

**CHALLENGING THE METANARRATIVES IN *OUR LADY OF ALICE*
BHATTI: A POSTMODERNIST STUDY**

Farah Deeba

Assistant Professor of English, Government Graduate College of Home Economics
Multan. Email: farahdeebajaafri@gmail.com

Ali Mortaza

Assistant Professor of English Govt. Graduate College Shakargarh
alimortaza7@gmail.com

Tasneem Koser

PhD Scholar, The University of Faisalabad
Email: kausart934@gmail.com

Abstract

This study focuses on the postmodern narrative of Our Lady of Alice Bhatti through a meticulous textual analysis, employing the theoretical framework of Lyotard's negation of metanarratives. The research is qualitative that illuminates how language in postmodern fiction takes on characteristics that are self-reflexive, ironic, localized, and intertextual. Through an exploration of language, the novel effectively challenges the overarching narratives of identity, professionalism, science and faith. The novel touches upon the subversion of these metanarratives through characters who defy societal norms and expectations. It also highlights the consequences of adhering to the grand narrative of nationalism and subverts the traditional scientific norms. The characters within the novel challenge fixed identities and societal norms, reflecting the fluidity of human nature. This research establishes that the novel continually draws parallels between metanarratives and mininarratives. It is observed that the characters within the narrative employ paralogical maneuvers to question the existing language games, thereby paving the way for the emergence of new and pluralistic narratives. The study is going to prove a feasible addition to the already existing literature in the field of postmodernism.

Keywords: postmodernism; metanarratives; Lyotard; mininarratives; Lyotard

Introduction

In the realm of philosophy, there is a widely accepted concept that divides history into two distinct epochs: modernity and postmodernity. As Lyotard (1984) has suggested, it's important to note that while there is no universal consensus on specific dates for these periods, a commonly held perspective characterizes modernity as the era spanning from the Enlightenment era to the middle of the twentieth century, and postmodernity as the period succeeding that time frame. As noted by Hooti and Azizpour (2010), the term "Postmodernism" is employed to encompass a broad spectrum of activities and ideas within aesthetics, culture, history, literature, and philosophy. It is frequently used to connote various things, such as an assortment of styles, a particular historical era, and a philosophical concept. Simultaneously, it is also associated with being an absence of style, a timeless occurrence, and a lack of clear conceptualization.

Mohammed Hanif is a British Pakistani postmodernist writer known for his book *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*. His literary style is often compared to Salman Rushdie, but he maintains his unique voice. Hanif's writing is characterized by a blend of satire, historical fiction, and a distinctive narrative approach. Muhammad Hanif, the Pakistani author, exhibits postmodernist tendencies in his work through the use of satire, irony, multiple perspectives, occasional metafiction, and the

exploration of cultural hybridity, challenging conventional storytelling norms and engaging with complex socio-political issues in a manner that aligns with some postmodern literary characteristics, even if he is not considered a strict adherent to the postmodern movement.

In his novel, Hanif challenges the metanarratives that often define and confine both literature and the societies it reflects. This postmodernist novel, set in contemporary Pakistan, presents a narrative that defies traditional expectations and invites readers to explore complex issues from a fresh perspective. The story revolves around Alice Bhatti, a Catholic nurse in a chaotic and morally ambiguous world, where the boundaries between good and evil, sanity and madness, blur. Hanif's narrative technique in this novel disrupts conventional storytelling, reflecting a postmodernist approach that questions established norms. It reflects the postmodernist idea that grand narratives, or metanarratives, are constructed and often imposed by those in power, and that these narratives can limit our understanding of reality. Hanif, through his narrative, deconstructs these metanarratives and exposes the underlying chaos and absurdity in contemporary Pakistan, particularly in the treatment of women and religious minorities. The novel's dark humor and absurd situations serve as a form of resistance against oppressive structures and ideologies. Hanif (2011) employs satire and irony to confront the serious issues he addresses, emphasizing the gap between appearances and reality, and challenging readers to question their own assumptions. The characters in the story, including Alice and the various goons she encounters, represent a diverse spectrum of society, each with their quirks and flaws. Through their experiences, Hanif (2011) offers a multi-layered critique of contemporary Pakistan, highlighting issues like gender-based violence, corruption, and religious tensions. This nuanced portrayal challenges simplistic metanarratives about the country, revealing a complex and multifaceted reality. In *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, the novelist presents a postmodernist narrative that confronts and deconstructs prevailing metanarratives, inviting readers to engage with a more nuanced and unconventional perspective on contemporary Pakistan. The novel's blend of humor, absurdity, and social critique not only challenges literary conventions but also encourages readers to question the dominant narratives that shape our understanding of the world.

