CHAPTER - IV

COWASJEE'S GOODBYE TO ELSA

I. Introduction: Cowasjee's Goodbye to Elsa is an experimental novel in the fashion of Desani's All About H. Hatterr and Trishanku's Onion Peel. These three novels form an obvious trinity. Like the first two, the last novel also comprises subversive themes and technique. It is more akin to Onion Peel in its theme. While Onion Peel dwells upon the theme of putting an end to the breeding by recommending castration of the male genital organ, Goodbye to Elsa follows suit by suggesting destroying the organ of fertility in woman i.e., 'womb'. In respect of technique too, Goodbye to Elsa has a great affinity with the All About H. Hatterr and Onion Peel.

Goodbye to Elsa is about the misadventure of its protagonist Tristan Elliot. Being deprived of the parental love, Tristan develops a negative attitude from his childhood. It is intensified by his disillusionment in love with a series of girls. As a result, he decides that he should commit suicide, which, according to him, is the only salvation from the sense of dejection. On the eve of his attempt of suicide, he meets his last girl, Marie, who also deceives him after some time. At this juncture, he indulges in the most outrageous deed, that is, he murders the twin sister, Marion, as a token of virgin sacrifice and kills himself. He claims that womb is the origin of sin and the process of reproduction must be stooped to attain salvation from the sin.

II. Subversive Themes: Cowasjee's Good Bye To Elsa deals with two subversive themes, namely: (i) Subversion of the notion of Creation, (ii)Subversion of the notion of High Literature.

(i) Subversion of the notion of Reproduction: The protagonist Tristan Elliott offers Marion as a virgin sacrifice by shooting her to death to pray for the suspension of reproduction. His contention is that sin is originated from the womb. To prevent the sin from further prevalence, the process of reproduction must be stopped once for all. Since the theme of Goodbye to Elsa is woven around the sense of contempt for the ongoing process of breeding, the novel rises as a subversion of the notion of regeneration. Tristan takes such an extreme decision
because he does not want the future generation to undergo the betrayal, bitterness, deception and disappointment that he has already undergone. For him, life is sin. Therefore he does not wish the flourishing of sinning mankind.

A comprehensive study of Tristan’s experiences will throw light on the proposition. Therefore, a critical examination of his life right from his childhood till his suicide is attempted.

In this part, the study aims at highlighting how Tristan has been neglected by his parents and deprived of parental love; how a sense of insecurity ever haunts him, how he is exposed to the corrosive influence of immorality; and how he is driven to distraction and disillusionment and how these factors contribute to the misshaping of his character in the days to come.

Tristan’s father is a British pilot and mother is an Anglo Indian working as a nurse at Willington Hospital. His father is described as being tall, slim and exceedingly handsome, and mother as beautiful. He has neither brothers nor sisters nor friends.

Tristan is deprived of his father’s care and love because his father is killed in the Burma war. He loses his father even before forming some concrete picture of his father. The protagonist narrates this with a nostalgic touch: “I have hazy recollections of Father. He was like me, tall and slim and exceedingly handsome. I recall having seen him only two or three times, so there are few memories that stick to the mind. ... suddenly losing all interest, he would get into his car and drive away. That’s all I remember about him”.

Tristan, though too small to understand the meaning of death, undergoes the sense of loss as his father has abruptly vanished. He asks his mother for his father very frequently and stops at one point automatically.

When Tristan has not yet recovered from the shock of his father’s sudden demise, Tristan receives another bolt from the blue, i.e., his mother begins to entertain her lovers within a few days of his father’s death. The small boy is scared that his mother also might go away suddenly like his father, and feels insecure. This sort of panic in the mind of a small boy haunts him constantly. The protagonist expresses in a melancholic tone his fear of losing his mother: “... but I was afraid Mother might leave me and go away like Daddy. And then
what would I do? I couldn't live alone, I had no money and no one was willing to give me a job. And the servants didn't listen to me. I begged Mummy not to leave me alone and go away. I promised her I would be good if she took me with her.²

Though she does not go away from Tristan like his father, she causes much more damages to his psyche through her immoral behaviour. For some time after the death of his father, she is very affectionate towards the boy. She would not leave him alone. But her affection for her son does not last long.

As her lover begins to visit her in her own house, she parts with Tristan and begins to sleep in another room, leaving the boy to himself. Though she comes back to him after sometime, his worries mount high. He remains sleepless in the bed in her absence, anticipating dreadful future. When he witnesses his mother with some other man in the bed, its impact on the tender mind of Tristan is so disastrous that one does know what sort of character it is likely to shape in him. Tristan describes the behaviour of his mother so picturesquely as: "When I felt very frightened, I would tip-toe to the door and watch Mother through the key-hole. One night I saw her holding the man close to herself the way she held me. I didn’t like it; I walked straight into the living-room".³

Tristan’s mother disregards the genuine feelings of her son. Though the man with whom he has seen his mother in the bed, is not seen any more, she has not wound up her illicit behaviour at all. On the other hand, the number of visitors gets enhanced in the course of time. Besides being subjected to the sinister behaviour of her men, he is made a victim of embarrassment, and the scar remains in his mind. Tristan vividly describes the sinister behaviour of his mother's paramours: "It was not that many men came to our house, but those who did come appeared sinister to me. I saw through them: not one of them really cared for me, all they sought was to take Mother away from me. They bought me toys and sweets, but didn’t want me around when Mother was there. They would ruffle my hair indifferently, pat on the cheek, give me a rupee, and ask me to go out and play. If mother didn’t happen to be in the
house, or was getting dressed to go out, then they would talk to me. And they asked the same questions: Do you have many visitors? When does your mother get up in the mornings? Are you going anywhere for the holidays?".4

Tristan’s suffering is doubled when his mother becomes the mistress of one Mr. Belton who works with the Railways. He is a widower with a daughter. He develops a sort of hatred towards Tristan. He gets annoyed at the very sight of Tristan. Besides abusing Tristan and his mother, he even goes to the extent of assaulting Tristan in front of his mother under their own roof: “As I was leaving, Belton landed a hard kick on my back which sent me flying out of the room”.5

Not only that, he is not spared by the children of his mother’s lovers. Belton’s daughter Sheila, who is elder to him by two years, also beats him. The protagonist recollects how she tortured him: “She used to beat me with the belt of her uniform. She would chase me all over the playground, whipping me as one whips a horse. At times I used to cry. I was only nine years old. ‘Why do you beat me?’ I asked her one day, swallowing my boyish pride. ‘Because your mummy is taking my daddy away’, She said. How? ‘Tell your mummy to leave my daddy alone’.6

Indeed, the author heightens the seriousness of this kind of environment by bringing the mother and the son face to face in which the son asks the unaskable question to the mother as:

Do you love Belton, Mummy?’

‘Yes, Tristan. I love him very much. But I will not give you up for the whole world ... not for the whole world.’

‘Do you love him more than you loved Daddy?’

Don’t, Tristan, don’t ask that.’

‘If Daddy were alive today, I wouldn’t have been kicked’.

‘Oh, my boy, forgive me. Forgive your poor old mother.

No one shall ever touch you again’.7

Though her relationship with Belton is broken, her conduct does not change at all. Only there is a change in the timing of her entertaining her visitors. She sees it that no man remains with her after eleven in the night.
When Tristan grows up, he is able to see the reason for his mother's conduct. Though he realizes that her loneliness is the determining factor for her illicit behaviour, it is too late to heal the scar of his childhood trauma. This experience makes him develop deep contempt for womankind and life.

He grows into a shameless pleasure monger because his mother's adultery has sown the seeds of illicit pleasure in his childhood. Indeed, Tristan's bitter experience during his childhood with all sorts of embarrassment provokes Tristan to hate and negate the notion of birth or reproduction because he does not want future generation to undergo what he has undergone and to be inflicted with sin.

Tristan leaves for Delhi for his studies. There he meets a girl by name Nellie, and they soon become lovers. They are head over heels in love. As such Tristan finds it difficult to forget her throughout his life. Then comes the sudden misery that Nellie loses both her legs in an accident. Nellie's loss of legs does not affect Tristan's love for her in any adverse manner. Indeed, he loves her even when she loses her legs as much as he loved her before losing her legs. He rushes to her to console her and remind her that his love for her is eternal. But she does not reciprocate in the same way and avoids him: "Nellie looked at me with her large brown eyes dimmed with tears. She did not utter a word. I came forward to kiss her, but she pushed me away with her arms".

