Chapter - 4
Text as Medium

I was exposed to many different influences. I described in A Tale of Love and Darkness how a half-forgotten American writer, Sherwood Anderson, had a tremendous impact on my writing. He liberated me from the idea that I needed to live in some metropolis in order to be a writer. It was Anderson who taught me that wherever you have your desk and your piece of paper and pen will be the centre of the universe.

Amos Oz (Interview: Amos Oz)

After a detailed analysis of the landscape, culture and religion oriented politics of Jerusalem, and the dominating dread and anxiety of the existential crisis, the present chapter is an elaborate study of the postmodern perspectives as narrative pattern of Oz. In the long list of postmodern writers such as John Fowels (1926– 2005), John Ashbery (1927- ), Adrienne Rich (1929–2012), Toni Morrison (1931- ), Walter Abish (1931- ), Ishmael Reed (1938- ), Margaret Atwood (1939- ), Angela Carter (1940–1992), Julian Barnes (1946- ), Salman Rushdie(1947- ), and Graham Swift (1949- ), the researcher includes Amos Oz (1939 - ).

Oz, in his writings, to delineate the subjective crisis of his fictional characters and political unrest in Jerusalem, makes use of self-reflexivity, historiographic metafiction, paranoia, fragmentation, collapse of cultural hierarchy, symbolism, figurative language, pervasive personifications, and intertextuality. He writes in Hebrew and makes a thematic use of biblical references and overtones in his stories’ titles, characters’ names, imagery, and plot parallels. Oz writes different genres in literature. His Black Box is an epistolary
novel and *The Same Sea*, is told in poetic paragraphs which reveals Oz’ poetic authority. Some of his novels such as *Elsewhere Perhaps, A Perfect Peace, Michael, Woman, and Rhyming* have a claustrophobic feeling, which mirrors the claustrophobia of the intense familial relationships they portray. *Rhyming*, sounds like a cacophony of voices. Two of his novels have eponymous characters. His autobiography, *Tale*, can be considered a family history which tells the history of war-torn Jerusalem. His *Hill*, is a trilogy wherein three stories are closely linked to one another. He also writes short stories, children literature, and political writings.

Oz gives reasons for shifting to different genres in literature, to his interviewer Shusha Guppy, in the interview, “Amos Oz, The Art of Fiction”. He confirms: “I needed quick satisfaction. I was very young and didn’t have the patience and wisdom to play long games. I decided to write short stories, because it is a craft that gets you there in a short time. I could work on a story in my head, then sit down and write it in one day. Incidentally, I can no longer do this. I have a different pace”. Oz has written an epistolary novel, *Black Box*, with a noticeable change both in form and content. When Shusha Guppy asked him, “Why did you suddenly decide on this form?”, he said:

By accident. ... It is a mistake to think that the novelist is God Almighty and can do anything he wants. At some point the characters take over. ...Black Box evolved into an epistolary novel because the characters wanted it that way. Letters become a medium of intimacy and detachment at the same time. It is also a good way of putting thoughts across without being interrupted in mid sentence, which is what happens in family arguments. As I said I always start with a bunch of characters.
Oz’ works are a fusion of Jerusalem’s history and his imaginative narration. Oz identifies himself to be a story teller. He creates characters, family and society from his own imagination. Few of his characters constantly shift from the real world to the world of dreams and imagination. Such oscillation in the characters and situations leads to complexity in understanding the narration of the author. Therefore, the narrative techniques such as the expression, literary devices and rhetoric of Oz’ works have been scrutinized to establish the authenticity of the arguments that establish Oz as a postmodern writer.

Dick Hebdige, in his *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things*, states,

> When it becomes possible for people to describe as ‘postmodernism’ … the ‘predicament’ of reflexivity, a group of rhetorical tropes, a proliferation of surfaces, a new phase of commodity fetishism, a fascination for images, codes and styles, a process of culture, political or existential fragmentation and/or crisis, the ‘de-centering’ of the subject, an ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’, the replacement of unitary power/discourse formations, the ‘implosion of meaning’, the collapse of cultural hierarchies, the dread engendered by the threat of nuclear self-destruction … a sense (depending on who you read) of ‘placelessness’ or the abandonment of placelessness… - when it becomes possible to describe all these things as ‘postmodern’ …then it’s clear we are in the presence of a buzzword. (181-2)

According to the definition given by Dick Hebdige, Oz’s works are postmodern in its form and narration. Oz, in his interview with the researcher and her supervisor determinedly declared that, “I think postmodernism is very much about the intention to invent new literary forms and I am less interested in inventing new forms” (Interview).
Though Oz firmly rejects the idea of postmodernism in his works, he agreed that, “It is only postmodern in the sense it is reserving certain distance from the historical events” (Interview).

Contradicting Oz’ opinion, the researcher identifies Oz’ works to be postmodern. Self-reflexivity, petit narration, the overlapping of reality and the text, fragmentation, fascination for images, intertextuality, paranoia, and the collapse of cultural hierarchy are found in abundance in almost all his works. Oz touches a universal chord in each character’s anguished search for meaning in a country that is a microcosm of a chaotic, dangerous world. Oz, in his narration, brings alive the historical conflicts by portraying the real places and people. Thereby, his works are self-reflexive in many ways. Oz, in his article, “From Jerusalem to Cairo – Escaping from the Shadow of the Past”, included in Peace, establishes the fact that, “I am a Jew, an Israeli, a Zionist, who belong to the moderate left in Israel” (Peace 34).

Oz’ declaration to the researcher and her supervisor that everything that he has ever written are autobiographical, but not confessional, reveals that the time, place and action in his works are based on the accumulated Jewish experiences that are either lived or shared. While revealing his experience as a Jew, Oz brings out the historical significance of the life and journey of Jews down the history. In doing so, Oz’ works can be evidently established as works of historiographic metafiction which is characteristically postmodern art form, with textual play, parody and historical re-conceptualization. Historiographic metafiction corresponds not only to a world of fiction, but also self-consciously presented as a created world which is of a community experience. Linda Hutcheon, in her A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction, who coined the term historiographic metafiction brings out the significance of it in postmodern texts. She states that:
The interaction of the historiographic and the metafictional foregrounds the rejection of the claims of both “authentic” representation and “inauthentic” copy alike, and the very meaning of artistic originality is as forcefully challenged as is the transparency of historical referentiality.

Postmodern fiction suggests that to re-write or to re-present the past in fiction in history is, in both case, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological. (110)

With this established idea of Hutcheon, self-reflexivity is the dominant feature of the works of historiographic metafiction and, in turn an important element in postmodern texts. Self-reflexivity is proven to be different from autobiography/biography. Self-reflexivity in postmodern literature directs to an invariable interruption of narrative and therefore any postmodern work is read as a text, language, and a fiction. Linda Hutcheon shares her views on the self-obsession of the postmodern fiction, with her classification of self-reflexivity in Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox. Hutcheon calls postmodernist fiction as “narcissistic,” “self-reflective,” “self-informing,” “auto-referential,” and “auto-representational” (1). In so saying, any postmodern text is considered to be self obsessive.

Further, Hutcheon argues that there are two forms of self-reflexivity. They are, “the overt and the covert forms. Overtly narcissistic texts reveal their self-awareness in explicit thematizations or allegorizations of their diegetic or linguistic identity within the texts themselves. In the covert form, this process is internalized, actualized; such a text is self-reflexive but not necessarily self-conscious” (7). It is, therefore, apparent that the realistic conventions function as the standard against which the experimental strategies can foreground themselves and so construct new fictional forms through self-reflection.
Oz’ works are identified as self-reflexive. His works lay claim to historical events and personages. By reflecting the past in the present through his writings, Oz is both a historian and story teller. Oz firmly declares to his interviewer Shusha Guppy that, “The novelist has no political aim but is concerned with truth, not facts. As I say in one of my essays, sometimes the worst enemy of truth is fact. I’m a writer of narrative prose, siporet, but I’m not a prophet or a guide, nor am I an inventor of fiction”. The firm affirmation of Oz reveals that his works are the reflection of reality and a faithful presentation of his country and his people which ultimately becomes self-reflexive.

Oz never seems to exclude himself from his text and his individual personal and political Jewish-self is reflected in all his characters. Though he writes only about his land, his people and his experiences, his excellence as a story teller is proved in the way he makes these personal experiences universal and his novels are evidently stories about a story. Oz while presenting the political turmoil, uses real places and people like, S. Y. Agnon, a Nobel Prize laureate writer and one of the central figures of modern Hebrew fiction, Martin Buber, an Austrian-born Israeli Jewish philosopher, Franz Kafka, one of the most influential German-language writer of novels and short stories of the twentieth century, David Ben Gurian, the first Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, the fourth Prime Minister of Israel and many other philosophers, literary veterans which help to bring in the touch of reality within his fictional world.

