CHAPTER VI

WOMEN'S WRITING: THE HARVEST OF NEW FORMS AND NEW LANGUAGE

Having examined the dominant themes in the novels of Morrison, Walker, Desai and Sahgal, now we examine the form and language of these novels. An attempt is also made to study the literary devices used by these novelists for expressing their feminine sensibility. Their creativity is reflected in subverting the stereotype and giving a new form to their narratives. The use of folk tales and legends with their nuances enhance the richness of their narratives, as these render new meanings to the old tales.

These women novelists belong to different cultures and their different techniques enhance our perception. Schorer note, about technique what T.S.Eliot means by 'convention'-- "any selection, structure, or distortion, any form or rhythm imposed upon the world of action: by means of which--it should be added--our apprehension of the world of action is enriched or renewed" (78).

After reading the novels of Morrison, Walker, Desai and Sahgal our perception regarding the world of action is enriched through their techniques. These artists have recognized the form and structure as, Gayle notes, "... little more than cousins to content." Through their peculiar use of language Morrison, Walker, Desai and Sahgal's narratives reflect feminine sensibility.

As Addison Gayle points out in his introduction to **The Way of the New World**, the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are "heightened by political, social, and historical factors." Their artifacts depict "the experiences of man" and woman and are hallmarks of the creative genius of these novelists. These women novelists successfully attempt the "task of redefining the definitions, creating new myths, symbols, and image, ..." (qtd. in Long 661).

In their fictional narratives, Walker and Morrison chart "the progression of a great people from social and political awareness to consciousness of their historical importance as a people and as a nation within a nation. ..." (qtd. in Long 661).

In **The Color Purple** Alice Walker invests the written word to reverse the black women's lot. Using the epistolary form, she establishes herself as a writer of great significance. Walker employs "a form" as Babb notes "traditionally inhospitable to oral cultures, the written word and transforms it, making it, too, responsive to" (107) her novels.

At the end of the novel Celie achieves a sense of her persona. She breathes, suffers and revels. As Walker asserts in **Living by the Word**, one sees Celie, because one sees "her voice", as she is "created out of language" (64). Celie and Nettie belong to that society which is formulated as an outcome of certain historical events and cultural values which endowed whites with dominance over blacks, men endowed with authority over women, and above all

gave dominance to literacy over oral expression. Walker achieves a reorganisation of this hierarchy in **The Color Purple**.

The epistolary form of **The Color Purple** itself is significant. Once aware of the conspicuous presence of writing, one cannot help noticing that a transformation occurs in terms of its function and form. In the first half of the novel, Celie uses writing to effect self-actualization, and its standard form is modified as elements of the oral are injected into it. This calls for Walker's experimentation in formalistic structure of the novel form.

In the second half of the novel, Nettie uses writing to record the oral history of Africa and Afro-Americans through her detailed letters to Celie in standard English. Its function as a cultural element generally signals the disappearance of the oral. The most significant aspect of the structure of **The Color Purple** is that two black women Celie and Nettie employ a device traditionally used by the white male culture to insure its authority.

Claude Levi-Strauss in **Tristes Tropiques** defines the supporting role writing plays in establishing social hierarchies. In all cultures, writing has played a crucial and catalytic role in cultural dominance. He writes:

> The only phenomenon with which writing has always been concomitant is the creation of cities and empires, that is the integration of large numbers of individuals into a political system, and their grading into

> castes or classes ... (I)t seems to have favoured the exploitation of human beings rather than their enlightenment, ... My hypothesis, if correct, would oblige us to recognize the fact that the primary function of written communication is to facilitate slavery (qtd. in Rabb 103).

The above statement seems pertinent to the situation of women as a class in Indian society who belonged to the "little tradition." They were denied any exposure to the study of the written word or scriptures for a very long time as examined in the first chapter of this thesis. The situation of the black women in America during the period of their slavery and the situation of the Indian women before Independence is identical. Levi-strauss' hypothesis of language as an instrument of dominance is portrayed by Morrison and Walker in their novels. The victimization of innocent blacks at the hands of whites due to their illiteracy is a common theme in their novels.

What renders verve to Walker's novels is her heroines--be they Meridian, Mem Copeland, Ruth Copeland, Celie or Nettie. These heroines learn to master the written word. Mem who gets destroyed in spite of her skill of writing and reading in **The Third Life of Grange Copeland** is regenerated as Celie in **The Color Purple**. She and her sister Nettie not only master the written word, modify its form and function, but also change their destiny by acquiring mastery over the written word.

What breathes life into Celie's character in **The Color Purple** is her oral expression. Although she records her experiences in the written form, she renders them in an oral manner. Her use of grammatical construction, syntax and spelling, all evoke Celie's speech pattern and the way it sounds. One such prominent example is the use of the Black English to be. It is used as a verbal conjugation and are is omitted in the sentence. For instance, "she be my age but they married" (TCP 14) reflects such a typical usage of the 'patois' form in the narrative. To pin point the characteristics of orality, we may use Walter Ong's definition of orality summarized by Gabb:

> rhythmic balanced patterns, repetition--- Antithesis, assonances, use of proverbs known to a large body, conservative use of language due to the need for repetition of tried and true expressions (110).

Celie's letters, in varying degrees, embody all these traits.

They too achieve this by using the word as power which was once denied to women in India. As Raja Rao puts forth, these women writers "go back to the changeless" in themselves, so they truly communicate with the reader (4). Toni Morrison and Alice Walker as well as Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal are upasaka of the word and their "word becomes mantra" (5).

The basic structure of Celie's sentences assumes the same pattern of subject first, then predicate. In her encounter with Corrine, the missionary's wife, on a trip to town, Celie describes an accidental sighting of a baby Corrine carries. She

believes it to be her lost child: "I seen my baby girl. I knowed it was her. She look just like me and my daddy" (TCP 22). There are similar examples of repetition which permeate the narrative. One such example is the pregnant Celie's description of her assuming maternal responsibilities while her own mother is ill from a recent child birth: "By time I git back from the well, the water be warm. By time I git the tray ready the food be cold. By time I git all the children ready for school it be dinner time" (TCP 12). She uses antithesis when she describes her stepson Harpo: "He strong in body but weak in will" (TCP 35); assonances are found in an early description of Shug: "Then she carlle. Sound like a death rattle" (TCP 50); and proverbs such as, "the Lord don't like ugly" (TCP 46) occur often throughout the novel.

Celie creates her own writing form gradually and becomes expressive in the use of the written form. Now she invents metaphors to express her feelings. True to her feminine sensibility, she speaks of her experiences in terms of nature, an element which, like Celie, has also been exploited by the men. Her humiliation, agony and pain during the routine beatings administered by her husband are analogues to male cruelty towards trees: as Celie says: "I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree. That's how come I know trees fear men" (TCP 30).

Celie learns writing and she uses it to crystallize her thoughts and realises black women's predicament. As an outcome of such realizations, we find the emergence of a stronger Celie. Her

dialect create the reality--it is uneducated but personal, difficult but precise. As Fifer notes:

> Even for Walker: dialect provides its own world view, its own answers, its own determination: it does not reduce, it compresses: it does not simplify, it focuses: it achieves distinction without cliche: "If us want to do better ... our own self is what we have to hand" (160).

Through the use of dialect Celie conveys primitive and childlike effects. She successfully manages the crisis of her world effectively. Her language makes the dangerous less threatening. Just as Celie's stitching is careful and precise, creating and connecting, so is her language. The creativity in sewing pants suggested by Shug to Celie reflects, as Baker rightly remarks, "an ancient affinity between women and cloth" (714).

