

THE FRAGMENTED SELF: THE LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF IDENTITY IN THOMAS PYNCHON'S *GRAVITY'S RAINBOW*

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Abstract

The linguistic study of Thomas Pynchon's work Gravity's Rainbow (1973) aims at examining the role of language in creating fragmented self, resulting in dissolved identity of its main character Tyrone Slothrop in the postmodern and war-torn environment. The research uses a postmodernist theory of Fredric Jameson and a concept of polyphony by Mikhail Bakhtin to evaluate polyphonic narrative voices, neologisms, and syntactic dislocations using stylistic and discourse analysis. The four themes, such as paranoia and surveillance, technological determinism, cultural dislocation, and historical trauma, are discussed in some selected passages, and the linguistic strategies adopted by Pynchon reflect dislocated identity of Slothrop. It was found that polyphonic voices, such as those of a dozen different Slothrops (Pynchon 241) and neologisms, such as preterite (Pynchon 85) disrupt a unified self, as postmodern critics of identity would claim. The research fills the gaps in Pynchon studies by borrowing linguistic approaches of Joyce and DeLillo studies to advance the knowledge of identity fragmentation in the postmodern literary texts. This study shows that by associating linguistic innovation with the themes of war, technology, and cultural chaos, in Gravity's Rainbow has described the disintegration of the self as a result of historical and cultural displacement, providing a new perspective on Pynchon in his criticism of the technologized world.

Keywords: Fragmented Identity, Polyphony, Postmodernism, Paranoia, Technological Determinism, Cultural Dislocation

1. INTRODUCTION

Gravity's Rainbow (1973) is a massive postmodern novel written against the backdrop of the World War II that presents a multi-layered tapestry of paranoia, role of technology, and human disjointedness in the wake of the V-2 rocket. The story traces the lives of myriads of characters, including Tyrone Slothrop, and his disjointed existences depict the disordered interactions of science, war and existential confusion (Pynchon). Psychologically and philosophically, identity is defined as the harmonious sense of self that incorporates individual experiences, memories and social identities into a unified whole (Erikson 22). In postmodern literature however, the identity is usually portrayed as unsteady, determined by outside influences and divided by the demands of society. The idea of the fragmented self which forms the basis of this analysis refers to that state in which identity becomes fractured into unconnected fragments, with no consistent centre as people move between competing discourses and historical breaks (Jameson 17). Pynchon in *Gravity's Rainbow* uses a linguistically innovative style, which is characterized by the shifting registers, neologisms, and polyphonic voices, as a means of reflecting fragmentation, as the dissolution of the self in the technologized, war-torn world. The current research paper will perform a linguistic inquiry to *Gravity's Rainbow* for identifying how language contributes to identity formation and deformation, as it is revealed as a fragmented self and a consequence of postmodern dislocation and traumatic history.

1.1. Background of the Research

Linguistic innovation for exploring identity has become a mainstay of modernist and postmodernist literature as writers play with language to show the unstable nature of the self in disunified societal geographies. *Ulysses* (1922) by James Joyce can be considered as a classic, where the use of stream-of-consciousness was used to express the fragmented self of Leopold

Bloom and *Stephen Dedalus*. Joyce also used another feature, which is the fragmentation of characters in the urban and psychological space via shifting narrative voices, neologisms, and syntactic disruption (Ellmann 45). Critics such as *Kenner* suggest that the linguistic experimenting of Joyce, e.g., paratactic sentence structures and multilingual wordplay, dismantles the conventional idea of a unified self, and introduces identity as a collection of thoughts and cultural influences (112). This strategy is in line with modernist anxieties over the decomposition of identity in an industrialized and warring world, anticipating postmodern experiments with the fractured self. Studies on *Ulysses* have focused on the way in which linguistic fragmentation can be read as an existential loss of orientation and the same is applied comparatively to the discussion of the *Gravity's Rainbow* where the same effects are used to show the disintegration of *Tyrone Slothrop* in a technologized setting of World War II.