His novella, Rhyming, is the claustrophobic novella which takes place almost entirely inside the head of a famous Israeli novelist, who is named Author who is a mirror image of Oz himself. The personal experiences of Oz, as an author, are fictionalized through the character of Author. He has been invited to a cultural centre to participate in a discussion of his work. The prospect fills him with dread because he could not stand the kind of questions asked at such events and he knows that in trying to answer them, he has
to pole lie upon lie. Oz begins the work with a series of questions Author would encounter in the literary evening:

Why do you write? Why do you write the way you do? Are you trying to influence your readers, and, if so, how? What role do your books play? … how would you define yourself? … Do you draw material for your stories from your imagination or directly from life? … Do you have fixed times for writing or do you just write when the muse visits you? Are you politically committed writer, and, if so, what is your political affliction? Are your books autobiographical or completely fictional? … And would you please tell us, briefly and in your own words, what exactly you were trying to say in your last book?

There are clever answers and there are evasive answers: there are no simple, straightforward answers. (Rhyming 1-2)

All questions that are listed above are questions that Oz himself has encountered during all these years of his life as an author. The characters that Author imagines in Rhyming are not related with one another. Author tries to bring in an order amidst chaos. It is also an attempt to bring in a unity among the differences. Oz succeeds in imagining an Author who imagines life for individuals whom he comes across, starting from the waitress in the café.

While reading Rhyming, the reader would get a clear understanding of how an author goes about writing his story and creating characters and situations for the same. In Rhyming, Oz is seen through the fictional image of Author who is a writer who imagines life for everyone around him. It is made evident that all of what Oz writes is purely the fictionalized reality of what he has lived through or shared experiences with his people.
He declares his early experiences as a little boy in his autobiography *Tale:*

So, it was in the cafés, against a background of endless conversations between my parents and their friends … conversations whose content I was unable to understand, that I gradually became a little spy.

I developed a secret little game that I could play for hours on end without moving, without speaking, with no accessories, not even pencil and paper. I would look at the strangers in the café and try to guess … who they all were, where they came from, what they did, what they had gone just before they came here, and where they were going after. … On the basis of a few uncertain outward signs, I made up complicated but exciting life stories for them. … How many possibilities there are! How dizzyingly rich the kaleidoscope of plots and stories I can weave from the fragments! (*Tale* 244)

Clearly, the plot for Oz’ *Rhyming* is taken from his personal experience during his childhood days in the café. Oz wonders that in imagining the other, “How many possibilities there are! How dizzyingly rich the kaleidoscope of plots and stories I can weave from these fragments!” (*Tale* 401). Apart from sharing his own personal experiences as an author, in many of his works, special importance is given to the parental characters. The characters are portrayed in such a way that they reflect the character traits of Oz’ parents themselves. The father figures in his fiction prove to be responsible enough to take care of their children and household works and also succeed in their professional life. The mothers are either less responsible or feel sick that they do not take care of the family chores. The families that Oz presents are found unhappy in many ways as his own family was.
In *Fima*, the protagonist, who is in his early fifties, is identified as the fictional representation of Oz himself. To list a few similarities, Fima has lost his mother when he was a child as in the case of Oz, who has lost his mother when she has committed suicide at the age of thirty six. The tormenting emotions of Fima remembering his mother quite often is what Oz also has suffered. Towards the end of the plot, after the death of his father, Fima realizes how important his father has been to him. For the first time in *Fima*, it is revealed that, “Fima suddenly put on his father’s winter overcoat... he was tired, and perhaps also because his heart was light and clear, he continued sitting in the cinema, huddled in his father’s overcoat, he continued sitting in the cinema” (*Fima* 321-22). It is a fact that, Oz ran away from his father soon after the death of his mother. He vehemently declares that, “I hated him” (*Tale* 391). It was only at a later stage that Oz acknowledged the worth of his father and has come out of his illusionary belief that his father has never been the reason for his mother’s death. He has regained the great regard and love for his father as he had during the beginning years of his life before running away from his father to Kibbutz.

In *Tale*, Oz records that he has started to write his autobiography only when his anger on his father has got subsided. His anger is not just at his mother, who committed suicide at the age of thirty six, but also “with my father for losing her; there must have been something wrong with him for such a perfect woman to have deserted him” (*Tale* 391). Oz himself tells in his biography that he has taken so many years to understand the nature of his father and especially after his death as his protagonist in *Fima* does. Oz admits the fact that:

I killed him particularly by changing my name... It was only many years later, the night of the day he died, that it suddenly occurred to me that behind this fixed, irritating, almost annoying joke there may have
lurked his own disappointed ambitions, and a sad necessity to reconcile himself to his own mediocrity, as well as the concealed wish to entrust me with the mission to achieve in his name, when the time came, the goals that had eluded him. *(Tale 446)*

Though it took years to feel the love of his father, Oz has always cherished the love and care of both his father and mother as a single child. Both of his parents have great expectations on their son. Oz creates Michael’s father as a clear manifestation of Oz’ father himself. Hannah, Michael’s wife who is the narrator, records about her father-in-law that:

Michael was an only child, and his father cherished high hopes for him. …His father’s greatest wish was for Michael to become a professor in Jerusalem, because his paternal grandfather has taught natural sciences in the Hebrew teachers seminary in Grodno. He had been very well thought of. It would be nice, Michael’s father thought, if the chain could pass on from generation to another. *(Michael 7)*

The desires of Michael’s father have come true when he has completed his doctoral research in a very complex subject. Michael has dedicated the thesis, “to the beloved memory of the late Yehezkel Gonen, a serious, upright, and modest man, in commemoration of his hopes, his love, and his devotion” *(Michael 240)*. He has also become a professor as his father has wished.

When Hannah tells about her father, she says that, “He was always looking for hidden meanings in their words, because he saw life as a lesson from which one had to learn a moral. … my father took me and my brother Emmanuel to the Tel or Cinema on a Saturday morning to hear Martin Buber and Hugo Bergmann speak at a meeting sponsored by a pacifist organization” *(Michael 10)*. She tells publicly, “I loved my late
father more than any one in the world” (Michael 2). Oz takes pleasure in creating fictional characters who love their fathers and in so doing Oz consciously brings forth his love and regard for his father, Yehuda Arieh Klausner.

Apart from Fima, Michael and Hannah who adore their fathers, Yoel, Fima and Michael themselves have proved to be adorable in fulfilling their roles as parents in a better way than their wives have done. Evidently, while creating a father figure in his stories, it is found that Oz could imagine no other father than his own. During the times of his mother’s sickness Oz seems to have cherished his relationship with his father. He tells that, “We were very close to one another at that time, Father and I: like a pair of stretcher-bearers carrying an injured person up a seep slope” (Tale 429).

When it comes to children in his works, Oz presents only single child families. In Michael Yair is a single child to Hannah and Michael, in Fima Dimi, the only son to Fima and Nina (Fima’s former wife), and Yoel in Woman has a daughter Neeta. The children reflect the characteristic traits of Oz himself. In Fima, “Dimi interested in the collections of stamps and coins” (Fima 321). In Michael Hannah tells about her son Yair that, “Yair could play for an hour, two hours in his room without making a sound. … A clean and careful child; a balanced child. He finds objects much more interesting than people or words” (Michael 156). Hannah also identifies that, “Yair imagines war as an extraordinary complex game, which displays a whole fascinating world of system and logic” (Michael 220). In Woman, Yoel has recognised that, “Netta … had no close girlfriends. When she was not at school, she went to the city library. Or lay in her bedroom reading. She would lie and read for half the night” (Woman 12). In Tale, Oz declares the state in which he grew up. He declares:

I was of the grown-up world and the prevailing values, and having no brothers or sisters or friends to counterbalance the personality-cult that
surrounded me... And I really didn’t care, because there was hardly any difference between being locked in the bathroom and my usual solitude, in my room or the yard or the kindergarten: for most of my childhood I was a solitary child, with no brother or sister and with hardly any friends. (*Tale* 244-50)

Oz, a Jewish young boy, a loner, a book worm and a boy who chooses to live in his own world of imagination is brought back to life to live in Oz’ texts. The children in Oz’ works are made to live in the unhappy families. Thus, the character traits and the personality of Amos Klausner, [Amos Oz] son of Yehuda Arieh Klausner and Fania Mussman, are dominantly reflected in the children of Oz’ stories.

The unhappy family atmosphere and the lifestyle in those families which Oz creates in his works are evidently a duplication of his own family. The families are unhappy due to various reasons including personal, societal and financial reasons. The individuals in all of Oz’ fictional families are careful enough not to disturb one another. In *Tale* Oz says, “Sometimes on winter evenings the three of us used to sit and chat around the kitchen table after supper. We spoke softly because the kitchen was so small and cramped, and we never interrupted each other. Father considered this a precondition of any conversation” (*Tale* 244).

Similar experience is portrayed in *Woman* where, “Not a voice had been raised in the apartment for several years. Father, mother and daughter were always attentively careful not to disturb one another. Whenever they talked, they did it so politely. They all knew their boundaries. When they met together on the weekends in the kitchen, they talked of remote matters of common interest” (*Woman* 13). In the same way, Hannah in *Michael* reports that, “Michael whispered to me that he had the feeling, sometimes, that I didn’t love him anymore. … Michael was understanding. My condition. My poor health.
Difficult circumstances. ... You are a stranger, Michael. You lie next to me at night, and you are a stranger” (Michael 66). The life of togetherness has meant nothing to Hannah. Her physical sickness and the discomfort that she feels in the Land of Jerusalem have ruined the joy of living. Therefore, though the couple lives together they are distanced from one another. In the list of unhappy families, Theo and Noa, in Night, is not an exception. Theo feels disappointed with Noa, his wife and tells that, “I supposed she must have belonged to one of those mystical groups that were so popular in Tel Aviv. I was determined to escape while there was still time from this mercurial school teacher with her tricks for regulating your breathing” (Night 104-5). In all the families that Oz creates in his fiction, the characters live together yet feel an emotional detachment within them. Disappointments, frustration and a sense of both belonging and not belonging create the monotony and every individual in the family is careful enough not to disturb others.

