

## Chapter - 3

### Con/fusion of Magic Realism and Bakhtinian Carnavalesque

In this chapter, the fusion of magic realism as a narrative technique and Bakhtinian carnivalesque as a subversive tool is explored in the context of postmodern fiction. The corresponding fusion of the phenomena creates an unusual world in postmodern texts. Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said* is chosen as a central text for the study. Other works of the same writer as well as numerous other postmodern texts that typify the same spirit are referred to support the study. It is essential for us to know the roots and emerging centers of magic realism as well as the basic concepts of Bakhtinian carnivalesque.

The history of magic realism has interesting routes as the term popularized by Borges and Garcia Marquez spreads all over the world, irrespective of the culture and the locality in the world. The term has an extended historical background with the span of eight decades. It evolved in Germany in the 1920s, flourished in Central America during the 1940s, and popularized in Latin America during the 1950s. It evolved in Europe, developed in Latin America, and subsequently, is adapted by various authors in the world. The key figures in the development of the term are the German art critic Franz Roh, the mid-twentieth-century Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier, the Italian writer Massimo Bontempelli, the mid-twentieth-century Latin American literary critic Angel Flores, and the late twentieth-century Latin American novelist Gabriel García Márquez.

The roots of magic realism are grounded in the post-impressionistic painting of 1920s in Germany. Despite its evolution and development in Europe and Central America, the writers of Latin America, who popularized the term by the way of its unique application from the context

of the local culture and history of Latin America, have aptly adopted it. They remodel and recontextualize the term from their local perspective. Because of that, it is now most famously associated with Latin America.

If the origin of the term is analyzed, many complexities and controversies surrounding the term will be noticed. Historians and critics do not identify the exact history of the term, and the critics like Roberto González Echevarría have acknowledged the complexities in its origins. The American critic Seymour Menton tries to present the chronology of the term in his book *Historia verdadera del realismo mágico* (The True History of Magic Realism), wherein a consensus is reached by the critics such as Amaryll Chanady, Seymour Menton, Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy Faris. They assign the origin of the term to the German art critic Franz Roh (1890–1965), who introduced the term to refer to a new form of post-expressionist painting. Roh in his book *Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (*Post-expressionism, Magic Realism: Problems of the Most Recent European Painting*) coined the term, which is translated as ‘magic realism’ to suggest a form of painting that differs significantly from its predecessor (expressionist art) in its attention to accurate detail. The term suggests a smooth photograph-like clarity of picture and the representation of the mystical non-material aspects of reality. Roh identified around fifteen painters active in Germany at his time of writing to exemplify the form, and they are Otto Dix, Max Ernst, Alexander Kanoldt, George Grosz and Georg Schrimpf. Reeds mentions in his book the contribution of Roh and the spirit of magic realism in the following words:

Expressionism was described by Roh as presenting a “fantastic dreamscape.” Magic realism reacted against the perceived introspection of Expressionism, and sought instead a re-acquaintance with the “real world.” In a depressed Germany of the mid-1920s, Roh

welcomed “magical realism’s return to reality after Expressionism’s exaggeration and distortion of realism” (*What Is Magical Realism* 177).

The Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier tries to distinguish between European magic realist writing and Latin American magical realist writing. He defines and names *lo real maravilloso Americano*, which translates as ‘American marvelous realism’. His argument is based on cultural differences and suggests that Latin American writing has more cultural depths in it, and the magic stems not from rationality but from cultural value systems. And considering Europe as a rational place where magic consists of fairy-tale myths, he says that European magic realists simply create a sense of mystery as a part of narrative technique rather than cultural beliefs. However, there are no firm and concrete explanations, and critics have identified these differences as naïve and have generally accepted the European influence in the development of magic realism in Latin America. The term is applied to the works of the writers from different parts of the world.

In order to understand the term in its full context, it is pertinent to explore the other terms that are associated with it. The terms like post-impressionism, surrealism, and Carpentier’s Latin American ‘marvelous realism’ have a corresponding relationship to the origin of magic realism. Magic realism may have drawn influences from surrealism, but both the terms are invariably different from each other. Feris suggests this difference, “In contrast to the surprising images constructed by surrealism out of ordinary objects, which aim to appear virtually unmotivated and which programmatically resist interpretation, magical realist images, while projecting a similar initial aura of surprising craziness, tend to reveal psychological, social, emotional, and political motivations after some scrutiny” (34). Surrealism is preoccupied with the notions of the subconscious and the unconscious. It is also essential to note that the fantastic literature and magic

realism are not the same. The fantastic, just like magic realism, includes supernatural elements within it. The difference lies in the reader's approach toward the work and an unusual narrative of the works. The reader may develop disbelief or hesitate to believe the world of fantastic world. On the other hand, the reader assumes the reality of the world of magic realism as true.

Many critics have pointed out that science fictions and fantasy are not serious fictions and tend to be escapist. But it is found that magic realist fictions are not escapists and are usually serious fictions. Instead of presenting one worldview, it presents several worldviews simultaneously. Rogers avers clearly in his article "What Is Magical Realism, Really":

Science fiction and fantasy are always speculative. They are always positing that some aspect of objective reality were different. What if vampires were real? What if we could travel faster than light? Magical realism is not speculative and does not conduct thought experiments. Instead, it tells its stories from the perspective of people who live in our world and experience a different reality from the one we call objective. If there is a ghost in a story of magical realism, the ghost is not a fantasy element but a manifestation of the reality of people who believe in and have "real" experiences of ghosts.

Magic realism has certain similarities and differences with the fantastical works, science fictions, and allegorical writings. For example, science fiction may appear to be similar with magic realist fiction, but the rational explanation behind the magical events devoid the fiction of the very quality of magic realist fiction, which is the acceptance of magical events as they were day-to-day events. In allegory, the obligation to represent an alternative meaning apart from the existing narrative makes the reader aware of the fact that the magical events are not real in any sense. The reader is aware of the fact that the magical events or persons stand for something else.

Magic realist fiction, on the other hand, depicts the kind of reality that is prevalent in a particular culture. In magic realist fiction, the magical incidents and supernatural elements are shown in such a way that they appear normal in the world. It makes us believe that what is supernatural or magical in that world is quite natural and acceptable. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, this phenomenon can be clearly seen. The unusual and supernatural elements, ghosts of the dead people that exist simultaneously with the living people, are shown as usual and normal elements in the world of Macondo. Magic realism sends the message that both supernatural/magical elements and natural or common people cohabit and this worldview is existent in day-to-day reality.

This worldview employed in the magic realist fiction is different from the objective view of reality found in realist fictions. It does not follow the predominant worldview with appropriate causality and logicity. Linearity of time and causality of subjectivity are rejected in magic realism. The magical and the ordinary are presented as indistinguishable. It does not represent the world with logical connections and assumed linearity. This lack of causality is shrouded under the narrative convention of representing it as something usual and making it normal. Magic realists work to put causally connected events side by side in a way that it does not appear to violate objective reality and attempts to convince us by details that the events described are natural and believable. To suggest this point, Bruce Rogers narrates an incident from *Ceremony*:

In *Ceremony*, for example, there is a scene in which a spurned woman is dancing very angrily. Miles away, the man who betrayed her is checking the commotion his cattle are making in the night. Descriptions of the woman's heels stamping the floor are alternated with descriptions of the cattle trampling the man to death, back and forth from one to the other. No assertion of causality is made, but the dancer's heels and the animals' hooves

become linked so powerfully that the reader doesn't just "get it." What's conveyed is not a symbol or a metaphor, but the reality that a woman can be so angry that when she dances, her lover dies (25-6).

