Chapter 5

Summation

If we don’t stop somewhere, if we don’t accept an unhappy compromise, unhappy for both sides, if we don’t learn how to unhappily coexist and contain our burned sense of injustice – if we don’t learn how to do that, we end up in a doomed state.

- Oz (Israel, Palestine and Peace xii)

In the preceding chapters the researcher tries to locate and establish Amos Oz as an existential-postmodern writer. In this detailed analysis, the researcher has identified that Oz has created a fictional model that could satisfy his various needs and to which he has remained loyal through most of his literary writings. The main coaxes and concerns of Oz’ fiction are the complexities that are recognized through the symbols, and the multifarious structure that corresponds every aspect of human experiences which includes personal, psychological, familial, socio-political and religious anxieties of life. Oz’ works are patently proved as contemporary biofiction, which are intertextual and interauthorial writings. His works cover historical time from the past and connect them to the contemporary world resulting in the continuous record of Jewish past and the present.

Literally, the Zionist enterprise cast immigration and assimilation in a positive light by using the Hebrew concept *aliyah* that describe immigration to Israel, linked to the notion of people returning to the homeland. The detailed study of the fictional and non-fictional writings of Oz is based primarily on the Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel and the resulting emotions of the Israelis. Through his narratives, Oz ascertains the fact that most immigrants, before the establishment of the State of
Israel, have found themselves to be outsiders, yearning for their lost homes, friends and culture, and unable to view the new land as their home. Along with many other Israeli scholars, Oz, being an accepted political and literary writer, has been constantly challenging the concepts underlying _aliyah_. In the wake of the ongoing debate on nationality, many prefer to replace the word _aliyah_ with immigration, which suggests that Israel should accept a diversity of identities and cultures. Rejecting such opinion, Oz has firmly followed Homi Bhabha’s distinction between the pedagogical and the performative and the idea of heterotopy in Foucault’s writing the narratives of immigration. Oz expresses dialectical relationships between an utopian pedagogical narrative of _aliyah_ and a personal performative narrative of immigration at the core of his _Tale_.

The elaborate analysis on the character and plot of Oz’ works reveal the traumatic experiences of the Jewish individuals. Since Oz believes that history is biography, the Jewish history and his personal experiences have become the key factors for his fiction. While scrutinizing the early days of Oz’ life, it is learnt that, his mother’s suicide has planted a seed that has later sprouted and has borne fruit in Oz’ writings. Oz’ works depict his mother as a charming yet capricious and irrational figure. Apparently, the emotional and psychological changes that Oz has experienced during the two years between his mother’s suicide and his departure from home, has destined the path that his literary production has taken, creating the clairvoyant anxieties. From his articles and stories, it appears that his mother should have been a romantic figure. It is also learnt that, because of her longings for what has been distant in time and space, has ceased her hope in the present existing space, Jerusalem.

In fact, Oz’ mother’s suicide has led the young Klausner (Oz) to conclude that romantic dreams, whether in their political, historical, orthodox, or in personal form,
suggest annihilation and trouble. Consequently, to survive he has to choose a sensible and realistic way of life, and thus, he has revolted against everything his parents have stood for. The traumatic experience of his mother’s suicide is apparent in almost all his works. The fascination for death has characterized Oz’ fictional protagonists in his works. Indeed, one of the tensions in Oz’ works lie in the actuality that many of his fictional characters experience life as a flat, deathlike existence. However, they also find death as a lively, seductive situation, or at least as a soothing and passive condition. His mother’s untimely death evidently has a long-lasting effect on Oz’ real and fictional world. His book of memoir, Tale is a classic example of the traumatic effect of his mother's death on his life and career.

Moreover, Oz, as a political writer and founding member of Peace Now Movement, always emphasizes the need for peace in Jerusalem. But, for so many centuries, peace in Israel is considered as an unachievable task due to the spatial and territorial problems and wars. Even in such a state, Oz insists on the reality that political courage involves, the ability and imagination to realize that some causes are worthwhile whether or not the battle is won. As Christopher Price, the host of British celebrity news show, has written in the October 20, 1995 New Statesman & Society, that Israel's Six-Day war caused Oz to develop a deep loathing for extremism and fanaticism, which Oz has seen breeding pain and death; and an equally passionate positive belief in compromise. Oz has a clear understanding about the uncertain state, whether compromise would have a positive result. However, Oz persistently claims that compromise is always a better choice than political and religious fanaticism. Oz's essays cover political topics as well as literary ones. He has written extensively about Israel's Arab and Palestinian conflicts, always advocating a position of peace without reconciliation. He firmly believes that the fighting can stop even while the separate
nations remain separate and opposed. Such a firm conviction is predominantly present in Oz’ political and literary writings.