Moreover, Oz creates uncaring mothers in his fictions who are seemingly the image of Fania, his mother. The fictional mothers of Oz reject and abandon their children. They are incompetent and neglectful not because they are career women who have chosen to work out of the home, and thus driven to leave their young ones alone. Rather, they are either stay-at-home mothers who for some unexplained reason seem incapable of bestowing love and care for their children, or mothers who forsakes their offspring for self-serving reasons. Hannah in Michael feels disappointed with her son Yair and her husband Michael. Their marriage has started to fall apart. Hannah agrees to the fact that, “I was an indifferent mother... I also felt that I should soon be dead and so I owed nothing to anyone... I would suddenly observe in both [Michael and Yair] of them, in all three of us, a quality which I can only call melancholy, because I do not know what other term to use” (Michael 81). Hannah fails to establish any kind of a meaningful bond with Yair. Throughout the story, Hannah is unwilling to accept the reality about her
circumstance, family commitments and societal demands which result in the collapse of the personal happiness and her family’s peace.

In Hill, the first story, “The Hill of Evil Counsel”, Dr. Kipnis is portrayed as the father who cares his son Hillel and it is not Ruth, his mother who cared. Whenever Hillel suffers an asthma attack Kipnis soothes him. It is said that, “At night he would wake up with attacks of asthma… Feverish, suffocated, he would… burst into tears. Until father appeared holding a small flashlight, to sit on his bed and sing him a soothing song” (Hill 16). Like Michael, Kipnis patiently answers all the queries of Hillel, tempering his responses with restraint and thought so as not to corrupt the young mind of Hillel and continuously provides affection and care. Hillel seeks his mother’s attention but she is immersed in her longing for her childhood and youth in Europe and desires to escape the reality of the newly established State of Israel. In the second story, “Mr. Levi”, Mrs. Kolodny, Uri’s mother, is constantly in a melancholic, brooding mood, unhappy with her surrounding and flees he social reality around her by retreating into a cocoon of romantic dreams. It becomes an obvious fact that Uri’s upbringing is done by his father and by his neighbours Mr. Nehamkin and his son Effraim, with whom he spends most of his time. In the third story “Longing” is a narrative that takes the form of a series of letters written by the cancer-stricken Dr. Nussbaum in his final days, to his former lover Mina Oswald who has left to New York. It is evident through their letters that they have an illegitimate child whom Oswald has left in some Kibbutz before leaving for New York to continue her research. Oswald writes, “My love and fears are directed desperately – forgive me toward the darling child you bore me and hid away in a kibbutz in the Jezreel Valley” (Hill 158). Thus, Oswald becomes yet another representation of Oz’ mother Fania.

Evidently, in all of Oz’ fictional mothers, the author reproduces the shadow image of his own mother Fania who committed suicide and has left Oz to be a single-parent
child. In *Tale*, Oz brings out elaborately about the way his father has taken care of him. Oz passionately elaborates the emotions that he has felt when his mother left him. He records that:

...if you love someone... you forgive them for everything, except betrayal. You even forgive them for nagging, for losing their cap, for leaving the marrow on their plate. To forsake is to betray. And she had- both of us, Father and me. I would never have left her like that, despite her migraines, even though I now knew that she had never loved u, I would never have left her, despite her moods....Never. All mothers love their children: that’s law of nature. ... The fact that only I couldn’t be loved, hat my mother had run away from me, only proved that there was nothing in me to love, that I didn’t deserve love.

(*Tale* 205)

The extreme emotional pain that Oz has suffered all his life has a great impact in all his works especially in his plot and characters. The psychological trauma that he has undergone for that many years has rooted deep in his psyche which in all forms is reflected in his works resulting his works to be self-reflexive.

Moreover, Oz’ women characters are created in such a way that they are not satisfied with the very nature of their husbands. In *Michael* when Hannah tells about Michael, she says, “I was ashamed of my husband because he was not amusing. His gaiety was strained and forced even when he told a funny story I could not laugh because he told it as if he were dictating lecture notes” (*Michael* 86). A similar opinion about Fima is given by Tamar. She tells Fima that, “You’re rather a darling yourself ... You’re very knowledgeable, you’re a pot and all that. A good man. The trouble is, you’re a child. It’s just incredible how childish you are” (*Fima* 130). In *Night*, Noa finds Theo, the same
way as Hannah and Tamar feels about Michael and Fima respectively. She declares that, “You know what you are, Theo? A tombstone. It doesn’t matter. I’ve got a headache. I [Theo] went back to the hall and continued my ironing. Inwardly I agreed with her: It’s hopeless” (Night 68). As already mentioned, the way Oz presents the men and women in his stories are the exact reflection of his own parents. A parallel line runs along all the stories of Oz where the men are identified to be responsible, educated, and truly committed in the relationships with their family and outside. It is also observed that every male character of Oz has the traits of his farther as the female characters have his mother’s image. In Tale, Oz narrates his father’s character that has been reflected in the characters of Michael, Fima and Yoel. He asserts:

Although he [Oz’ father] had no sense of humour and possibly had no clear idea of what a sense of humour was, my father always loved jokes, witticism and word-play … he decided to call the tortoise to call by the comical name of Abdullah-Gershon, … Whenever we had visitors … he was always amazed that everyone present did not double up with laughter. Consequently he felt it necessary to enlighten them as to the reason”. (Tale 358)

Apart from the individual self that he has projected, Oz echoes the attitudes of men and women as he has witnessed with his parents. Resultantly, the characters, their attitudes and the family situations become a re-telling of his biography in different tones and in different ways by changing their names in different stories flavoured with his powerful imagination. With his mastery in story telling, Oz, in Michael, presents Hannah who comfortably stays in her world of dreams, declares gladly about the way she enjoys her husband taking care of her, their son and all he household works. She does not seem to feel bad about making him burdened with such chores. But Michael without any ill
feelings for Hannah who willingly choose to stay in her own world of fantasy, tirelessly carry out the family commitments and the professional demands. He proves himself capable of balancing the hectic burden of life. Hannah says that:

I loved my husband when he spread a white napkin over his gray jacket, washed his hands, and carefully lifted his son. ... At five in the morning Michael would get up, boil some water, and wash the baby’s diapers. Later I would open my eyes to see him standing over me, silent and submissive. He would hand me a cup of warm milk and honey. I was drowsy. ... There were nights when Michael did not even get undressed. He sat at his desk till morning reading his books. ... If the baby cried in the night Michael would pick him up and carry him backwards and forwards across the room, from the window to the door and back again, whispering in his ears facts which he had to learn by heart. ... He never uttered a word of complaint. (Michael 77-79)

In Hill, Woman, and Night, the men are highly responsible in taking care of the house, their women and children. No fictional male character of Oz is an exception from these stereotypical characteristics of Oz. In his family, Oz has witnessed his father being responsible in carrying out the household chores. He documents a similar situation from his life in Tale. He writes that, ‘He [Oz’ father] always asked her [Oz’ mother] permission before he went out. He never went out before he had finished all the chores: putting the shopping away, washing up, hanging out the washing, bring in the washing’ (Tale 388).

Despite reflecting the his personal experiences, family set up and parental roles, Oz also presents people’s dislike for the Land which is blooded with hatred and anxiety He witnessed a profound dislike for the land in his mother. In Tale he records that, “My
mother lived a solitary life, shut up at home for most of the time. …my mother found no sense or interest in Jerusalem” (Tale 262). The experience is similar to Hannah’s in Michael. After living for many years in Jerusalem, considering her emotional and physical health, the family of Michael has moved to Kibbutz Nof Harim. Hannah has got conceived with her second child and has a perfect health. She has always identified that Jerusalem is one of the major reasons for her sickness and pain. Hannah articulates that, “Jerusalem was far away and could not haunt me here. Perhaps she had been conquered in the meantime by the enemy who hemmed her in on three sides. … I did not love Jerusalem … She wished me ill. I wished her ill” (Michael 247). The sense of belonging and not belonging to the place has been a constant struggle for Jew who lives in Jerusalem. In Night, Theo talks about the news that he has heard that morning. Theo declares that, “This morning on the news they broadcast an excerpt from a speech by the Foreign Minister, who talked about the hoped-for peace. The phrase ‘hoped-for’ is mistaken here. Either hope or peace: you can’t have them both” (Night 41). As Theo presents, Jerusalem is a place where hope and peace are found to be an impossible elements of life due to the socio-political and religious confusion that constantly prevail for centuries together. In every work of Oz, his fictional characters bring out the pain that is involved in residing in their Promised Land.