Our Lady of Alice Bhatti is a novel with distinct postmodernist elements, although it doesn't adhere to a strict postmodernist framework. The novel exhibits postmodernist characteristics through its fragmented narrative structure, where the story is presented in a non-linear, multi-perspective fashion. This narrative technique challenges traditional storytelling conventions and is a hallmark of postmodern literature. The book also engages in metafiction by blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality. While set in a fictional world in Karachi, Pakistan, it explores real societal issues through satire and exaggeration, reflecting the postmodernist practice of commentary through inventive storytelling

Research Questions

1. How does Hanif challenge traditional metanarratives through postmodernist narrative techniques in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*?
2. What are the implications of deconstructing metanarratives in the novel for understanding complex social and political issues in contemporary Pakistan?

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the postmodernist narrative techniques employed by Hanif in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* and how they disrupt conventional storytelling and metanarratives.

2. To assess the impact of challenging metanarratives in the novel on the reader's engagement with complex social and political issues in Pakistan.

Review of Literature

Postmodern theory, a prominent intellectual framework, represents a departure from the modernist ideology. It challenges traditional beliefs and assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, and culture. The "post" in postmodern signifies a reevaluation and reconfiguration of the principles that underpinned modern thought. This theory is marked by its skepticism toward the grand narratives and universal truths often associated with the Enlightenment era. Instead, postmodernism prioritizes diversity, heterogeneity, and difference as agents of cultural redefinition. In the realm of literature and art, postmodernism is characterized by innovative techniques like parody, irony, self-reference, and the incorporation of multiple narratives and identities.

Hooti and Torkamaneh (2011) investigate postmodernist principles to Beckett's play, which is celebrated for its enigmatic narrative and existential themes. Postmodernism, as an intellectual movement, is characterized by its inclination to question established norms, challenge conventional structures, and blur the boundaries between various forms of art and discourse. Hooti and Torkamaneh's (2011) exploration illuminates how *Waiting for Godot* embodies the quintessential postmodernist spirit, as it defies straightforward classification and interpretation. The article delves into how the play exemplifies postmodernist notions such as intertextuality, where it draws on a multitude of sources, cultural references, and philosophical ideas, creating a complex web of meaning. The authors scrutinize the fragmentation and absurdity within the narrative, which are emblematic of postmodernist literature. They argue that Beckett's work epitomizes the postmodernist stance of questioning the stability of language and the capacity of words to convey absolute truth. Hooti and Torkamaneh (2011) claim "Although postmodernism has influenced all the literary forms, but usually it focuses on one kind of writing which mostly is narrative fiction. The narrative advances in flash backs, flash forwards and is frequently interrupted; it is like cinema and movie techniques" (p. 14).

Hooti and Omrani (2011) engage in a comprehensive analysis of Vonnegut's novel through a postmodernist lens. The study is anchored in a diverse array of literary and psychological sources to explore how Vonnegut employs narrative techniques that align with the postmodernist diegetic process. The research accentuates the potentially representative content of the narrative, which extends the boundaries of meaning and conceptual interpretation. The primary focus of this investigation centers on examining ontological aspects, the narrative flow, fragmentation, parody, and irony within the context of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The authors strive to concretize abstract postmodernist terms, bringing them into practical application within the novel. The study has a broader aim: to scrutinize the presence and feasibility of postmodernist narrative elements in the broader realm of fictional storytelling. Hooti and Omrani (2011) claim that "metanarratives traditionally serve to give cultural practices some form of legitimation or authority" (p. 816).