The tradition continues in postmodern literature where fragmentation of language is taken to an even greater degree so as to reflect the instability of identity in a media-saturated, globalized world. In *the Sound and the Fury* (1929) *William Faulkner* foretells the postmodern fragmentation in the form of polyphonic narrative and disjointed time especially in the part featuring *Benjy Compson*. The non-linear syntax, the repetitive diction, along with staccato dialogue, employed by the author, render the disorientation of *Benjy*, whose personality is torn apart by the familial erosion and the Southern decline (Bleikasten 78). Critics such as *Matthews* point to how *Faulkner* utilizes linguistic techniques (including elision and syntactic ambiguity) to create a sense of multiplicity of selves that cannot be coherent, an idea that echoes well with how *Pynchon* presents *Slothrop* as having his identity scattered across war-torn Europe (Matthews 134). An even more self-consciously postmodern novel is *Don DeLillo White Noise* (1985) which uses a hyperreal linguistic register of consumerist jargon, academic speech, and media clichés in the attempt to represent the fragmented identity of postmodern simulacra. The parodic dialogue and syntactic repetition by *DeLillo* show how the self is made by outside cultural noise, which is echoed in the polyphonic story by *Pynchon* (LeClair 203). Study of these works highlights the ways that linguistic fragmentation reflects the dissolution of identity that provides methodology to study the stylistic innovations of the author.

Although linguistic constructions of identity have been widely analysed in regard to modernist and postmodern fiction, but still little attention has been given to the linguistic construction of the fragmented self in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Critics such as *Weisenburger* focus in turn on the thematic use of paranoia and entropy by *Pynchon*, in one case acknowledging the entropic deconstruction of the identity of *Slothrop* under the influence of military and technological forces, but more likely to occupy themselves with narrative form rather than language (Weisenburger 56). The linguistic reflection of postmodern fragmentation is implied in the stylistic multiplicity of *Pynchon* which is analyzed by *Hite* as changing tones between scientific jargon and slang (Hite 89), but there is no systematic linguistic approach has been done to it. By contrast, treatments of *Joyce*, *Faulkner*, and *DeLillo* using linguistic resources has been used in multiple studies and the same method to parse out identity fragmentation, in *Pynchon* can be applied on his use of neologisms, polyphony, and syntactic interruptions. To give an example, discourse analysis of *Ulysses* demonstrates the way in which lexical density of *Joyce* splits the self of *Bloom*, which is applicable on the linguistic scattering of *Slothrop* (Attridge 123). This paper fills this gap through a linguistic interpretation of *Gravity's Rainbow*, employing linguistic approaches used previously to analyse the text for exploring use of language in constructing and deconstructing identity and creating fractured self.

1.2. Summary of the Novel

The *Gravity's Rainbow* is a postmodern novel of epic dimensions, taking place mostly in the last months of the war in Europe, and the first days of its aftermath. It is a dense, sprawling novel incorporating an intricate tapestry of characters, themes, and stories, woven across war-torn Europe. It is a loose adaptation of *Tyrone Slothrop*, an American lieutenant whose inability to have sex without the rockets hitting its target, leads to him being of interest to several secret agencies. After *Slothrop* moved through a crazed landscape called *the Zone*, a stateless post-war world, he encounters dazzling people like scientists, spies, drug smugglers, mystery cultists, all of them connected by webs of paranoia, conspiracy, and fascination with technology. It is an exploration of the interplay between science, war, and human desire, and the novel combines historical events with surreal moments, including drug-induced hallucinations and bizarre pursuits to give a disjointed narrative, reflecting the confusion of the characters and the time period.

Slothrop finds himself on a path towards the disintegration of identity, and he takes on various identities, losing himself slowly in the process of cultural displacement and trauma of the war. V-2 rocket is one of the key symbols of technological determinism that depicts the destructive nature of man and the absence of human will in a mechanized world. Other characters such as the sadistic Captain Blicero and the mysterious Tchitcherine have their obsessions, whether they be occult practices or personal vendettas, and this further augment the themes of power, control and entropy presented in the novel. The story of *Pynchon* does not follow a linear format, and it incorporates a kaleidoscopic style that abounds with digressions, songs, and scientific asides, and it leaves the reader with an incomplete reflection on the forces that influence human existence in a non-linear, post-modern reality.