An elaborate study of Oz’ works bring out the Jewish self in Oz. Both characters and situations are reflections of the reality that Oz has been experiencing. It is also evident that all of Oz’ writing are fictionalized reality and therefore his works are self-reflexive and thereby it is postmodern in its form and content. In analyzing Oz’ writings to be postmodern, another important aspect that has been taken into consideration is the narrative pattern in his texts. Oz has proved his mastery in presenting the most complicated issues of family and politics in a simple way through which his readers could
perceive the existing problems and try to resolve them. Hans Bertens, Professor of American Studies at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands, in his *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History*, explains Jean-Francois Lyotard, the French philosopher, sociologist, and literary theorist:

Lyotard’s point of departure is the demise of what he terms ‘metanarratives’: ‘simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives’ … Those metanarratives or ‘grand’ narratives are broadly speaking, the supposedly transcendent and universal truths that underpin western civilization and that function to give that civilization objective legitimation, a term that Lyotard borrows from Habermas and that will turn out to be *The Postmodern Condition*’s key concept. (124)

Evidently, Lyotard asserts in his *The Postmodern Condition* that it is no longer the recourse to the grand narratives but it is the little narrative [*petit recit*] that remains the standard form of imaginative invention. Oz, as the one who established Israeli Peace Movement, finds routes to establish peace in the Land of Israel. His stories present the existing condition of war-torn Jerusalem and in his works the relationship struggles that are found in the families present the existing toughness between Jerusalemite and the Palestinians. All such complicated and crucial problems of the Land are presented in a simplified manner by Oz through his stories. In his works, Israeli society is impenitently scrutinized. Oz metaphorically presents the complicated political turmoil in the Israeli society through the families in his stories. The families and their problems are the microcosmic representation of the entire Jewish community’s political struggle that prevails between Arabs and Jews. Oz while presenting the existential struggle of Jews in Jerusalem, in a way, presents the microcosm of the existential struggle of the people
around the world. Oz excels in presenting the complicated issues of human life in a simplified manner through his writings.

Consequently, Oz’ writings that are based on real people, places and situations pave way to analyze the works as fiction which is similar to historiographic metafiction. In fiction or historiographic metafiction, the subject material is based on real events, but writers of faction tend to blur the line between fact and fiction to the degree that it is almost impossible to know the difference between the two. The writers of faction presents the problem that they face in their times. The term historiographic metafiction has been coined by Linda Hutcheon to refer to works that fictionalize actual historical events or figures. The aim of novelists who write historiographic metafiction is to bring in a change in the existing social reality and create a better society with order and the writers’ attempts to give a better shape to the society.

Oz, in his Land, deals about the intertwined living condition of Jews with the history of the place, Jerusalem. He documents:

Look. For us, history is interwoven with biography. And not just from this morning. One can almost say that history is biography. Private life is virtually not private here. A woman might say, for example, ‘Our oldest son was born while Joel was in bunkers, during the War of Attrition.’ Or, ‘We moved into this apartment exactly one week before the Six-Day War.’ Or, ‘He came back from the States during Sadat’s visit’ (266).

Therefore, it becomes evident that Oz cannot write without being influenced either by his personal experiences or by the historical events in the Jewish history. Oz’ Michael is a metaphor for the underlying theme of the discord within the State of Israel during the 1950s. Hill, is a collection of three linked stories, all of which took place in Jerusalem
during the last years of the British mandate. His characters, in *Night*, while being influenced by political events in a land under constant siege, also exhibit the universal emotions of love, longing, fear and ambition, as well as the tension of ethical dilemmas. In *Fima*, he deals with the legacy of the ‘67 war and what it has done to the Israeli soul. So it is evident that all his stories are dominated by the history of Jerusalem. When Shusha Guppy in her interview, “Amos Oz, The Art of Fiction”, has stated that, “Your work is very much rooted in the realities of Israel today, and you do tell the people and the government what is right and what is wrong”. Oz has responded:

> Because our lives are soaked with history. History is not something on the TV screens, or overseas, or in the Congress or the House of Commons, it is everywhere, and it penetrates the most intimate issues of life. To give an example: during the recent Gulf War, we were issued gas masks against chemical bombs. My son who is asthmatic and can hardly breathe had to wear one. We were sitting, shut tight in a sealed bedroom, wearing these ghastly masks, looking like monsters, our most private intimacy invaded by a threat from two thousand miles away. So you see, we can’t get away from the realities. People use moments in the country’s history to measure time: I got married just before the Six Day War, they say. Or, my daughter was born the day Sadat came to Israel.

While presenting the history of Jerusalem; it is unavoidable to record it without recording the constant threat of war and chaos that prevails in the land. This atmosphere of war and struggle leaves the land in utter disorder. Ultimately, Jews constantly live with a wounded psyche for so many years. The stories of Oz reveal the pain and pathos of Jews in Jerusalem and in Diaspora. The uncertainty and evils of war create a
psychological turmoil in people. In postmodern perspective, the thought process that is heavily influenced by anxiety and fear is named as paranoia. The belief that there's an ordering system behind the chaos of the world is another recurring postmodern theme. For the postmodernist, no ordering is extremely dependant upon the subject. So paranoia often straddles the line between delusion and brilliant insight. This often coincides with the theme of technoculture and hyperreality. Paranoia, thus, refers to the distrust in a system or even distrust in the self.

John Farrell, in his *Paranoia and Modernity: Cervantes to Rousseau*, attempts to delineate paranoia. He defines, “Paranoia is a psychological tendency in which the intellectual powers of the sufferer are neither entirely undermined nor completely cut off from reality, but rather deployed with a peculiar distortion” (1). Accordingly, the narration that is created by Oz who has witnessed the evils and threats that wars have brought and fought in the war-field for the sake of protecting his family and land, could also be considered as a paranoid narrative. Bran Nicol, Professor of English Literature, in his *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction*, states that, “Postmodern fiction displays a typically double-coded attitude of paranoid reading. Postmodern texts frequently invite readers to interpret them in a paranoid manner” (47).

Through the dialogues and conversations of the fictional characters, it becomes evident that their Jewish emotions are dominated by angst, threat and menace. In *Fima*, it is stated that:

While he [Fima] waited for the water to boil, he reconstructed the Korean War, the era of Truman, MacArthur, and McCarthy, and ended with the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The next nuclear holocaust won’t start with the superpowers, it’ll start with us here, he thought. With our regional conflict. The Syrians will invade the Golan
Heights with a thousand tanks, we’ll bomb Damascus, they’ll fire a salvo of missiles at the coastal towns, and then we’ll set off the doomsday mushroom. In a hundred years there won’t be a living soul here. (*Fima* 118)

There are constant references to Lebanon War, War of Independence and Six Days War in many of his works. The Jewish psyche in every Jew leaves them with the constant fear and anxiety due to the social unrest and political distortions. In *Michael*, it is recorded that, “Many of the British Mandate period were destroyed by shell-fire during the War of Independence. In 1950 most of them were still shattered. Shadowy hills showed in the distance at the ends of the streets” (*Michael* 22). The fear of war and death still prevails in Israel even after the establishment of the State for the Jews after so many years of wandering.

In *Fima*, the protagonist ends up in a conversation with his cab driver about the ongoing struggle in the Land of Israel. The driver concludes their conversation stating wearily that:

Maybe only after we lose another few thousand lives. There’s no other way, sir. The Arab is not going to evaporate, and neither are we, and we’re about as capable of living together as a cat and a moue. That’s real life, and it’s also just. It’s written in the Torah: if two customers are holding onto a tallith and they’re both shouting that it’s theirs, then you take a pair of scissors and you cut it in half. ... Better to cut the tallith than to keep cutting babies. (229)

Every Jew is frustrated with the burden of unrest. Death pursues all through his life. But as a Jew, he subordinates or suppresses all his fears in order to respond with respect to transcendent values. In *Michael*, Hannah, who suffers physical ailments mainly due to her
troubled psychological and emotional state of living expresses her inability to cope with
the traumatic living condition of Israel. Hannah feels that, “It was dark, terrifying
reflection. Jerusalem was haunting me … The spectacle was frozen and turbid. An alien
land was being washed with cold light” (Michael 248). In Night, Theo gets back to Tel
Aviv after a long time of wandering. He states, “We got to Tel Aviv in July, during a
suffocating week-long heat wave. The steamy city repelled me at first glance. After ten
years away it looked more ugly than ever: a mess of grimy suburbs with no centre. Wars,
rhetoric, greed, punctuated by raucous fun and the same sweaty mixture of destiny,
arrogance and despair” (Night 111). Thus, every character of Oz experiences the emotions
of fear and anxiety as they continue their survival in their Promised Land of Israel. The
overt Jewish concern about their past which includes anti-semitism, Genocides and
Holocaust experiences are believed to be the Jewish paranoia. Thus by identifying the
aspect of paranoia in his texts, Oz’ works are clearly postmodern in its concern.

Fragmentation and non-linear narration are considered to be dominant postmodern
features in Oz’ works. Temporal distortion in postmodern fiction is used in a variety of
ways in his writings. In postmodernism the authors do not confirm to any coherent theory.
But the writers share a few things in common. Some of the issues are temporal disorder,
the erosion of the sense of time, and fragmentation. Tim Woods, in Beginning
Postmodernism states that, “… instead of lamenting the loss of the past, the fragmentation
of existence and the collapse of selfhood, postmodernism embraces these characteristics
as a new form of social existence and behavior” (8-9).