The structure of **The Color Purple** gets firmly rooted in the form of letters. The narrative reaches its culminating point in Walker's last letter addressed to all,not only confined to God but to the elements of nature including stars, trees, sky, peoples and every thing in the universe. Thus, in an all-encompassing humanistic tradition the author covers each and every object from a blade of grass to the throbbing stars. This takes us back to the dedication of the book: "To the spirit"; thus reiterating Jungian theory where spirit longs for love and

love for the spirit. Eros and Logos become complementary in Walker's fictional universe. The enchanted world and the purple muse of **The Color Purple** entwine at the end a real happy family reunion takes place. Nettie, her husband Samuel and their daughter Olivia, and son Adam with his African wife Tashi meet Celie and her family and a warm homely atmosphere prevails in spite of oppression, suffering, endurance, rebellion and alienation. Ultimately, in the use of plain speech of the Southern black full the spirit of joyousness prevails in **The Color Purple.**

In **The Third Life of Grange Copeland**, the formalistic structure embodies the generational progression from Margaret, Mem to Ruth Copeland. The eleven parts and forty-eight chapters bring forth the lives of three women and achieve the metamorphoses of Grange Copeland as a grandfather. Thus, Walker's novels have predominantly performed a heuristic function. Grange through his suggestive attitudinizing performs the pivotal role of preserver of his own lineage by training Ruth.

The narrative is smudged with the motifs of physical and spiritual murder, by suicide and infanticide, by wife beating and killing, set against the backdrop of the horror of racism in the South. The structure of the novel resembles the structure of a quilt made by the black women characters in this novel. As Christian observes the "pervasive pattern of this quilt is fun filling" (164). Part One to Part Seven of this 'quilt' depict the cyclical motifs of spiritual and physical degeneration within the

Copeland family. The most awaful motif is Brownfield murdering of his wife Mem in the presence of their three daughters. After this climax, the terrible pattern of violence breaks for Ruth, the youngest child. Hope lights up her very existence when Grange, her grandfather takes her responsibility and resolves to be a father to her. Probably he expiates for the neglect of his own son, Brownfield.

In the later half of the novel, the grandfather and the grand daughter nurture each other. Grange mellows in the innocent company of Ruth. A new pattern evolves in the 'quilt' as Grange turns into a caring father to his grand daughter. Ruth is taught not only to survive but to survive as a whole being.

Again, like a quilt, the first and second half of the novel are marked by a distinct change in the texture of the story. The first half is dismal and gray in its desperation. There lurks the gloomy shadows of maltreatment of wives and children. The rhythm is tense, whereas the second half is charged with hope and splashes of innorent joys shared by the older and the younger generation of the [illegible] family. The tender care and laughter in the shadow of intense tensions or murders are redeeming features of the narrative.

The use of images and metaphors in Walker's first novel reveals her feminine sensibility. The sky near Grange's house at the end of a clearing looked like "a round blue muffler made of wool" (TTLGC 6). Images from the nature have predominant place in the narratives of all women novelists under the study. The

"yellow and red lines" in the eyes of Grange are "like the veins of a leaf" (TTLGC 10). Margaret Brownfield's life in its monotony seems to her "as predictably unexciting as last year's cotton field" (TTLGC 19). Even the name Margaret chooses for her son is from nature. As she sees brownfields before her, she names her son 'Brownfield'.

The language reflects the despair and forlorn state of Brownfield's early childhood. Mem Copeland's disaster of living with Brownfield, her dejection and her frantic efforts to survive are delienated with sensitivity. Like Mattie Michael of Naylor's The Women of Brewster Place, Mem's efforts to plant flowers reveal her feminine sensibility as gardening helps women to express their creativity.

With Meridian, Waller brings forth innovation in the form of her narrative. The anecdotal narration of the struggles of Meridian Hill and her mother Mrs. Hill are entwined with several tales and legends of black women under the yoke of slavery. Meridian's experiences at Saxon college are delineated authentically which recalls her [and the novelist's] feminine sensibility. Meridian's rebellious stance is conveyed through overtones of language. At the outset, the power of language is revealed by Waller when she defines 'meridian' in the myriad ways we can read the word. The word as two basic contexts: as a noun, as something define in and of itself, and as an adjective, as something that modifies another subject. Thus, through Meridian, Waller tests the ways in which one gives meaning to activities and to objects, to self and to others. One would agree with Nadel

that "Meridian" is a lesson in the power of language, the power to retain as well as to distort, to affect as well as to deny" (67).

Walker states in an interview that in **Meridian** she "wanted to do something like a crazy quilt. ... something that works on the mind in different patterns" (Tate 176). Thus, in the structuring of her second novel **Meridian**, Walker is aware of her style which reverberates with myths. Walker further elaborates on the formalistic aspect of her narrative that crazy quilt is different from a patch work quilt. The former "only <u>looks</u> crazy. "but it is not 'patched', it is planned". Likewise the story in **Meridian** jumps back and forth in time. It operates on several different levels and weaves myths in the pattern. As an outcome, the narrative evokes metaphor and symbolism much more than a novel which has a chronological structure like **The Third Life of Grange Copeland**. Walker compares the structure of **Meridian** with the work of one of her favourite artists, Romare Bearden. "In some ways Meridian is like a collage" (**Tate** 178).

The narrative in **Meridian** is circular in structure. The novel is formally divided into three parts: 'Meridian', 'Truman Held' and 'Ending". The first chapter, "The Last Return" embodies the outcome of the struggle undergone by Meridian and her sense of achiving 'wholeness' by suffering for her people. 'Sojourner" evokes the legendary black woman Sojourner Truth, her struggles and triumphs as the chapter entwines the African folk tale of Louvinie.

Walker's formalistic technique is often compared to that of an adept quilter's. In the narrative pattern of **Meridian** personal events and public history mesh to compose the collective process of the sixties. The personal experiences of Wild Child's history or Louvinie's, are selected for intensity, as they indicate the personal history of many a black women. Similarly, every public experience is given a personal dimension.

The images of black children and black mothers, of nature and music and the relationship between the body and the spirit are found in every chapter. Walker uses these images as compressed images. Louvinie's clipped tongue was "like a thick pink rose petal, bloody at the root" (M 44). The tree- Sojourner "in full bloom, was like a huge mountain lit with candles" (M 46). Another image chosen from nature is the crowd of neighbours at The Wild Child's funeral receded at the Chapel door, "like a snail that has salt poured on its tail" (M 47).

As Barbara Christian notes, "the concept of animism" permeates throughout Walker's novels, which is the crux of all these (nature) images. Walker defines <u>animism</u> as "a belief that makes it possible to view all creation as living, as inhabited by spirit" (O'Brien 193). Thus, Walker stresses the oneness of the natural and the human worlds. The concept of animism is expressed fully by music. For Walker, music is itself the unselfconscious sense of collective oneness. The novel invariably refers to music in every chapter. Even the structure of **Meridian** is based on music. Christian observes: "Like a circular rhythmic pattern,

short chapters follow long ones, creating syncopated beats. There are starts and stops within every chapter, melodious outpourings, and dissonant sharps" (212).

The movement of the plot is a symbol of revolution and the motifs of the novel reiterate the concepts of wholeness and fragmentation, so that the characters add another dimension to the novel. The structure and images created by Walker embody the feminine sensibility under stress at times, especially during slavery and the turbulant period of the sixties in the black history. "Meridian's quest for a language and a praxis is analogous", as Willis notes, to Walker's work as writer, which demands both distance from and integration with the people" (116).

Whereas Toni Morrison solved the problem of finding a viable literary language by developing a highly metaphorical language, Walker solved the problem by finding the anecdotal narrative pattern. As its relationship to story telling and the family is close, it approximates a woman's linguistic practice more intimately. Herndon observes:

> the literature of contemporary black women is a dialectical composite of the unknown coming out of the known. It is an upheaval in form, style and landscape. It is the negation of the negative and it proffers a vision of unfettered human possibility (58).

The black women's search for a specific language, specific

symbols and images with which they could render life experiences have come to fruition in Morrison's **The Bluest Eye, Sula, Song of Solomon** and **Tar Baby**. Wagner writes that, "Morrison attempts different and usually new techniques with each book ..." For her "each book is a new arena, a place to choose structure and craft to achieve a total effect" (191). She has a mission as a writer. Morrison thinks deeply about what her novels ought to do. As a literary form, primarily meant for specific group as she tells LeClair, her novels should "clarify the roles that have become obscured; they ought to identify those things in the past that are useful and those things that are not and they ought to give nourishment" (26). Another aspect of Morrison's writing of the novel is that she continuously strives to restore the language that black people spoke to its original power as she tells" a language that is rich but not ornate" (26).