1.3. Aims of the Research

The primary aim of this research is to conduct a linguistic analysis of Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* to elucidate how language constructs and deconstructs identity, thereby illuminating the fragmented self as a product of postmodern dislocation and historical trauma. By examining *Pynchon's* innovative linguistic techniques—such as neologisms, polyphony, and syntactic disruption—this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of identity fragmentation in postmodern literature, building on existing scholarship that explores similar themes in works by Joyce, Faulkner, and DeLillo (Attridge 123; Matthews 134).

1.4. Research Objectives

- To analyze the use of polyphonic narrative voices and shifting linguistic registers in *Gravity's Rainbow* to determine how they reflect the fragmentation of *Tyrone Slothrop's* identity.
- To examine Pynchon's neologisms and syntactic disruptions as linguistic strategies that destabilize traditional notions of a cohesive self, emphasizing the fragmented identity in a technologized, war-torn context.

1.5. Research Questions

- How do polyphonic narrative voices and shifting linguistic registers in *Gravity's Rainbow* contribute to the portrayal of *Tyrone Slothrop's* fragmented identity?
- In what ways do *Pynchon's* neologisms and syntactic disruptions destabilize the concept of a unified self, reflecting the fragmented identity in the novel's postmodern context?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a qualitative linguistic approach to explore how the linguistic processes in Thomas Pynchon *Gravity's Rainbow* produce the fragmented self by looking at the themes of

paranoia and surveillance, technological determinism, cultural dislocation and historical trauma, all of which are used to dissipate the identity of its main character *Tyrone Slothrop*. The complex linguistic structures of the novel, which include polyphonic voices, neologisms and syntactic interruptions, signify fragmentation of identity in a post-modern dialectic, which can be analyzed using a qualitative approach, as it had been done in the case of *Joyce's Ulysses* (Attridge 15). The approach is based on the combination of stylistics and discourse analysis by using the literary-linguistic paradigm proposed by *Toolan* to outline the systematic investigation of the way (23) in which these themes, as part of the language used by Pynchon, destroy the identity of *Slothrop*. This would achieve the goals of studying polyphonic voices and neologisms by associating them with paranoia, technology, culture, and trauma in an attempt to answer how they represent the fragmented self.

Gravity's Rainbow (1973) has been used as the main source of data with references to the passages that include *Slothrop*, disintegration of whose identity serves as a model of a schizophrenic self. Some of the excerpts are chosen out of the main settings: London scenes in terms of paranoia and surveillance, interactions of the Zone in terms of cultural dislocation, passages about the rockets in terms of technological determinism, and war aftermath scenes in terms of historical trauma (Pynchon). The reason these passages were selected is that they are linguistically dense, in the sense of polyphony (e.g., mixing slang terms with scientific terms), neologisms (e.g., preterite, scuffling), and syntactic interference (e.g., ellipse, fragmented clauses), which reflect the fragmented identity of *Slothrop* along these lines (Weisenburger 67).

Stylistics and Discourse analysis are used as analytical frameworks. Stylistic analysis dwells upon linguistic elements associated with the four themes, including lexical items (e.g. using scattered to describe historical trauma), syntax (e.g. using parataxis in passages dominated by paranoia), and discourse markers (e.g. voice shift in scenes of cultural dislocation). Based on the analysis of *Joyce* lexical fragmentation by *Senn*, this approach measures the linguistic disruption and its effect on the identity of *Slothrop* (Senn 112). Discourse analysis, which is a modification of the analysis of *Gaddis polyphony* conducted by *Moore*, encodes the narrative voices, scientific, colloquial and mythic in a passage such as *he is a child of the Rocket* (Pynchon 419) to the extent in which they form competing facets of identity (Moore 145). The linguistic patterns are connected to the identity fragmentation through close reading and thematic coding (e.g., paranoia, trauma) with voice shifts and neologism.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Fredric Jameson posits that the fragmented self is a mark of the late capitalistic societies where identity is disrupted by the technological, cultural and historical discontinuities. In *Postmodernism*, or, *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, *Jameson* maintains that the postmodern self has lost its fixed centre, and is broken up by the commodification of culture (Raza and Bhatti 28) and the end of historical continuity (17). In *Gravity's Rainbow*, the identity of *Tyrone Slothrop* is fragmented in the shambles of World War II and the technological ubiquity of the V-2 rocket, and evokes the idea of a self split between warring discourses: militant, scientific, and cultural (Pynchon 20-100). This fragmentation is reflected in the linguistic strategies of *Pynchon*, who varies the registers of the scientific jargon with the slangs and poetic prose, causing the sense of self in *Slothrop* to deflate into the multiplicity of selves (Jameson 25). An example of this is the paranoia of *Slothrop* which is written in broken sentences and neologisms such as preterite, according to *Jameson* the postmodern subject is a locus of contradictory narratives (Weisenburger 56). It is through this aesthetic framework that the polyphonic, discontinuous, and