In this regard, Oz’ characters are highly fragmented in the sense they have an
oscillated self between their world of reality and world of dreams. Fixing themselves to
any particular world is a difficult task. The characters do not form unified self. In the
same way the narration of Oz is also found to be non-linear. The narration of Oz’ stories
keeps moving from past to present and vice versa. The narration not only reflects the non-linearity in time, it also becomes confusing in the way the characters express their life of reality and dreams, throughout the stories. Most of the individuals in Oz’ stories are fragmented individuals. When they come together and form a family, obviously they form fragmented families with fragmented individuals. Moreover the Land of Israel and the culture of the place are fragmented in many ways due to the territorial partition and diaspora.

Regarding the kingdom of Israel, it was divided for the first time during BCE 930 into Kingdom of Judah and Israel. After this the land was conquered by many Persian and Hellenistic monarchs. Jews have always been displaced from one place to another whenever the rulers of the land change. While tracing the history of Jerusalem it could be known that the Land of Israel has been under the rule of Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, Mamluks, Ottomans, and the British. The people in the Land have been compelled to adopt the demands that the rulers placed. In 1947 when the US proposed to establish separate states for Jews and Arabs, Jerusalem was divided under Israeli and Palestinian rule. This has resulted in the constant war between the Arabs and Israelis. Oz’ political writings explicitly deal with the problems of partition and the issues related to the struggle that goes on between Arabs and Israelis. His literary writing which is ultimately based on families becomes a metaphorical representation of the chaotic and fragmented situation that prevails among the states. Thus the fragmentation that prevails in the state of Israel results in the fragmented and wounded psyche of individuals in Oz’ works. His fictional characters and texts are broken up into numerous fragmented sequences, with multiple characters, employing ephemeral techniques. Israel is known to be more fragmented and segmented society than ever. The Jerusalemites in Oz’ fiction has desires to achieve great things but they do not attain their desires because of their
inability to identify what they actually long to achieve. It seems that they have all come to a state of inertia. The characters are fragmented because of their lack of wholeness. They have different personalities within themselves which contradict one another.

Christopher Butler, a Roman Catholic priest, in his Postmodernism A Very Short Introduction, states that:

the work of postmodernists was deliberately less unified, less obviously ‘masterful’, more playful or anarchic, more concerned with the process of our understanding than with the pleasure of artistic finish or unity, less inclined to hold a narrative together, and certainly more resistant to a certain interpretation, that much of the art that had preceded it. (5)

In this regard, the detailed analysis of Oz’ texts reveals that they reflect the characteristics of a postmodern text as suggested by Butler. Evidently Oz’ works are less unified and it is difficult to understand the text as a unified whole. His writings revolve around the world of reality, world of fictional imagination of the author and the world of fantasy and dreams of the characters. Therefore, it is not an easy task to understand Oz’ writings.

There has been a constant shift that takes place between the characters’ world of reality and dream. Fima, for example, has noble dreams. Yet he struggles within himself by oscillating between two worlds: the real world and the world of dreams. While Oz presents Fima’s instability, he states:

Angrily he decided that he ought to sit down to work right away. He repeated to himself the words from the dream, Have to separate. Separate what from what? A warm, tender voice that was neither male nor female but held a deep compassion said to him, And where are you Efraim? A very good question, Fima replied. (Fima 10)
The overlapping of the real and dream worlds torments the fictional characters of Oz and they fail to accomplish what they exactly desire to achieve.

Hannah in *Michael*, has also experienced similar difficulty. Her inability to draw the boundary between the world of reality and dreams shatters her life in the present. At the same time, for Hannah, the painful past experiences torment her and compel her to stay in the world of dreams or slumber. She seems to enjoy her world of dreams more than the real world which keeps her away from the real world where she has her own responsibilities as a mother and wife. She narrates, “Those were dizzy, multicolored weeks. I was a queen. My cool mastery was challenged by open rebellion. I was captured by the mob, imprisoned, humiliated, tortured. But a handful of loyal supporters in dark corners were plotting to rescue me. I had confidence in them. I relished my cruel suffering” (*Michael* 16). Her refusal and unwillingness to come into the world of reality ultimately spoils the joy and peace of her family to which she belongs.

A similar attitude is found in Noa in *Night*. Though Noa has desire and enthusiasm to take up the project of establishing the rehabilitation centre for the drug addicts, the inability of performing it amidst the political difficulties leave her in a state of flux. Theo, on the other hand, foresees the underlying intricacies in carrying out the project. Noa has high ambitions yet unrealistic. Her helplessness to comprehend Theo’s arguments makes her claim that their life is fragmented due to the tragedy of not wanting to do anything. She affirms that, “Our real tragedy is that we’re not truly desperate to do anything. That’s the real disaster. When you’re not burning to do anything anymore, you cool down and start dying…. We’ve got to start wanting things” (*Night* 193).

Consequently, with the individuals’ lack in the oneness in their personal self, when they get to live with another individual, they tend to ruin the steadiness in the other person. When they form the institution called family, it is collapsed due to the already
existing perplexity in the individuals. The family is always in a compulsion to stay together amidst the difficulties. But the fragmented individuals tend to bring in the fragmented attitudes, behaviours and beliefs into their families. It is true that better families form better communities than any other societies around the world which is an important element with the Jewish community. Neusner, in his Judaism the Basics, states that, “The action then invokes creation, the making of a new Eden. The community of the two ‘I’s becoming one ‘we’ is the couple changed into the paradigm of humanity, beginning with Adam and Eve. So the union of woman and man becomes the beginning of a new creation, so that the woman becomes Eve, and the man, Adam” (62).

As observed, it is pathetic that Oz’ families are always found to be unhappy. In his interview with the researcher, Oz affirmed that, “My novels are primarily about families. If I have to say in one word, what all my works are about - families. If you give me two words I would say unhappy families” (Interview). Eventually, the unhappiness that prevails in the families are mainly because of the fragmented individuals. In Fima, Oz expresses the fragmented mental set up of the man and woman in the family. They feel an inability to accept the past and thus the influence of their past leaves them with an inability to accept the present. In Night, it is said that, “…after a terrible fight, when he had mollified her with the words: If only we weren’t married, I’d ask you to be my wife. And she, smiling, had answered through her tears, if you weren’t already my husband, I think I might say yes” (Night 12).

In Michael, Hannah realizes well her own physical and emotional state of being. She whole heartedly accepts the fact that it is always she who would collapse the balance of the family. Yet the realization about her fragmented self has done no good to the betterment of the family. She records that:
One night, after we had turned out the light in silence, Michael whispered to me that he had the feeling, sometimes, that I didn’t love him anymore. He said this calmly, as if reciting the name of some mineral.

“I’m depressed,” I said, “that’s all.”

Michael was understanding. My condition. My poor health. Difficult circumstances… You are a stranger, Michael. You lie next to me at night, and you are a stranger”. (Michael 66)

Similar conditions prevail in the relationship between Theo and Noa in Night. When Theo tells about Noa, he says, “She is so much at peace with herself, with the darkness, with the desert” (Night 10). In the same way, when Noa tells about her state of living with Thoe, she expresses that:

He [Theo] knew from the start that I’m not up to the challenge. He knew that after one or two slip-ups and failures I’d come running straight to him. Meanwhile he’s tactful enough to say nothing and not interfere. Like a grown-up who allows a toddler to climb wherever he likes but keeps a close watch and holds his hands out, where the child can’t see him, to catch him if he falls. (Night 13)

Even though Hannah and Noa realize their own individual selves, they fail to do anything for the betterment of either the family’s peace or their own peace. This stubbornness in them ultimately brings in a compulsion that the male members compromise on many things in order to hold on to their family relationship so that the family will continue as a united whole which expected from every Jewish family.

In Judaism the Basics, when Neusner tells about the Jewish family, he considers the family to be a metaphoric representation of the Jewish community. He presents,
“Zion, the bride and Israel the groom” (64). It becomes obvious that the fragmented self of an individual leads to the fragmented state of families which ultimately results in the fragmentation in the Jewish community. Fragmentation is, thus, dominantly found in his individual fictional characters, in the families that he has created, in the community and in the Land of Israel.

Postmodern writings include the collapse in the cultural hierarchies. Mike Featherstone, the director of the Theory, Culture & Society Centre and Professor of Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London, in his Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity, argues that:

As we shall see, the term ‘postmodernism’ can be understood as pointing to this process of cultural fragmentation and collapse of symbolic hierarchies which, I would argue, gains much of its impetus from the awareness of a shift in the value of symbolic power and cultural capital of the West, rather than a move to a new stage of history, ‘postmodernity,’ itself premised upon a developmental model of tradition and modernity constructed from Western experience. This, then, is one important sense in which postmodernism points to the decentering of culture and the introduction of cultural complexity.