The tremendous power and intensity in Morrison's narratives emanate from her insight in the use of cliche. She considers a cliche important as she tells LeClair that the core of human experience is expressed in it. As an artist she likes "to dust off these clichés, dust off the language, make them mean whatever they may have meant originally" (26).

Morrison's novels, **The Bluest Eye, Sula,** and **Song of Solomon** are profound experiences. The intensity and emotional appeal of Morrison's narratives is very deep. She wants "a residue of emotion" in her fiction. She tells her stories in the narrative form. She believes that the narrative form is the best way to learn anything, whether history or theology. Morrison is a

stylist for whom. "Getting a style is about all there is to writing fiction" (Ruas 219).

As style and language are interlinked, she states that "The language must be careful and must appear effortless. It must not sweat. It must suggest and be provocative at the same time" (LeClair 27). Morrison's unique style is due to her passion for language. She tells to Ruas:

> I know that if the action is violent, the language cannot be violent: it must be understated. I want my readers to see it, to feel it, and I want to give them things even I may not know about, even if I've never been there ..." (232).

Morrison brings all her sensibilities at work when she narrates. Like all black people, she loves, "the saying of words, holding them on the tongue, experimenting with them, playing with them." She tells LeClair, "It's a love, a passion. It's function is like a preacher's: to make you stand up out of your seat, make you lose yourself and hear yourself ..." (27).

The rhythm of **The Bluest Eye** is circular, although the circles are broken. If we go back to the beginnings, we get pushed along toward the end. After letting the readers know what happens in **The Bluest Eye**, Morrison weaves a world in which readers are immersed as participants. We feel the moving of the seasonal cycle through 'Autumn'-'Winter','Spring' and 'Summer', but with a difference. We feel Claudia's sickness and her

coughing, as well as her realisation that when she thinks of the autumn, she thinks of "somebody with hands who does not want me to die" (TBE 14). 'Winter' heralds chill and Claudia's word pictures and imagery bring forth experiences of a nine year old school girl. Her perception of her father's face in 'Winter' is remarkable:

> His eyes become a cliff of snow threatening to avalanche; his eyebrows bend like black limbs of leafless trees. His skin takes on the pale, cheerless yellow of winter sun; ... his high forehead is the frozen sweep of the Erie, hiding currents of gelid thoughts that eddy in darkness. (TBE 52).

Claudia relates her feelings and thoughts of another season, 'Spring': "Even now spring for me is shot through with the remembered ache of switchings, and forsythia holds no cheer" (TBE 79). In the seasonal cycle, 'Summer' is recollected by Claudia just by breaking into the lightness of a strawberry, and she sees summer--its dust and lowering skies. In the memory lane of Claudia, summer remains "a season of storms". Just as the sudden, violent storms "both frightened and quenched" Claudia, so does the last section of the novel frighten and shock the reader. Pecola's yearning for blue eyes end in her fatal visit to Soaphead Church. Thus,'Summer' too holds no promise to Pecola. Pecola's lapsing into madness, her assault by Cholly Breedlove and her utter isolation have grim impact on the reader, which recalls the Greek tragedies.

With little running life let loose tape of a cassette player, 'Spring' depicts Pecola's utter disappointment in the prime of her life--childhood. Neither her mother nor her father has time to play or be with Pecola, so is the black community. The stylistic device of titles to the chapters symbolizes the angst of Pecola:

SEEMOTHERMOTHERISVERYNICEMO
THERWILLYOUPLAYWITHJANEMOTH
ERLAUGHSLAUGHMOTHERLAUGHLA (TBE 66).

One more title reflects Pecola's and her family's disintegration, as the title parodies Cholly's failure to support his daughter or sustain her emotionally:

SEEFATHERHEISBIGANDSTRONGFATH
ERWILLYOUPLAYWITHJANEFATHER
JSSMILINGSMILEFATHERSMILESMILE (TBE 105).

In **Sula** and **Song of Solomon** black communities turn their backs to Sula and Pilate, so does the black neighbourhood of Lorain, Ohio, slight Pecola. This neglect is expressed tersely in the title in the section 'Winter':

SEETHECATIRODESNFOWMEOWCOW
LANDPLAYCOMEPLAYWITHJANETHE
KITTENWILLNOTPLAYPLAYPLAYPLA (TBE 67).

Thus, the jumbled lettered titles achieve a remarkable impact which reveals the novelist's intent of showing the 'geometric oppression' of black women in the black and white society, in an innovative narrative technique.

The Bluest Eye opens with three different typographical

versions of Dick-and-Jane Primer. The first version represents the upper most layer 'the haves' in the white American society. The sentences are neat, double spaced, visually appealing and readable. The second version represents the middle class--the common folks' interpretation of the reality around them. It is represented by the single spacing of the Dick-and-Jane version. Another striking device used by the novelist is the obliteration of the punctuation marks and capital letters. In the third version, the text is all mixed and confused like the life of poor, black, Breedlove family.

Like an artist, Morrison uses as her tool--the letters of the alphabet and some punctuation marks. Through the medium of these, she has achieved an impact similar to that of a musician and a painter. All the inner thoughts of Pauline are printed in italics, thus separating them from the main narrative. Stylistically, **The Bluest Eye** stands out as a unique narrative reverberating with poignancy of Perola and black women as well as the black men's experiences in the White America.

Morrison pursues her dialogues as an eloquent artist. The reader is immersed into the process of reading **The Bluest Eye**. In the process we feel angry. As Raymond Hedin states, the "structure (of the novel) has begun to take on a double edge"; because Pecola cannot understand that she should be angry, "it is Morrison who is angry" and creates an anger in the reader: "the careful form of the novel intensifies rather than deflects the reader's sense of that anger" (49).

The Bluest Eye retains its impeccable appeal as Morrison does not adhere to the elaborate, layered and segmented narrative pattern in her later novels.

The pattern of **Sula** alleviates to transform a seemingly obvious theme. Formalistically, the novel is divided into an Introduction, and two parts. Part One sketches Sula's and Nel's growing up during the twenties, Eva's trials and her magnificent personality. Part Two depicts Sula and Nel as grown up women in the late thirties and early forties. Sula defies the Bottom mores and puts Eva in the old folk's home. Natural phenomenon get entwined with the human life and its upheavels. Sula's homecoming is as if met with an ill omen. The use of omen reveals feminine sensibility of the novelist even in the structuring of the narrative. Finally, the chapter "1965" emerges as an epilogue which brings understanding and recollection to Nel Wright. Morrison being a conscientious and committed artist reminds us that this narrative about the friendship between Nel Wright and Sula Peace is related to the survival of their community. It is symbolically presented at the outset with the razing off their hometown. Like **The Bluest Eye**, in **Sula**, Morrison uses the motif of inversion of derangement. The natural order is turned upside down as an outcome of human society.

Each chapter in **Sula** is headed by a year, a time that allows us to focus on the climax of that section. The reader is made aware of the intertwining circles of the march of time and events, and their kaleidoscopic impressions on the mind of

adolescent Sula. The delineation of a specific year is a focus, not a limitation. Morrison uses the element of time with flexibility. In the narrative one can move from time to time, from one setting to another, without the need for changing props or signaling a new set of images. Morrison is beyond time, collapsing the past present, and future into the now one may understand and feel the significance. Thus, the formalistic structure of the novel is always transforming itself, because, it does not move forward in a straight line. This technique is very much in tune with the feminine sensibility of the creator of the narrative.

Part One of **Sula** depicts the friendship of Nel and Sula as young girls. It charts the several styles of women's behaviour that the Bottom is willing to absorb. In contrast, Part Two is a cartograph of Sula and Nel's friendship and its estrangement. It also stresses the forms of behaviour that the Bottom community will not tolerate. Like the marigolds that would not sprout in **The Bluest Eye**, Part Two of **Sula** begins with an uncommon freak of nature, a plague of robins. Thus, while the narrative progresses in theme, the structural elements of this fable remain the same. The oddity of nature is the upper most in the imagination. It conjures up images of dread of the unknown. Part Two depicts not the physical but emotional and spiritual death. In Chapter '1937', Nel and Sula's sustaining friendship comes to an unexpected end as Sula sleeps with Jude, Nel's husband. In chapter '1939' Sula and Ajax's relationship is severed by Sula's attempt to possess Ajax. In '1940' Sula dies, but one feels her

death is due to spiritual malnutrition as much as any physical cause. In '1941', a large number of people in the Bottom are drowned in their attempt to destroy the tunnel that they were not allowed to build. In a way they bring about their own death, as they are spiritually and physically drained by poverty, extreme weather and starvation--a powerlessness. Death is not just a physical phenomenon. It is related to people's spiritual needs which are unfulfilled by Nature and Society.