Thus rejected, Tristan suffers from the sense of dejection. His first love is destined to end in misery and disappointment. It enhances the sense of despair and embarrassment that have already been inflicted on him during his childhood. His psyche is further affected so much that high pressure is being built up within his person only to be exploded at the end.

His unhappy experience at his uncle's also seems to conspire against him. He arrives at Leeds for his studies and visits uncle Kenneth, his only relative abroad, who stays in Chapel Town Road. Since his uncle is an imperialist and abuses Indians, Tristan goes out to a bar where an aged whore joins him in his drinks. Despite his objection, she accompanies him up to his uncle's house and to his misfortune his uncle sees him with the whore. Though his uncle says nothing at that time, his aunt pricks him deeply, the next day saying:
"a mother can not do the job of a father, that young folks need a father to inculcate in them a sense of morality and character". The aunt's smarting words hurt Tristan in at least two ways. Firstly, it appears as an abuse on his parents' morality and secondly, it appears as a reminder that Tristan deserves no hospitality. Tristan feels alienated and gets dejected.

From now onwards, Tristan is let down by a host of women, which causes to form his main motif in life. In this series of betrayal, the first woman he encounters is Jane, a Geology student. Though her breath stinks, they carry on as lovers for sometime. During this period, Tristan has to spend a large sum on peaches, as Jane is tirelessly fond of consuming peaches. She does not remain faithful to Tristan and ditches him in a few weeks time. Tristan recounts very painfully: "I missed Jane when she left me for another man". What is to be noted here is that Tristan's mind sustains further irreparable damage.

The next woman who causes frustration in Tristan is Lydia. When Gisella, a girl friend of Mr. Dayal, brings Lydia for the Diwali social get-together, Tristan dates with her. Tristan is astonished to find that Lydia was a girl friend of somebody else and that she had got her pregnancy aborted earlier. When Tristan expresses uneasiness to date with some one who has already experienced not only sex but also abortion, he is stunned to witness how Dayal is at ease to ask Tristan to ignore such matters and justify that she is still chaste. Dayal's contention defies the natural intercourse. The following conversation makes it clear: "All the same you can not call her a good girl,' I protested.' Why not? What is wrong with sex? Besides, Amul did it orally - I mean manually - by hand'. 'I don't understand'. 'He put his sperms into her by hand. It can be done'.

There is an element of magic realism in the proposition of pregnancy through oral means. This also anticipates Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* in which Karuthamma inserts her hand into her womb from her vagina in order to prevent her foetus from being born. Besides giving a touch of magic realism and making it a pornographic sketch, it is also suggestive of the post modernistic approach. It is so because it presents the unpresentable. Tristan is thereby disgusted with the nature of the people and the environment around him. The
impact of this shock is expressed in his subversive reaction against the very
notion of life.

The next woman who comes in Tristan's life to disillusion him is Julie, a nun. He meets her in a dance hall. Subsequently, they come close to each other. Though they spend several evenings together, she does not rise to his expectation, because she betrays him in the name of God. Whatever the mode of betrayal, it does cause immense damage to him and Tristan admits it: “The inevitable hour arrived: She had to choose between God and me, she told me. Never before had I faced such stiff competition. Julie left me, and I missed her a lot. I was lonely again, drinking and feeling sick every night”. The repercussions of Julie’s betrayal on Tristan which are evident in the above confession are so strong that he seems to swallow it now only to burst out with greater violence in the near future.

The next woman who lands him into a similar trouble is Heather Malleson. He meets her at a dance organized by Student’s Union in a peculiar manner, which is humorously recounted by Tristan as follows: “I can’t dance, I don’t enjoy dancing, but that evening I was feeling lonely and wanted company. I asked the prettiest girls around to dance with me and they all, some eight of them, refused. I was on the point of retiring to my flat when I allowed myself one last try. It turned out to be Heather”. Such an accidental meeting with Heather grows into infatuation with the passage of time. At the first meeting itself he learns that Heather has got the experience in love already and later also she shares bed with Raman on several occasions. It means that Tristan is not first person with whom Heather falls in love. And she does not feel pricks when she betrays Tristan. She reveals it when Tristan interrogates her later: “And with Shituloo Raman - the day he took you home after the dance?” Yes, but on that day”.

Heather deceives him not just once but repeatedly. Tristan, though suspicious about Heather’s affair with Dr. Raman, decides very firmly to marry her. When he is away in Dublin and in London for the collection of materials for his research, an earnest debate takes place within him on the wisdom of marrying Heather. Finally after weighing the pros and cons, he feels it right to

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marry her. Hence he rushes back to her flat but only to discover her shocking infidelity. On reaching the flat, he knocks the door, rings the doorbell but in vain. When he loiters outside the flat furiously mad, he is suspected by the police and is taken to the police station.

Tristan somehow escapes from getting locked up by the mercy of the policeman and returns to the Heather’s flat again. He is made to wait till the dawn, and when the door opens, what he sees there disheartens him. He finds that a huge man walks out from Heather’s flat. Though Tristan could guess what might have happened inside the whole night, he is still optimistic and enquires Heather about it. Heather’s confession comes down on him as a sledgehammer. The simple dialogue is a masterpiece of conversation: “I spoke to her gently, ‘Heather, I will not hurt. I will not abuse you. I will not shout, or rant, or curse you. All that is over. Forgive me for what I have done. But tell me the truth, even though I know it. You have nothing to lose now, Heather’. All right’, she said. Did you make love with him?” ‘Yes’.

The agony of Tristan is difficult to describe in words. Tristan’s faith in such things as love, woman and morality is shattered to pieces. He feels that he has every right to exercise his authority over Heather whom he has taken for his wife, though they are not yet married. But she does not sanction that right to him and goes to the extent of warning him to mind his business. On that occasion, his anguish knows no limit, and that is brought out through the dialogue between Tristan and Heather as follows: “All right, you were back. But what did you do while you were there?’ ‘That is none of your business’, she hurled defiantly. I had been expecting her to say that all the while. ‘It is my business. Who else’s is it? I - I who loved you, and gave you my whole being, never for a moment thought about myself ... Was even willing to shoulder my responsibilities towards the child.... I...I, and you tell me it is none of my business’.

Heather leaves Tristan and goes with her Syrian lover Moustafa Sadat. Tristan feels as if he is thrown into a deep sea for he undergoes unprecedented sense of high remorse. In the mean time he meets another girl ‘Elsa Harbaur’ in the British council. She is from Munich studying English there. She also looks
after the children of a Jewish doctor as a part-time governess. Tristan's interest in her is not out of love. He treats her as an outlet for his tensions caused by Heather. His heart still longs for Heather only. Elsa is a different girl altogether from those whom he has already met. She does not greet Tristan's lusty advances towards her at once with approval. But somehow they get married.

As stated earlier, Tristan does not marry Elsa out of love. The first thing with which Tristan is fed up is her huge size. She is fat but not immoral like his previous girl friends. Elsa too had a lover with whom she was planning to get married. Unfortunately a bear attacked him due to which he lost his potency. As he could never recover from it, he had committed suicide as an escape from impotent life. One can note the expansion of this impotency as a metaphor in Rushdie's novels.