Magic realist fiction tends to portray ordinary as something miraculous and magical as ordinary. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the ice that gypsies bring to the tropical village of Macondo is described with awe. An ordinary thing called ice generates a lot of curiosity among the people. It is not with ice only, but the entire natural world is represented with the same curiosity. What is natural and obvious is presented with novelty and unusualness, and what is truly magical such as a person living for hundreds of years or a person living even after the actual death is shown as something natural or usual in that world. For example, a character in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is shot in the head, the blood from his body flows out into the street of a path that takes it all the way to the feet of the character's grandmother. The incident is shown with precision and descriptions, and the reader is left to believe in the magic. In other words, magic realism rejects common sense reality, logical conclusions, and causality. With its unusual nature, the term is always difficult to define and multiple definitions of the same term is found.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said had the following to say about the use of the term "magic realism":

Discussions of magic realism in the Caribbean and African novel, say, may allude to or at best outline the contours of a "post-modern" or national field that unites these works, but we know that the works and their authors and readers are specific to, and articulated in, local circumstances, and these circumstances are usefully kept separate when we analyze

the contrasting conditions of reception in London or New York on the one hand, the peripheries on the other. (374)

Magic realism in literature enjoyed popularity in many parts of the world just after World War II, during which influential writers such as Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez in South America, Günter Grass in Germany, and Italo Calvino and Umberto Eco in Italy incorporated magic realism in their fictions. Magic realist writers in English are John Fowles, John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, Emma Tennant, Don DeLillo, and Salman Rushdie. Among these writers, though their purposes and usages vary from one another, their break with reason and subsequent tendencies in literature are found common in the works. The ‘control of imaginary’ with the so-called powerful tool reason has been denounced and rejected by these writers. In this regard, Chanady raises an important question:

How can we reconcile the fictional world of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, populated by the characters ascending to heaven amidst bedsheets, mysteriously levitating while drinking cups of chocolate, and turning into snakes or puddles of pitch, a world benighted with deluges lasting several years, and yellow flowers falling from the sky, with the claim that New World fiction is subject to a control of the imaginary based on the mimetic representation of the continent’s reality, especially bearing in mind the importance of positivism in Latin America? (126).

It is found that Chanady clearly rejects the control of reason in representation of magical worlds of writers like Marquez and others. But this breach with reason is also executed with a cause, specific to a particular writer. Marquez, for example, represents historical suppressions and exploitations in Latin America, Rushdie represents post-colonial impacts in his world of fictions,

and Robert Kroetsch narrates Canadian questions, carnivalesque world, and an ironical worldview of human lives. In other words, the purpose of subversion – the postmodern phenomenon pervading in all of the postmodern narrative techniques – remains the same in all the works with variations in their approaches. Ouyang states in this regard that both realism and grand narratives are resisted: “While postmodernism resists definition and escapes specificity, magical realism locates the politics of the text in the particular context of postcolonial resistance to European grand narrative in general and European realism in particular” (271).

It is analyzed and found that magic realist writers utilize the narrative technique with their local and personalized approaches attached to it. This is the reason behind its unparalleled popularity in many parts of the world. Zakes Mda, South African novelist, utilizes magic realism in his South African cultural context. In his works, the miraculous incidents are narrated in the normal and day-to-day surroundings. In other words, both the magical and the ordinary are put into one category delimiting the traditional differences between them. In *Ways of Dying*, the magical and improbable incidents, e.g. fifteen-month pregnancies, are narrated against the backdrop of the ordinary and believable incidents. It should be noted that Mda’s magic realism depicts the apartheid issues of the territory, racial discrimination, and the dichotomy of life and death.

Similar is the case with Latin American writer Marquez, who narrates magical stories in a common reality of day-to-day life. There are several incidents of magic realism in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The characters in the novel live endlessly beyond an ordinary life of a human being. The children are born with a pig’s tail as an outcome of incest. An entire village turns insomniac and is saved by a magic potion from the enigmatic gypsy Melquíades, and the rain that continues for years. In addition to this, the narration is fused with local, cultural, colonial, and political issues. Bowers states in this regard: “Although some critics accuse García Márquez



of writing novels that lose their political power due to his nostalgia and whimsy of magical realism, others find the magical realism to be a powerful form of indirect political resistance” (39).

Marquez’s magic realism represents a subtle and ironical attack on the political and cultural reality of Latin America. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, he shows historical wars between the liberals and the conservatives. The pointless wars have historical references to Columbia and hence, the writer criticizes those pointless historical wars. At some juncture, the writer proves the irrationality and the pointlessness by eliminating the differences between the two groups. The ironical representation of the wars is further intensified by the use of subtle magic realism. The writer includes one of the most horrific incidents in the novel; the cruel massacre of the banana workers who gather for strike to protest against injustice. The owners kill mercilessly the entire group of workers and ironically, the horrible event results in nothing but a disbelief and denial as nobody remembers or knows the incident, except the sole witness Jose Arcadio. He suffers from the trauma of this horrific knowledge throughout the novel, with nobody believing in what he says, and the entire massacre and the bloodshed turn into nothingness. Magical representations are seen in many of the other Latin American Writers. This magical trend continues to flourish in both Latin America and the rest of the world.

It proliferated in Latin America and then spread in the English-speaking world. It appeared first in the early 1970s in Canada, West Africa and the United States and many other locations of the world. Notable locations of magic realism are Canada, the Caribbean, West Africa, South Africa, India, the United States, England, Australia, and New Zealand. The widespread use of the term in the major parts of the world is due to its suitability for various purposes. Magic realism is a suitable weapon for the people and their culture belonging to the margins as well. It is a subtle

and ironical weapon for the margins such as feminist writers, a platform to resist the male metanarratives and imperialism, and black and post-colonial writers, a unique way to represent the post-colonial world and resist the dominant powers. Bowers points out in this regard from the context of Canadian magic realism. She opines, “As Canada is one of the most consciously multicultural nations in the world, and a nation marginalized by previous British colonialism and current American neocolonialism, magical realism becomes a useful narrative device for expressing views that oppose the dominant ways of thinking” (49).

It is termed as a postmodern weapon. Just as postmodernism deconstructs the metanarratives, magic realism as a postmodern narrative strategy represents the margins of the world and resists the dominant powers. While referring to *Beloved* and *Distant Relations*, Feris rightly mentions:

In both novels, voices come from the margins to the center. Fuentes (who appears in his own persona at the end of the novel) is the Latin American narrator in Paris, revealing the voices of Latin American poets echoing through Paris and changing its literary traditions, just as the Latin American rain forest takes over the French automobile club. Morrison symbolically moves the strong voice of Baby Suggs, holy, who preached in the marginalized forest, into town, if only for a moment, when the voices of the women save Sethe from another murder and another incarceration (203).

