CONCLUSIONS

Helen Dunmore has contributed to various forms of literature—poetry, novels, plays, essays, reviews and children’s fiction. Her novels are praiseworthy for two reasons: Firstly, for their authenticity and secondly, due to the limits of her imagination. This authenticity comes in her novels from knowing what she is writing from either having lived it or being closely connected to it. Dunmore writes about any location or type of character and makes it authentic. She has prolific accuracies of culture, voice, and characters when actually, they had never been there at all. This is the gift of her imagination which is paired with her extensive research. Helen Dunmore has published twelve novels with a wide range of different subject matter.

Dunmore’s gift for narrative and her fascinating choice of subject-matter make her writing distinctive. She reflects on every aspects of human life and explores its several dimensions with great skills. She is specially known as the creator of dream world who herself dreams and makes others dream about their lives. Her novels are the records of various aspects of life such as pleasure and pain, victory and defeat, triumph and tragedy. The use of sensuous imagery, poetic intensity and skill of storytelling attribute her novels. In her historical novels, Dunmore, no doubt, follows a literary tradition of personifying the country, Russia, but develops the themes in her own artistic skill. All her novels differ in their themes, places, characters and the period the inhabitants belong to.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, England is the dominating world power with its strong sense of imperialism and its establishment of colonies and political influence all across the world. After the First and even more-so after the Second World War, England’s global reach was weakened. This change in world view changed the literature. As the world view became more focused on England itself, there is the rise in the interests of the people of England. There are labour organizations rising in power. Women are asserting their equal rights. There is much more
attention to social legislation and welfare concerns. The country moved towards its more modern socialist state. These concerns become the themes of their literature. An important development in the postwar period is the rise of the so-called “feminist literature”. A new consciousness of the peculiarity of women's outlook and social role opens up new directions for women's writing. Women's writing, as a discrete area of literary studies and practice, is based on the notion that the experience of women, historically, has been shaped by their gender.

Postmodern literature describes certain tendencies in post-World War II literature. Postmodernism was originally thought of as a reaction to Modernism. Largely influenced by the Western European disillusionment induced by World War II, postmodernism tends to refer to a cultural, intellectual, or artistic state lacking a clear central hierarchy or organizing principle and embodying extreme complexity, contradiction, ambiguity, diversity, interconnectedness or inter-referentiality. Since 1948 the influx of migrants from the Caribbean, India, Pakistan and Africa has created a variety of religious and ethnic groups within the wider British society, and the experience of growing up bi-cultural has produced new perspectives which have invigorated English literature and become one of its most distinctive features from the 1980s onwards.

The 20th century literature is dominated by war with common themes of alienation, isolation and fragmentation. While talking about British Literature, most of the 20th century fiction, poetry and short stories especially that were produced have the common theme of alienation. Much of the writing is marked by deep psychological trauma. Helen Dunmore, being the writer of twentieth century, concentrates on war and its aftereffects as basic themes of her war novels. Themes of war appeal readers much as they are the first hand experience of the writer. Dunmore and her family became victims of war. The segregation of joint family stamped on Dunmore's personality terrors and horrors of war. Moreover, the migration of the family served as a backdrop for Dunmore to depict her characters more realistically.
Her characters appear more humanist on the background of war. They have helping nature and hand. Even in the adverse situation, they preserve humanity, love, respect and concern for others. Dunmore experienced these things which, she finds, have started withering in the post modern scenario. On one hand, her novels are lamentations over the loss of humanity; on the other they talk of importance of humanity thereby offering her novels humanistic approach. In short, her characters emerge with the message of Dunmore that humanity can be practiced and preserved though the situation may be adverse. Thus, her characters flourish in a positive way and this is one of the special features of her novels.

Undoubtedly, these novels are war centric. But Dunmore is more interested in the internal war that takes place after the outbreak of the nation’s war. Dunmore brings forward betrayal, cheating and exploitation of common people by common people. Dunmore’s novels are much appealing as readers feel that their experiences are reflected in the novels. On the background of exploitation and cheating, her protagonists appear wiser than others. Her novels are, for Dunmore, social portraits. And she does not look at novels as produced for entertainment. Novel writing, for Dunmore is not a profession but a movement to make people wise in the adverse situations like wars. Wars can be fought at anytime and anywhere and Dunmore’s novels move around wars so they have universal appeal. Perhaps Dunmore is talking about future wars. That is why her novels are meaningful and readable.