Elsa is depicted with good qualities. She is virtuous, thrifty, caring etc. But Tristan suffers from torment because he could not make love to Elsa as Elsa. Heather's thoughts have permeated so deep into him that she alone appears before his eyes. Tristan describes this particular wretched condition of his mind, which also anticipates Arundhati Roy's description of the relationship between Larry McCaslin and Rahel as husband and wife in The God of Small Things, as follows: "I froze at the thought of children: four summer sausages, for that's what they would look like. And all from a woman I didn't love, a woman with the quaint notion that she could make me happy. The days were bearable, for my studies kept me occupied. But the evenings and nights were full of torment. I couldn't make love to her unless I closed my eyes and imagined I was with Heather". 17

They move to Canada where Tristan is offered a teaching position in the department of history in Erigon College of Liberal Arts. They buy a house from the Chairman of the History Department, Professor Patrick Dunlop. Elsa becomes pregnant and Tristan mistakes the words of the doctor that Elsa carries twins. Tristan has a mysterious panic for children. Somehow he does not feel comfortable at the thoughts of having children. He had a similar fear when Heather was mistaken for being pregnant. However, Elsa delivers only one child to the greatest relief of Tristan. On the arrival of a son, Tristan plans to
part with Elsa for good. He wishes to go somewhere and put himself to death. So he slips away from Elsa. He has lost interest in both his wife and son. Though Elsa pleads with him to stay or to inform her where he is going to stay at least, Tristan turns a deaf ear to both the requests because he is strongly determined to kill himself in order to save himself from the haunting thoughts of Heather. Tristan saying to himself: "Long, sleepless nights, when you hold your breath and hear the other breathing. I will have to shut only one eye now. Easier still - push the barrel down your throat and don't count,"18 chooses a place called Mount View for the execution of his death wish. He has already purchased a 0.22 rifle for that purpose from the Army and Navy store. But before going to Mount View, he goes to a near by store in Crowned and buys some food items and places orders for a dozen tins of sardines to be delivered at his door. Till this moment he has no contempt for the process of birth or reproduction despite the fact that he has personal agony and wishes only to kill himself. The arrival of the last girl in his life causes a turning point and makes him react violently against the continuation of mankind.

**Tristan's post-marriage Disillusionment:** One of the twin daughters of the grocer, Marie Germain, visits Tristan to deliver the grocery items ordered by him. First, she is reluctant, slightly frightened when she is called in by Tristan. The courtesy talk of Tristan with Marie grows into the narration of his own life story. Marie listens to Tristan's narration with fear and uneasiness and disinterestedness in the first meeting and becomes a close companion in the subsequent meetings. She is a symbol of the collective audience in the oral tradition. Rushdie's Padma in *Midnight's Children* seems to be an expansion of the character of Marie as a metaphor for collective audience. About this a more detailed account will follow in the forthcoming part. Tristan narrates his life history from his childhood to the present to her. Marie listens to him sympathetically, and her pity for him is transformed into love consequently. Tristan does not approve her love at once despite his admiration for her in the heart of his heart. She shares her bed with him and refills hope and optimism in him. She succeeds in dissuading him from his decision of committing suicide.
Tristan emerges as a new, changed and enthusiastic person again by being fed with love, care and promise for a new life by Marie. He overcomes the obsession of death wish. A hopeful future is renewed after the arrival of Marie in Tristan’s life. He is able to forget Heather, Elsa, his son and his whole past in the presence of Marie. She has won his heart, and promises him to provide a satisfactory life by saying:

You don’t have to go back to Elsa if you don’t want to. You just stay with me. As soon as I start working and have found a room, you come and live with me. Will you?

‘What will I do in Vancouver?’

‘Anything you like. You don’t have to do anything. I will work and look after you and give you all you want. In the day while I am gone, you can write. When I come back in the evenings - you love me.’  

Marie's speech echoes the speech of Martha Matthew with Nathan in Onion Peel. Tristan cannot resist the magic spell cast over him by Marie’s speech. So he yields to the words of Marie and agrees to her proposal. She stays with him sharing everything with him until the day she leaves for Vancouver for the job as a book-keeper. She promises to him that she would take him as soon as she finds a suitable room. Thus she bids goodbye to Tristan.

Tristan receives a series of letters from Marie carrying her passionate love for him. To indicate the greater frequency of the letters from Marie to Tristan, the author has employed a novel technique of putting the content of various letters of Marie into just one letter. This is suggestive of seamless narration. A similar device is found in Rushdie’s Shame in which as many as eighteen shawls are glued and made a long one. Indeed, Goodbye to Elsa can well pass for the genre called the literature of letters.

But the last letter carries a volcano to Tristan. She writes to inform him that she has agreed to accept the proposal made to her by Joe in preference his. Indeed, she did reject Joe’s proposal on a few previous occasions. The author uses a skillful method of conveying the message of the last letter through Marie’s own twin sister Marion as: “Dear Tristan, I think I must be frank and
honest with you and tell you that I feel we can not come together as we had planned. You are very dear to me, but finally realized after much contemplation, fear, embarrassment and anxiety, that we are not suited for one another. I shall be moving into his apartment next week till I find something suitable for myself. I shall pray to God to give courage to face life”.

This is the unkindest cut Tristan has ever received at the hands of a woman, for Marie proves to be the greatest deceiver of all the women Tristan has encountered so far. This sudden change of Marie’s mind comes as an explosive to blow up Tristan’s dream of aspiration, hope and optimism in life. His surging rage and hatred for womankind in particular and for life in general make him mad. And in that fit of madness, he decides to put an end to human fertility, which, according to him, is the only alternative solution to safeguard humankind.

**Rejection of Reproduction:** Having concluded that the whole mankind is treacherous and sinful, Tristan decides to offer a virgin sacrifice as a mode of prayer for the termination of the process of reproduction. For this purpose, he chooses Marie’s twin sister Marion as an object of virgin sacrifice. He plays a trick to make Marison arrive at his room by telling her that he has got a serious message to convey to her about her sister. On her arrival at his door with anxiety, he shows her sister’s latest letter and informs her that he is going to murder her. Thus Tristan makes Marion a sacrificial lamb.

This portion of the narrative reads like a crime fiction. He forces her to undergo a bath, like the lamb, which is given a wash before it is sacrificed. Then he takes the rifle to shoot her. Marion begs, pleads, and even warns him that he will be arrested by police and asks him to spare her but her tearful appeals bear no fruit at all. Tristan finally murders her, which is narrated as: “Marion tried to flee by climbing out of the window. She had grabbed on to the sill and was heaving herself up when I fired”. After having shot Marion down, Tristan puts an end to himself too.

Now the most important point to be driven home is why Tristan murdered Marion. The novel provides an answer to the question: Tristan has been subjected to betrayal, deception and disillusion by the acts of a host of
women, including his mother. So he wishes that the future generation should be freed from them, and says to himself visualizing the future of his son: “When I look at him (Tristan’s son) I see into his future, and the torture that awaits him. I brought him into the world to suffer. It was a pure accident - but he will suffer all the same. Suffering is the only legacy he will inherit from me”. Tristan’s description of life as a symbol of suffering reminds one of Hardy’s view on life. Though the above is addressed to his son, it holds good to the future generation also.

The next reason is that Tristan views life as full of ‘lame excuses’. He has experienced this aspect since his childhood till now. His mother apologized, his companions apologized and his women apologized. Therefore, he has every reason to regard life as an apology. The author has represented this notion very cleverly as follows: “I was sorry for my mother and Nellie, and Heather and my wife............Your sister. She was sorry for me. And Elsa too, when I lost my eye. All of us sorry for one another, as if the world could be saved by mere apologies”. So he comes to the conclusion that life is full of apologies, and wants to cut life at its root.

The next reason Tristan gives is that termination of the cycle of birth amounts to attaining salvation. Also Tristan resorts to the Biblical Philosophy that the mankind is sinful and affirms that the only means of seeking salvation is through Virgin sacrifice. By doing so, he believes, the future generation will be protected from the impact of the sins committed by those like Tristan. Finally, Tristan’s own philosophy, that is: “The sin is in the womb- the womb has to be destroyed” drives him to commit such sanguinary crime.

Tristan’s philosophy contains the nucleus of the message which the narrative carries and also an implied comment on Goodbye to Elsa that it is a subversion of human fertilization. Tristan justifies his act by quoting from the Bible once again: “For behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts that never gave suck”.

Tristan’s confirmed belief indicates that the process of reproduction should be stopped forthwith. Therefore Goodbye to Elsa may be regarded as a
subversion of the notion of reproduction. Uma Parameshwaran’s observation of the protagonists of Rushdie’s novel that: “All his protagonists defy the law of nature”.\textsuperscript{26} can hold good to Cowasjee’s protagonist Tristan Elliot also, because one can easily make out from the above study that Tristan also defies the law of nature. Defying of the law of nature is one of the characteristic features of post-modernism which is explicit in Tristan’s philosophy. Tristan’s plea for the end of birth echoes the tendency of post-modernism which asserts that philosophy, culture, art and, in a way, life have reached the dead end.