Countries like India and Canada were colonized in their distant past and hence, writers in both the countries use this narrative strategy to subvert the colonial powers. In Indian writing, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy are notable writers who employ magical realism as a key narrative strategy to deconstruct the metanarratives. In 1970s, Canadian writers attempt to portray Canadian nationhood divorced from British colonialism. Robert Kroetsch and Jack

Hodgins in the Canadian west, away from the center of power in the eastern cities of Toronto, Ottawa and Quebec, employed magic realism as a key narrative strategy to introduce an unashamedly postmodern postcolonial form of magical realism. Bowers posits:

Kroetsch's use of the magical realist mode in his novel *What the Crow Said* (1978) was a deliberate choice, following the influence of García Márquez, specifically to find a mode of fiction that would provide a means to express both the marginal perspective of rural western Canadians, and also the Canadian perspective in relation to Britain and to the powerful neo-colonial neighbour, the United States (47).

A similar wave of magic realism is found in West Africa wherein the writers like Okri and Morrison incorporate the term as a key narrative strategy in their fictions. Okri, British Nigerian employs the strategy in *The Famished Road* with a West African cultural perspective. The novel represents the struggles of an abiku child who tries to negotiate between the two forces: the living and the dead. Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, *Beloved*, and *Jazz* have magic realist elements such as the presence of ghostly figures from the past, women with magical powers, and men that can fly.

Magic realism is inherently transgressive and subversive. Because of these qualities, it has become popular among postcolonial, feminist, and cross-cultural writers. The tendency to represent magical as ordinary or routine and routine as something magical diminishes the conventional boundaries between what is real and what is magical. For example, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* the discovery of ice is shown as something magical and the magical incidents such as a child born with a tail of the pig is shown as something common and ordinary. It problematizes the relationship between the real and the magical or the unreal.

These transgressive and subversive aspects of magic realism are, in fact, postmodern factors that resist and destabilize the existing metanarratives. For example, the English feminist Angela Carter's writing utilizes these qualities to subvert the patriarchy in the British society. Using magic realism as her means of attack, Carter in her novel *Wise Children* subverts the authority of the patriarchal upper class. In the novel, magic realism is found at several points such as catastrophic sex, excessive liveliness in older age, and conjuring acts that come true such as a missing girl appearing from a box. These incidents of magic realism heighten ironically the agenda of the novel.

Apart from the existing dominating forces, history is another hegemony that magic realism contests and negates. Postmodern fiction, at large, explores/ reconstructs/ deconstructs/ questions history. History is visited with an altogether different perception; unlike the nostalgic viewpoints, postmodernists view it with critical viewpoints. As discussed in the previous chapter, the absolutism and unquestionable authenticity regarding history is questioned and negated by the postmodernists. History is nothing but a narrative with prejudices and subjective perceptions. Magic realist fictions treat history with the same perspective. Their works infuse the same kind of irony in the representation of historical data and facts as found in the postmodern historiographic metafiction. While analyzing *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or *Midnight's Children*, the intention to defy the conventional truths regarding history is found in them.

In *Midnight's Children*, the writer represents the reconstructed and subsequently ironized cultural history of India. In the novel, history is reconstructed through the eyes of the main protagonist Saleem. The character witnesses history and represents a different version of history through magic realism. The character along with himself creates national history. For example, Saleem's birth and India's independence coincide at the same time. "Therefore, if we recall

Jameson's definition of postmodernism, we can see that Saleem himself is being forced to think historically through the circumstances of his birth at a time when the country of India is leaving its colonial history behind and forming its own national identity" (Bowers 73). In the reconstruction of history, there are inevitable blocks that are discussed by the postmodernist writers in their works such as memory loss or forgetfulness, personal bias or prejudices, subjective narrative style, and the problem of language to represent reality. Similar case is found in the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In the novel, an attempt to recreate an alternative version of history is made by questioning the accepted and conventional facts presented in the official versions of history. The writer represents an alternative history of not only Columbia but also of the all of Latin America in the narrative representation of the family history of Buendias in the magical setting of Macondo. The fictional story of the Buendías includes actual historical events such as a strike in a banana plantation of the region in 1928 and a subsequent massacre leading to countless deaths. What one gathers in the examples of the magic realist texts is the notion of postmodern subversion that repudiates the validity of fixed truths and knowledge.

The provisionality of truth and knowledge is the basis of postmodern philosophy and hence, it exists as a key function of the narrative strategies of postmodern fiction. Secondly, they represent mininarratives from the perspectives of the margins, and the earlier truths represented by the metanarratives are negated and repudiated. For example, Rushdie's novel represents the post-colonial viewpoint; a marginal one as opposed to the Oriental one espoused by Said. Just as postmodern narratives focus on narrating mininarratives, magic realist fictions do the same by espousing the marginal and local truths. Bowers rightly puts, "All three writers 'wage war on totality' by using magical realist devices to disrupt fixed categories of truth, reality, and history. Their multiple-perspectived texts and the disruption of categories create a space beyond

authoritative discourse where the unrepresentable can be expressed” (77). In other words, it is construed that magic realism is subversive, and the so-called ‘totality’ or ‘metanarratives’ are questioned by magic realism in their way to present the stories of the margins in the center stage of the fiction. The postmodern phenomenon can be seen in any fiction of the era. Magic realism sets up a proper platform to present the margin and deject the dominating forces. By allowing the writer to flout the restricted boundaries drawn by reason, magic realist writers avail a stronger weapon to attack upon the conventional dominating forces both within and outside the society, and both literally and metaphorically. This subversive spirit is also found in Bakhtinian carnivalesque and heteroglossia, and their corresponding nature generates the postmodern space in the fictions.

It should be noted that they both possess liberating spirit in their approach and flout the rules and dogma set by reason and conventionality. The presence of this fusion becomes a common phenomenon in a magic realist text. In order to discuss the fusion of the magic realism and the carnivalesque, it is pertinent to consider basic aspects of Bakhtinian carnivalesque and heteroglossia.

Mikhail Bakhtin in his works *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and *Rabelais and His World* presents the theory of carnivalesque in literature, which represents the world not through the conventional, common, and accepted viewpoints but through the radical, subversive, popular, and the repressed notions. It aims at subverting the assumptions of the dominant style through humor and chaos. The roots of this theory lie in the age-old festivals and ceremonies such as The Feast of Fools and Feast of the Circumcision. These medieval festivals break away with the prevailing norms and dogmas of the society and a kind of free and uninhibited rein is allowed temporarily. For example, the social hierarchies of everyday life, moral, and decent behavior is

overturned in favor of the suppressed and neglected voices. In this process, the fools become wise, the beggars become kings, and the binaries such as fact and fiction, or heaven and hell are mingled.

Bakhtin in his *Rabelais and his World* explores the works of Rabelais in terms of the historical influences. He studies the works from the social perspective and presents a radical theory of the carnivalesque. Bakhtin has always reiterated the significance of social aspect in the discourse of the novel. His inclusion of the social in the text has been widely influential in the postmodern world. He has said, “Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon – social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning” (259).