In Part Two of **Sula**, the images of nature accompany Sula. Just as in the previous section, the elements of fire and water are prominent, in this section the natural elements of air and earth are pervasive. Sula returns to Medallion after ten years. Her homecoming is heralded by a plague of robins. Natural phenomenon is thus interwoven with the life of the Bottom dwellers and their beliefs. They believed that the "purpose of evil was to survive it" (S 90).

The evocative power of Morrison's narrative is all-pervading throughout **Sula**. The story takes off at a point in time when old time world of the Bottom is being razed off and a new pattern--a progressive world--is being set up by making room for the Medallion City Golf Course. And the nature of such a new order seems disruptive to the natural order and the black community. They pull out blackberry patches from their roots. The shady beeches and pear trees are chopped. The centre of the Bottom community - Irene's Palace of Cosmetology and Time and a Half Pool Hall are disintegrated.

The time sequence is linear and the narrative encompasses the period of twenties to sixties. The structure of **Sula** is more "spiral" than circular. Though Morrison does not title the expository chapter as prologue, it acts like a chorus. The flow of narration is magnetic and pulls the reader and immerses him in the narrative.

The patterns of the black culture as well as the larger white society are distinct in **Sula**. Sula's destiny is charted by the mythology of Evil and Nature. To the Bottom society Sula represents evil. She is the 'pariah' to the people of the Bottom. Morrison delves deep in exploring the black community's system of beliefs. The novelist reveals the inner thoughts of the heroine which is a distinct phenomenon as it evinces feminine sensibility. She weaves a fable about the relationship between conformity and experiment survival and creativity. Christian notes, the myth is obvious in the fabric of the novel through death. Death as such is so ordinary in its eternal presence that it might otherwise be missed. Morrison's craft lies in creating the drama of time as a significant event, and by pervasive use of nature as both a creative and destructive force.

Morrison tells her stories meanderingly as though they are going in several directions at the same time. The form of **Song of Solomon** is entwined with the African myth of flying. The novel opens with an unusual note of the Insurance agent, Robert Smith. He Plans "to fly from Mercy to the other side of Lake Superior at three o'clock" (SONG 3). As the narrative unfolds itself one reads several other stories. Thus, Morrison "recreates something

out of an old art form" in the novel. The novel culminates in the episode of its hero Milkman Dead's discovery of his roots and ancient heritage. He too leaps and tries to fly, but with a difference. Since his visit to Shalimar he knows that if one surrenders to the air, he could ride it. Whereas Robert Smith, one of the Seven Days fails to fly, as he does not surrender himself completely to the air.

Song of Solomon ends on a positive note--the power of love as Pilate expresses it. Morrison's narratives hold the readers invariably as she incorporates the black myths, folk heroes, and black traditions in her novels. The novel centres on Milkman's attempt to fly as Solomon, his African ancestor, had done. The flying myth is one of the gifts of black people, it is in the spirituals and the gospels. It expresses wishful thinking-escape, death. It also makes the life of the black people bearable. It expresses the aspirations of the black people. As a literary device it corresponds to man's attempt not to merely transcend space: but also to transcend his own physical limitation. Thus, the African flying myth, black ritual and custom include the aspirations of blacks through Milkman's urge to rise beyond the mundane, to ride the air, to go home, physically or spiritually, to be safe, to be free, to purify the soul. Clark notes: "Escape may be checked by water and land, but the air and the sky are free. ..." (56).

In all her narratives Morrison creatively transforms music: it may be street rhymes of the children in Shalimar: Virginia,

which literally and symbolically keep alive the past, or the communal spirituals of Tar Baby: the dirge of Shadrach; or the ritual of humiliation, "black e mo Black o mo Ya daddy sleeps nelled" (TBE 55). Through such a device one visualizes that music helps to take misery, as the black people transform misery into an art form. The spontaneity and creativity of music alleviate many a black woman of Morrison's fictional realm to transcend oppression and misery. They achieve a peace of mind and maintain a sense of identity through music.

Morrison's dialogues also suggest the power of her language as they have an oral quality. The narrative in **The Bluest Eye** is meandering, effortless and spoken. The reader moves through the story with Claudia, through all the seasons and places. As the story rises to a crescendo, one hears the clipped dialogues of Pecola with her 'other' self. Her forlorn state of mind is conveyed through her monologues. The macrocosm of young Claudia, adolescent Frieda and Pecola palpitate through their conversations which proclaim their feminine sensibility.

Certain events like Pauline's and Cholly's early life, Pecola's stay at the MacTeers, Mrs. MacTeer's exchanges with her friends and her daughters, are rendered vividly through powerful dialogues. Dialogues serve as a yardstick to gauge various characters' responses to their situations and their relationship to each other.

Maelstorm in the life of little Pecola--her harassment by boys at school, later on taunting by Maureen Peal, cold disdain

of Geraldine and talls of the town folks over Pecola's baby--its birth and death, all these are conveyed by means of dialogues. There are many scenes where one hears sounds and feels the pain. Pauline's voice while asking Chully to get some coal feels "Like an earache in the brain" (TBE 36). Poland's singing in 'her voice sweet and hard.(is) like new strawberries" (TBE 43). Marie's laughter is "like the sound of many rivers, freely, deeply muddily, heading for the room of an open sea" (TBE 45).

Morrison creates levels of values by juxtapusing two contrasting families, the MacTeers and the Breedloves in **The Bluest eye** and Wright and Peace in **Sula**. The levels of values differ in each of these families, which in turn can easily confuse Frieda, Claudia and Pecola, as well as Sula and Nel. The perceptions of these young girls provide a focus to the narratives. Actually, many dialogues in the early part of both the novels occur in the form of questions that children would ask. Morrison involves the reader by not giving answers--as the reader does. The reader also sorts through the families, meanings, situations, and trappings of plot in order to create a mosaic of "story that seems to elude the girls, who are ostensible narrators", as Wagner points out, "to the end of the novel" (194).

Images in **The Bluest Eye** are tender and potent, enchanting and lyrical. The conversation of Mrs.MacTeer with her friends has a tactile quality as well as visual impart. It has intonation, volume and gesture as Claudia recalls:

> Sometimes their words move in lofty spirals: other times they take strident leaps, and all of its punctuated with warm-pulsed laughter--like the throb of a heart made of jelly. ... (TBE 16).

Claudia and Frieda being nine and ten years old feel the "edge; the curl, the thrust of their emotions" (TBE 16). But as they are young, they fail to understand the meanings of all their words. They "watch their faces, their hands, their feet, and listen for truth in timbre" (TBE 16).

Morrison's images from nature help us to visualize the scene, the person who is a simile, a metaphor, a painting. Throughout Sula the images of fire, water, wind and earth are intimately connected with the eternal presence of death and the Bottom's concept of time. As a result, the novel projects an integral world view, for the qualities of creativity and destructiveness and continually transforming the images of nature. The image of the watermark on the fine mahogany table in Macon Dead's house indelibly reflects the feminine sensibility of Ruth Macon as well as Morrison.

Morrison's evocative power transforms myths and legends, fables and parables to suit her needs. Female strength and power on the one hand and oppression and suffering in the patriarchal society on the other hand are stitched by Morrison. Further, Morrison associates women's creativity with nurturing, be it spiritual or physical, as it is evinced in the characters of

Pilate and Ondine.

The narrative in Tar Baby flows from Chapter One to Chapter Ten--a sort of a choral prologue and an epilogue. The device symbolizes Son's evolving from waters towards the land at the beginning. In the end Son Greene is heading towards land through waters, but with the knowledge given by the blind and prophetic Therese. The open-ended ending of the novel makes one wonder, weather Son prefers to go after Jadine or pursues the mythic "one hundered horsemen on one hundred horses". Although Therese has warned him that Jadine "has forgotten her ancient properties," (TB 268) and in all probability he pursues the mythic horsemen. Tar Baby has Son Greene who is endowed with feminine sensibility instead of the heroine Jadine.