(ii) Subversion of the notion of High Literature. Goodbye to Elsa is an Indian post-modernist novel of the Western counter part. Post-modernism is regarded as reactionary to modernism in the West. The modernists have bred the notion of high literature by prescribing norms and rules. Thus the works that were modelled on modernism turned out to be highly academic. In turn, a novel form is created. What A.S.D Pillai says in this regard is worth noting: “One is the artist’s sense of dissatisfaction with the dominant art form of his time and another, the inaccessibility of the art form to the common man. This inaccessibility is in most cases due to the cleavage that will have arisen between art and entertainment”.\textsuperscript{27}

The works of T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and William Faulkner may be categorized as the works of High Art. One need not read the above statement to characterize James Joyce as a modernist exclusively. Indeed, he may be considered as a transitional writer between Modernism and Post-modernism for his works sling a challenge to the hegemony of certain notions of tradition and the hegemony of form in literature. Linda Hutcheon calls James Joyce the late modernist on this basis only. Nevertheless, his works exhibit the character of High literature because of its inaccessibility to the common.

Post-modernism gives birth to a new literature to fill in the gap between art and entertainment through a form called popular or pop literature. Leslie Fiedler may be regarded as the pioneer of post-modernist popular literature because it is he who first challenged the notion of High literature with his popular texts such as Gone with the Wind, Uncle Tom’s Cabin, The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn, and Moby Dick. About Fiedler, Prem K.Srivastva writes as
follows: "Fielder has administered a brisk tremor and shaking to the staid and comfortable world of American literature establishment". And A.S.D. Pallai notices Fielder's connection with post-modernism for: "To Fielder, post-modernism is primarily a de-Eliotisation movement in art". Hence one may concede that pop-literature subverts the notion of High-literature.

According to Fielder, the deployment of myth is a chief mode of connecting the gap between the High art and Low art which in turn becomes a pop art. Srivastava notes this point in Fielder as: "On the one hand, myth wipes out the gulf that divides elite culture from pop; on the other hand, Fielder uses myth, as a bridge, to move to and fro, into the realisms of the elite and the pop culture and elite to pop culture and vice versa. Moreover, myth, with its tenacity and capability of being present in elite culture as well as in the popular, apparently destroys the barrier that separates one from the other. For Fielder, Myth is the only consistent agent which universalizes all literature into a mythic whole".

A careful reading and skillful application of Fieldian post-modernism to Goodbye to Elsa make it resemble the Pop-Novel. In Goodbye to Elsa, the myths of 'virgin sacrifice' and 'barren womb' are highly suggestive. Tristan avenges the exploitation and betrayal meted out to him by various women, including his mother, like, Nellie, Lydia, Julie, Jane, Heather, Lily and Marie by murdering Marion though she has done no harm to him. True, there is no poetic justice in the sacrifice of the innocent Marion, but it is designed to suggest the myth of the virgin sacrifice. It is narrated in a rhetoric manner as: "Would she understand? Would the paschal lamb understand why it must be slaughtered and its blood smeared on the lintels of Israel?".

When Marion defends herself to be spared on the ground that she is not Marie who has betrayed him, he articulates very clearly about the myth of virgin sacrifice as: "Marie, or Marion, or Heather or Elsa. They are all one in God's eye. Except that the lamb should be of undoubted virginity. I hope you are a virgin". Tristan illustrates the myth of virgin sacrifice with suitable illustration to Marion before she is murdered, saying: "I want from you a
supreme sacrifice - a sacrifice as great as Alcestis made for Admetus.” 33 Thus the myth of virgin sacrifice is deployed skillfully in Goodbye to Elsa.

There is also another myth, the myth of saviour in Goodbye to Elsa. Tristan declares himself a saviour. When Marion enquires him as to what he has got to give to the world, he contemplates and makes the announcement wherein the myth of saviour is suggested: “Here was the eternal confrontation between the cynic and the saviour ... And yet the saviour must speak the truth. ‘Salvation’, I said”. 34 Tristan refers to the myth of saviour on another occasion too. Marion warns him against his behaviour and the punishment for his criminal behaviour. But Tristan indulges in the Biblical rhetoric as if he is the saviour himself: “On the third day I shall rise to heaven as easily from the gallows as I shall from the grave, I said... The angels of God are waiting for me. The red carpet is laid out for me, and all heaven has assembled to receive me”. 35 It is needless to reiterate that the speech of Tristan resembles the speech of Jesus Christ before crucifixion and that the myth of saviour is incorporated into the narrative of Goodbye to Elsa in order to subvert it. Hence the novel fulfils the condition of pop-literature as prescribed by Fie der. The use of myths is ironical and parodic. Indeed, the parody in the novel strengthens the claim for Goodbye to Elsa as a post-modernist text.

The next feature of pop-literature according to Fie der is that: “Popular literature never ‘really belonged to one medium’”. 36 Goodbye to Elsa which employs multiple forms music, art, dances, folktales, poetry, letters, criticism—can be regarded as equivalent to popular literature.

The next feature of pop-literature is its feasibility for exchange of location or character’s race, sex etc with others: “You can mix them and match them, it makes no difference to popular appeal”. 37 In Goodbye to Elsa, replacement of the region, characters with any other race or creed is possible. The narrative in Goodbye to Elsa is full of sex erotics and may be deemed to be unsuitable to the Indian cultural background, but the novels like Onion Peel of Trishanku, Sisters, Snapshots, Susila’s Friend of Shobha ‘de, The God of Small Things of Arundhati Roy have depicted the libertine element in Indian culture and they are well received.
by the readers in India. Therefore *Goodbye to Elsa* passes the test of exchange of its elements with others as well.

The next feature is that of its nature of market orientation rather than that of the nature of academic orientation. Pop-litterature aims at the highest sale. *Goodbye to Elsa* has risen to this occasion. It has already been mentioned that *Goodbye to Elsa* has reached seventh imprint in paper back in India. It is true that it has not drawn enough critical attention, which indeed, is a characteristic of pop literature. Fiedler himself mentions it in his *Towards a Definition of Popular Literature* that: "the art forms preferred by majority of people can not be admirable and worthy of receiving serious attention" and that "there is an inverse relationship between literary merit and market-place success".38

The feature of popular literature according to Fiedler is a changed notion of *Ekstatis*. The traditional notion of eroticism is replaced with pornography. In this regard, *Goodbye to Elsa* surpasses all others. There are twenty-nine chapters in *Goodbye to Elsa*. Excepting two or three, in almost all chapters pornography is explicit.

Tristan narrates his love with Nellie to Marion when she visits his room to deliver the ordered goods. He narrates how he and Nellie were close to each other with a tang of pornography:

I would remove her clothes one by one, still she stood naked before me. Then I would lift her up and lay her on my bed-on her back...The ritual would begin. I would take her feet in my hands and press them together and kiss them. I would kiss her toes, several times and then I would move up, inch by inch, kissing the length of her legs till I came to her sex. We never had sex, it didn't seem important. I would continue the journey, pausing a while on her breasts, neck, chin and lips. I would rest on her lips,...

I would traverse the entire length of her body, leaving nothing unkissed.39

Then Tristan's experience with another girl who is elder to him by two years by name Julie is also narrated with the same pornographic touch:

"Seeing her home, I kissed her on her lips and breasts. ...We would kiss and
play. We would lie naked beside each other. But we did not have sex. She was too frightened of hell....Every time I had an erection she would say, 'God is watching us'. Though I did n't believe it, my penis always shrank at the mention of the Deity". Indeed, one more feature of post-modernism is also evident in the above citation. It is the note of irreverence towards God Almighty.

Tristan and Heather remain as lovers for a very long period. They make love on many occasions, which are narrated with utmost erotic tone. Tristan's description of Heather is also very lusty: "Her little breasts grew firmer, the nipples harder, her sex opened like a chalice. I used to cover it with my hand and call it "my handful of love".41

Shituloo Raman’s conversation with Tristan on one occasion also is narrated in a similar manner. Raman describes the culture of women in the West which is marked by obscenity and vulgarity. Raman says that: “There are no virgins in Leeds. Here the girls get fucked before they are twelve years old".42 By filling the narrative with pornographic sketches, Goodbye to Elsa shows its hostility towards the notion of high literature which does not approve the frank treatment of sex, and thereby the novel is affiliated to post-modernism. Despite the fact that those sexual elements are of bad taste, they are used as a tool to build a bridge between art and entertainment.