Dunmore’s War Novels–The Siege, Zennor in Darkness, and The Betrayal are marked by their use of historical events and personages along with fantasy and grotesque. It has been exemplified in the texts analyzed in this study that Russia, represented as subordinate, can also be imagined as a master. For example, in Dunmore’s historical novel, The House of Orphans there is the representation of a Russia that rules Finland, and people are represented as superior to the Finnish nation. In House of Orphans there is a Russian theme, but the Russian presence is that of an oppressor, rather than a
victim. Russia is a despotic, demonized community from which, “like all extremes”, comes “restless, rebellious anger against the order of things”. Dunmore uses power in a highly symbolic way to emphasize the exclusion of the nation and to construct imaginary relations between superior and subordinate. In *The Siege* Dunmore wrote vividly about the effects of wartime starvation, cold and terror on the Russian soul. *The Siege* is about the world stricken by memory and the flesh of Leningraders who died of hunger in silent, frigid rooms. There is sense of collective solidarity in her war novel. It provides the purpose of the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidotes to traumatic experience.

Numerous novels have been written about the siege of Leningrad but Dunmore’s *The Siege* stands out for two reasons. One is that it covers only the first few months, that terrible first winter in which so many people perished, often while out on the streets in search of food. The other is that it looks at the siege from a social rather than military point of view, in particular from a woman’s perspective. The ability to combine striking details about people’s experience of warfare with the broader sweep of narrative history is one of Helen Dunmore’s great skills. She didn’t live through the Nazi blockade of Leningrad. Yet Dunmore has taken the alien milieu and makes a spellbinding narrative. She writes in the present tense, which can be as infuriating as the past perfect, but much of the time her words shadow her imagination closely enough to give the vivid immediacy the style demands. The themes in war novels are analyzed through historical point of view and the literary history is analyzed in the context of social, political and cultural history.

The horror of war, the siege, betrayal, fight to survive, hunger, starvation, deprivation, fear and terror of Stalin’s Russia and tender love are some of the major themes reflected in Helen Dunmore’s war novels. Instead of glorifying war, Dunmore put the war off stage.

The historical novels, Dunmore wrote are *House of Orphans*, *A Spell of Winter* and *Counting the Stars*. These historical novels deal with the culture, language, and literature of concerned historical settings. Dunmore’s historical
novels deal with the themes of orphanhood and parenthood, fight for survival, love and sexuality, war and betrayal, food and starvation. These novels offer her a liberating and revisionist realm where she can rewrite history and create alternative histories of the silenced.

The thesis emphasizes upon the political impulse of Dunmore to write the histories of the ex-centric (be it in class, race, gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity). Her novels open the way to private histories (in the plural) of individuals whose stories have remained untold. In *Zennor in Darkness*, the reality of the bestial slaughter overshadows the lives of the people. The novel not only deals with the historical representation of World War I, but it also includes the private stories of D. H. Lawrence, Clare Coyne. Dunmore manages this plurality in her novels through using fantasy. In the fantastic world of *Zennor in Darkness*, the official history of “great men” is attacked by German who offers a version of history from below, rather than the history of the official record or the history books. Likewise, in *The Siege*, she attempts to challenge women’s experience in history and opens a space for narrating the untold histories of the ex-centric.

The study of Helen Dunmore’s writings helps to clarify the development of women’s social and historical representation with literary, historical, and cultural factors. There is the intrinsic relationship between historical and literary narratives. The literary and historical narratives permeate by fiction and read as legitimate ways of providing historical evidence. The exploitation of the psychological impact of war is recurrent in Helen Dunmore’s war novels. The innovative aspect of her psychological approach to historical characters like Stalin, Volkov as well as the English novelist Lawrence appear in her novels in order to make explicit the impact war had on people’s minds and psychological make-up. Through fictionalized dialogues between these and other “real-life” characters, Dunmore plays with the intersection of historical and literary narratives.