(13)

Oz, being a Jewish individual, seems to collapse the traditional socio-cultural and religious practices of the society in his stories and writings. Jerusalem is considered to be the Promised Land for Jews. Primary importance is given to the tradition, culture and religion in Jewish community. Jews always take pride in identifying themselves as people of culture and religion. But Oz’ works do not show characters who are culture bound or religious. His characters are found to be less religious and are people who do not adhere
to their cultural norms. The hierarchy in the family is challenged in his works. Though being a patriarchal society, Jewish men in Oz’ stories play a submissive role. Oz has never created men who are assertive over their women. This reversal in the traditional hierarchies proves Oz to be a postmodern writer. In this regard, it can be considered that Oz establishes a developmental model of Jewish tradition through his stories and characters. Oz uses dialogism to express his opinions and ideas. Oz’ religious and cultural stands could easily be traced from the dialogues of his characters. Any Jew could only be related with the practices and customs of his religion and culture. Oz breaks such tradition in his characters and settings of the plot.

Apart from questioning the religious and cultural hierarchies, Oz tends to bring in the collapse in the traditional and cultural norms. In Jewish tradition and religion, women are always considered inferior to their men folk. Womanhood is considered to be a burden and almost a curse. In *Fima*, Oz presents the protagonist as a character who envies the state of women. His imagination of all that a woman undergoes leaves him in confusion about his own emotions. He elaborates:

Sometimes womanhood itself struck him as being a crying injustice, almost a cruel illness that afflicted half the human race and exposed it to degradations and humiliations that the other half was spared. But sometimes a vague jealousy stirred inside him, a sense of deprivation or loss, as though he had been cheated of some secret gift that enabled *them* to relate to the world in a way that was barred to him forever. The more he thought about it, the less he was able to distinguish between his pity and his envy. The womb, conception, pregnancy, childbirth, motherhood, breast feeding, even menstruation, even miscarriage and
abortion – he tried to imagine them all, struggling over and over again
to feel what he was not meant to feel. (Fima 35)

In presenting such characters, Oz represents a man who could sympathize with a woman.
Fima feels that, “The separation of humankind into two sexes struck him as an act of
cruelty and an irreparable injustice” (Fima 128). When he handles Annette, one of his
patients, in his clinic, she declares that, “He handles me as though I’m made of glass”
(Fima 95).

Oz, explicitly, breaks through the patriarchal stereotype of household practices
meant for women. Almost all his male characters are presented as responsible and gentle.
They perform the roles of a father, a husband and a son or whatever, they are found to be
at their best. There is no stereotypical sharing of responsibilities. The desire for being
another gender is found in Fima and Hannah. In Michael Hannah says, “When I was nine
I still used to wish I could grow up as a man instead of a woman (Michael 5). She also
says, “I thought that if I wrestled and climbed trees and read boy’s books I’d grow up to
be a boy. I hated being a girl. I regarded grown-up women with loathing and disgust”
(Michael 23). When Oz brings in a change in the attitude of his characters they are made
to feel what they ought not to feel. Hannah, hating to be a girl and Fima, looking at
separation of human gender as an act of cruelty are found to be Oz’ attempts to break the
hierarchy that lies with regard to gender.

In Fima, the protagonist expresses that, “…he had never been a practicing Jew
and was certain that God was not in the least religious and had no use for religion” (Fima
19). In Michael, Hannah states that, “We do not light Sabbath candles, because Michael
would consider it hypocritical in people who choose not to follow the ways of religion”
(Michael 147). When Michael tells about his father to his son Yair, he tells that, “My
father did not know what truth there was in the ways of religion. Hence he kept them. It
was only when my brother Emanuel joined a socialist youth movement that all the Sabbath observances were abandoned. Our respect for tradition was very frail” (Michael 148).

Hannah in Michael, brings out the religious standards of her husband and father-in-law. After the death of Yehezkel, Michael’s father, “Michael abstained from shaving during the week following the funeral. I do not think he did this out of respect for religious tradition, or even in deference to his father’s wishes (Yehezkel had used to describe himself as a practicing atheist)” (Michael 137). Almost all of Oz’ characters have little consideration for their tradition and their religion. This elucidates Oz’ neutral stand in religion and culture. Oz thus proves himself to be anti-fanatic towards Jewish religion, culture and tradition.

Oz’ works are abundant with various literary and philosophical images. Fascination for images is also an important element in postmodern texts. In Cities and Fascination: Beyond the Surplus of Meaning by John Urry, a British sociologist and Professor at Lancaster University, brings out the importance given to conceptions, images, and representations in postmodern texts. He elucidates:

... the constructivist basis of postmodernist theory (re-)questions the possibility of distinguishing between an external ‘reality’ on the one hand and perception, conceptions and images or representations of such a reality on he other. ...Thus such images and pictures become primary material for analysis and interpretation – to be understood in their respective contextuality and contingency. (81)

In Jewish literature, symbols, metaphors, similes, descriptions and images have become an integral part. Jewish writers have proved their mastery in bringing out their ideologies and ethics through various images and metaphors. Howard E. Schwartz, an author,
business executive, consultant, and social critic, in *The savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism*, states that:

Recent theoretical and ethnographic literature has shown that metaphor not only infuses thought but that language itself is metaphoric at its root. ... The metaphors that are used to reflect upon human life and social experience frequently revolve around animal life and agriculture. For example, since animals and plants serve as metaphorical human beings difference between social groupings are metaphorically related to differences in species of animals. ...In the case of ancient Israel ... metaphors provide a language for conceptualizing the relationship of Israel to its neighbors and to God and for thinking about kinship and social relations. (117-19)

In this regard, Oz in his works uses more of images and metaphors. Life was foundering in candlesticks and frying pans, gestation of an elephant, bill goat years, tortoise year, dead man who was late for his own funeral, cockroach, lizard, butterfly, wolves, living together as a cat and a mouse or oil and water, hawkish element, ape and cats are all some of the images and metaphors that Oz prevalently uses in his various texts. In *Fima*, Oz brings out an altogether different view on a cockroach which is ultimately a symbolic representation of Jews:

Suddenly a cockroach came strolling toward him [Fima], looking weary and indifferent. It did not try to escape. At once Fima was fired with the thrill of the chase. Still on his knees, he slipped off a shoe and brandished it ... He was filled with awe at the precise, minute artistry of this creature, with no longer seemed abhorrent but wonderfully perfect: a representative of a hatred race, persecuted and confined in
the dark; a race that had fallen victim to primeval loathing born of fear, of simple cruelty, of inherited prejudices. *(Fima 78-79)*

By presenting the image of a cockroach, Oz brings out the way Jews are looked at by the people around the world, especially by their colonizers. They have been the hated race while they have been in Diaspora and have always been persecuted by many rulers even in their own home land. They have experienced the pain of living in darkness. Through history, Jews have never tried to conceal their ethical identity in order to escape pain and persecution. The Jews stood the test of time for many years and at last found a place for them on earth which they consider to be their Promised Land.

While presenting Fima, Oz reveals that:

For fifty years, like the gestation of an elephant, this faceless clerk had been swelling inside the womb of child and youth and grown man, and now the fifty years were up, the gestation was complete, the womb has burst open, the butterfly had begotten a chrysalis. In this chrysalis Fima recognized himself. *(Fima 8)*

In almost fifty years, Fima has had protected stages of development. Elephants have the longest gestation period of all mammals, carrying their young for nearly two years before giving birth. Long developmental periods are common among highly intelligent animals. Since elephants are the largest living and biggest-brained land animals in the world, there is a lot of growth for elephants to do in the womb. In this manner, it could have been a symbolic representation that Oz makes while presenting his character. Fima has proved his intelligence through his talks on various subjects, from politics to human emotions. He has gained his maturity in every sphere of his life during the fifty years of his living on earth. Only when he is fifty years of age he has recognized himself. Fima used to refer
to his tortoise years that he has crossed through his life. Each achievement or dream, has
delayed and it is impossible to achieve tasks in life or in reality.

Oz has always proved his scholarship in philosophy through his approach towards
life and the symbols that he uses in his works. In *Fima*, the protagonist reflects on the
way he feels about the differences that exist among people. Oz, through the emotions of
Fima, brings out the fact that every human remains to be same in their needs and wants. It
is brought out through Fima’s point of view. It is said that:

...he [Fima] sometimes felt that the difference between people, any
people – men, women, or children – were of no consequence except
perhaps for the outermost layer, the ephemeral surface. Just as water
took the form of snow or mist or stream, or a lump of ice, or clouds or
hailstones. Or just as the bells of the monasteries and village churches
differed only in their pitch and rhythm, all having the same meaning.

(*Fima* 20)

According to Fima, the changes and differences among human beings are not found at the
base level but only in the outer surface. The basic human instincts remain the same with
every individual around the world.

Oz, who has an in-depth understanding about the reality that exists in the Land of
Israel, brings out the relationship that exists between the Jews and the Arabs. As a
dialogist, Oz in *Fima* through the words of Fima’s father states that, “They [Arabs] will
simply be here, living their own lives, as if you and I and all the rest of us were no more
than last year’s snow. A handful of dust” (*Fima* 75). Later he added that, “The Arabs are
not going to evaporate, and neither are we, and we’re about as capable of living together
as a cat and a mouse. That’s real life, and it’s also just” (*Fima* 229). Fima’s father
remarks that bringing peace between Jews and Arabs is an impossible task. Therefore, it
is possible to go on only by making compromises in various aspects. He also reveals that it is a tough mission to make both the poles meet. But they will exist together like cat and mouse. It is because of the memories which they hold on to. The sufferings of the Jews were so intense that there is no more possibility to erase the memories of their past. They are the undying memories. Oz expresses the lasting effect of such memories through the words of Bat-Ammi in *Hill*: “Bat-Ammi writing in her notebook … she is making a note in her autograph book: *When snow is black and pigs can fly, only then will my memory die*” (*Hill* 130). The images that Oz uses are powerful enough to bring out the intensity of the Jew’s emotions that would last for ever.