Tristan and Elsa fall in love with each other. Elsa does not allow any pranks of Tristan at the beginning. In course of time, she does not restrict him to touch her, though she never agrees for sex before marriage. Tristan’s pranks are narrated as follows: "I put my arm around her. I bent and kissed her under the chine, and down the neck as far as her dress would allow. She did not mind. With the back of my fingers, I teased the nipples of her breast".43

In the life of Tristan which is overcast with the cloud of disappointment, Marie appears as a silver line. Tristan, who has already decided firmly to commit suicide, is dissuaded and is made to feel that Marie resurrects him. She entertains him very liberally and obeys to fulfill his sensual desire on many occasions. Indeed, the whole episode of the love between Tristan and Marie reads like a book of pornography. Just one example may suffice to illustrate the
pornographic appeal the narrative has: "I raised my body and brought it to rest against hers. She opened her mouth, and breathed her warm breath into my mouth. I undid the buttons of her blouse, and buried my face between her breasts".44

These are evidences of pornographic narration incorporated into Goodbye to Elsa. If one reads it only as a popular pornographic piece, one is likely to be misled. It has to be viewed as a frank treatment of sex which is consciously undertaken by the post-modernists to subvert the notion of high literature. Fie der reiterates that there is no discrimination among the works of art as high and low. He objects to not only making value judgment but also to the notion that the academicians are the authority to determine the standard and taste of any work of art. He recommends that it should be decided by the mass of readership. According to Fie der, one should not read the scenes and actions, which are presented graphically as mere porn, but should probe the porn in order to decipher the myth as well as the elements of fantasy underlying it. Thus the study of the myths in Goodbye to Elsa will reveal more about the theme than its study as a piece of pornography can do.

Fie der also mentions that counter tradition is a characteristic of pop literature. This is applied to challenge the domination of the patriarchy in the traditional narratives. This is done in the projection of home as heaven, man as a redeemer and woman as a destroyer. This aspect of pop literature is also observable in Goodbye to Elsa. Tristan experiences his home as heaven while his father is alive and as hell after his death. Elsa is portrayed as a redeemer and Heather as a destroyer because Tristan is provided with a home and homely attention by Elsa whereas Heather haunts his mind so much so that he feels that only death will relieve him from the nightmare.

The last characteristic that is associated with the popular literature according to Fie der is the treatment of the most dark and perilous aspects of our psyche. In the portrayal of Tristan, the author successfully represents the most dark and perilous aspects of human psyche. Tristan makes a scheme to murder Marion, who is as innocent as a lamb in which the dark and perilous aspects of Tristan's psyche are reflected.
Goodbye to Elsa possesses most of the characteristics of popular literature. It is also known as mass literature. In turn, it also suggests the tendency of subversion of the notion of High literature. This pop- literature with excessive pornographic elements is also known by various other terms such as Teenage Fiction, super ghetto and Untouchable category etc.

III. Subversive Technique:

(i) Structure: Goodbye to Elsa possesses several subversive features pertaining to technique. Goodbye to Elsa deals with the persecution and revenge of Tristan. The structure of the plot is somewhat loose. The novel begins with the proposal of the suicide of Tristan and ends with it. But the narrative is not closed. The end of the novel like other novels of this order is left open. Both the opening and the closing scenes are placed in Canada. Tristan's suicide is not narrated directly. The ghost of Tristan appears and reveals how Tristan committed suicide after murdering Marion. Tristan's ghost anticipates that the police will arrive and arrest him as if he is alive which never happens. It creates the impression that the narrative is yet to be completed.

The notion of logical linear connection is foreign to this narrative. While Tristan's later life following his discharge from the hospital is described in Chapter One, his childhood, which should have been in the beginning, is depicted in Chapter Twenty six. In between, the life sequences of Tristan are narrated in crisscross and zigzag manners.

The narrative begins with Tristan's decision to depart from his family and shows him leaving his family in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, Tristan meets the grocer, and his daughter Marie visits Tristan to deliver his ordered goods. He narrates his story before Marie in the flash back manner. But here also Tristan does not begin the account of his life with his childhood. Instead, the narrative commences with his love story with Nellie. Indeed, he is about twenty years old when he loves Nellie in Delhi. Though the novel covers the life history of Tristan from the age of four till his death, the first episode of his life begins with his love with Nellie through the flash back technique. Before this, the events such as the death of his father, his mother's flirting with her men, his school and his career in the Army Academy have occurred but they are
not narrated in the logical sequence. On the other hand, they are narrated in the most zigzag way. After the episode of his affair with Nellie, his voyage to Leeds via Dublin, then his visit to his uncle, his meeting with Mr. Dayal, his love affair with Heather; his marriage with Elsa, his completion of Ph.D, his getting a job in Canada, the birth of his child etc are narrated. There is a linear progress up to this point but then it is broken without description of his career in the Military Academy which should chronologically have been the second event in the narrative. Actually, the birth of Tristan's son occurs before his getting a job in Canada but it is not narrated chronologically. This anticipates the narrative strategy of Rushdie which is popularly known as 'hotch-potch' mode.

The account of Tristan's childhood comes after the account of his career in the Military Academy, and thereby the text parodies the conventional notion of plot as one built on the sound foundation of logical narration. Also the unity of place, unity of action and unity of time are honoured in the breach of them. This is a sharp contrast to the notion of internal morphology which is prescribed for the harmonious whole in the structure of the novel. This is done cleverly by employing the mode of flashback. The use of flash-back in this novel anticipates Rushdie's use of the same in his *Midnight's Children*.

**Intertextuality:** The technique of intertextuality needs a special treatment here because it is a major characteristic of Post-modernism. Borrowing from Wordsworth has just been mentioned. But there are some more instances of intertextuality in the novel.

The evidence of intertextuality is found not only inside the narrative but also before it begins.

‘Oho!’ they cried, ‘The world is wide,
But fettered limbs go lame!
And once, or twice, to throw the dice
Is a gentlemanly game ...’

OSCAR WILDE

*The Ballad of Reading Gaol.*

Again, the above can be interpreted from multiple angles. Firstly, it gives us an impression that *Goodbye to Elsa* is a linguistic game. The kinship with
G.V. Desani, Trishanku, Rushdie, Tharoor, Arundhati Roy etc., can be established in the deployment of intertextuality. One can notice the rise of a new cult in the Indian English novel that brushes aside the conventional notion of the novel. Secondly, it illustrates technique of intertextuality. Thirdly, it is a parody of intertextuality for it appears before the beginning of the narrative, which means it is a parody of a parody.

The author has used the text of S.T. Coleridge and Shelley also. The protagonist quotes the latter's poem on the death of Keats in fragments:

\[\text{The bloom whose petals, nipped before they blew,} \]

\[\text{Died on the promise of fruit.} \]

Tristan remembers former's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner at the time of his departure from his wife and son: "Farewell, farewell! But this I tell

\[\text{To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!} \]

These two lines occur in Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner when the mariner teaches, out of his own experience, the wedding guests, who are reader's substitutes, that they should have love and reverence for all the creatures of God: Farewell, farewell! But this I tell

\[\text{To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!} \]

The author banks on the Bible for multiple purposes, and one of them is for purpose of intertextuality. Heather quotes some verses from the Old Testament in her letter to Tristan to brainwash him in order to convert people to Christianity. The verses that are borrowed from the Old Testament are:

\[\text{I am set as 'watchman' as written in The Old Testament, Ezekiel ch. 33, verses 7-8. Verse 7. 'So thou, Son of Man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word from my mouth and warn them from me'.} \]

\[\text{Verse 8. 'When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou does not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand'.} \]

Besides exemplifying intertextuality, the above alludes to James Joyce whose style, being a linguistic experiment, seems to have influenced Goodbye to
Elsa, which will be dealt with separately in the Diction part. Regarding allusion to James Joyce, the above is identical with Joyce's description of St. Xavier who converted ten thousand people to Christianity in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Youngman*. The tone of satire on the propaganda of Christianity is parallel to that in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Youngman*. The impact of James Joyce on the Post-modernist writers is too deep to miss notice. The influence of James Joyce on Cowasjee too is evident in this novel.