What distinguishes Morrison's novels is cosmology integrated to the human life. By the suggestiveness of the title Tar Baby one hears the resonance of the epithet. The unflinching faith of the black women is discerned in the Biblical epithet of the novel:

> For it hath been declared
> unto me to you, my brethren, by them
> which are of the house of
> Chole that there are
> contentions among you.
>
> I CORINTHIANS 1:11.

These contentions are those of Ondine for Jadine to be a

true black daughter and perpetuate black values.

Thus, Morrison holds old values, beliefs, turns them upside down and creates a modern myth. Jadine needs to imbibe old values in order to survive. Against the fiefdom of Valerian, the world of Sydney and Ondine's comradship is manifested. Under duress Son and Jadine take different stance and the life of Gidéon and Thérèse unravels the oppression of the natives in the Caribbean. Margaret and Ondine, Valerian and Son Greene, Jadine and Thérèse all have some secret or the other, except Sidney. The narrative attains the climax as Margaret's waiting for her son Michael on the Isle des Chevaliers for Christmas turns out to be a short in the sudden appearance of Son, a black vagrant in Margaret's wardrobe. Thus, Morrison creates a suspense and plays on reader's curiosity. All the expectations are toppled. The class distinctions and cultural values collide and the novel is iridiscent with the genuine properties of the black woman in yellow robe seen by Jadine in Paris as she haunts her.

Morrison creates a mythic world in creating "L'Arbe de la Croix" on Isle des Chevaliers. On this Caribbean island all the living things in nature are on an equal footing with the humans. Birds talk and butterflies cry. Fish race off "to carry the news of the scatterbrained river to the peaks of hills and the tops of the champion daisy trees" (TB 8). In protraying such an enchanting world, Morrison evinces the vast imagination of black women artist and their creativity. Likewise, she depicts the violation of the earth and its revenge, which reflects the

insight of the artist due to feminine sensibility.

Female oppression is not only limited to the black community, but the white community is also no exception. Morrison comments on the exploitation of the Haitian labourers and natives like Mary and Yardman Gideon who come to work at Valerian's mansion.

The dialogues in **Tar Baby** are short, terse and lively. The idiom is witty and projects the real life situations between white husband and his wife--Valerian Street and Margaret. Margaret is chided for dawdling during their meal by Valerian:

> "There is a rhythm to a meal. I've always told you that."
> "I said sorry. I'm not a fast eater."
> "Speed has nothing to do with it. Pace does," Valerian answered.
> "So my pace is different from yours." (TB 52).

The dialogue sets the tone of the story and simultaneously reveals how Valerian is in disagreement with Margaret in all matters, including their only son Michael.

The pretence and hypocrisy of the rich is exposed. They mind the table manners, but not the feelings of their spouse. For a slip Margaret is rebuked and then Valerian's and Margaret's faces "were closed, snapped shut like the lids of jewelry boxes" (TB 55). Thus, the similes, metaphors and images are stunning.

Winter on the Isle des Chevaliers is ushered in thus:

> Fog came to that place in wisps sometimes, like the hair of maiden aunts. Hair so thin and pale it went unnoticed

until masses of it gathered around the house and threw back one's own reflection from the windows ... (TB 52).

On Sundays, in Valerian's mansion the atmosphere and mind freezes as Margaret perceives, where "[T]he peaches and walnuts were quiet in their silver bowls" (TB 65). Moods are created, at times recalled, where suddenness and silence are hinged together out of language, a unique trait of Morrison. Jadine's sense and feel of quietness in Valerian's mansion is made alive:

> Three months, no two And the quiet to which the house succumbed at night still disturbed her. Sunset, three minutes of Titian blue, and deep night. And with it a solid earthbound silence. No crickets, no frogs, no mosquitoes up here. Only the sounds, heard or imagined, that humans made. The hiss of a gold-headed match; the short cascade of wine into a goblet; the faint, very faint, click and clatter of the kitchen being tidied, and now a scream so loud and full of terror it woke the maiden aunts from their sleep in the corners of the room. And when they saw those blue-if-it's-a-boy blue eyes gone white with fear, they fled, pulling their maiden hair behind them (TB 65-66).

The above incident throws light on Morrison's typical use of language to recreate word pictures, lyrical, evocative and

suggestive. The oral dimension of her written word is felt by the reader in all its aspects. At times, Morrison's prose in the narrative is charged with a lyrical quality and we become aware of its intensity as we feel the experience vicariously. Nature in its varied hues come throbbingly alive in **Tar Baby**. The ethos and the repose at a particular hour at the Isle des Chevaliers are recreated:

> Bees have no sting on Isle des Chevaliers, nor honey. They are fat and lazy, furious about nothing. Especially at noon. At noon parrots sleep and diamondbacks wait down the trees towards the cooler undergrowth. At noon the water in the mouths of orchids left there by the breakfast rain is warm. Children stick their fingers in them and scream as though scalded (**TB** 69).

Such evocative prose is a tour de force in Morrison's fictional realm.

Alongwith the thriving nature of the Caribbean island, Morrison portrays the people, their activities, habits and preferences in food and drinks in the torrid zone:

> People in town go inside because the sky weighs too much at noon. They wait for hot food with lots of pepper so the day will feel cooler by comparison. They drink sweet drinks and swallow bitter coffee to distract their insides from the heat and weight of the sky

Anita Desai does not follow a set pattern of a plot which consists of a beginning, a middle and an end in her novels. Instead, we perceive a 'pattern', or 'inscape' to use a phrase of Hopkins. To her 'pattern' is more natural than 'plot', as the term 'plot' sounds 'arbitrary, heavy-handed and artificial'. She believes that a novel should have a pattern that fits the characters, the setting and scenes so as to form a balanced whole.

Desai's fictional world forges a unique world out of the mundane things of the day-to-day existence of an Indian woman. As discussed earlier, the protagonists in her novels are women. Their's is a small world, but it has a form and colour of its own. Desai lends a definite aesthetic end to her narratives and gives them a pattern and design. She uses the stream of consciousness technique, flashbacks, and interior monologues for exploring the inner worlds of Maya in **Cry, the Peacock** and Bim in **Clear Light of Day**. **Cry, the Peacock** is marked by the intensity of Maya's inner struggle. The novel is divided into three parts. What strikes us in this narrative is the novelist's ingenuity in, what Sharma calls, "capturing the psychic states of a woman haunted by an awareness of death" (24). It is a fascinating psychological study of "neurotic fears and anxieties caused by marital incompatibility and disharmony, and compounded by age old superstitions" (Sharma 24). Part One and Part Three consist of one chapter. Part Two of the novel reflects the quintessence of Maya's complex personality. Her chaotic state of mind is unravelled through a series of iterative motifs and symbols. They

embody Maya's inner crisis and the narrative gets elevated to a tragic poem. Maya's muted and muffled cries for love in a loveless marriage are expressed in the cry of the peacock which is symbolic of 'life-in-death' and 'death-in-life'.

Part Three brings the denouement closing the novel on a note of despair. As Iyengar observes, **Cry, the Peacock** is "zig-zag in narration, jumbling the past, present and future to charge the novel with suspense, piquancy and characterisation on the basis of purposeful inconsistency " (329).

Chandhar Prasad Singh finds: "the story elements are subordinated to lyricism" (231) in **Cry, the Peacock**. However, Desai's interest is in exploring the inner space in Maya's life. The novel is also a study of the 'forces' that condition the growth of women in the patriarchal, Indian families. Desai's chief skill lies, as Williams notes in "the vividness of Maya's characterisation" (88).

Heroines are projected in Desai's novels as individuals. They are of 'primary interest' to the novelist as she tells Kelly Cheth in an interview in **Imprint**. The writer is not interested in the 'anonymous multitude' but the individual.