In *Michael*, Oz reveals the dangerous state of leading an idle life. According to Oz, when people are contented with what they are and stop acting towards betterment, it would lead to disaster. Michael explicates, “… when people are contented and have nothing to do, emotion spreads like a malignant tumor” (*Michael* 107). Malignant tumor is one that invades surrounding tissues, is usually capable of producing metastases, may recur after attempted removal, and is likely to cause death unless adequately treated. The authority of Oz in using appropriate images helps to analyze and interpret things in the right manner.

In *Michael*, Oz brings out the way in which the past in human life ought to be handled. Hannah is presented as a character who lives in her past fears and anxieties and who ultimately ruins her life in the present whereas Michael is a person with much pessimistic attitude and as a hard worker he finds meaning in the present and not in the past. For Michael the past has no role to play in the present. Oz in *Michael* observes that:

> Like most optimists, Michael regarded the present as a soft, shapeless substance from which one has to mold the future by dint of responsible hard work. … The past appeared to Michael like a pile of orange peels
which must be disposed of, not by scattering them along the way, because they would make a mess; they must be collected up and destroyed. (*Michael* 227)

The image that Oz uses to define and illustrate the worthlessness of the unwanted past and its memories, gives a wake up call to the readers who stick on to the past which spoils the joys of the present. Oz brings out the essential reality of life when he demands the need to eradicate and destroy the superfluous past like a pile of orange peels which in scattering makes the place a mess.

In *Michael*, Oz explains the philosophy that is set in life. Hannah’s father is represented as a man who has known the complicated philosophy that is innate in the simple fact of life, “He was always looking for hidden meanings in their words, because he saw life as a lesson from which one had to learn a moral” (*Michael* 10). Thus, Oz has proved his skill in using appropriate images in his texts to bring out the complicated realities of life. His literary efficiency is obviously revealed through his use of images.

The domestic life and the political life of people in Jerusalem are almost finding no visible boundaries in the works of Oz. The domestic and the political realities are effectively brought out by Oz through his incredible images. Thus the fascination that Oz has for images in all his writings, be it political writing or story telling, prove him to be a postmodern writer.

Yet another important feature in postmodern literature is intertextuality. Linda Hutcheon in her *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, states that:

In the wake of recent assaults by literary and philosophical theory on modernist formalist closure, postmodern fiction has certainly sought to open itself up to history, to what Edward Said (1983) calls the “world.” … The textual incorporation of these intertextual pasts as a constitutive
structural element of postmodernist fiction functions as a formal marking of historicity—both literary and “worldly”. (124)

Postmodernism represents a decentering of the subject/self in postmodern literature, which highlights the concept of intertextuality. Intertextuality is the relationship between one text and another or one text within the interwoven fabric of literary history.

Intertextuality in postmodern literature can be a reference or parallel to another literary work, an extended discussion of a work, or the adoption of a style. Marko Juvan, the chief in Institute of Slovenian Literature and Literary Studies, in his *History and Poetics of Intertextuality*, brings out the argument of Manfred Pfister. He says:

Pfister argues that the concept of Intertextuality that Kristeva and Barthes shaped amidst the turbulent social events… became the ‘central constructional principle’ in postmodernism; it was not only prominent but also reflected in metafictional structures of literary texts themselves. (84)

In this regard, as a student of philosophy, Oz in his works refers to many philosophers and he adopts many philosophical ideas in his texts. He does not lack originality. Oz uses a unique pattern of writing. Moreover, constant references to other literary texts, fiction writers, historical evidences, philosophic ideas, and the usage of biblical names, incidents and verses, bring in the aspect of intertextuality in all his works. For example in *Fima*, the protagonist and other characters make constant mention on the biblical verses. To cite a few examples, “If the light within you darkens, it is written, how great is the darkness” (*Fima* 132) is found in Matt. 6. 28. “He lives without sense and dies without desire. Frail man, his days are as the grass” (*Fima* 72) is found in Ps. 103.15.

The title “Way of the Wind”, with allusions to *Genesis* and *Ecclesiastes*, suggests the caprice of the father, Shimshon Sheinbaum, who to be strong, like his similarly unshorn biblical character Samson, a Judge called by God to save Israelites from the
hands of the Philistines, but failed to be a Nazarite and had a fatal death along with the Philistines. Shimshon, in his devotion to the country and to the political writing has abandoned his wife and son Gideon. He lives away from them on the kibbutz. The allusive title also forecasts Gideon’s tragic attempt to live up to his own heroic biblical character to please Simshon. The result is his becoming fatally tangled in power lines on the kibbutz when his army paratroop unit makes a jump and the wind shifts. When Oz talks about his unbelief in universal love, gives reason for the human beings being mean and cruel. He states that, “Every little child knows that, and yet wickedness till doesn’t come to an end. How can you explain that? It seems we got it all from the apple that we ate back then: we ate a poisoned apple” (Tale 145). Oz constantly uses biblical names, situations and quotes to symbolically represent his ideas and opinions in his writings.

Apart from many other biblical references, many literary texts which are also packed with philosophic ideas are mentioned in specific context by the characters of Oz in his stories. The title of Rhyming, is borrowed from Yerucham Shdemati’s Rhyming Life and Death. In Fima, he states that, “Death seemed as boring as one of Wahrhaftig’s stories” (Fima 85). In another context when Fima talks with Tamar, he makes a mention of Kafka’s work. He states, “Kafka’s story about Gregor Samsa, who woke up one morning to find he had turned into a giant cockroach...he went on to give her a summary of the plot of Metamorphosis” (Fima 125). In Woman, Oz refers to the text which Netta carries with her who is a replica of Oz, a voracious reader of various texts. “Netta...carrying a large book entitled Verses on Stone: Epitaphs from the Days of the Pioneers” (164). Yoel, the protagonist, travels to various places and it is said that, “On his [Yoel’s] recent trips he had been reading books by the Bronte sisters ... in Wuthering Heights he found a puzzle” (Woman 80).
Oz is not restricted with literary analysis but he also includes other genres such as music and art. In Night, the protagonist, Theo refers to a poem which is known for its lyrical beauty. His interest and involvement in music provide him the authenticity to say that, “In a book called Words to Music: The German Lied from Mozart to Mahler I came across a poem entitled ‘Moonlit Night’ by Joseph von Eichendorff that was set to music by Schumann in 1840” (Night 187). In Michael, the eponymous hero says, “I read two chapters of Mapu’s Love of Zion” (Michael 18). Oz brings in appropriate references from the literary artists and their works, biblical verses and philosophers’ concepts which make all his writings more authentic. Oz has a strong philosophic hold in his writing due to his strong authority in, “the ‘Diological philosophy’ from Kierkegaard to Martin Burbur” (Tale 404). In his telephonic interview with the researcher and her supervisor, affirms a positive response to the opinion that his works are dominated by the existential philosophy. Oz also claims that his primary influence is Albert Camus. He intends to confirm that he is a secular man and not a religious one. He validates saying that, “Martin Burbur, (the religious existentialist) is very close to my heart and has an influence on my work, especially his ideas about the crucial importance of the dialogue between individuals between I and You, between myself and yourself” (Interview). Oz also accepts that, “I consider Simon de Beauvoir as one of my influences” (Interview). When the researcher has asked whether he goes along with the ideas of Sartre, he has said, “Only part of it because it is a difficult question and to explain what I exactly take from Sartre and what I don’t take from Sartre, I need to give a long lecture which I cannot do it at the moment” (Interview).

Being a student of literature and philosophy Oz’ works are strongly influenced by the philosophers and so his writings philosophic. Also, being a Jew, Oz has the history rooted in him, making his work historical. Though he insists on his secular stand as a Jew,
his works have so much of characters, settings and backdrop from the biblical ground. He includes characters that have their concerns in art and music and their dialogues are based on their field of interest. Apart from all other intertextuality, his works are dominated by the political settings of Jerusalem and the chaotic atmosphere created due to the Israeli-Palestinian partition of the Land. Thereby, Oz’ works are evidently intertextual yet that does not take away the originality of the author’s presentation, but it enhances the legitimacy of his writings.