Historically the term carnivalesque has association with the theory of laughter and the cultural norms in terms of official and unofficial behavior. He traces the period of the Renaissance during which the significance of laughter was considered as a lower strata behaviour, and it was always marginalized or ignored in higher art and life. During the period, in order to gain control over the common mass, the Church and the Feudal authority continuously suppressed the comic, and with the sense of fear and awe, they achieved a serious discourse opposed to that of comic one. Bakhtin identifies two cultures: official culture of the ruling class and unofficial folk culture. According to Bakhtin, it is this unofficial culture as an alternative to that serious culture, and this nonofficial aspect generated a new space for the practice of carnival. The Renaissance witnessed the collapse of feudal and church authority, and the emergence of the new bourgeoisie. He argues that this scenario paved a way of carnivalesque practices in the discourse of Rabelais. Because of that, the period of Renaissance witnessed the development of comic discourse alongside of that of serious discourse in the works of Shakespeare, Rabelais, Boccaccio, and

Cervantes. Consequently, grotesque imagery with its emphases on corporeal questioned the mediaeval ideology. The need for the eternal truths disqualified the grotesque imagery as a suitable form. It was not considered as an appropriate medium to express serious ideas. As a result, the comic remained as the marginalized in the mainstream of the discourse.

It is significant to note that Bakhtin highlights carnival as a significant alternative to the conventional officialdom. He shows its significance in the development of the novelistic discourse. He shows in his *The Dialogic Imagination* the gradual evolution of the discourse passing through several phases. He outlines three major elements: monoglossia, polyglossia, and heteroglossia. Monoglossia represented the monolithic language and depicted singleness in the work of art. According to Bakhtin, the monoglottic conditions of ancient Greece gave rise to such works that flew in one direction: epic, tragic and lyric. Polyglottic cultures include two or more different languages and create some sense of diversity in the work. Roman and medieval cultures gave rise to this phenomenon. During this period, monoglossia was replaced by the polyglossia. In the subsequent times, the earlier two were replaced by heteroglossia that first comes into existence in Renaissance and continues to develop in the novelistic discourse. He illustrates:

The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized) (*The Dialogic Imagination* 263).



Heteroglossia and its subsequent dialogization is a distinguishing feature of the novel. The carnivalesque, on the other hand, a social theory propounded by Bakhtin is recognized in the novelistic form. If heteroglossia resides in form, then the carnivalesque belongs to content. And Bakhtin does not believe in the separation of form and content.

Carnivalesque practices are not merely limited to the carnival feasts, but go much beyond it. Although it is banished from the official realm, it is present outside the realm of the officialdom. It not only provides an alternative to the official imagery, but also temporarily allows the scope of subverting or suspending the prevalent hierarchies. There are three major aspects of carnivalesque practices: grotesque imagery, laughter, and the marketplace. Grotesque imagery deals with the imagery associated with the grotesque body. It does not comply with the classical conception of the body as a complete and individual entity. The imagery is not merely limited to the bodily parts such as mouths, noses, or private parts, but it deals more with the functions such as eating, drinking, digestion, defecation, copulation, childbirth, and death. Grotesque imagery largely deals with the functions of the body and its dynamic interaction with the world. It provides a celebratory alternative to the official imagery. Carnivalesque laughter is an important tool to overcome the sense of fear and its consequences. The belly laugh is an essential carnival tool that grants a license to celebrate uninhibitedly. It further expresses the anti-feudal sentiments and popular truths. Bakhtin emphasizes the role of laughter as a regenerative force that eliminates fear and its consequences. Danow points out the significance of laughter in carnivalesque. He puts, "True to the carnivalesque tradition this depiction of laughter is collective at the core, belonging not to a single individual but to the world's inhabitants at large" (37). Marketplace, similarly, is a venue uncontrolled by the officialdom. It provides free and open space for communication. The marketplace communication invites abuses, curses,

profanities, and improprieties. As it does not have any set norms and patterns of communication, it gives a kind of free vent to the people in this area. This is how Bakhtin highlights the key elements of carnivalesque practices. Several writers in their novelistic discourse adopt these carnivalesque practices. Many postmodern novelists, irrespective of their cultural localities, include carnivalesque practices.

Carnavalesque practices imbue in them subversive tendencies that aim at unsettling and dislodging the ruling and the dominant power. This subversiveness is the fundamental idea behind the development of the postmodern culture and discourse. This subversiveness has given rise to the inclusion of carnivalesque practices in the discourse. Angela Carter creates carnivalesque atmosphere in her novels such as *Nights at the Circus* and *Wise Children*. She reverses binary oppositions in *Nights at the Circus* and creates a carnival world in which the fools are given superior importance. She also creates the novel of heteroglossia in which multiple perspectives and voices conflict with each other. In the novel, both the magical perspective and the realist perspective are shown, and they conflict with each other. Bowers has said in this context, “By reversing the binary oppositions and allowing her characters to express such a festive exuberance, Carter’s work epitomizes Bakhtin’s idea of the carnivalesque in literature. Her magical realism also plays its part in creating this carnivalesque atmosphere” (67).

Both carnivalesque practices and magic realism have corresponding similarities. Both the terms have subversive tendencies and topsy-turvy the existing powers. They are hybrid by nature. It becomes quite natural for the magic realist text to imbibe carnivalesque practices within them. The iconic work of magic realism *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is fused with carnivalesque practices. The topsy-turvy of conventional norms of society, free rein to the festive exuberance, and conflating voices turning into heteroglossia are found in the text. Magic realism proves to be

a propitious ground for the repressed to turn into actualities. The laughter of the carnivalesque is included in the magic realist text as a regenerative force. Danov points out:

In magical realism, death figures in the carnivalesque sense that Bakhtin perceives in popular-festive imagery; it allows for (re)birth and new life. There is a regenerative feature evident in its humor and consequent laughter, first of all, but also in the sheer proliferation of life forms documented in Latin American writing indigenous to the jungle and the sea, to both land and water (40).

It can be clearly seen that magic realism and the carnivalesque are commonly utilized in the postmodern narratives and most of the writers of magic realist fiction, irrespective of their locations (Latin American writers, British writers, African writers and Canadian writers) create a carnivalesque atmosphere in their magic realist fictions.

Both Bakhtinian carnivalesque spirit and magic realism are con/fused inseparably in Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said* and in many other postmodern texts. It is, indeed, essential to explore how and why the scope of carnivalesque unavoidably flourishes in magical realist texts. The Canadian writer applies the narrative strategy of magical realism in the same line of Marquez's *One hundred Years of Solitude*. Kroetsch proves that with magical realism as a narrative strategy the carnivalesque becomes indispensable. Beata Gesicka has rightly said in this regard, "this exposure of the incongruous nature of world-views is in keeping with the logic of the carnivalesque and that this logic is one of the fundamental features that all magical realist novels, Latin American or others, share in common"(393). It just provides the right platform for the carnivalesque to flourish. The novel self-consciously foregrounds both inconsistencies and incompleteness in it and attempts to defy the conventional rationality in favor of the absurd and

the magical. In addition to this, Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia has been carefully crafted in the novel, wherein multiple voices are found conflicting with each other.

The opening of the novel sets the tone of the fusion of magic realism and the carnivalesque. As a reader, one can witness in the opening of the novel an unusual and illogical probability. The Bakhtinian carnivalesque reaches to new heights and levels of grotesque realm with the coupling in *What the Crow Said*. The novel opens, "People years later, blamed everything on the bees; it was the bees, they said, seducing Vera Lang, that started everything" (1). The representation of lower body strata is one of the focuses of carnivalesque practices. The bodily functions such as copulation that are considered as taboo in the conventional officialdom is celebrated in carnivalesque practices. The body is not something unique or complete, but an incomplete one and transgresses its own limits. The openness with which the writer deals with the body and its functions surprises the reader. Gesicka points out that, "during the carnival, the official self enters into a dialogue with the unofficial other; they exchange roles and borrow their discourses from one another. The constant processes of acceptable or unacceptable transformations lead to a variety of truths that are "peripheral" and "ephemeral" by nature" (397). The very function of diminishing the boundaries promotes the hybridity of the popular as well as "peripheral" and the art.