Mahmoud and Al-Marroof (2011) delve into the postmodernist examination of Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's play, *Into the Woods*. The central theme of postmodernism, which embraces notions of meaninglessness and fragmentation, is carefully explored. The authors highlight skepticism as a dominant characteristic of postmodernism, emphasizing its role in challenging and questioning established beliefs. *Into the Woods*, a musical play interweaving

traditional and famous fairy tales, serves as the canvas upon which Sondheim and Lapine deconstruct and challenge these conventional narratives, making them relevant to the postmodern era. The study particularly focuses on two of these tales, Cinderella and Jack and the Beanstalk, and scrutinizes them through various postmodern lenses, such as intertextuality, deconstruction theory, and fragmentation. The study concludes that in a postmodern society, traditional fairy tales like Cinderella and Jack and the Beanstalk lose their value. This devaluation is attributed to their propagation of false values and beliefs, which are seen as unsuitable for imparting meaningful moral lessons, especially to children. The tales often portray characters who engage in acts of exploitation, violence, and theft. These narratives perpetuate an outdated and problematic societal moral code. The authors also assert that traditional fairy tales, including Cinderella and Jack and the Beanstalk, reflect the cultural and ideological elements of the societies in which they originated.

Al-Shalabi (2015) examines Kate Chopin's renowned novel *The Awakening* from a postmodernist perspective, challenging the conventional interpretations that categorize it as realistic, feminist, or naturalistic. The study employs rigorous analysis to examine Edna's character and her interactions with other ordinary characters, emphasizing the perceived meaninglessness in her life. The author underscores various elements contributing to the novel's postmodern nature, including the collapse of the Pontlliers family, the use of irony, and the fusion of literary traditions like realism and romanticism. It concludes that *The Awakening* embodies postmodern characteristics. The novel's open-ended conclusion reflects postmodern uncertainty, and Chopin's portrayal of women challenging traditional roles without condemnation resonates with the postmodern theme of embracing uncertainty and open interpretation within a changing societal landscape.

Awais, Salman, and Khalid (2017) conduct analysis of David Mamet's play *Romance* from a postmodern minimalist perspective by employing Warren Motte's minimalism theory as a theoretical framework to scrutinize the play's contextual elements. The research emphasizes objective repetition and the reduction of means within a postmodern context to amplify the influence of minimalism in the selected text. The study uncovers how Mamet's distinctive narrative style in "Romance" portrays ordinary characters as representatives of disunity within American socio-political and religious systems. Mamet utilizes the themes of entropy and fragmentation to expose perceived corruption within the American judicial system. The research's objective is to shed light on the minimalistic narrative techniques employed in the play, contributing to a deeper understanding of Mamet's art and theater. Mamet's use of clear and straightforward language allows readers to comprehend the intricate dynamics between characters and various societal systems.

The existing literature on the selected novel shows that the selected novel, *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* can be studied from a postmodernist perspective with a view to subverting metanarratives.

Theoretical Framework

Modernism seeks to explore literature as an individual's endeavor to break free from traditional and orthodox thinking. This movement has reshaped the prevailing approach, which had revolved around myths, fantasies, and the gradual evolution of society, by embracing the principles of science, reason, and personal detachment in the realm of literature. According to Childs (2000), modernism is marked by its endeavor to position "humanity and in particular human

reason at the centre of everything”, spanning religion, nature, finance, and science (p. 16). Butler (2002) asserts that the prevailing stance is one of embracing relativity over absolute truth, perceiving the reader’s synthesis of truth as an imitation and reflection of art and defining this viewpoint as an essential postmodernist perspective, contending that “universal truth is impossible” (p. 27) and relativism is our inherent condition. According to Butler (2002), postmodernism encompasses a notably critical approach to knowledge, showing resistance to any comprehensive “philosophical or political doctrine” while strongly challenging the ‘dominant ideologies’ that uphold the existing societal order (p. 40). Al-Shalabi (2015) remarks that

It was first coined, Nicol contends, in the 1940s to describe a reaction against modernism in architecture. As regards its use, Nicol adds, it began to be widely used in the 1960s by American cultural critics and commentators, especially Susan Sontag and Leslie Fiedler who wanted to describe a new trend in literature that either rejected modernist techniques or adapted or extended them.(p. 277)