Moreover, dream is another aspect of postmodern literature that is found in Oz. Fiction, fantasy and dreams were formerly tabooed themes and devices which could be understood as postmodern. Postmodern narrative blurs the distinction between hallucination and dream. Mark F. Frisch, Associate Professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Duquesne University, United States in You Might Be Able to Get There from Here: Reconsidering Borges and the Postmodern, states that, dreams are part of postmodern literature. He says:

It [Postmodern literature] emphasizes that we are dream images, that we exist because we are dream images, that we exist because we are perceived, and that the line between sleeping and waking is indistinguishable. It serves to challenge the reliability and authority of sensory perception. Our senses do not define ‘the real world’. (52)

In some of Oz’ works dream plays an important role in the life of the characters. Among the characters, dream becomes an integral part in the lives of Hannah and Fima. Hannah’s inability to live with fear and uncertainty further exacerbate her sickness. She consoles herself with her dreams and thereby finds peace and comfort in all uncertainties. Fima has a dream book. “In this book Fima had made it his habit to write down, in bed, as the first pale lines of dawn began to appear between the slats of his blinds, whatever he
had seen in the night. Even if he had seen nothing… wrote something like this, ‘Twentieth of December-blank night’” (1). Both Hannah and Fima seem to have unpleasant dreams. In Michael, Hannah records that, “wild visions came without my wanting them” (111). It is the same thing with Fima when he has a dream where he saw his mother. It is said that, “Terrified, Fima turned away. And woke up” (114).

Sometimes dreams also become a wish-fulfilment for both Fima and Hannah. Both of them prefer not to come into the world of reality; instead they prefer to stay in their world of dreams. Hannah puts across that, “Awkward things sometimes happen in dreams, but some force always operates which makes decisions for you, and you are free to be like the boat in the song, with all the crew asleep, drifting wherever the dream carries you” (17). Oz gives importance to the aspect of dreams in his stories. His characters experience the perfect and comfortable zone in their world of dreams. Oz brings in the aspect of dream in his texts which becomes yet another reason for establishing Oz’ works to be postmodern.

Another important aspect in postmodernism is the hope against the hopeless situation. While the modernists mourn on the fragmented state of the cosmos, postmodernists hail the fragmented nature. Christopher Butler, in his Postmodernism A Very Short Introduction, states that, “…the postmodernist party tends to believe that its time has come. It is certain of its uncertainty, and often claims that it has seen through the sustaining illusions of others, and so has grasped the ‘real’ nature of the cultural and political institutions which surrounds us” (2).

Oz, himself is a product of such a fragmented and uncertain world. Such uncertainties are reflected much in his works through the characters and situations. Oz’ works also deal with the hopelessness and absurdities of the cosmos. The uncertainties and chaos that he highlights about Jerusalem is not restrained only to a particular place
but to the entire universe. His stories revolve around the chaotic atmosphere inside the families and the society. Yet the stories end with a note of hope amidst the hopeless situations. The characters’ transformation gives a hopeful ending for his works.

In *Fima*, Oz expresses the deliberate need for every individual to do the best to bring peace in the Land. Due to the hatred and enmity that have been spilled on them by their neighbouring countries, it becomes impossible for the Israelites to find the needed peace they long for many centuries. It is only pain and suffering that the Jewish generations have encountered in their lives. In *Fima* it is stated that the Jewish community is, “... a representative of a hatred race, persecuted and confined to the drains, excelling in the art of stubborn survival, agile and cunning in the dark; a race that had fallen victim to primeval loathing born of fear, of simply cruelty, of inherited prejudices” (*Fima 79*). In *Michael* it is said that, “Political speculation was rife. There was still a great deal of uncertainty” (*Michael 44*). Michael, who has fought in the Jewish army, tells, “We [Jews] walk past the heavy iron gates of Schneller Barracks. I have never set foot inside these grim walls. When I was a child the British army was here, and machine guns protruded from the loopholes. Many years ago this fortress was called the Syrian Orphanage, a strange name which threatens me in its own way” (*Michael 146*).

Oz as a master story teller fictionalizes almost all historical events from Jewish history. The tension between trauma and war and the ideological suppression of memory defines the major theme of the texts. Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of the independent State of Israel, has extended the hand of peace and good-neighbourliness to all the States around Jerusalem and to the people, and calls upon them to cooperate in mutual helpfulness with the independent Jewish nation in its Land. The area in dispute is also very small. According to the settlements, the built-up areas constitute only 1.7% of the West Bank. This has always led to many wars in their history.
In such a living condition, Oz, being one of the founders of the Israeli Peace Movement, through the words of Fima comes out with his own suggestion to bring an end to all cruelties. Oz’ most popular fictional character Fima lives modestly in order to dream fabulously. Oz has used *Fima* to bring out his suggestions and opinions through his protagonist’s political arguments which he makes within his own self and with people whom he encounters and he finds pleasure in winning his arguments. Oz’ suggestions for the peace of his nation are brought out effectively with the fictional touch. Fima says to Dimi, his son that, “Children sometimes do very cruel things, simply because they don’t have enough imagination to know what pain is. Dimi: we haven’t got a hope. But let’s go and search anyhow. So at least we’ll know we tried and failed” (145). What Oz suggests through the words of Fima is the ultimate need of the postmodern world. Every individual is in a demand to put in his/her best efforts to bring in peace to the world of chaos and confusion. Whether the attempts that he/she makes succeed or not, it would give a satisfaction that, “we tried” (*Fima* 145).

Apart from coming out with such suggestions, Oz, in *Hill*, brings out the unfailing hope that rules the hearts of people in Jerusalem. There he presents the characters’ hope against the hopeless situation and their certainty about their uncertain atmosphere. Nehamkin in *Hill*, states that:

> The residents longed to leave Jerusalem and settle some where less extreme. Some of them fixed their sights on other suburbs…. They believed almost without exception that the hard times would soon be over, the Hebrew state would be set up, and everything would change for the better. Surely they had completed in full their term of suffering. Meanwhile …it was almost impossible to explain to them why and
from where their parents had come here, and what it was they were
waiting for. *(Hill 64)*

The characters reveal their longing for a better world where they would find possibility
for getting their dreams fulfilled. It has been since many years that the Jews spent their
lives in despair and tears, yet one of Oz’ character boldly declares, “There would be no
more tears” *(Hill 119)*. Moreover, Dr. Nussbaum writes to Mina stating that, “I have still
not entirely given up hope” *(Hill 134)*. Even in the war torn city, Dr. Nussbaum could
say, “What will come of this war I haven’t the faintest idea. Only all sorts of hopes and
fears” *(Hill 135)*. Such sort of contradictory emotions of hope and fear has become an
integral part of Jewish life.

Such firm hopes that the Jewish people have kept their hopeless world to prolong
for all through the past years. Their certainty for a better future has always been their
driving force to push through their lives’ difficulties. It is their untiring efforts with hope
is what brought them back to their own Promised Land from the lands of exile round the
world. Evidently Oz’ works are mere reflections of such hopes and believes of the
individuals. Hopelessness and despair are thoroughly overthrown by his writings. Oz
becomes a postmodernist in his hopeful attitude in the hopeless world and ultimately his
works become postmodern texts.

Raymond Federman, in *Critifiction: Postmodern Essays*, adds playfulness and
black humor as one of the characteristics of postmodernism. He states, “However, in
these novels that appear after 1968, the element of parody is gradually replaced by pure
irony and explicit self-reflexiveness, which release new energies into the language of
fiction. Moreover, the blasphemous humor and the playfulness of these novels displace
not only the somber black humor of the early postmodern novels” *(28)*.
An elaborate study of Oz’ works reveals a seeming reality that aspects such as playfulness or black humor is used in his works. In Woman it is told about Yoel that:

He was almost ashamed of his strange joy... He knew well that people’s acts, all people, all acts, acts of passion and ambition, acts of fraud, seduction, accumulation, evasion, acts of malice and defection, competition and flattery and generosity, acts meant to impress, to attract attention, to be engraved on the memory of the family or the gang or the country or the human race, petty acts and grandiose ones, calculated or uncontrollable or vicious acts, almost all of them almost always take you somewhere you had not the slightest intention of ending up. This general and constant deflection or diversion of people’s various actions Yoel tried to call in his heart the universal practical joke, or the black humor of the universe. (Woman 134)

With reference to Yoel’s understanding, it is known that Oz’ every visible and invisible act and word in all his texts is mere playfulness or parody. Therefore, Oz indirectly brings in playfulness or parody in most of his works and thereby proves himself a postmodernist.

To conclude, Patrick D. Murphy, one of the main experts on ecofeminine literary criticism, in his Farther Afield in the Study of Nature-oriented Literature, defines literary postmodernism as:

… a particular type of writing that shares the philosophical orientation arising from the condition of postmodernity and that tends to display certain stylistic aspects that would proceed from or reinforce such an orientation a break with traditional realist conventions is one blatant feature; another is a break with the kind of focus on epistemology as the key to meaning and understanding found in much modernist
literature of the first half of the twentieth century; a third is a disbelief in a master narrative or universal structuring principle for the world—much less the literary text; another is a tendency toward stylistic experimentation favoring the rational, the non-linear, and the indeterminate, with high favor for parody, satire, and excess; and, perhaps most important, is a tendency to cast doubt on the possibility of intentional human agency. (36)

Oz’ works are substantiated with evidence that his works are highly philosophical in its concern due to his strong philosophic education during the early years of Oz. Though Oz claims himself to be a story teller, he has adopted his own variety in creating and presenting his stories. He consciously breaks the traditional and the cultural conventions which are very much Jewish. Oz has simplified the complicated political, cultural and religious complexities into his fictional world through his petit and non linear narration. It is also made apparent that parody, paranoia, fragmentation and self-reflexivity are found to be dominating in all his fictional works. Evidently, Oz’ works are firmly established to be postmodern in their form and structure.