The representation of lower body stratum has certain purposes such as ironization, subversion, and rendering of the carnival spirit. The presence of which is found in all the works of Kroetsch. Importantly, they do not serve the purpose of shallow entertainment, but insert subversive carnival spirit in the text. Hariharan has rightly pointed out with reference to the subversiveness in *Badland*. He states, "the bawdy song itself is used as a narrative model to subvert the authority of the male and the structures of phallogocentrism. The "awful song" *Roll me over in the clover*,

*roll me over, lay me down, and do it again*, works to decrown her father's narrative of the quest and to bring the heroism of the male down to the lower bawdily stratum" (68). The same trend is found in the present work as well as other works of the author. In the present work, lower bawdily stratum is presented in the magic realist setting creating magical and absurd moments.

The art and the popular culture are generally separated conventional fictions. This hybridity of mixing the two and creating an altogether different culture eradicates the traditional differences between the binaries. Carnavalesque practices disregard the officialdom, and the relevant hypocrite mannerisms and etiquettes. It calls upon the natural roles and hence, openly celebrates the bodily functions as a part of carnival celebrations. Holquist has rightly highlighted the nature of the carnivalesque spirit, which accepts and promotes the differences. He points out that, "carnival is best conceived dialogically: i.e. as the interaction of differences in a simultaneity. Carnival can be understood only in relation to a set of differences which both oppose it and, *at the same time*, enable it" (222). He adds, "Carnival celebrates the opposite of all these values" and it does not accept the traditionally assigned authenticity in terms of social roles, rules and customs, and hence, "it promotes indeterminacy" in all the sphere of the existing social and political domain (222).

The carnivalesque subversion has similarities with the postmodern subversion as described by Hutcheon in her *Poetics of Postmodernism*. The postmodern subversion is carried out through the narrative techniques, which is discussed in detail in the previous chapter. The traditional narrative techniques are installed and subverted by the postmodern writers. The nature of subversion is, indeed, the same, but the approach is different as the carnivalesque deals with subverting the dominant social norms prevailing in the society. For example, in Bakhtinian world, the religious spirituality gives way to the bodily functions. Despite the appearing

similarities between the postmodern subversion and the Bakhtinian subversion, Bakhtin has devalued the role of postmodern parody calling it as ‘narrow and unproductive’ (Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism* 84).

Bringing in the forbidden bodily functions in the novel, Kroetsch diminishes the binaries of literary art and popular art. The original and organic body is fully exposed and explored in it. The writer in all of his works includes carnivalesque practices. Whether a person explores *The Studhorse Man*, *Gone Indian*, or *Alibi*, the presence of the prevalence of the carnival world is found in them. For example, in *The Gone Indian*, many incidents typify the carnival spirit. The impotence of Jeremy Sadness is presented with the carnival spirit. The writer narrates, “My doodle is up. My drumstick. My hammer. My man-root. My tent-peg. My thumb of love. My howitzer. Like a thunderhead. So I lie down. AND DOWN IT GOES” (67). In *The Studhorse Man*, the writer openly narrates all the incidents related to lower body stratum. Copulation is seen as one of the common etiquettes in the novel and the same is utilized to subvert certain social conventions. The writer points out, “Sexual activity, Hazard swore to me, was the last thing he intended that night. He and P. Cockburn lay together, she naked with him in that great soft nest of a bed, and just as he moved to consummate – her passion, he insisted, not his own – just then, sitting up, kneeling stiffly in the dim light, he was able to see beyond the bed’s thin curtains” (36).

In *What the Crow Said*, the writer takes the carnivalesque to its extremity. Magic realism allows more liberty to the writer to experiment with the carnivalesque. The first chapter shows the unnatural or magical copulation between the bees and Vera Lang. The unusual attraction of the bees towards the naked body of Vera Lang and provocative response of Vera Lang result into an

unnatural and magical sexual experience. The entire incident is presented with an utmost description. The writer narrates:

She lifted her hips against the pressing, her long pale legs spreading to the weight of the bees, this slow surging of the bees. Her body joining their urgency. The drones, bigger, slower, moving with a hot deliberation, seeking always the hiving queen. Vera herself, swarmed into a new being. Her body singing like a telephone wire. Her nipples swelling and throbbing to the kiss of wing and leg, her belly tightening to the push and rub of her myriad unthinking lovers (4).

Magic realism as a suitable strategy to narrate carnival world. It should be noted that this postmodern strategy is employed by many other postmodern writers, but in a different way. Llosa, for example, fills his *Death in the Andes* with magical elements. Unlike Kroetsch, the writer employs magic realism to suggest the issues of poverty, violence, and hopelessness in his novel. The writer fuses many supernatural elements in the investigation of the disappeared men by Captain Lituma. Despite having different purposes, their narrative technique remain the same as both the novels fuse magical elements in common setting and present eccentric attitudes of the characters.

In *What the Crow Said*, the writer continues to weave magical elements along with the carnival spirit. An unusual carnival scene in which liberation reaches to an unusual height is noted, with magic realism providing unhindered scope of imagination. Vera Lang's carnivalesque gratification is mysteriously carved out as the writer shows her 'despairing and ecstatic' cry. The 'despairing and ecstatic' cry of not help but ululation during the act of copulation represent juxtaposition of the opposite words. Such juxtapositions representing binaries are quite frequent

in the novel. For example, “That was the year the snow didn’t melt. After those few hot days in April, the cold returned” (7). The above statements represent contradictions with one another. Magic realism negate the rational justifications to the things that happen around us, and an intrinsic and irrational world is created in the novel.

The eerie sense of magic realism pervades throughout the novel. All the characters bear among them this eerie sense, and their actions and dialogue represent the same. For example, Liebhaber remembers future. The carnivalesque coupled with magic realism subverts all the conventional authoritative forms, and even the time is not spared. The character of Liebhaber does the job of subverting the conventionalities of time. The remembrance of the past is replaced with the remembrance of future. The rational belief is that the future cannot be remembered; and only past can be remembered. The writer confuses the reader with the unique and magical treatment of time that upsets the traditional belief of time. Liebhaber remembers the death of his close friend Martin Lang and the same thing is translated into reality. The contradiction and lack of cohesion continue in *What the Crow Said*: “Funny damned break-up,” Skandl said. “I can’t cut ice because it’s almost summer, and I can’t sell ice because it’s almost winter. This time it’s belly-up for sure” (11). The unusualness of Liebhaber continue to prevail: “Liebhaber looked for words with his fingers, not with his head;” (11).

Kroetsch associates language with the body and its bawdy part. In this regard, Hariharan has rightly shown the mixture of the textual and the sexual, and their interrelationship as well as interdependency:

As we have seen, the first tenet in a grammar of the body has to be the desire of language itself for a body, the need of mere words to be embodied in a text. But the ‘body’ of a text



is not to be found in its physical production alone of paper and glue and ink, but in its mental production of desire for an absent presence. In a sense, the textual becomes a sexual act; the two are dialogized, they interpenetrate (60).