Since Oz gives much importance to his place and the history of his land, it has been found essential to learn the texts from the spatial and temporal perspectives. In so doing, Oz’ works are identified as chronotopic writings. In line with the arguments of Bakhtin, the study of space and time as a unified concept is made authentic. Evidently, at the spatial problems, the emotional struggles and the psychological anguish that the Jews undergo are for the place Jerusalem, the Land which Jews claim to be their own land from the time of their forefather Abraham. The long history of the land Israel has proved itself as the land of extremes.

In establishing Oz’ works as chronotopic, the works of Oz has been studied in the context of Israel and its history. The ideas of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Camus are found predominant in Oz. While examining his story bound characters, as Jerusalemite Jews, they are in a situation to face the crisis caused due to the quandary that prevails in Jerusalem. According to the existential phenomena, it is the reality that the world in itself is chaotic and every individual is born to live amidst the chaos and confusion. But each human individual is given the liberty to make the choice for his living. The choice that he makes destines whether his life on earth is a blessing or a curse. Oz’ characters are not an exception. The researcher, from the existential point of view, has categorized the fictional characters in four major groups. Due to the choices that the characters make, they become social misfits, chokers, escapers or endurers.

Furthermore, all of Oz’ works are popularly known for its intense human emotions. His fiction has been noted for its empathy, humanism and insight into human nature, as well as for its occasional fantasia and irony. *Unto Death* (1975),
*Touch the Water, Touch the Wind* (1974), *Elsewhere, Perhaps* (1973), and *Hill* (1978), each carry the complexity of Oz's themes, style, and form. Oz also tends to explore the gloomy side of life, divulging human follies and sufferings, often in a farcical, grotesque fashion. But Oz's novels are also imbued with humanistic concerns in spite of the sardonic position. His humanism encompasses all his writings, including his topical essays and critical works, as in his series of Israeli interviews, *In the Land of Israel*. Though Oz presents his humanistic perspectives through his stories and characters, Oz presents his fictional Jewish men as characters who feel horror and fascination when facing women, and are unable to create a relationship based on equality and mutual sharing. Oz’s male protagonists have difficulty in falling in love. Being in a patriarchal society, Oz daringly collapses the Jewish cultural hierarchy by presenting such male characters.

Apart from creating Jewish characters, Oz is particular in setting his stories in Jerusalem and its suburbs. Almost all major characters in his stories are totally disappointed about their lives in Jerusalem. The Holy Land has been considered as brooding city, city in the hands of dogs and as city of extremes. The major characters show their dislike to stay within the walls of Jerusalem which is a war-torn place with no peace within its walls. But once they leave Jerusalem to stay in the suburbs or in the Kibbutz, they could feel the emotional comforts in those places. An in-depth study of Oz’ characters reveal that the key to Oz’ world is not in the contrast between Jerusalem and Kibbutz, for the existence in both places has been characterized by his psychological and emotional split and their oppositions.

To reiterate, though Oz claims that all his stories are the children of his imagination, he could not create his stories without the influence of his personal experiences which are either shared or lived. He also includes the historical incidents
that are inherently present in the Jewish psyche. The pain, suffering, agony and afflictions that are undergone by Jews down the centuries have their major place in Oz’ writings. The sense of belonging and not belonging to the place has created an intense identity crisis in every Jewish individual. Thus, Oz, while writing about Jerusalem and Jerusalemites, does not exclude the identity crisis that Jews suffer. The emotional unrest that prevailed within the boundaries of the Holy Land due to the territorial problem and the socio-political turbulences are powerfully brought out in the political and literary writings of Oz.

By reiterating and recapitulating the postulate that has been discussed in the preceding chapters, the researcher arrives at the following key findings.

- Oz being a Jew who has lived both in Jerusalem and Kibbutz has gained the courage and scope to deal with the nuances and intricacies of his home land and his own people.
- Oz’ writings are more ideological than action oriented and he focuses on the personal and social issues highlighting the struggle that every contemporary man is bound to undergo in the modern yet puzzled and perplexed world.
- Oz blends his personal and political biography and imagination which ultimately makes his writings bio-fiction.
- Endurance and conciliation towards the traumatic experiences have become the solution to the social and personal stability in Oz’ fiction.
- The indispensable relationship of time and space in almost all works of Oz expediently makes them chronotopic. Resultantly, Oz’ works are established as historiographic metafiction.
- Even after Jewish settlement in Israel, Oz has created fictional Jewish characters who are wanderers / schlemiels / scapegoats who relentlessly feel a
sense of alienation to the place, and a sense of detachment in their family relationships which characteristically prove that Jews still have the archetypal wounded psyche of their forefathers.

- Oz’ fiction concretely reveals his conviction that a landscape is always defined or qualified by the conditions of the people, who dwell there for, every joy and sorrow in the life of Jews is strongly entwined with the place.