The inclusion of history in fictions of Helen Dunmore has been reshaped the language. History has become more literary and literature more
historicized. In the hands of Dunmore, war and historical novels become liberating tools because historical fiction becomes a strong political resonance. If one of the driving forces in the writing of historical fiction is to give a voice to the ex-centric, then for a woman author to write into being the unaddressed past and its muted subalterns, or to rewrite an established male-authored work, presents a challenge for both author and reader.

Literary writings may convey as much historical authenticity as historical narratives. *The Siege* and *The Betrayal* rewrite history from the eyes of its main characters, Anna Levin and Andrei both of whom are “victims and losers” of the wars. The historical materials of the novels are mostly given through the narration of its pivotal female characters. Women’s social roles and their attitude are triggered by those tragic events, especially regarding the rise of women’s optimism towards the construction of a society with equal opportunities. It has been observed that Dunmore blends the historical material with the fantastic and magic realist elements. And fantasy is used as a strategic tool where she can insert the untold stories of her characters.

Therefore, the centre of her perspective no longer completely holds. It can be noted that from the decentered perspective, the ex-centric (be it in class, race, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity) take on a new significance in the light of the implied recognition that the culture is not really the homogeneous monolith. She puts the individual memory of her characters as the basis for history instead of objective documents. The past is reinterpreted from different angles by means of the characters’ subjective stories. This brings forth the inevitable role of the narrator in interpreting past events. The silenced histories of ex-centric groups are foregrounded, their stories are retold and alternative histories are composed. Dunmore strives to challenge old established realities whose truthfulness is taken for granted. Instead of historical reality, she offers the reality of imagination that places her as a unique novelist in the post modern scenario.

Some of Dunmore’s novels expose the contemporary themes of urban corruption, sexual exploitation, social tensions and gross hypocrisy of society.
In *Burning Bright*, she creates a world of sexual exploitation, where emotional ties can lead young women into lives of prostitution. In *Talking to the Dead*, Dunmore peels away the sisters' secrets. *Your Blue-Eyed Boy* is a psychological thriller where Dunmore confidently mines a number of subtle themes—the emotional perils of rendering judgment, the lure of vulnerability, the surprising power of memory. The fatal love of crooked hearts and an ambiguous bond of brotherhood are the central themes of Helen Dunmore’s *With Your Crooked Heart*. In *Mourning Ruby* the theme is loss, mourning, recovery—on a personal level and a much broader public level. Dunmore’s novels of contemporary setting expose the themes of fight for survival, orphanhood and parenthood, death, betrayal, food, love and sexuality.

Minor themes in Dunmore’s novels sequentially explore, compare and determine the characteristics of her fiction. Helen Dunmore has never flinched from writing about pain, deprivation, forbidden loves, and suffering. Dunmore has chosen subjects including child abuse, starvation, and family collapse that are microcosms of the struggle for human and humane survival against terrible odds. She has made powerful connections between the specific story and its larger historic meaning. The minor themes in all her adult novels are varied in forms. History and memory, slipped family relationships, secrets, blood, madness, sweetness of life, change and death are the minor themes highlighted in this study by analyzing her war, historical and literary novels.

No doubt, her novels have poet’s gift as her language combines vibrant imagery with precision of meaning. Yet her books are in no way abstruse. Most of them deal with the tensions of sexual and familiar relationships, subtly exploring the pleasures, pains and betrayals inherent in them. All these characteristics offer special attraction to her writings and place her different among her contemporary novelists. Her work is distinctive as she does not stick to one particular theme or style.

Though her novels are criticized for sensuous elements, they effectively bring forward the purpose of the novelist-reconstruction of history
and its culture. One cannot ignore her as she has contributed her literary
talent in her distinct way to enrich British Novel. Though she has been writing
for more than 20 years, it seems that she is at her mid-point of her literary
career. Many literary forms are expected to be written by Dunmore to offer a
golden opportunity to her readers, scholars and researchers. In the present
scenario, a study of Dunmore’s novels helps to widen and direct our thoughts
to the British contemporary approaches towards the subject matters and
their cultural backgrounds in British society.