The author has subsumed the text of Buddhism also in *Goodbye to Elsa*. Though there is no induction of any portion of the text at length, the very reference to its ideology also amounts to intertextuality as it indicates the indirect incorporation of Buddhism. Tristan speaks about it in brief: "I had also read Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha* and had been captivated by the sage Gautama. ...I wanted to go to Indo-Chino and walk the Ho-Chi-Minh Trail, imparting to all the 'noble eight-foldpath'." On another occasion the author quotes the apocalyptic words from the Bible: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children". The author has borrowed the texts of others both directly and indirectly. He has freely borrowed from literature, religion, history, politics (national and international) etc. The art form of this type i.e., incorporating materials from various sources in the making of a novel, typifies collage, and with its pluralistic text it claims its kinship with post-modernism.

**Mixed Genre:** Various forms of literature are incorporated in the text of *Goodbye to Elsa* in such a way that the texture resembles that of collage art. The forms such as poetry, letter, reportage, criticism etc. are incorporated in the structure of the novel.

Poetry is one of the major genres of the mixed genre in the narrative structure. On four occasions lines from the poetry of other poets are used. Besides making the novel an intertext, this device distorts the form of the novel as a prose narrative. The first piece of poetry appears at the time of Tristan's parting with his family. They are taken from Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner*.

"Farewell, farewell but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest". 
On the second occasion the following lines appear:

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate. 53

These lines at the time of the dispute between Heather and Tristan over the latter's suspicion that the former has had sexual affair with Raman. As a result of that dispute he is separated from Heather for two days. He undergoes an unbearable agony of separation during these days. So he longs to go to her, which is expressed through symbols in this poem.

The third time a song is sung by a choir of six beautiful girls conducted by a middle aged salvation officer:

O God of salvation hear,
And help a sinner to draw near
With boldness to thy throne of Grace, 54

Tristan hears these lines while roaming and searching for a whore at the Hyde Park, which he visits during his travel to collect materials for his research. There is a strain of irony in it as it is sung while Tristan is looking for a whore to satiate his carnal appetite.

The fourth piece is the one Tristan quotes from Shelley's elegy on Keats:

"The bloom whose petals, nipped before they blew,
Died on the promise of the fruit, ----" 55

The author has not only infused poetry in the narrative but also used a number of poetic expressions. One should not hesitate to consider Goodbye to Elsa as a lyric, since the narrative is larded with poetical expressions.

The second device adopted for the narrative is of the epistolary type. Soros Cowsjee can be said to belong to the cult of Richardson, as he has imitated Pamela to a great extent if not completely. Cowsjee goes one step ahead in incorporating a variety of letters in his narrative.

To begin in the logical order of the novel, the first letter is a letter of resignation. Tristan writes this letter to escape from the Army Academy that is to save himself from the brutal behaviour of Army men. The situation in which
he is writing this letter is very amusing. The company officer comes to his door and kicks at the door. Tristan who, is already frustrated with the ill treatment there, disobedies the orders of the Company Officer stating that he has already resigned his job though he is yet to write and submit the letter of resignation. While the Company Officer is kicking at the door, Tristan drafts his resignation letter in a hurry as follows: “As he went on abusing and kicking, I hurriedly wrote out my resignation on a large brown envelope. I remember every word of it: ‘Dear Sir, After mature consideration I have come the conclusion that the Army has nothing to offer me and I having to offer the Army. Please accept my resignation with immediate effect and let me go home. Yours truly, Tristan Elliot’.

There are two phenomena in the letter. Firstly, it reveals the disillusion of Tristan in the Army for he has had a different notion about the career in the Army. But he is made to realize that one cannot survive there with self respect. A little later, Tristan comments on the Army: “What was the Army but downright slavery? And its rules violated the human rights in the Indian Constitution. I cursed Colonel Ross for painting a rosy picture of salutes, care of arms, mess, uniforms and all such nonsense”.

Secondly, the letter subverts the notion of the letter of resignation in any profession in general and the one in the Army in particular. No one is permitted to resign his or her job from the Army without a strong valid reason. The willingness of an employee is not considered as a reason for resignation at all. Thus it is a parody of the notion of the letter of resignation.

The second variety of letter that appears in the novel is the letter of invitation. Mr. Dayal writes this letter to Tristan inviting him for the Diwali socials organized by the India Association. Unlike the conventional letter of invitation, this letter is very long and tainted with campus politics. The length of the letter of invitation, i.e., forty lines, is a parody of the letter of invitation, which may not normally exceed a couple of lines. The content also subverts the notion of the letter of invitation. It dwells more upon the dissidence from the rival of the president than the genuine concern of hospitality.
One more letter appears in this episode. This letter is written by Kumar from France to humiliate Mr. Dayal. Though Kumar has written it, he lands Tristan into a controversy by subscribing Tristan’s name. This letter may be called a letter of forgery, which is sent to Mr. Dayal. The author reminds the reader of the vicious atmosphere of modern society.

The next are a bunch of letters written to Tristan by Heather. Though she has written several letters to him, he preserves only two of them. The first letter has been sent to him a few months before his marriage with Elsa. This letter serves as a gap filler and provides an account of the aftermath of their ‘love-wreck’. Tristan has written many letters to Heather. This letter describes the consequences of her choice of Mustafa. Her condition has worsened: “I feel you have a grudge against the world - and against yourself. You must have had a very unhappy childhood. Also, I feel at times that you are not normal person - from the things you do! ... less of a creature of reason and control”.58

The second letter is very significant because the author has a dig at religious fanaticism. Heather has been converted to Christianity and her conversion worries others whether they too would be forced to go over to Christianity. This reminds one of Lucifer’s rhetoric in Doctor Faustus. The author seems to have included this letter in the narrative to expose the religious fanaticism and non-secular tendency of Christianity in a subtle manner. So a few lines from the letter to this effect:

You are to bring others to the Christian religion; you are to warn adulterers, fornicators, drug addicts, prostitutes, of death which may be sudden if they don’t turn to Christ. You are to set up other ‘watchmen’ for moral laws and order - you are to ‘fish’ or bring in man for Christ. MOVE AND OBEY, or you might die suddenly and be answerable to God who does exist

Yours faithfully,
Heather Malleson (Miss).59

The underlying irony in Heather’s letter is obvious. Heather has forgotten her own past while advising others on observing morality. She has herself admitted that she has had sex with David, Raman and Mustafa. Her
contact with Tristan is an open secret. Even after having eloped with Mustafa, she has expressed her desire to return to Tristan. Such a person’s preaching of purity amounts to the Devil’s preaching the Bible. Her claim that she is only ‘Miss’ now is yet another layer of irony. Goodbye to Elsa exhibits itself as a votary of post-modernism in being irreverent to religion and God through its use of parody and irony.

In the last two chapters, Marie’s letters to Tristan are included. Marie is a prolific letter writer and the author gives the resume of letters written by Marie: “Letter-letters-letters. Morning and evening letters. Letters every day, sometimes as many as two. I am her ‘Most loving Tristan’, ‘Darling of darlings’ and ‘Dearest of all’. And she sings off: ‘Yours with love, love, and more love Marie’.

The rhythm in the prose letter echoes Sidney’s Arcadia and Lyly’s Eupheus, which are the pioneers in inculcating poetic rhythm in prose romances in English literature.

Thus the author has used letters as a technique of flashback, of psycho analysis for building up suspense as well for parodying the conventional notion of letter writing and novel writing.

Metafictional Elements in Goodbye to Elsa: The narrative comments on the notion of writing without criticizing any text in particular. Criticism without criticizing any work is an attribute of metafiction. The author has deployed the oral device in the narration. Tristan tells Marie the story of his life. Marie is a symbol of collective audience in a way. Her role is two-fold. She is a lady-love of Tristan and a medium for the author to reach the readership. Marion participates in the process of narrative by both listening to Tristan and by making remarks about the narration. The dialogue between them is suggestive of the genre of criticism.

Tristan introduces himself as a writer to the strangers as: ‘I am a writer’. He narrates to Marie his experience in the Army as his own life story. Marie functions both as an audience and a critic. When Tristan asks Marie for her opinion about his language, she responds sharply that it is not adequate for creative writings. The dialogue between them indicates not only this feature but also Cowasjee’s art of dialogue writing. Hence the following, for example:
What do you think of my story? ‘As a story it is quite good. But you will have to improve your English’, Marie said. ‘What’s wrong with my English?’ It’s too simple - babyish. Even Grade Nine student could understand it. And you keep using the same words.