- Oz presents his fictional families as a microcosmic representation of Israeli – Palestinian society where in both cases there is an absence of solutions to the internal and external conflicts.

- Amidst the chaos and confusions prevalent in the Jewish world and the world in common, Oz suggests different routes to live through the existing socio-cultural paradigm of the contemporary world.

- Based on the existential crisis, Oz’ fictional characters differ in their choices mainly on the willingness to abandon, yield, overcome and survive the hardships.

- Oz, as a postmodernist, has simplified the intricate political, cultural and religious intricacies into his fictional world through petit and non-linear narration. It is also made apparent that parody, paranoia and self-reflexivity prove his works, postmodern in their form and style.

- The imaginary Jewish individual protagonists in Oz’ fiction are created with their fragmented and offended consciousness which stop them from achieving their desired goals and being successful in their relationship with their kith and kin, resulting in becoming the reason for the fragmentation in their families and society.
Still, research possibilities on Oz’ writings are ample and varied. Oz’ fictional as well as historical biographies are documentaries which include history, fiction, verifiable facts and author’s interpretation of facts. Thereby, the researcher has identified enough scope to analyze Oz’ works as trauma literature. Contemporary literary trauma theory asserts that trauma creates a flabbergasted fear that divides or destroys the self identity in any individual. This serves as the basis for a larger argument that suggests identity is formed by the intergenerational transmission of trauma. Descriptions of the geographic space of traumatic experience and remembrance, position the character in relation to a larger cultural perspective that includes societal standards that influence the reminiscence of the event and the reconfiguration of the self. Similarly, the writings of Oz which are trauma novels demonstrate that a traumatic occurrence disturbs relationships between the individual self and others. Resultantly, by challenging essential assumptions about moral laws and social relationships that are themselves connected to specific environments. Oz’ writings represent this commotion between the individual character and others by circumspectly unfolding the place of trauma because the physical environment or the space, Jerusalem, has offered the probability to scrutinize both the personal and cultural histories imbedded in landscapes that define the character’s identity and the meaning of the traumatic experience.

Moreover, Israeli literary criticism since the country’s establishment in 1948 has been apprehensive with the exploring of the Zionist endeavors, nation and state edifice issues and Israeli Palestinian conflict. As a result, feminist reconsiderations and enquiry into gender constructions in the Jewish ideology have been conspicuously gone astray. But in the last few decades, Hebrew literature has given scope for gender research. Paucity of gender research has changed, with numerous Israeli Hebrew
authors opening up the affluent, sundry and exhilarating area of feminist studies. Oz has been comparatively fortified from the feminist discussion and from the continuing discourse between literature and gender hermeneutics. Oz creates his stories with woman character on whom the plot revolves around. Being in a patriarchal society, Oz creates women with a dominating attitude who decides the happenings of their families. A deeper analysis of Oz’ writings, gives enormous scope to study them all from a feminist perspective.

Furthermore, the researcher has identified the scope to make hermeneutic research on Oz’ writings. Oz frequently uses biblical references and allusions in almost all his fictional writings. He has written The Gospel according to Judas and The Gospel according to Jephthah where explicit discussions are made on the incidents recorded in the Bible. In addition to them, there are characters who symbolically represent few more Biblical characters like Samson and Gideon. Since Oz bases his fiction in Jerusalem and its suburbs, the places that he mentions are in turn biblical. Since, Oz has never been a religious fanatic, he has handled biblical topics and Jewish themes there are enormous possibilities to apply hermeneutics theory to critically analyze Oz’ literary works.

Besides, Oz’ fictional characters are packed with intense emotions who are identified as social misfits, chokers, escapists and endurers. In so doing, Oz’ characters can also be scrutinized from Maslow’s Humanistic Theory of Self-actualizaion. From the theory created by Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist, self-actualization represents growth of an individual towards fulfillment of the highest needs. Oz’ Jewish fictional characters lack the sense of belonging, safety, protection and self-respect, which fall into Maslow’s ‘highest needs’. The lack of fulfillment in all these needs lead to the flaws in the characters. Therefore, the
researcher finds it possible to derive justification for Oz’ characters who find
difficulty to cope with the chaos and confusions of the world in the light of Maslow’s
Theory of Self-actualization. In addition, comparative studies of Oz’ works with other
Jewish writers from Israel and from other countries, particularly with Ahron
Appelfeld, A. B. Yehoshua, Philip Roth, Bernard Malamud and Nicole Krauss could
offer fresh insights and scope for future research.

To sum up, Amos Oz as an existential postmodernist represents many ways
the best of present-day literature in English. Oz’ works are always a blend of existing
history and individual destiny. He firmly stands for his visions and literary ambitions.
Through his fiction he tells the stories of extraordinary people and their loneliness
which ultimately brings out the Israeli society as the microcosmic representation of
the contemporary world by holding firm on the existential and postmodern
convictions.