Lodge (1992) maintains that a postmodern novel is essentially “fiction that revolves around fiction,” encompassing novels and stories that explicitly draw notice to their fictional nature and their own methods of composition (p. 206). McGowan (2019) pinpoints that Postmodern theory “is driven by the simultaneous fear that a monolithic social order shapes contemporary life and hope that a strategy for preserving pluralism (difference) can be found” (p. x). McGowan (2019) believes that “postmodernism can best be defined as a particular, if admittedly diminished, version of romantic dreams of transformation—hardly the middle age that poets in their youth would have chosen, but a despondency that is fitting all the same” (p. 1). McGowan (2019) remarks that “artists and intellectuals often find themselves in the position of coming close to claiming the absolute constitutive power of signification while also bemoaning the fact that modern society marginalizes the cultural” (p. 3). McGowan (2019) points out Peter Burger’s categorization of modernism into two distinct groups: the elitist modernists who practiced a more esoteric and hermetic form of art, and the various avant-garde movements that took a more openly confrontational approach. The key distinction lies in the fact that the modernist elite, including figures like Eliot, Mondrian, Matisse, Le Corbusier, and Schonberg, revered art as the secular world’s closest connection to the sacred. According to McGowan (2019), Writers like Rosalind Krauss and Andreas Huyssen consider the avant-garde as the precursor to postmodernism, if not its first manifestation.

A significant portion of postmodernist theory relies on maintaining a skeptical stance, with philosopher Jean-François Lyotard’s insights playing a crucial role. Lyotard’s (1984) primary targets are the narratives of humanity’s ongoing liberation - from Christian salvation to Marxist utopianism - and the narrative of scientific triumph. He asserts that such doctrines have “lost their credibility” since the Second World War. In 1984, he defines the postmodern condition as characterized by a profound skepticism and disbelief in overarching metanarratives. Lyotard (1984) expresses the view that postmodernism involves interpreting culture and encompasses the examination of science, literature, and art, characterizing postmodernism as a state of “incredulity towards metanarrative” (p. xxiv). These narratives, found within or suggested by major philosophical systems like Kantianism, Hegelianism, and Marxism, advocate the belief in a progressive history, the liberating potential of knowledge, and the hidden unity of all knowledge.

In Woods' 1999 work, Hebdige's notion of postmodernism is encapsulated as a shift away from a central subject, a rejection of overarching narratives, the replacement of singular power structures with a variety of power dynamics, the collapse of meaning, and the disintegration of

cultural hierarchies. Dix's (2011) study delves into the postmodern reaction against overarching narratives of nationalism, war, and science in British literature. Nevertheless, he doesn't primarily emphasize the substitution of these grand narratives through the perspective of Lyotard's idea of "language games" and "mininarratives." While he does touch upon postmodern notion and the blending of genres in British literature, his focus is not centered upon deceptive and paralogical maneuvers that play a crucial role in undermining established norms and conventions. Joy (2019) cites Klages, who argues that postmodernism, by eschewing grand narratives, gives preference to "mininarratives" – narratives that elucidate small-scale actions and local incidents rather than grand, universal, or global concepts. Postmodern mininarratives are inherently context-specific, tentative, dependent on circumstances, and temporary, and they are antagonistic to universality in respect of all areas of life (p. 34). In *The Condition of Postmodernism*, Harvey (1989) characterizes postmodernism as a movement that, in stark contrast to previous paradigms, places great importance on "heterogeneity and difference as emancipatory elements in the reshaping of cultural dialogue" (p. 9). Postmodernism embodies a skeptical stance regarding the assertions of truth found in the grand narratives of Enlightenment philosophy. Barry (2010) remarks that Lyotard challenges the idea of naturalizing diverse dual oppositions. He observes that these so called "metanarratives," claiming to provide explanations and a sense of security, are essentially illusions created to suppress diversity, opposition, and multiplicity (p. 83). Lyotard (1984) asserts that postmodernism signifies the devaluation of "universally embraced truths", for example technological advancement, political liberation, logocentrism, Eurocentrality, philosophical consensus, historical accounts, patriarchy, and colonisation (p. 37). Lyotard (1984) views science as a significant metanarrative that, over time, failed to substantiate its claims of advancement and liberation. Lyotard (1984) contends that the postmodern stance of "incredulity" undeniably stems from advancements in the sciences (p. xxvi). Lyotard (1984) proposes that during the modern era, various institutions, for example religion, corporations, education, and the legal system, joined forces in the pursuit of universal liberation. Their significant influence led to significant transformations in modernized societies. As Lyotard (1984) further comments that nature of knowledge changes as societies transition into the postindustrial era and cultures evolve into what is commonly referred to as the postmodern age (p. 3). Lyotard (1984) explains that he uses the term "modern" to characterize any science that legitimizes itself by referencing a metanarrative, appealing to grand narratives like the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth (p. xxiii). He goes on to express his belief that regardless of whether it's a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation, the grand narrative has lost its credibility (p. 37). Overall, postmodern theory serves as a critical and transformative lens through which to understand and interpret the complexities of our contemporary world.