creative language used by *Pynchon* builds a disjointed identity, placing *Gravity's Rainbow* in the larger discourse of postmodern literature that has questioned the unified subjectivity, such as in *DeLillo White Noise* (LeClair 178).

To add to it, the theory of polyphony offered by *Mikhail Bakhtin* offers a linguistic perspective of the reflection of fragmented self through the use of multiple narrative voices in *Pynchon*. *Bakhtin* describes polyphony in *Problems of Dostoevsky Poetics* as the presence of different, independent voice in a text that helps to construct dialogically the meaning (34). *Pynchon* in *Gravity's Rainbow* uses polyphonic voices namely scientific, colloquial, mythic, and bureaucratic in order to show the identity of *Slothrop* as a contentious zone, and not a coherent narrative (Hite 89). As an example, in the pages of the "Zone" (pp. 200-300), *Slothrop* is described as interacting with the competing registers, like technical descriptions of rocket flights are accompanied by slang-rich dialogue, as an expression of his broken mind (*Pynchon*). The notion of polyphony is very applicable here because the linguistic diversity of *Pynchon* destabilized the self, which corresponds to the *postmodern dislocation* (Attridge 123). The framework is used to describe the discourse analysis of how the polyphonic narrative of *Pynchon* creates the identity of *Slothrop* as a collage of external discourses, which strengthens the fragmented self as an outcome of narrative instability.

The combination of the ideas of *Jameson* and *Bakhtin* offers an effective tool in discussing the linguistic construction of identity in *Gravity's Rainbow*. The postmodernism of *Jameson* can be used to tie *Slothrop* to his fragmentation into the historical and technological context of the novel, where war and capitalism are undermining the stable identities, and the polyphony of *Bakhtin* can also be used to break down the linguistic devices of *Pynchon*, the neologism, syntactic disturbances, and shifts of voice, as an aspect of such fragmentation (Toolan 45). These frameworks in combination respond to the research objectives because they establish a connection between the polyphonic voices and unconventional language of *Pynchon*, which answer the question of how these features undermine conventional ideas of selfhood. This study differs with other works that analyze the polyphony of modernist works of literature such as the sound and the fury by *Faulkner* because the latter employs polyphony to investigate the psychological fragmentation (Bleikasten, 78; Zia-ul-Haq and Bhatti 35). This approach can add to research in the field of identity in postmodern literature by pointing to the distinctive linguistic representations of the splintered self in *Gravity's Rainbow*.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theorizing postmodern literature often involves studying fractured self in terms of linguistic innovation, highlighting the instability of identity in the fractured cultural environments. *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) has been widely analyzed in terms of multiple themes, like paranoia and technological determinism, and less so with regard to its linguistic construction of identity. According to *McHale*, the story by *Pynchon* breaks the ontological order and introduces such characters as *Slothrop*, who are fragmented by the opposing discourses, but the analysis is epistemologically focused rather than linguistically precise (Postmodernist Fiction 87). *Cowart*, on the same note, analyzes the identity dissolution of *Slothrop* as an objection to the control of capital in the novel through the use of eclectic language that has no organized linguistic structure (*Cowart* 45). By contrast, the linguistic analysis of *Finnegans Wake* (1939) is strong, giving an example of how *Joyce* uses multilingual wordplay and syntactical fragmentation to portray a non-unified, fluid self (Senn 112). These works emphasise the necessity of a more linguistic study of

Gravity's Rainbow, because it has a tendency to deemphasise language in favour of thematic issues, and this study seeks to fill that gap.