The textuality and its sexuality is present throughout the novel, and the role of language is carnivalized in the novel. The elitist and official language takes a carnival route. In addition to that, the writer uses abusive and swear words frequently. This bawdy nature of language suggests the inclusion of popular art in the literary art. The carnivalesque practice subverts the line of demarcation between the two. Bakhtin says in *Rabelais and His World*,

It is characteristic for the familiar speech of the marketplace to use abusive language, insulting words or expressions, some of them quite lengthy and complex. The abuse is grammatically and semantically isolated from context and is regarded as a complete unit, something like a proverb. This is why we can speak of abusive language as of a special genre billingsgate. Abusive expressions are not homogenous in origin; they had various functions in primitive communication and had in most cases the character of magic and incantations. But we are especially interested in the language which mocks and insults the deity and which was part of the ancient comic cults (16).

Language in the postmodern fiction is carnivalized. The marginalized section of language comes to the fore. For example, the word ‘asshole’ is an abusive word used in the streets. Martin Lang while referring to the deteriorating condition of the weather says, “Asshole of the Universe, Even the gophers can’t make living” (11). The ‘marketplace’ language gives vent to the repressed feeling. Apart from abuses and swears, the novel presents bitter curses uttered by the characters frequently. The Bakhtinian marketplace language gets a central forum in the novel. Interestingly,

the abuses and the curses are not simply limited to the humans, but to the Almighty and the World as well. Liebhaber says, "The world is a double hernia" (13). Kroetsch habitually and quite naturally presents this language suffused with curse, abuses, and at the same time market place qualities in his other works. In *The Studhorse Man*, such conversation is quite natural. During one incident, Hazard indulges in a slang conversation with one of the drivers on a road. The vulgarity in their conversation is obscenely visible to the onlookers:

'Get that bloody milkwagon out of the way, you little peckerhead'.

'You hangnail pecker yourself,' Hazard replied, throwing off his cape from his red sleeves and white gauntlets....

The driver, a moose of a man, turned off his engine. 'Don't ekerpa me, you pandering redcoat peter,' he shouted back to Hazard.

By this time an appreciative audience of pedestrians, most of them coeds on their way to the university, had begun to collect; little did they realize the trucker was offending the very core of Hazard's being.

You tool,' Hazard said, You faltering apparatus.'

'You whang and rod and pud,' the trucker replied.

The girls all together gave a little scream, some of them clapping (42-43).

Similar trend continues in the work with carnival spirit flourishing in the novel. The presence of lower strata of body in the form of open description of copulation of Hazard with multiple partner and erotic cravings of several other characters can also be seen in the novel. In *What the Crow Said*, the same is represented with a magical twist in it as the incidents of copulation break away with the conventional treatment, and with magical powers, it crosses all the boundaries. These elements in the character of Vera Lang are seen. Vera Lang's magical copulation with the

bees has subsequent impacts on the town as it starts freaking out. Tiddy says, “The bees did it” (13). It leads to two consequences: the pregnancy of Vera Lang and the other is the deteriorating weather. Vera Lang’s disregard towards the entire race of male is frequently seen in her popular statement: “Men are a bunch of useless bastards” (13).

Ironically, Vera Lang is shown to have more association with the bees than with the male counterparts. The conventional sexual relationship is transgressed, and it becomes radical and improbable. During the scene of heavy storm, when Liebhaber and Martin Lang are trapped in the deadly weather condition, Martin Lang is shown to have homosexual attractions with the male opponent. The writer narrates, “Liebhaber pushed his weight forward against the unrelenting arms, leaned back again, then tilted away from the kiss on his cheek. The hard, stiff kiss, on his brittle cheek, panicked him (Liebhaber) into motion” (19).

The representation of lower body stratum and the bodily functions pervade in the novel ceaselessly. Those incidents that are not discussed in public or come under the category of taboo are discussed or narrated overtly. The writer narrates an incident during which Vera Lang and John Skandl were having conversation: “He pulled himself, with a quick yet stately motion of his buttocks, back inside his underwear. He brushed where a trickle of urine ran icy cold down his leg” (23).

This carnivalesque spirit is present in all the other works of the same author. But the treatment of subject matter is different in *What the Crow Said*. The carnival traces found in other works typify normal outcomes and are, indeed, subversive, but on different grounds. With magic realism in this work, the impact, and the scope of the spirit is multiplied. It breaks away with all the conventionalities including rationality and common sense. The magical elements, contradictions,

unusualness, and carnivalesque atmosphere combine and create an altogether new world in the novel. The beauty of the novel lies in the fact that magic realism is foregrounded in Bakhtinian carnival atmosphere. The reason behind the mutual correspondence between the carnivalesque and magic realism is that they both carry similar principles. Subversive nature, eradication of the arch binaries such as real and magical, the center and the margin, the popular and the literary art, the officialdom and the marketplace, the spiritual and the lower body stratum, morality and immorality, life and death, and transgressing of the conventional boundaries whether social or literary are identified in them as common factors. They may not be termed as synonymous to each other, but certainly as corresponding with each other. This is how carnival sometimes becomes unavoidable for the magic realist writers such as Marquez, Carter, and Kroetsch. In fact, in the carnival world, magic realism flourishes endlessly. In this regard, Gesicka has rightly stated her views. She posits:

I would argue that what is distinctive of this narrative structure and what changes the significance and function of the magical events is the carnivalesque-grotesque liberating spirit that permeates every magical realist text. In other words, the logic of the carnivalesque (with its exaggeration, excessiveness, "billingsgate language," and the aesthetic of the monstrous) provides the magical realist text with the capacity of undermining the validity of any given worldview, whether "real" or "magical." Therefore, it is my belief that the features of the carnivalesque-grotesque are inherent in magical realist narrative (395).

Subversiveness of magic realism becomes conducive for the carnivalesque and the margins. Angela Carter in her *Nights at the Circus* employs this subversiveness to present her feminist sentiments and other related issues. In her novel, Fevvers is born with wings, Fanny has four

eyes, and a black man is born without a mouth. The magical aspects are imbued for the sake of subversiveness that destabilize existing domination of the white male race. Such magical traces appear in the novel frequently, and it can be seen in the magical narration of the Sleeping Beauty. She narrates, “Her female flow grew less and less the time she slept, until at last it scarcely stained the rag and then dried up altogether, but her hair kept on growing, until it was as long as she was herself” (63). A similar trend of magic realism is found in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. Toni Morrison narrates motherhood and slavery with the aid of magic realism. The ghost of her own dead son haunts the female character Sethe. The writer narrates magical elements when Sethe tries to unveil her story to Paul D. The writer narrates: “She was spinning. Round and Round the room. Past the jelly cupboard, past the window, past the front door, another window, the sideboard, the keeping room door, the dry sink, the stove – back to the jelly board. Paul D sat at the table watching her drift into view then disappear behind his back, turning like a slow but steady wheel” (159). Magical realist writers, sometimes, exaggerate the practical reality to an extent that it no longer remains reality anymore. Here the grief and guilt of woman is metaphorically translated into a haunting ghost of an infant.