Research Methodology

The research methodology will involve a comprehensive analysis of the text through a qualitative approach to dig out postmodernist nullification of metanarratives in favor of mininarratives.

Textual Analysis

Hanif is a famous Anglo-Pakistani writer. He is a keen observer of the different aspects of life. His fictional works are pregnant with layers of meanings and interpretations. In his novel *Our*

Lady of Alice Bhatti, he shows postmodernist stance of cancelation of metanarratives in favor of little narratives. He challenges grand metanarratives, embracing ‘petit recit’ or little narratives that champion paralogy, heterogeneity, and diversity over the dominant consensus. Through diverse characters, the novel subverts totalizing ideologies, emphasizing the rejection of ‘meta-narratives,’ and advocating for alternative, albeit unconventional, legitimate truths. The novel explores religious issues in Pakistan, shedding light on discrimination against minority communities, despite the teachings of tolerance in Islam. It underscores the failure of attempts to unify the diverse population, challenging the faith-based master narrative and exposing conflicts within existing hierarchies. Hanif emphasizes the true message of Islam, advocating for unconditional love, humanity, and respect over mere birthright faith. Alice, a character in the novel, challenges the narrative of faith by highlighting how it’s often employed as a language game. She notes that individuals tend to become acutely aware of their religious beliefs primarily during challenging times. This is exemplified when a Muslim Shia woman in labor alternates between screams and reciting religious slogans like ‘Ya Ali,’ resembling the fervor of a new convert at a Shia procession (p. 239). This portrayal underscores the artificiality of such behavior, which categorizes humanity based on faith and exacerbates religious conflicts. The novelist demonstrates that faith’s narrative also impacts the personal lives of its characters (p. 265). When Alice marries Teddy, they grapple with choosing a name for their child, symbolizing the societal divisions between Muslim and Christian identities. Her internal struggle is reflected in her contemplation of a neutral name that could harmonize both faiths. She envisions, “She would have settled easily on some neutral name, no Joseph or Judith obviously” (p. 265) by relying on something that is common for both.

The gardener’s silence against the powerful reverend stems from the fear that no one would believe his account, and the physical evidence on Margaret’s lifeless body suggests her resistance against her rapist. Despite this clarity, no one dares to challenge or charge him with the murder. The text of the novel exemplifies how differing voices opposed to merciless authority are stifled, as one person even swears on the Bible to dismiss the stranger’s accusations as mere “rumors” during a post-funeral prayer (177). These lines reflect the exploitation of religious oaths for personal gain in worldly matters. Joseph Bhatti admires Islam but questions the legitimacy of being a Muslim solely based on one’s faith. He advises his daughter, Alice, against marrying a Muslim, emphasizing that “just because they became Muslas” doesn’t inherently make them superior (p. 179). Joseph’s deep respect for Islam is evident in his practice of reciting Islamic verses to treat ulcers, surprising his Muslim patient, who witnesses “a Christian choohra reciting the Holy Quran” (p. 66).

The novelist highlights religious teachings’ commonalities, stressing a universal message of peace, respect, and unity. Teddy, as a policeman, comforts a Bangladeshi prisoner, noting the shared word “Allah” amidst her distress. The novelist is critical of individuals who conceal their religious recognition to avoid discrimination, exemplified by Sister Hina and Alice’s Christian college friends who disguise their faith. In contrast, Alice and her father openly embrace their religious identity. Alice satirizes the commercialization of crosses, stating, “Crosses are everywhere now, you can buy them (p. 179)”, and she questions if this abundance of crosses would convey a constant state of suffering to Jesus if he were to return. Alice and Joseph Bhatti endure discriminations in all fields of life. Alice faces a violent assault by Muslim girls in her nursing school, with religious motivations, but her resilience emerges from her faith, leading her to confront her attackers. The incident reflects a segment of Pakistani society that intertwines religion

with nationalism, contrary to the founder's message of religious tolerance and coexistence. Dr. Pariera, as the college in charge, comments on Alice's actions, stating "Nurses might be doing God's work" (p. 254). Joseph Bhatti, despite his community service, remains underappreciated and criticizes those who feign religious devotion. The novel also satirizes superficial displays of religious fervor, like a driver playing a "Musla anthem," and highlights a lack of understanding of the true message of peace within religion (87). Sister Hina questions the world's shift toward literal interpretations of faith, contrasting it with the broader concept of God being in everything (p. 276). The story of Alice's pregnancy exposes double standards when her lover declines marriage due to religious differences, revealing the hypocrisy behind their relationship, as he states, "For generations, there has never been a single marriage outside our Shia clan" (p. 263). This subversion of the grand faith narrative intersects with nationalistic and patriotic slogans, echoing back to the partition of the Indian subcontinent.