At one place you used the word “thought” three times! Why not use other words like “cogitate”? Marie is a hard critic. And that’s what I need if I’m going to set myself high standards.62

Marie does not stop at being a critic of just finding faults with Tristan as a writer. She plays the multiple roles of the critic to Tristan. As Marie observes that Tristan is required to improve upon his style, she does not hesitate to make suggestions to him. “Marie thinks I need more practice in writing, though my ideas are good there is a lot of room for improvement in style. She has suggested that I should take after Shakespeare (especially Julius Caesar)”.63

She becomes a great source of inspiration and motivation at times as Dorothy Wordsworth was to William Wordsworth. She generates a new enthusiasm in him through her words of encouragement. So he writes: “Meanwhile, I shouldn’t waste my time but write as best as I could: about my earliest recollections of childhood. I told her there was nothing in my childhood to write about. To this she replied that ‘The child is Father of the man’, and all great writers must start at the beginning. So I wrote the following account for my love, who loves me”.64

The above passage implies many factors. Firstly, Marie is styled a critic and various functional aspects of criticism are attributed to Marie. Secondly, she is alluded to Dorothy Wordsworth in her suggestion that he should continue to write, if not on some other theme, at least on his childhood. His childhood recollection reminds one of Ode on Intimations of Immortality Recollected from Childhood. Thirdly, it anticipates the character of Padma in Midnight’s Children.

ii) Characterization: The character of Tristan alone is taken for analysis because the author has employed more technical devices in portraying Tristan than in portraying the remaining characters. The device which is adopted in the
characterization of Tristan can be described in just one word i.e., hybridity. Hybridization in characterization of Tristan subverts not only the conventional notion of characterization but also the notion of hybridity even because hybridization of Tristan in Goodbye to Elsa is multi layered. He is characterized by hybridity, genetically, culturally, and through the allusions to other characters.

Genetically or racially, Tristan is a hybrid, because he is born through the mixed marriage of his parents. His father is a European whereas his mother is an Asian. Thus Tristan is a Eurasian. Cowasjee presents Tristan wittily as: "Father, a British pilot... Mother is Anglo-Indian which makes me three quarters English". It echoes the self introduction of Hatter that he is biologically fifty - fifty of the species in All About H. Hatter. Hatter is fifty percent Indian and fifty percent European. Tristan's son represents hybridity in a higher scale. For instance: "Canada is the country for me, and an Anglo-Indian-Canadian child is what this country needs".

Being born a hybrid, the culture that is imbibed in him is also a mixed one. He is not sentimental with regard to his relationship with his parents, which is a characteristic of the white culture. Tristan says: "I love my father, but I am glad he is dead. I couldn't live any other life but the one I am living". This shows what the Western culture is. That is, a Western person lives his own life without poking into the lives of others. This is a sharp contrast to the composite and joint family culture of India. At the same time Tristan is not an embodiment of the Western culture alone. He has inherited the Indian culture too. It is found in his unadulterated love for Nellie. Therefore the characteristics of Genetic and culture hybridity are evident in the character of Tristan.

Several allusions are there in the characterization of Tristan. The author has alluded Tristan to Jesus Christ. Tristan considers himself a saviour when he is trying to sacrifice Marion. Further his declaration that he would rise from the third day indicates Tristan's allusion to Jesus Christ: "On the third day I shall rise to heaven as easily from the grave', I said". The allusion to Jesus Christ is used for purpose of subversion. It reveals two factors. The first is that Tristan is a cheat to claim resurrection because his life is tainted with the impurity of
lust and immorality for he has lived throughout an immoral life. It is highly ridiculous on the part of Tristan to claim resurrection for himself as Christ did. The second is that by drawing a parallel between Christ the Saviour who died for the mankind and Tristan, a murderer who dies for his personal cause, the author's irreverence towards the notion of Religion and God is made explicit.

The author seems to allude Tristan to Mahatma Gandhi too. It is so because Mahatma Gandhi is the modern sage who has followed Buddha in respect of non-violence. The words of Tristan to this effect are: "I was thinking of renouncing the world and walking the Ho-Chi-Minh Trail preaching the doctrine of non-violence".69

This also appears to be subversive in its motif, because the act of drawing a parallel between a saintly personality like the Mahatma and an outright womanizer like Tristan is unbecoming in the conventional mode of comparison. It hints at a satire not only on Tristan but also on Mahatma Gandhi. This sort of irreverence towards Gandhi appears on a few more occasions in the novel.

Firstly, Mr. Dayal is compared to Mahatma Gandhi as "He pictured himself as another Gandhi and had also a record in fasting—though intermittently".70 It appears to be a parody of Gandhi who also established an Association of vegetarians to propagate vegetarianism during his stay in London for his studies in Law. But comparing Mr. Dayal, the President of the India Association, with Mahatma Gandhi is beyond imagination in the conventional narrative. It is so because Dayal violates all the principles Mahatma Gandhi preached, represented and followed.

The elements of irreverence towards Mahatma Gandhi appear twice during Tristan's career in the Army Academy. When a Gentleman Cadet advises Tristan while he is carrying out the order of an unknown Gentleman Cadet, disrespect for Gandhi is implied in the advice: "What! Are you telling me that you obeyed somebody's orders without even finding his name! Learn to command. You are an officer now, not a bloody bania (a member of the shopkeeper class in India)".71

One tends to find it a parody of Gandhi on two grounds. The first is that Gandhi is universally known as a high priest of peace, who is against war. The
second is that it is an open secret that Gandhi belongs to Bania community. But
the author's skill of irony deserves a genuine applause because the Gentleman
Cadet who speaks like this is a Bania himself.

At the time of Sand model classes in the Army, Tristan responds to the
question put to him. The instructor's response is a satire on Gandhi: "He asked
me what I would do if I were alone and unarmed and found myself surrounded
by a platoon of Pakistan soldiers. I said I would address them at the top of my
voice: " 'You, you sons of Islam, you can kill me but you cannot kill the sprit of
India. Mahatma Gandhi ki jai (victory to Mahatma Gandhi), Bharat-mata-ki-jai
(victory to mother land)"."

By depicting Tristan as being willing to submit himself to death by
raising slogans typical of the national movement instead of using any military
strategy when surrounded by Pakistani troops, the author's motif to satirize
Mahatma Gandhi is very clear. The elements of irreverence and disrespect to
Mahatma Gandhi prevail among those who represent the new generation in the
Indian English novel.

In the creation of Mr. Dayal and Shituloo Raman, the author shows the
influence of the western life style on Indian students in England. Their
hypocrisy is revealed in their passion for white women. Their conduct is a
parody of the notion of Indian culture. All the women characters are portrayed as
deceptive and unfaithful to their lovers. In the creation of the women characters,
the author dislodges the notion of Platonic love and visualizes that infidelity
will cause the end of mankind.

Thus the manner in which Tristan is characterized shows clearly that
Goodbye to Elsa deviates from the conventional notion of characterization.

iii) Diction: A close study of the diction in Goodbye to Elsa proves that there is a
very curious stylistic experiment. Firstly, the author has incorporated
Hindustani expressions in the diction. This style differs from that of Mulk Raj
Anand on the ground that almost all the expressions in Goodbye to Elsa are
abusive and vulgar.

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Mather-chod (rape mother), babin-chod (rape-sister), bati-chod (rape-daughter), ghada-ka-lund (penis of a donkey) ma ki choot (cunt of your mother).

There are similar expressions in English too. They are given below at random: ‘fuckin’ name, to beat the shit out of the enemy, racialist bastard, conceited bastard etc’. Cowsjee seems to provide incentives for the Western readers with the English words of abuse to counter balance the Hindi words of abuse. This vulgar and abusive expression forms one aspect of Cowasjee’s diction in Goodbye to Elsa.

Another aspect of Cowasjee’s diction is that of using incomplete sentences like: ‘In my left eye. I insisted. Porridge for both of us.

And there are short simple sentences like: ‘It is night. I went to Leeds. I think a lot. These two stylistic methods in diction contribute the quality of readability and ease to the novel.