The instability of identity is very much a typical theme of linguistic fragmentation in postmodern and modernist texts. *Slaughterhouse-five* by Kurt Vonnegut (1969) uses disconnected narrative and repetitive diction to echo fractured identity after being exposed to war trauma creating non-linear syntax (Reed 67). It is similar to what Pynchon does with syntactic disturbance in *Gravity's Rainbow* with the difference of Reed's as that was not directly on the linguistic construction of identity. Similarly, *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968) by Barth employs metafictional language to portray the shattered self of narrative self-awareness, and Waugh emphasizes that the parodic discourse of Barth subverts identity (Waugh 134). Pynchon reflects the postmodern fragmentation using language but critical works on Vonnegut and Barth are scarcely focusing on stylistic or discourse analysis as the present study does. Woolf, too, in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), foreshadows the postmodern fragmentation in stream-of-consciousness, that is why Zwerdling has claimed that the identity of *Clarissa* is linguistically fabricated by fragmentary thoughts (Zwerdling 89). These readings offer the comparative linguistic devices, including lexical density and voice shifts, which could be used in the polyphonic narrative of Pynchon.

There are some studies on Pynchon which disregards the role of language as an element of identity fragmentation in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Like Tanner discusses the critique of technological rationality in the novel observing the dispersion of identity of *Slothrop* and concentrating on the plot but not on the language as an apparatus (Tanner 78). The intertextuality of Pynchon, emphasizes the linguistic diversity, including scientific, mythic, and colloquial, but reduces it to the cultural criticism, lacking the possibilities of stylistic analysis (Grant 102). Comparatively, other postmodern writers, such as the *JR* by Gaddis (1975) are linguistically insightful for which, Moore examines their polyphonic dialogue as a discontinuous fashion of corporate identities (Moore 145), which can be applied to Pynchon, when he uses a multi-voiced narrative. Likewise, in *The Public Burning* (1977) by Coover, the depiction of disintegrated national identity is revealed through the language of satire, and Walsh considers it a chaotic syntax as an indicator of cultural displacement (Walsh 123). These works imply that linguistic analysis can be used to shed light upon identity fragmentation but *Gravity's Rainbow* by Pynchon is under-studied in this aspect hence the need to have a linguistic study of the fragmented identity of *Slothrop*.

The linguistic construction of the fragmented self is also applicable to the larger issues of the postmodern like media and globalization, which can provide additional context to *Gravity's Rainbow*. In *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) by the same author Pynchon, linguistic fragmentation was used to express the unstable identity of *Oedipa Maas*. Johnston mentions that Pynchon employed the ambiguous diction to signify the postmodern uncertainty (Johnston 56). The works of Osteen on DeLillo's *Libra* (1988) are relevant in discussing the disintegration of identity that is achieved through media-driven language of Lee Harvey Oswald and can be applied to the narrative discourse analysis of Pynchon that is media dense (Osteen 98). Moreover, *Beloved* (1987) by Morrison is not a pure postmodern novel, but still its fragmented dialog is employed to represent a fractured self of *Sethe*. That is why Horvitz discusses the gaps of the language used in *Beloved* as signs of trauma (Horvitz 76). These works emphasize the role of linguistic disintegration in identity formation in different settings, which is a reason to use the same on *Gravity's Rainbow*. This study tries to use the same method on Pynchon by combining stylistic and discourse analysis; it tries to understand the way, in which the language of Pynchon creates the fractured identity of *Slothrop*, adding to the knowledge on postmodern self.

4. DISCUSSION

Gravity's Rainbow is postmodern novel, and it is the main text for the current study. There are four main themes relevant to the study: paranoia and surveillance, technological determinism, cultural dislocation, and historical trauma. Following is the discussion of all these themes relevant to postmodernism and shattered identity of *Slothrop*.

4.1. Paranoia and Surveillance

The polyphonic narrator voices of *Gravity's Rainbow* present the concept of paranoia as the main agent dividing the identity of the protagonist *Tyrone Slothrop* as a postmodern self that is always under surveillance. In the opening pages of the novel, *Slothrop* is paranoid, feeling that unknown forces are monitoring his every step in the war-torn city of London. This is the second time he has found himself talking aloud to himself this week (Pynchon 23). That fact that the third-person narration is transformed into internal muttering of *Slothrop*, with the syntactic breaks, reflects his broken psyche, which is in line with what *Bakhtin* describes as polyphony, a situation in which a single entity is disrupted by competing voices (Bakhtin 34). The ambiguous pronoun *They* reoccurs again and again, such as in the line *They have taught him to watch for the sign* (Pynchon 25), furthering the impression that *Slothrop* is being watched by an unspecified power. This linguistic uncertainty, combined with badly cut sentences, leads to an understanding of the idea of *Jameson* on the postmodern self as the place of external influence, where the paranoia destroys the integrity of personality (Jameson 17). This dispersal of the linguistic space as *Slothrop* drifts between monologue and observation, between stable and unstable self, is symptomatic of his failure to keep a stable self under the all-seeing eye of surveillance.