The novel challenges the overarching narratives of nationalism, emphasizing the discrepancies and discriminations experienced by certain residents under the banner of nationalistic stories.

The novelist exposes corruption and gaps in the working philosophy of various national institutions, particularly critiquing laws like Islamization, Martial law, and Hudood ordinances introduced during Zia's regime in the 1970s. These laws have marginalized minority communities, including Alice and Joseph Bhatti. The characters in the novel highlight seemingly trivial yet genuinely troublesome issues. Hina shares her experience of being unable to change her name on her ID card after a divorce due to the bureaucratic obstacles, humorously remarking that attempting the process might take "more than one lifetime" (297). The novel delves into the consequences of adhering to the grand narrative of nationalism, revealing that citizens' freedoms are often curtailed within rigid boundaries. It illustrates how slogans like "Pakistan ka Matlab kya...La Ilaha Illala" marginalize non-Muslim nationals, despite the original intention of creating a united nation (p. 128). The text of the novel laments the post-Partition state, shedding light on the persistent problems in the country even after gaining independence. It emphasizes the root causes of contemporary Pakistan's issues, and like Ayesha Jalal, Hanif suggests that discrimination against the Christian community existed even before partition. The novel challenges the nationalistic narrative by portraying the, demonstrating the distorted criteria for measuring one's toughness post-Partition, as exemplified by the line "no, electricity didn't count; you were still a sissy puss" (p.199). The novel challenges the legitimacy of the Partition by depicting horrifying incidents, highlighting that justice cannot be achieved through mass killings and atrocities. It subverts the present/past binary opposition. Characters like the medical surgeon and Sister Hina exemplify this influence, as they continue to be haunted by the events of the past, showing that the impact endures even decades after Pakistan's creation (p. 263). Sister Hina deconstructs the Partition ideology by sharing a disturbing history of exchanging mentally retarded individuals between Pakistan and India, and questioning the titles bestowed upon historical figures like Fatima Jinnah, ridiculing the notion of titles like 'mother of the nation' and 'father of the nation,' stating, "They could have called her sister of the nation, but no. Because then people might have mistaken her for a nurse, one of us. It's a nation of perverts, I tell you" (p. 81)."

The novel challenges the master narrative of science through characters like Alice and Joseph, subverting the authority of degree-holding doctors and highlighting the efficacy of spirituality in healing. Joseph's unconventional approach to treating ulcers through spirituality

challenges the hegemony of science, as there's "nothing in that fat book that he hasn't seen strewn on the floor of A & E" (p. 38). Similarly, Alice's mystical power to predict the future and miraculously heal patients deconstructs the notion of fixed reality and rationality. Alice's statement, "Ordinary people on the streets," (p. 61), reinforces her mystical abilities and challenges conventional scientific norms. Her recognition as a miracle worker emphasizes the importance of spirituality in a postmodern context, culminating in her sainthood and ascension. Her tragic death in an acid attack is seen as a mystical event. These supernatural elements blend with fantasy to create an unreal effect, with even inanimate objects like cars and machines exhibiting miraculous actions, adding to the novel's mystique and symbolism.

The novel portrays characters who challenge fixed identities, and Alice embodies multiple identities. Her character is not developed linearly but is constructed through fragmented mini-narratives. From her childhood to youth, Alice defies societal norms by attending nursing school when marriage was expected. Despite facing discrimination from peers, staff, and society, she successfully completes her degree. As a junior nurse, she grapples with marginalization. Her beauty, perceived as a 'curse' by society, exposes her to harassment, reflecting the language games of patriarchy. In police custody, Alice maintains a brave façade under the security of the police. Despite facing wrongful imprisonment, the deplorable conditions cannot break her spiritual strength. Alice's dreams are crushed by a corrupt society, but her hopes remain high, symbolizing a new generation breaking free from oppressive constraints (p. 136). Alice's character is depicted as a strong and unconventional woman within the backdrop of a patriarchal and conservative society, challenging the traditional expectations placed upon her as a Christian woman. She reflects a unique individuality and inner strength, transcending societal expectations and even possessing strong masculine qualities. Throughout the novel, Alice raises objections to the inhumane treatment of women and their limited access to essential services during childbirth. Her marriage to Teddy is met with disapproval, but she exercises her individual power. Even in her marriage, she remains unafraid, celebrating it in an unconventional manner, and initiating physical intimacy with her husband. As she contemplates her actions, she realizes that marriage "is a liberation army on the march" (p. 209), highlighting her sense of empowerment and liberation within her marital relationship.