The author has incorporated non-linguistic expressions also in the diction. While depicting a writer who is writing a novel called, ‘The Long phuff-phuff’, the motion of the train is imagined and the sound of the train in his sleep is reproduced: ‘Chuck-chuck, phuff-phuff, chuck-chuck, phuff-phuff’. It reminds one of James Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young man in which similar non-linguistic expressions are used: “That night at Dalkey the train had roared like that and then, when it went into the tunnel, the roar stopped. He closed his eyes and the train went on, roaring and the stopping; roaring again, stopping. It was nice to hear it roar and stop and then roar out of the tunnel again and then stop”.73

There are plenty of jokes and proverbs in the novel. The novelty of Cowasjee’s contribution to diction through Goodbye to Elsa lies in the use of words associated with electronic gadgets, like, typewriter, Xerox, duplication, audio-visual techniques. In this sense Goodbye to Elsa deserves to be called the literature of language for it answers the definition by John Holloway satisfactorily:

Concrete verse may be compared to film or T.V. in one respect, since it effects a kind of marriage between the visual and lexical;
sometimes by collage, sometimes by experimental typography, sometimes indeed, by utilizing the technical resources of the typewriter for purely visual patterning where lexical meaning is blurred or even absent. It has also utilized the potentialities of, for example, the cassette recording, to effect a similar link between spoken language and non-vocal sound; . . . A trend towards what might well be termed 'the literature of language', a verbal copiousness and ingenuity that demand to be liberated from notions of chronicling 'reality', is one response not unnatural both to ampler techniques resources (typewriter, audio equipment, offset-litho printing and much else of the kind) and to an external world that seems over-complex; baffling and dispiriting.74

Excluding these contexts, the language is very informal throughout the novel. It gives the impression of oral communication to the experience of the readers while reading it. Cowjee has attempted a collage in his stylistic experimentation by incorporating various language diversities. It seems to anticipate Rushdie's chutnification of diction in his Midnight's Children and its children.

Conclusion(i): Goodbye to Elsa is a representative Indian novel, which approximates, what Pillai says, "the post-Modern Western"75 novel. It is so because the themes that the narrative garraples with are of universal nature than of our native culture. Though Indian characters and backgrounds are there in the narrative, the novel dwells more upon the foreign culture and traditions. Unlike All About H.Hatterr, Goodbye to Elsa has a vision which is starkly bleak, destructive and pessimistic. Like the Western post-modernists, the author has negative tendency towards life and refuses to put something else in the place of what is rejected. In a way, Goodbye to Elsa shares its stance with Onion Peel.

Therefore, there is no doubt that Goodbye to Elsa is an Indian novel in the mould of western post-modernist fiction.

(ii) The three novels All About H. Hatterr, Onion Peel and Goodbye to Elsa discussed in this part have been seen as precursors of post-modernism in the
Indian Fiction in English, the predominant characteristic of which is the subversive tendency in the treatment of themes and technique.

All About H. Hatterr subverts the notion of the Upanishadic tradition and the notion of single truth. To attain the task in the former theme, episodes of seven sages are incorporated in the thematic structure and all the seven sages are exposed as phony and fake. The protagonist is not exempted in this scheme. He appears as a disciple but fails to observe the prescribed norms deliberately. Thus the theme of the Upanishadic tradition in All About H. Hatterr parodies the Upanishadic tradition which has been prevailing in India from time immemorial. To attain the task in the latter, the author makes Hatterr undergo the experiences practically which, in turn, causes a drastic change in his attitude towards the notion of truth. He negates not only the Indian notion of truth but also the western notion of truth. He proposes that the truth has to be seen in light of the theory of contrast which does not confine to a single truth.

Though late, Onion Peel has helped the new sensibility generated by Desani, to gain momentum. Onion Peel contains three subversive themes. The first is with regard to the notion of Buddhist enlightenment. This is successfully carried out in the creation of Nathan whose life parodies the process of attaining the aforesaid enlightenment. The second is with regard to the notion of ethics which is conducted successfully by exposing the failure of observing the ethic of nurse, student, journalist. And the third is with regard to the notion of Indian culture. In this discussion, the betrayal of the sacred Indian culture in terms of love and marriage is exposed. The technique used various devices to subvert the notion of plot, characterization and diction. Thus, Onion Peel follows the trend set by All About H. Hatterr and thereby becomes a true precursor of post-modernism in the Indian fiction in English.

Goodbye to Elsa also consists of subversive themes and technique. Two subversive themes are identified in the narrative. The first subversive theme is with regard to the notion of reproduction. Like Nathan in Onion Peel, Tristan in Goodbye to Elsa subverts this notion by suggesting that the womb should be destroyed so as to stop the process of reproduction. According to the
The protagonist womb is origin of sin and the salvation is to be sought through destruction of the womb. The second subversive theme is with regard to the notion of 'High Art'. Cowasjee dislodges this notion by subsuming a Pop Art in Goodbye to Elsa. The subversive technique is discernible in the various devices like intertextuality, mixed genre, nonlinear narration, hybridity, word play, fantasy, chutnification etc in framing the structure, creating characters, and manipulating the diction not only in Goodbye to Elsa, but in the All About H. Hatterr and Onion Peel also. Hence, this section is classified as 'Novels - Towards Post-modernism'.

These novels have sown the seed of a new sensibility in one form or the other in the history of the Indian Fiction in English. This new sensibility has matured in the novels of Salman Rushdie to be taken up for discussion in the next part. In a way, Rushdie can be regarded as a legitimate heir to Desani, Trishanku and Cowasjee who are the forerunners of Post-modernism in the Indian Fiction in English. Therefore, three novels of Rushdie who is the pillar of post-modernism in the Indian context are examined in the next part.
NOTES

5. Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 139.
23 Cowasjee, Goodbye to Elsa, 149.
24 Cowasjee, Goodbye to Elsa, 151.
25 Cowasjee, Goodbye to Elsa, 151.
29 Pillai, *Post – Modernism An Introduction to Postwar Literature in English,* 22.
31 Cowasjee, Goodbye to Elsa, 150.
32 Cowasjee, Goodbye to Elsa, 150.
33 Cowasjee, Goodbye to Elsa, 151.
34 Cowasjee, Goodbye to Elsa, 151.
35 Cowasjee, Goodbye to Elsa, 150.
36 Cowasjee, Goodbye to Elsa, 151- 52.
40 Cowasjee, Goodbye to Elsa, 12.
41 Cowasjee, Goodbye to Elsa, 18 – 19.
42 Cowasjee, Goodbye to Elsa, 47.
Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 81.


Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 0.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 120.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 3.


Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 41.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 96 - 97.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 150 - 51.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 3.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 59.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 71.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa* 120.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 130.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 131.


Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 41.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 146.


Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 133.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 134.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 134.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 15.

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Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 142.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 15.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 151.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 110.


Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 125.

Cowasjee, *Goodbye to Elsa*, 129.


Pillai, *Post-Modernism An Introduction to Postwar Literature in English*, 76.
PART TWO

POST-MODERNISM PROPER
To say that with the arrival of Salman Rushdie on the scene, the emergence of the Post-Modernist specimen in the Indian English Fiction is confirmed beyond doubt may amount to labour the obvious. It is true that the novels of G.V.Desani, K.M.Trishanku and Saros Cowasjee have had the post-modernist character but they remained unknown until the publication of Rushdie’s *Midnight’s children*. This novel only prompted to look back and recognize the earlier works. Keeping this phenomenal contribution by Salman Rushdie in view, his novels are treated as representatives of post-modernism in the contemporary era.

All the novels of Salman Rushdie are post-modernist in one sense or the other. Keeping the space constraint and native themes in mind only three novels are selected for a detailed study here. Thus, *Midnight’s Children* in Chapter V, *Shame* in Chapter VI and *The Moor’s Last Sigh* in Chapter VII are examined in this Part.

Salman Rushdie is a prolific writer and a regular winner of awards for his writings. His career as a novelist began with *Grimus* (1975). His second novel is *Midnight’s Children* (1981) which is regarded as a true representative of Post-Modernism in the Indian fiction in English. The author has won not only the Booker Prize but also the Booker of Bookers for this novel. It is followed by *Shame* (1983) which is a winner of the French Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger. His next novel is *The Satanic Verses* (1988) which has brought both fortune in the form of Whitebread Prize for the Best novel and misfortune in the form of fatwa passed by Khomeini. It is followed by *Haroun and the Sea of stories* (1990) which has won Writers’ Guild Award. Then appeared his next polemic novel *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (1995) which was banned for some time in India though it has also won the European Prize for Literature. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) and *Fury* are his next novels. The latest novel of Salman Rushdie is *Shalimar the Clown* which has narrowly missed its nomination for the Booker Prize.