The motif of paranoia is given more strength in the sections labelled as *the Zone*, where the language of polyphony used by the author is a mixture of military and slang terms, and mythical tones, which further disintegrate the identity of *Slothrop*. A passage about *Slothrop* navigating the crazy post-war Zone has changed him as Pynchon say, *He changed, masqueraded, played roles ... a dozen different Slothrops, cancelled out to zero* (Pynchon 241). This quick alternation of narrative voices (colloquial or masquerading, mythic or cancelling out to zero, and analytical) has the effect of a polyphony that reflects the disintegration of *Slothrop* into a plurality of contradictory identities within the framework (Bakhtin 34). The neologism of cancellation recalls the act of erasure that linguistically creates a sense of identity fragmentation as *Slothrop* is pressurized by surveillance. This is consistent with *McHale* who indicates that the stories of *Pynchon* disrupt the ontological integrity and portrays identity as a product of externalities (Postmodernist Fiction 87). The multiplicity of language, the sudden change of registers, is seen as a reflection of the paranoia of *Slothrop* who feels himself hunted by some invisible systems, which disintegrates his identity.

4.2. Technological Determinism

The motif of technological determinism also helps to disintegrate the identity of *Slothrop*, the neologisms and syntactic interferences used by *Pynchon* help in understanding the notion of technology that helps to destabilize his identity. Early in the book, we are told how *Slothrop* was linked to the V-2 rocket, i.e., how the blood was taken secretly: *There is a map, Slothrop is part of it, a secret integral they have taken of him* (Pynchon 85). The neologism which is used in the world of mathematics, *integral*, is contrasted with a passive voice, *they have taken*, presents *Slothrop* as a part of a machine and this is just what *Jameson* sees in the postmodern subject. He believes that the subject of postmodernity has taken up by the late capitalistic systems (Jameson 25). The disjointed syntax with short disjointed clauses reflect the loss of agency inherent in *Slothrop* as he is reduced to a cog in the machine of the rocket. This language technique resembles

syntactic fragmentation in *Finnegans Wake* by Joyce (Senn 112), highlights an aspect of technology which is deterministic and disintegrates the unified identity of *Slothrop*.

The use of technical slang and syntactic confusion by Pynchon in the later parts intensifies the effects of technological determinism over fragmented identity. *Slothrop* comes across a conspiracy about the rocket in the Zone: *The Rocket is plotting its own course ... Slothrop is a son of the Rocket* (Pynchon 419). This issue of personification of the rocket, along with the resort to neologisms, like *plotting*, and the sudden changes of the point of view to the one of *Slothrop*, causes the polyphonic narrative that disrupts the identity of *Slothrop* as he is being conflated with the agency of the rocket (Pynchon 419). Such linguistic combination of human and machine, as Cowart points out, parodies the technological domination of subjectivity (Cowart 45). The syntactic breaks, ellipses and incomplete clauses show how *Slothrop* is being fragmented, and it proves that Jameson is right when he states that the postmodern identity is given by the outside forces (Jameson 17). Using these linguistic features, Pynchon demonstrates how technological determinism disintegrates the self of *Slothrop*, which makes *Gravity's Rainbow* one of the critiques of technologized world where identity is constantly destabilized.