The novelist challenges stereotypical representations of ideal love, as the marriage between Alice and Teddy proves to be a failure, causing depression and anxiety for Alice and abnormal behavior in Teddy. Malangi, a colleague of Teddy, embodies the social patriarchal power structure, which rejects an independent, intellectual, and strong woman as a wife. In a conversation with Teddy, Malangi shares his own marital experience, revealing the societal pressure on men to be experts outside their homes but often feel undermined within their marriages. This highlights the tension between public and private roles for men in a patriarchal society and Alice's exceptional character in defying these norms. The novel portrays Alice as a woman who defies societal norms by being mature, bold, courageous, and unafraid of threats. She possesses a unique individuality, resisting the traditional roles imposed on women and challenging the stereotypical image of a woman. Alice's experiences and actions, such as her confrontation with sexual harassment in the VIP room and her calm, fearless response, set her apart from conventional female characters. She maintains a masculine tone and straightforward language. The text describes her as "an ambitious, adventurous, an talented person (p. 145)." This portrayal of Alice contrasts with the common

societal view of women, making her a powerful and unconventional character. Similarly, Noor, another character in the novel, exhibits multiple identities.

Hina known for her professional seriousness and control at work, reveals a contrasting side of her personality when encountered outside the hospital. This duality leaves Alice perplexed. After Alice experiences sexual harassment, Sister Hina surprisingly blames her, perpetuating patriarchal values that favor men. This portrayal highlights the complexity of human nature and the role women can play in sustaining patriarchal norms. Sister Hina's shifting behavior underscores the fluidity of character and the hypocrisy that can exist within individuals. Teddy Butt, a policeman, exhibits contrasting behaviors as a kind and sympathetic officer in his professional role but becomes dominating and ruthless as a husband. His acid attack on Alice raises doubts about his character. These characters challenge the fixed and traditional roles imposed on them in society, showcasing the complexity and fluidity of identity. In a nutshell the novel is a beautiful portrayal of negation of the metanarratives in this period of postmodernism.

Conclusion

In conclusion Hanif, the novelist presents a powerful narrative that effectively challenges the grand metanarratives that have long dominated literature and society. This postmodernist study has investigated the subversion of these metanarratives through the lens of faith, science, nationalism, and identity, skillfully woven into the lives of its multifaceted characters. The novel advocates for the embrace of "petit recit" or little narratives that champion diversity, paralogy, and heterogeneity over dominant consensus. It reveals how language can be a powerful tool in challenging established norms, and how characters like Alice transcend societal expectations, defying traditional gender roles and challenging the faith-based and patriarchal master narratives. Furthermore, *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* explores religious issues in Pakistan, shedding light on the discrimination faced by minority communities. It underscores the failure of attempts to unify the diverse population and challenges the faith-based master narrative. The novel emphasizes the universal message of peace, respect, and unity found in religious teachings, irrespective of one's faith. The story also reveals the consequences of adhering to the grand narrative of nationalism, shedding light on the discrepancies and manipulations experienced by certain citizens under the banner of nationalistic stories. The narrative challenges the legitimacy of the Partition, portraying horrifying incidents and highlighting the continuous influence of the past on the present. In terms of science, the novel showcases characters who challenge the conventional authority of degree-holding doctors and highlight the efficacy of spirituality in healing. Alice, with her mystical abilities, subverts the traditional scientific norms, emphasizing the importance of spirituality in a postmodern context. The characters within the novel challenge fixed identities and societal norms. Alice and Noor, with their multifaceted identities and fluidity in different contexts, exemplify the complexity of human nature. These characters represent a shift from traditional and linear character development, reflecting the fluidity of identity.

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