Like her first novel, **Fire on the Mountain** is divided into three parts. Part One of the novel depicts Nanda Kaul's anxiety to meet the young intruder, Raka in her private world of self-willed isolation. It portrays the throbbing world of nature in images and metaphors which creates a unique pattern in the novel.

There are movements and stillness, sounds and shadows. Like past, present and future the three parts of the novel suggest Nanda Kaul's isolation at Carignano, Raka's arrival at Carignano and Ila Das's leaving Carignano.

The action in this novel is evenly distributed among the three women characters. The novel also suggests, as Sharma notes, "an adroit manipulation of the point-of-view, for the denouement comes as a surprise to the reader ... " (128). We are inclined to accept Nanda Kaul's fantasy of her childhood as a reality. In **Where Shall We Go This Summer?** and **Clear Light of Day**, Desai uses the same technique as a means of reinterpreting the reality. In **The Fire on the Mountain**, as Jain states, fantasy is "consciously projected as part of the total structure ..." (227). This mode of narration enables the characters to relate to each other. Desai uses fantasy not only for creating an alternate reality but also for contrasting the two or more visions of reality projected in a particular novel. It implies a shedding of beliefs and myths and adjusting to the external reality. In **Cry, the Peacock**, Desai works through the consciousness of Maya, the protagonist. Like him, Maya does not come to terms with the reality through fantasy.

In **Fire on the Mountain** fantasy is not used as an escape from the reality. It is not employed to question the nature of reality as is done in **Cry, the Peacock** by Maya. It does not border on hallucination. Here two different types of fantasy worlds are created which exist side by side, one world is consciously created by Nanda Koul to interest her great

granddaughter Rala, the other is shared by Rala and Ram Lal and is based on Ram Lal's belief in the supernatural. Jasbir Jain notes the presence of "a third world of fantasy" in this novel (232). This world thrust itself on Rala's imagination, is a world which shows her alienation from the disjointed world of her parents.

The parameter of feminine sensibility forms a bond between artists like Anita Desai and Toni Morrison. Desai's narratives embody feminine sensibility through their richness of images, symbols as well as their patterns. The atmosphere of **Clear Light of Day** permeats with this distinct feminine sensibility. In this context we will examine the structure of **Clear Light of Day** to substantiate the thesis.

By performing 'the rites of childhood' Tara, the visiting sister of the protagonist Bim plunges the reader into the memory lane of their common past. Such a device enhances the poetic and the musical quality of the structure. The past and the present fuse so well that it makes us feel that life as depicted by Desai is whole. Delving into the past, as done by the heroines of Morrison, Walker, Sahgal and Desai as mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, is a feminine trait.

The two sisters, Bim and Tara relive their childhood memories as they walk through 'the rose walk' in their garden. While Tara perceives the blanched snail, which appears to her once again like a pearl or a silver ring, retrive their past, in a flood of memories and associations of the time gone by. The

two sisters recollect the past: at times together, but more often in solitude, in their own minds. Bim quotes from Four Quartet, and a line from the poem sums up their situation well: when young, they "had the experience but missed the meaning." and now that they are mature enough to "approach to the meaning" they have to recreate the experience in their memory. Anita Desai's feminine sensibility enables this reconstruction which take place in pristine form, in all its depth, texture and colour.

Memory of past is both: as Desai quotes an epigram from Emily Dickinson:

"... a strange bell:-
Jubilee and knell"

at the beginning. On the part of Bim and Tara the act of remembrance is fraught with pain and terror. Especially, Bim's present condition, her relationship with Tara, and the very ethos of the house which gradually acquires a personality and force of its own, compel the sisters to remember: and what they remember, and how they understand what they remember, constitutes the novel.

The weave of the past in Desai's narrative is most skillfully and seamlessly woven with the present. An incident occurs, or words are spoken or a scene is described in the present; this naturally leads to the recreation of the past happenings, words and scenes: the past is explored, and then as naturally one moves back to the present, but with a difference. By exploring the past, one achieves an illumination and this

light helps to juxtapose the past and the present together. This patterning is done by the novelist with great economy. There is nothing in the present which is not related to the past and vice versa: and whatever is presented, whether of the past or the present is an integral part of the whole, the totality of the sisters' consciousness, and of the meaning that this consciousness points to.

The past and the present are so interfused that the reader keeps going back at different times in the present to the same event of the past—the drowning of the cow in the well, Hyder Ali Sahib's evening rides on the white horse, the sad end of Aunt Mira-but always with the knowledge that the intervening description of the present has given.

The rich complexity of the texture of **Clear Light of Day** is rendered by Desai's superb handling of the past and the present and a sense of control of the highest order. The clearest light of the artist's vision is rendered through feminine sensibility as it envisions images, at times 'condensed' at other times 'sharpened'. Amina Amin rightly relates that Desai's art comes close to "a painter's or a cinematographer's" (Sen). Just as Morrison brings forth cosmology in her novels, so does Desai. All the elements of nature cohere in her narratives. Through artistic mode of perception and expression, her novels focus on the inner worlds of her protagonists. This again is due to creativity, being an integral part of feminine sensibility of the artist.

The novelist's observant eye transmits even the rows of ants

and barks of the dog as well as the cascading rose petals and the "dry crackling grass of the lawn" under the walking feet. Desai's narratives engage the reader as all the senses get engrossed in the description, which is a marked trait of feminine sensibility.

Desai's portrayals of her heroines' inner worlds come alive through the use of imagery, metaphors and symbols. Initially there seems disorder and confusion of mind. As we read Desai's novels closely we realise that what seems disorder is a cry for order in a world of confusion. All her novels are composed following the best principles of balance, contrast and proportion. In doing this, they render in art the disgust and loathing of a sensitive spirit pitted against living reality. Desai makes us see the situation of her sensitive heroines quoting Ortega Y. Gasset in her interview with Dalmia in **The Times of India** when she says that her protagonists reveal "the terror of facing, single handed, the ferocious assaults of existence".

In Desai's novels, action, drama and story mean little to her except in so far as they emanate directly from the characters she writes about. In Desai's creative process her novels are born of a single image, which has stayed with the artist, while countless other images have passed away. In the aesthetic of novel, for Desai, the concept of form is of utmost value. She writes naturally, inevitably. The titles of her novels reflect her singleness of vision. In the title **Cry, the Peacock**, we feel the evocative power of the symbol of peacock. Titles like **Fire on the Mountain** and **Clear Light of Day** evoke flames of fire and the

magnificent Himalayan range of mountains and the element of light, brightness, clarity which diffuses the darkness and gloom in the later title.

Desai's novels abound in images and symbols through which she tries to capture and concretize a wide range of experiences. These images lend a vividness to the situation she tries to describe, the characters she delineates, and the events she narrates. The mode of perception and expression reveal the feminine sensibility of the novelist. Frank quotes Pound that: "An image is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (85). Desai's images strike the reader with an 'instantaneous impact'. Pound stresses this feature of 'instantaneous presentation' of images which gives:

> that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits: that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art (qtd. in Frank 86).

Desai's feminine sensibility creates new wholes by fusing what Eliot calls "seemingly disparate experiences into an organic unity."

Desai's novels prove intense experiences as she 'shows' instead of 'telling' the inner most thoughts and feelings of her heroines through variegated images. She elaborates in "The Indian Writer's Problems" on this visual aspect of her images:

> It is the movement of the wing one tries to capture, not the bird. ... it is the image that matters, the symbol, the myth, the feat of associating them, of relating them, of constructing with them. ... only it must be done spontaneously, compulsively, subconsciously (226).

In **Fire on the Mountain**, the characters of Raka and Ila Das are delineated through startling imagery. Raka is an extremely delicate but an overactive child. When she approaches Carignano, she looks like "one of those of dark crickets that leap up in fright but do not sing, or a mosquito, minute and fine, on thin precarious legs" (**FOTM** 39). Raka moves about in Kasauli like 'a soundless moth'. She appears a freak by virtue of never making a demand. She appears to have no needs:

> "Like an insect burrowing through the sandy loam and pine-needles of the hillsides, like her own great-grandmother, Raka wanted only one thing-to be left alone and pursue her own secret life amongst the rocks and pines of Kasauli" (47-48).