Similar cases are found in numerous other postmodern texts, in which the binary between the life and the death is deconstructed; the binary is repudiated on account of the carnivalesque, which subverts the status quo and reverses all the privileges; and on account of magic realism, which, by being subversive, rejects all the conventional binaries. The coexistence and recurrence of the ghost in major postmodern texts is not coincidence. In *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Marquez, just like his other magic realist texts, presents the role of the dead or the ghost as an inseparable element from the living. Fermina, just like Tiddy Lang of *What the Crow Said*, feels the presence of the dead husband. *The house of the spirits* by Isabel Allende, too, removes the distinction

between the living and the dead by diminishing all the differences. The novel witnesses overt and active participation between the two worlds. Clara, a central character in the novel, both communicates with several spirits and plays an active role even after her death by being a spirit herself. It is a common trend of major postmodern writers, and the same is found in *What the Crow Said*.

Magic realism creates magical world in an ordinary setting in a way that magical elements merge into the ordinary and become the ordinary in the end. The ordinary is presented as though it was magical or something unusual and becomes magical in the end. The difference between the magical and the real is complicated and eroded. The side-by-side narration of the magical events and the ordinary events elude the reader into believing the magical as ordinary and the ordinary as magical. Robert Kroetsch has done the same when he narrates the story of Vera Lang being impregnated by the bees. People in the novel accept her status of being pregnant after her copulation with the bees as an ordinary incident.

Along with that, logical gaps in causality are found; a highly irrational and subjective causality, and the disrupted linearity of time are the other areas that are portrayed in the novel. For example, the break in causality and subsequent contradictions are frequently presented in the novel. The narrator says, "The thrilling call, out of the silence that followed the storm, created a sense of urgency; on the following morning, twenty men and boys went out to walk and ride through the stillness and the snowdrifts. They were looking for Martin Lang, they said. They walked out into the blinding sunshine, studied, warily, the mystery of snow-molded hollows and mounds" (29). The break in causality is found in the case of freezing winter and blinding sunshine. The basic logical connections and causality are disrupted. The linearity of time is equally treated with the same approach. For example, the unending seasons, unending life span,

and mixture of the past and the future are the areas that are narrated in the novel. Robert Kroetsch presents carnivalesque practices using the narrative technique of magic realism. Additionally, such gaps in time, space, and causality recur in any magic realist text. In *Beloved*, Sethe while telling her stories to Paul D blurs both the lines between the present and the past, and disrupts the linearity.

Carnavalesque practices are found in all the works of Robert Kroetsch. In *Alibi*, countless examples of carnivalesque practices are found. The representation of the lower strata of the body and regenerative and healing impacts of carnivalesque practices is shown in *Alibi*. The approach to carnival practices, thus, is quite different from *What the Crow said* as it tends more towards ironical stance. *Alibi* shows a carnivalesque world with its regenerative spirit. Indeed, the rules and conventions have been thrown in favor of carnivalesque practices. During one incident Dorf ignoring all the conventions and rules goes for mud baths. He says, “It seems I leapt to my feet and went running straight for the magic gate; I banged my way through the gate, rules be damned, and made a beeline for the ladder and then, the said ladder be damned too, I made a flying leap into the mud” (177).

In *What the Crow Said*, the usage of vulgar words is used quite frequently, which rejects the officialdom in favor of the taboo world. Skandl says in the novel to refer Liebhaber, “He is useless as the tits on a boar” (31) and on another occasion, he says, “He’s broke flatter than piss on a plate” (30). The words like tits and shit become common terminology in the novel. As a part of carnivalesque practices, the representation of the lower body stratum and the related bodily functions is seen in the novel. In one of the scenes of Liebhaber and Tiddy Lang, the crisp narration of all the private parts is seen, “He found with his healed mouth the round and invisible fullness of her buttocks, his fingers stroking the first softness of the small hairs at her body’s

openings, the quick of his tongue licking her first motion. The heat on his mouth, the smoke on his tongue” (33). The representation of the functions of the lower body stratum is not taboo in the novel. It defies the idea that art should represent higher spiritual values. There is no higher value or lower value in the carnival world, and in fact, the marginalized taboo or bawdy content gets the center stage in the novel.

Kroetsch in this novel attempts at confusing the difference between the improbable, the real, and the magical. The incidents that are narrated in the novel are sometimes improbable, having hyperbolic qualities, and magical to some an extent. They refuse to be categorized into certain fixities. It can be seen in the following incident that took place in the home with Rose: “Shivering by the windmill while the cows and horses drank, trying to amuse herself, she accidentally stuck her tongue to an iron rung of the ladder that went up the windmill’s side. She hollered and groaned for help until the heat of her breath freed her torn skin” (35). In this regard, Gesicka has rightly stated, “The incongruity of the disparate sources (that are all part of the carnivalesque tradition, as will be shown) is projected into the structure of the novel, and reinforced by essentially carnivalesque language, humor, the aesthetic of the monstrous, and hyperbole” (394).

The crossing of the boundaries between life and death is seen when Tiddy Land sees her dead husband now and then plowing the snow. The presence of ghosts is one of the common elements that is found in major magic realist works. The ghost of Martin Lang occasionally appears in the novel. Just as in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the presence of ghosts is very significant and plays active roles in the lives of the living people, the ghost in this novel, too, plays a similar role. Martin Lang appears in front of Gus Liebhaver and converses with him. The ghost is not shown with supernatural powers or extraordinary miracles. In fact, Martin Lang is shown to be



affected by the earthly impacts. The writer narrates, “The wind was blowing hard. Martin Lang was having difficulty, walking in the wind” (49). Magic realism diminishes the apparent differences between the living and the dead. An example of Skandl can be seen, whose hair continuously grows in the coffin “filling every small space” (156). The ghost is presented as though it was an ordinary thing and simultaneously, the living people such as Vera Lang with her magical relationship with the bees, and Gus Liebhaber with his ability to remember the future are also presented as though there were ordinary. Thus, common and uncommon, ordinary and extraordinary, real and magical, and the living and the dead transgress their traditional assumptions and mix into the opposites by assuming the opposing norms.

Kroetsch narrates a magical incident in an ordinary way and an ordinary incident in a magical way. The writer mentions how Alphonse Martz loses his hearing capability in an unusual and inexplicable way:

He’d fallen into a well when he was a boy. When the searchers finally found him and got him out he was perfectly fine, except that his hearing was impaired. He had, in a single night of darkness, up to his neck in water, down in the well, learned silence. A doctor told him he had willed his not hearing and therefore couldn’t be helped by medicine. Father Basil prayed for him and that hadn’t help either (77).

Magical aspect in the event can be construed, as the person cannot willingly stop his hearing, and at the same time the role of the Father is ironized, who is unable to rescue the man of his typical condition through prayer. Common characters with unusual typicalities and magical elements in common setting make the novel more appealing and believable.

Vera Lang's infatuation and obsession with the bees, her sexual affair with the bees, and her fierce hatred towards the males are the few things that make her character uncommon. Interestingly, her uncommon qualities are shown to be common and usual in the novel. She is shown to have a cold arrogance towards the males and she reiterates her famous statement: "Men are a bunch of useless bastards".