4.3. Cultural Dislocation

A polyphonic narrative voice in *Gravity's Rainbow* is used to describe cultural dislocation as a theme that tears the identity of *Tyrone Slothrop*, a postmodern self that is no longer tied to cultural moorings. In the sections called *the Zone*, *Slothrop* moves in a post-war Europe that has lost all cultural boundaries: *He is in the midst of a stateless anarchy where no language is spoken exclusively, no language is preferred* (Pynchon 287). The linguistic mosaic of mixed languages: German, Russian, English slang, and the language of myths, reflecting the cultural alienation of *Slothrop*, fits in the idea of polyphony, according to which various voices destroy the idea of individuality (Bakhtin 34). The term *stateless anarchy* is a neologistic unit that implies the fragmentation of culture, and it underlines how *Slothrop* is unable to attach his identity to one of the cultural narratives. It is a linguistic multiplicity, which according to Jameson is a sign of the disintegration of postmodern self as it is scattered through the commoditized cultures of the globalised society (Jameson 17). *Slothrop* is culturally dislocated, and this cultural removal is emphasized by the disjointed dialogue he speaks, full of American colloquialisms and borrowed idioms, as he is a fragmented whole, a composite of various displaced voices.

The idea of cultural dislocation becomes even more explicitly developed as *Slothrop* assumes many faces, and Pynchon disorients the syntax to emphasise identity division. Pynchon also writes, in a section where *Slothrop* pretends to be a journalist, that, *in his Ian Scuffling suit, Slothrop is anybody fool, a borrowed name, a borrowed life* (Pynchon 305). The elliptical syntax (*a borrowed name, a borrowed life*), the sudden changes in narrative voice (third-person to *Slothrop* self-consciousness) disintegrate the text and reflect how *Slothrop* is losing a coherent sense of self in the changing culture. The novelty or neologism of the word, *Scuffling*, which brings forth the image of struggle, as well as improvisation, is a linguistic re-enactment of *Slothrop*, being culturally displaced as he assumes temporary labeling to defend himself in the anarchy of *the Zone*. It corresponds with the perception of McHale who considered that narratives of Pynchon disrupt the ontological coherence and offer the identity as a product of the external culture (Postmodernist Fiction 87). The disjunctive nature of *Slothrop* is further broken apart by the polyphonic interaction of voices, journalistic jargon, slang and mythic overtones, demonstrating how cultural dislocation in a postmodern world fragments the self into disjunctive roles.

4.4. Historical Trauma

The motif of historical trauma, represented in the form of devastation of World War II, which further disintegrates the identity of *Slothrop*. Along with that the use of neologisms and syntactical confusion, demonstrate the breakdown of the self in the oppression of history. In one of the passages describing the interaction of *Slothrop* with the legacy of the War, Pynchon says, *The War was a part of him ... it has torn him to pieces, scattered* (Pynchon 432). The linguistic expression of *Slothrop* as an identity that has been destroyed by historical trauma is represented by the neologistic terms, the term *scattered*, and broken syntax, clauses are short, discontinuous, a phenomenon echoed by Jameson in his conception of the postmodern self as the result of historical rupture (Jameson 25). The passive voice of the expression has puts *Slothrop* as a victim of the impersonal forces of war, deprived him of an agency and coherence. The linguistic device, fragmented syntax was used by Joyce in *Finnegans Wake* (Senn 112), and also used to highlight how historical trauma, the violence and displacement of World War II, separated *Slothrop* into disconnected linguistic pieces that could never fit together again.

The polyphonic structure of the narrative employed by Pynchon enhances the effects of historical trauma by using the voices that are fused together to represent *Slothrop* as one of the victims of war that has passed its trail. In one of the final passages *Slothrop* thinks of his lack of attachment *History has him now ... a ghost in the rubble, no more Slothrop* (Pynchon 738). The change of personal thoughts to that of a mythic voice (History got him) and use of neologism (rubble) generates a polyphonic impact, which blends *Slothrop* as an individual with the trauma of the destruction caused by war on the whole (Pynchon 738). Such a linguistic hybridism, according to Cowart, is a critique of historical forces devouring individual identity (Cowart 45). The language disturbances, such as ellipses and sudden breaks in the voice, correspond to the breakdown of *Slothrop* into a disembodied entity, a ghost, a shredded personality, traumatized by the past. Polyphony describes this abundance of voices as a decentered self, with the identity of *Slothrop* being scattered over the narrative fragments of war (Bakhtin 34). Using these methods of language, Pynchon shows how historical trauma destroys the identity of *Slothrop* making *Gravity's Rainbow* the critique of a war-torn world where self is always fractured.

