters. She is a born storyteller. She excels in all the fictional departments, namely, description, storytelling, narration, characterization dialogue writing, and finally argumentation.

Anita Desai’s fictions can be analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated against the parameters defined by the modern rhetorician Kenneth Burke in his *Dramatic Pentad* [*Drama of Thinking*] and against Freytag’s *Pyramid*.

Moreover, there is a studied fusion of the surface structure and deep structure in her fiction from the point of view of narratology.

Thus, in the subsequent chapters, the characters and the fictions in which they appear are gauged against the narrative techniques, high and sophisticated level of characterization, and the elements of fiction, and the psychoanalytic theories of Freud,
Jung, and Lacan, and other theorists. In this context, the observation of Madhusudan Prasad is worth recording [Anita Desai: The Novelist, 1981, p. 3]

In *Cry, the Peacock*, Desai explores the turbulent emotional world of the neurotic protagonist, Maya, which smarts under an acute alienation, stemming from marital discord, and verges on a curious insanity [My Emphasis]. . . .

Anita Desai has richly contributed by fictions to the strength, significance, growth, development, transcendence, relevance, wide reach, and consequence of Indian writing in English, and by extension to world literature.

Anita Desai’s themes such as love, hatred, sex, alienation, the absurd conditions of life, psychic stresses and strains, and the secondary status of women and her crusade to redeem the women from their suspended state and show them the means to empower themselves through education and economic independence, are always creative and have vistas.

Anita Desai, the creative artist with verve and vitality, absorbs and expresses everything that she witnesses in the society and Establishment of her period. In a way, her fictions can be termed as revealing social documents, without the least trace of propaganda literature. They sound at times as protest literature, but never get reduced to the level of propaganda.

As stated earlier, the flawless triumph of Anita Desai’s art lies in her creative ability to give expression adequately and admirably to her feelings, thoughts, and experiences in her literary products, and invest them with the balanced proportions, symmetry, perfection, cohesion, order and unity.