Ila Das is also presented in an arresting manner. The novelist is at her best when she describes Ila Das reminiscing about the lovely days she has had in the past at Nanda Kaul's house in Kashmir, specially the parties and the presents and the games and the piano. She actually plays an imaginary piano in a

voice "... like an arrow that pierced Nanda Kaul's temple and penetrated her jaws, setting her teeth tingling" (**FOTM** 118).

Desai evokes various places vividly. **Fire on the Mountain** brings before the readers a world of nature in the Himalayan valley at Carignano. Pine trees and their 'scented exhilance' permeate the surroundings of Carignano. Here the musicians are cicadas 'fiddling invisibly' under the pine needles. The novelist tells to Sheth: "The environment and place are my material, ... They are of primary importance to me. The visual images and sounds, smells and textures of the palces I know are my material" (60). Any change in the environment is conveyed poetically. Raja and Nanda were having their tea:

> Over their tea they watched the clouds drop from the sky, swollen and heavy with cold, like a great polar bear crouching, hurrying over the hill tops, its white fur settling on rooftops, brushing the hillsides, enclosing the pines (**FOTM** 61).

The irritating heat has its own distinct feel in almost all the novels of Desai. While Nanda Kaul looks impatiently for Raja, she experiences the atmosphere of her empty garden in which cicadas "audibly sizzled as though the sun were frying them in its great golden pan." (**FOTM** 107).

Another remarkable feature of Anita Desai's prose is the use of colour to express the effect of sound or music. One such image describes the scene from the highest Monkey point in Kasauli

while Raka surveys the scene below:

> To the north, the soft, downy hills flowed, wave upon wave, gold and blue and violet and indigo, like the sea. The sound of the wind rushing up through the pines and then receding was the sound of the sea (FOTM 61).

In Fire on the Mountain and Clear Light of Day nature in its pristine as well as rapacious aspects is evoked through colours. The moods of the heroines and the atmosphere of various places are also presented through a riot of colours. Clear Light of Day is rich in varied images. Tara relieves her past on her visit to India from the U.S.A. and the mood and feel of her old Delhi house is captured in a perfect image. In the verandah, the pigeons are cooing soothingly. They express "their individual genius for combining complaint and contentment in one tone." There are spiky bougainvilleas that scrape the outer walls of the garden and scatter "their papery magenta flowers in the hot, sulphur-yellow wind" (CLOD 21).

Various scents and moods are conveyed through images in Desai's novels. The evening time and the early morning atmosphere come alive in Clear Light of Day. The gardener waters the flowerbeds of jasmine and palms in the garden '... bringing out the green scent of watered earth and refreshed plants.' Again, we feel a scent of spider lilies from the flowerpots massed on the verandah steps as soon as they are watered. The simile is striking. These watered flowerpots are 'like ladies newly bathed,

powdered and scented for the evening'(CLOD 23). One more image is from nature: "Flocks of parrots come winging in, a lurid, shrieking green, to settle on the sunflowers and rip their black-seeded centres to bits, while mynahs hooped up and down on the lawn, quarrelling over insects"(CLOD 23).

The late evening sky has its own charm in Clear Light of Day. It changes its patterns and has wrinkles "...with pale brush-strokes of blue and grey and mauve. A flock of white egrets rose from the river bed and stitched their way slowly and evenly across this faded cloth field" (CLOD 24). Slowly the egrets disappear into the dusk like so many needles lost. The image of beautiful roses in the garden of their rich landlord Hyder Ali Sahib makes young Tara long for such roses in her garden. In the various geometrical shapes of flowerbeds, Tara sees roses "like scoops of vanilla ice cream, pink ones like the flounced skirts of English dolls, silly yellow ones that had the same smell as the tea her mother drank, ..." (CLOD 102).

Tara's constant conflict during her stay at her home in old Delhi is rendered vividly through the simile of a pebble. By coming home, a part of her feels relief, joy. The other of her sophisticated part feels resentment at the sameness, dullness, and the unchanged life of her sister Bim. Bim's anger all through that summer keeps her perturbed. "All afternoon her anger swelled and spread, acquiring demonic proportions. It was like the mercury in the barometer that hung on the veranda wall, swelling and bulging and glinting" (CLOD 163).

Desai excels in creating many moods of characters and atmosphere. The dust storm in summer precipitates Bim's anger. Seasons are used symbolically in the novels of Desai as well as in Morrison. Just as in **The Bluest Eye**, the narrator remembers the tornado of the forties which precedes Pecola's tragedy, in **Clear Light of Day** the agitated state of Bim's mind is foreshadowed by the dust storm raging outside at the start of Part Four in the novel. Thus, the subtle changes in the moods of the heroines correspond to the season. Desai uses seasonal cycle in her another novel **Where Shall We Go This Summer?** successfully. Such a technique reveals the feminine sensibility which throbs through the narratives of the novelists under examination.

Silence and shadows too come alive in **Clear Light of Day** as Tara pushes Baba, her retarded brother, into answering her query regarding his going to the office or not. Her interrogation is met with silence. First the room rings with her voice and then with silence: "In the shaded darkness, silence had the quality of a looming dragon. It seemed to roar and the roar to reverberate to dominate" (**CLOD** 13). Similarly Bim too uses Baba to purge her swelling anger. She fails to elicit any answer whether Baba prefers to go and stay with Raja at Hyderabad. Instead:

> Silence roared around the house and thundered through it, making her press her hands against her ears. She would have relished the sound of the gramophone if it could have drowned out the sound of silence (**CLOD** 164).

Thus, silence has sound in Desai's narratives as the

exuberance of splendour and riches pervade Hyder Ali Sahib's household and attract young Raja who dreams of becoming a hero and composes verses in Urdu.

Desai's novels are rich in such varied images. Her language and pattern of her narratives evince feminine sensibility. Sinha observes in his review of Prasad's book on **Anita Desai: The Novelist** that, Prasad is tempted to call her an "imagist novelist" because of her use of rich images. Desai lucidly expresses her preference for using English language as a means to express her urge of writing:

> I am very glad to be writing in a language as rich as flexible, supple, adaptable, varied and vital as English. It is the language of both reason and instinct, of sense and sensibility. It is capable of both poetry and prose. It answers my every need. I do believe it is even capable of taking on an Indian character, and Indian flavour, purely by reflection" (22).

As discussed in the second chapter, Desai's novels embody feminine sensibility. To Desai, the process of writing means to explore the past and retrieve whatever is possible from it. She shares this view with Sheth: "Perhaps that is what writing a novel is -- trying to retrieve some of the water flowing through your fingers" (62). We feel touched by her concern with female destiny as she explores the inner space of her heroines. Like

Morrison Desai's vision penetrates 'tragic' element in the life of women and content dictates the form. So she uses tragic themes for her novels because a tragedy requires more time and space to develop. She explains to Sheth: "It's something one builds up slowly, like a storm gathering then breaking" (63). One such rendering is that of the encounter between Tara and Bakul in **Clear Light of Day.**

Tara feels as much happiness in her suffering as Bakul: her husband, in being busy and active. Bakul, the successful diplomat hardly knows the bliss which Tara experiences when she lives with her spinster sister Bim and retarded brother Baba. To Tara, there seems much more fulfilment in suffering than in happiness. This too is a sort of feeling which brings into its fold feminine sensibility. One would recall the 'blues' and 'greens' felt by Claudia MacTeer in her mother's sweet voice as she sings' sad sweet song in **The Bluest Eye.** To stretch the point little further Bakul, the successful husband of Tara seems unaware that none can instil a sense of happiness into another being as it is an intimate and intense experience. Such a rendering of emotional experience throws feminine sensibility into bold relief in **Clear Light of Day.**

Desai is the exponent of feminine sensibility in Indian English fiction. Her contribution to Indian English fiction is significant. She asserts her own sensibility and offers her art a sequence of meanings, visions and epiphanies validated by feminine sensibility.

While Desai's vision is the 'private vision" of the artist, Nayantara Sahgal invests reality as a 'spring-board' to realize her vision of fulfilment in the life of her heroines. Sahgal's novels evince that the 'matter' shapes the 'form' and the 'form' of her novels glow with 'life".