5. CONCLUSION

Gravity's Rainbow (1973) is a sprawling postmodern novel by Thomas Pynchon covering the events of World War II and follows a complex narrative of paranoia, technology and cultural upheaval through fragmented experiences of Tyrone Slothrop whose identity melt away under the pressures of the war and surveillance (Pynchon 20; 738). In the given research paper, a linguistic analysis explored the ways in which the innovative language used by Pynchon constructs a fragmented self through the lens of the postmodernism theory of identity as being destabilized by late capitalist and historical discontinuities and the theory of polyphony by Mikhail Bakhtin, which describes the instance of a multiplicity of narrative voices as an expression of a decentered self (Jameson 17; Bakhtin 34). The paper had two aims, firstly, to examine the use of polyphonic narration voices and the manipulation of linguistic registers to ascertain how they contribute towards the fragmentation of a subject in *Slothrop*; secondly, to consider the neologisms and syntactic disturbances as a means of destabilizing a coherent self. These goals were facilitated by two research questions that were as follows: how do the polyphonic voices and the changing registers create a fragmented identity of *Slothrop*, and how do the neologisms and the syntactic discontinuities in the novel create a destabilized identity within a world of postmodernism.

Four themes, paranoia and surveillance, technological determinism, cultural dislocation, and historical trauma, were examined in the analysis, each of which was connected to the disintegrated identity of *Slothrop* through linguistic techniques by *Pynchon*. Discourse and stylistic analysis of some of the excerpts (e.g., pp. 23, 85, 287, 432) demonstrated the manner in which the language used by *Pynchon* reflects the postmodern situation, where the identity of *Slothrop* gets fragmented among various competing discourses (McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* 87). The approach, which relied on a qualitative linguistic analysis, coded polyphonic voices, neologisms, and syntactic constructs systematically, and cross-linked the results with the research on *Joyce*, *Faulkner*, and *DeLillo* (Senn 112; Moore 145). The motifs of paranoia and surveillance, using the ambiguous pronouns, such as *They* (Pynchon 25), and technological determinism, characterized by the use of neologisms, such as *integral* (Pynchon 85), emphasize the external factors, which are weakening the self of *Slothrop*. The fragmentation of his identity continues with cultural dislocation and historical trauma, of which he speaks in phrases such as *the stateless anarchy* and *a ghost in the rubble* (Pynchon 287, 438), which fit the definition of cultural and historical instability as a postmodern self-concept (Jameson 25).

Answering the first research question, polyphonic narrative voices and linguistic registers swings in *Gravity's Rainbow* and play an important role in the identity fragmentation of *Slothrop*, introducing him as an assemblage of discourses in conflict with each other. *Pynchon* also combines mythic tones with scientific jargon and slang in the sections of the book titled *the Zone*, and it produces a polyphonic effect reflecting *Slothrop* (Pynchon 241) breaking down into many different selves (Bakhtin 34). These changes between colloquial and technical registers indicate his cultural dislocation and paranoia as in the case of the changes in narrative voice in the expression, *They are watching me*, (Pynchon 23) where the continuity of identity is disrupted. This plurality, according to *McHale* destabilizes ontological coherence, and makes *Slothrop* identity fractured and amalgamation of external voices (87). Through the use of polyphony, *Pynchon* performs linguistically the postmodern disintegration of self, which fits into the framework of Bakhtin and highlights the fact that *Slothrop* has no unified narrative centre.

In reference to the second research question, neologisms and syntactic disruptions destabilize the idea of a unified self linguistically operating to enact identity dissolution of *Slothrop* in the postmodern environment of the novel. The use of neologisms such as *preterite* and *scuffling* (Pynchon 85, 305) suggests the erasure and improvisation, whereas fragmented syntax, ellipses and paratactic clauses in *The War has been a part of him ... broken him into pieces* (Pynchon 432) reflects the broken psyche of *Slothrop* under the pressure of historical trauma and control by technology. Such linguistic tactics, correspond to the understanding of *Jameson*, who describes the postmodern self as the result of technological and historical discontinuities (17). The break in traditional language patterns also demonstrates how such external influences take over the identity of *Slothrop*, making his contribution to postmodern studies. Language used in *Gravity's Rainbow* presents the fragmented self as a formal accusation of a world in chaos and at war.

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