With **A Situation in New Delhi** (1977) Nait notes that there is "...a definite advance in Sahgal's fictional art, since there is no cleavage here between the political and the private worlds, the main actors in both being the same" (240). Similarly, **Rich Like Us** is an example of a perfect blending of the 'matter" and the 'form'. It explores the spirit of freedom through the consciousness of its heroine and its significance in the life of other characters. Thus, this novel can be described, to use John Barth's phrase, as the 'literature of replenishment'.

The novelist narrates the story in **Rich Like Us** from two points of view: the omniscient author and the point of view of Sonali. **Rich Like Us** is remarkable for its technical mastery and the optimistic vision. The story is narrated in the third person by the authorial narrating voice and in the first person by Sonali. The novelist, by alternating the focus between the third person omniscient author and Sonali, the heroine in first person, projects a political reality at two levels--the level of the masses and the level of an individual. This may symbolically represent the two classes in which these characters are situated in the novel. By using this technique of two points of view, Sahgal has ably portrayed the two Indias: that is India of the rich, western educated ruling elite and Bharat, the India of the

poor, toiling mass of humanity, which has been denied the fruits of India's independence.

The third person narrative technique enables the novelist to get into the minds of both the rich and the poor. The most sensitive mind of Sonali is, however, reflected through the first person point of view of her own.

Sahgal makes a very interesting and authentic use of historical documents like the newspaper editorials and letters written to the editors of the newspapers. **Rich Like Us** refers to the editorial from the **Calcutta Gazette** written on 7 December 1829. This editorial expresses 'supreme pleasure' on the act of abolishing the 'horrid rite of suttee' administered and brought into effect by Lord William Bentinck. The English administrator is hailed high for this reform by ending "a system demoralizing in its effects on the living, a revolting system of suicide and murder" (RLU 134).

Sonali, as she feels lonely and wretched since her demotion, goes through her father's papers and letters. In the trunk of her father, she finds 'a small manuscript marked in her father's hand, 'Written by my father in 1915'.

Another example of rueful custom of 'sati' is found by Sonali which dates back to 29 September 1823 in the **Bombay Courier**. By quoting these documents which are situated within the illiterate tradition of western education, the novelist ironically attempts to comment on the validity of this tradition in Indian

situation. Sonali reads her grandfather's comments in this second document, which she finds in her father's old papers:

> How literary true it was. Travellers since the Greeks had seen *satis* performed. I found more recent accounts in my father's files, one written only two evening after the episode it described in a letter to the editor of the **Bombay Courier** dated 29 September 1823: (RLU 137).

The letter then quoted describes the misfortunes of the *Suttee* in a style which is embellished with the sentiments supposed to have aroused in such a situation. Similarly, another account of 'sati' is quoted in the novel, which is noted by Sonali's grandfather who was a successful lawyer, of his times with a comment:

> It may be deemed worthy of remark, that this victim of superstition appeared firmly impressed with the idea of the present being the third time of her soul's incarnation. In answer to the magistrate's remonstrations and entreaties, she assured him that self-cremation was not at all terrible, or even new to her, as she had performed that rite at Benares and at Canonge: and added that she knew perfectly well what would be her sufferings on the pile, and in what manner she would be recompensed for them here after (RLU 139-140).

Sonali, instead of making her own comments on the observations of this news item, just shifts herself to her father's early childhood. Thus, the novelist ironically brings out the superstitions and callousness of the Hindu society and the deeper implications of the policies of the British rulers. The lawyer grandfather of Sonali criticizes the law that remains on a piece of paper and does not become a powerful weapon in eradicating the 'horrid rite of sublee'.

Sonali's experience of reading about her father's heroic efforts to kill his mother's murderers provides an insight into the human spirit and its urge for justice and freedom in her present context. It also inspires in her an awe for her father's courage and heroic act. She juxtaposes the past with the present emergency regime. As an administrator, she may be passive, but this technique of fusing the past with the grim present provides an inkling of hope. She thinks: "Not all of us are passive before cruelty and depravity. He (her father) had not been. Nor the boy in Connaught Place ..." (RLU 152).

The third person narrative in **Rich Like Us** helps to illuminate events which are not experienced by Sonali directly. Pam's encounter with Rose in England and his relationship with his first wife, Mona are examples of third-person point of view in the novel. Similarly, Mona's changed attitude towards Rose and Pam's father-Lalaji's affection for Rose are such examples. Sahgal's use of point of view technique from the first person to the third person, authorial omniscient view point helps in

projecting the problem of emergency from an involved individual's perspective as well as from the angle of the masses. It also lends a double perspective on certain events which are described by Sonali.

Sahgal in **Rich Like Us** uses the historical facts to enhance the form and technique of her narrative. Anita Desai also, refers to history by quoting an excerpt from the **Life of Aurangzeb.** This technique of referring to historical accounts lends an authentic touch to the narrative and proves useful in showing the change of heart of the heroine Bim in **Clear Light of Day.** She murmurs the last words of the emperor Aurangzeb to herself: "Many were around me when I was born, but now I am going alone. ... Strange that I came with nothing into the world, and now go away with this stupendous caravan of sin !" (CLOD 167). Thus, Bim purges her heart of the anger she had felt towards Raja and feels a sense of expiation after hearing Raja's letter. Sahgal's point of view technique reveals the present reality in bold relief in **Rich Like Us.**

Nayantara Sahgal in **Rich Like Us** moulds the language to her purpose. The novelist conveys Rose's intonation and speech pattern by her innovation in her dialogues with Neuman, the English business associate of Dev in his venture of Rupyola factory. Rose, the English wife of Ram passes judgements which are close to the bones. She loath, the young people who are 'one minute nothing' and the 'next minute' call themselves 'enterprenner'. Rose breaks the syllables as she speals, in words like 'poly-ticls' and changes the intonation when she ironically says

'compengeaytion'.

Rose's speech pattern is vividly captured with her 'broad accent'. Neuman, though no expert at shades of English sees in Rose's speech 'with its glitches in place', a shade of her 'Cockney' (RLU 11). Her fervent appreciation of Lalaji, her father-in-law's business knack is conveyed through her typical speech pattern:

> 'Tale my father in-law'. 'E never saw a contract in 'is life. Couldn't spell a word of English. Wouldn't even have chairs and tables in 'is part of the 'ouse. 'E was a villager, that's wot 'e was, and that's stayed till 'is dying day. ....' (RLU 13).

Sahgal employs several Hindi phrases and words to convey the flavour of the common man's everyday life and experiences in Rich Like Us. This use of expressions is common in India:

> Ishvar-Allah tere nam
> Sab ko sammati de bhagvan' (RLU 127)

or

'Inquilab Zindabad' (RLU 65). 'raita' for cucumber in yogurt; and 'chaman' for homemade cheese. 'jelabies' for a sweetmeat reveal Sahgal's tendency to lend an authenticity to peculiar experiences. The novelist catches the exact intonation of the interminable speeches delivered by the ministers at inauguration ceremonies by using phrases like 'Bhaiyon aur Behenon' for brothers and sisters from Hindi. The nightmare quality of Kishori Lal's Dev's father-in-law-experiences in the

prison is well described. All the corruption and callousness in India is shown minutely. The reaction of the Hindu society is well retained in calling Rose as 'Lalaji's Angreji bahu' (Lalaji's son's English wife) in the novel.

Thus, Sahgal has created an unforgettable picture of India in its totality during Emergency in **Rich Like Us.** This reminds us of Walker's **Meridian**, a novel which is created out of the novelist's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement during the sixties in America. We can affirm that female consciousness penetrates the reality, and the women novelists have truthfully rendered the experiences in new forms and new language peculiar to feminine sensibility. Both, black and Indian English women novelists enlarge our conventional assumptions about the nature and function of literary tradition. They involve the readers' whole beings and hold the mirror up as literature ought to do. As I visualize, the camaraderie of black women novelists and Indian English women novelists will pave a new path in the field of research. With an added dimension of feminine sensibility to one's experiences and responses, these women writers transform silence into speech and render power back to the culturally disenfranchised.

Morrison, Desai, Walker and Sahgal as examined in this thesis affirm the feminine sensibility as central to the human existence. They also have the wholeness and endurance of a vision which as they articulate, can be shared through feminine sensibility.

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