The erotic and the spiritual are mixed together in the carnival world or the traditional differences have been wiped out. The color of blue represents celestial things in Christianity. In the Bakhtinian carnival world, this celestial aspect is carnivalized and mixed with the erotic images. Skandl's attempt to woo Tiddy Lang by creating a lighthouse made of ice has associations with this aspect. The writer narrates, "The ice of Skandl's erotic dream shimmered a translucent blue in the blank glare of what should have been a harvest sun" (38). It is construed that in the carnival world, even spirituality does not hold the ground. The subdued erotic world takes over the spiritual world. In other words, the spiritual is carnivalized in Bakhtinian style. Hariharan states, "Like Rabelais, Kroetsch displaces the sacred and spiritual associations of blue; such heavenly ideas are brought down to the lower bawdy stratum. The joyful site of carnival is not just earth but the lower body, particularly the penis and its vagaries" (61). The juxtaposition of the church and the erotic is found in the marriage of Tiddy and Skandl. In the sacred marriage arranged in church, the writer narrates: "He (Liebhaber) noticed Tiddy's hand, furtively touching Skandl's wrist; the couple, endlessly impatient before the altar" (44). The writer mixes the sacred and spiritual feeling with the erotic feeling of the couple. The writer aims at projecting the carnival world with hard and naked truth, rather than masked spiritual notions.

In the novel, the treatment of the world is very unusual and pathetic. The traditional ideology regarding the betterment of the world is put down in favor of more pathetic and saddening one.

The characters use swear words and abuse it. Even the priest, who is supposed to have optimistic ideology, curses and abuses the world. He justifies his car having square wheels due to the lack of centrifugal forces in the earth and thereby losing its roundness. He also says, “The world is out of motion. We inhabit a strangled universe” (44).

Gus Liebhaber, throughout the novel, maintains the tone of abusiveness towards the world. He continues to do what the people in the novel rightly say, “always pissing and moaning”. Abuses, curses, and swear words imbue carnival qualities in the novel. It points out Bakhtinian ‘marketplace’ language, which frees the norms and conventions of fine etiquette followed in the officialdom. One of the most abusive conversations in the novel is found between the speaking crow and Liebhaber. Their abusive tones permeate throughout the novel. The crow states, “Liebhaber you don’t know your ass from your elbow. You are a *Dummkopf* beyond my worst expectations” (56). The crow further adds, “Why don’t you go out to one of Vera’s bee yards, take off our right boot, hook your dirty big toe onto the trigger of a borrowed shotgun, and hope for the best? (56) The fusion of carnivalesque practices and magic realism or the presentation of carnivalesque practices through the narrative technique of magic realism is seen in this case. The abusive utterances, swear words, and curses are magically spoken by the crow. The speaking crow becomes a fusion element of the two parameters. The crow from the present study, to some extent, resembles the parrot of *Love in the Time of Cholera*. The writer on numerous accounts narrates the magic of the parrot, “Dr. Urbino could barely see him amid the leaves, and he tried to cajole him in Spanish and French and even in Latin, and the parrot responded in the same languages and with the same emphasis and timbre in his voice, but he did not move from his treetop” (21).

Ironically, the crow can speak in the novel, but JG, the newborn baby, has no sound at all. His voicelessness is juxtaposed against the speaking crow. JG has an unusual and the only connection in the novel with the crow as “only the black crow fascinated the boy” (54). Such abnormalities of humans often match with the magical elements in such texts. Similar incident is found in Patrick Suskind’s *Perfume* in which a similar boy is born without an odor of any kind. The quality of abnormality and magic is part and parcel in the present novel.

Another such incident is found in Mick O’Holleran. Despite losing his right leg and private parts in some English war, he admits of being capable of using them. The carnivalesque erotic sense and the magical quality combine in the character. The narrator puts it, “O’Holleran, without the slightest argument, admitted that at times he not only felt the presence of his missing leg and private parts, but could actually use them” (58). Magic permeates throughout the novel, and it is presented side by side in an ordinary setting, and so is the case with the subversive carnivalesque practices that are accepted by the characters as common and routine. O’Holleran, despite having the lack of ‘private parts’, impregnates Rose Lang, a daughter of Tiddy Lang. Excepting a few characters, all the other characters perform carnivalesque practices. Even Zike, who appears in the novel for a few times only, is shown with deadly erotic sense. He says, “FUCKED MY HEAD OFF LAST NIGHT” (59). Liebhaber, throughout the novel, reveals his erotic intentions. For example, “One day, watching a teaser cow excite a bull, he becomes so excited that he accidentally inserted himself in the semen-collecting device” (61).

Traditional conventions pertaining to marriage and child rearing are rejected. In the novel, the female characters rear children, even without being married. Vera Lang and other female characters deconstruct the existing convention through radical and unusual carnival practices. Additionally, the writer fuses human world and animal world together with both magic realism

and the carnivalesque. Most of the characters like Vera Lang, Gus Liebhaber, Rose Lang, and JG have curious and unusual relationship with the animal world. Their relationship with the animal world is not a normal one as it is much more than holistic and regenerative. Rose Lang has passion to bury the dead birds and make “novenas for their souls” (58). Vera Lang has an erotic infatuation with the bees, and JG is associated with the speaking crow, which speaks on his behalf. In other words, the animal world is not considered as a secluded or isolated from the human race. In his attempts, the writer rejects the binary of animal world/human world.

In this confusion of the carnivalesque and magic realism, the writer thwarts/modifies/rejects/subverts and leaves nothing out of its realm. In this process, apart from the norms of the social world, language, too, is carnivalized. Meaning is context bound and context imbue the quality of limitlessness. According to Bakhtin, every utterance is filled with heteroglossia that combines two forces: centripetal and centrifugal. He says, “Every utterance participates in the “unitary language” (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (centrifugal, stratifying forces)” (*Dialogic Imagination* 272). Robert Kroetsch imparts the same treatment to his utterances in the novel. For example, the statement, “It’s snowing” has a common comprehension that the snow is falling. The meaning in the novel bears erotic connotations while spoken by Tiddy Lang and Anna Marie. Such sexual connotations are prevalent in the novel. Liebhaber, who continually plays with the alphabets, associates them with erotic connotations. For example, he associates ‘O’ with Tiddy Lang’s breasts. He says, “The absolute of Tiddy’s breasts” (64).

Along with the confusion between the real and the magical, the magic realist texts also confuse the definitions of normality and abnormality. All the characters with their irrational, erratic, and abnormal behavior generate exaggeration and hyperbole, which are common elements of both

the carnivalesque and magic realism. In the current novel, all the characters are marked with typical eccentricities. All the frequently appearing characters such as Vera Lang, Gus Liebhaber, Tiddy Lang, and Rose Lang are marked by these qualities. The less frequently appearing characters are also shown with typical eccentricities. For example, Isador Heck has the typical quality of skepticism; he refuses the theory of gravity. The writer illustrates, “He lived in a homestead shack in the middle of a section of hey sloughs and windblown wheatland and had never swept his floor, speculating that if anything does in fact exist, there was no reason to believe it was visible” (67). The point does not end in mere representation of such qualities; it lies in the matter of its sheer ironization. He refuses to go to mass on a silly argument with the Father. The writer narrates, “Father Basil argued that light was the white corpuscles of the universe. Heck argued that light was the absence of dark” (67). Such an incident ironizes and trivializes both the Church and the individual.

Such qualities of absurdities, abnormalities, and eccentricities among the characters are found in all the major magic realist texts. In *Perfume* by Patrick Suskind, a contemporary German writer, plenty of such examples can be identified. Suskind describes Madame Gaillard as a person without any sensations or feelings. He narrates: “She felt nothing when later she slept with a man, and just as little when she bore her children. She did not grieve over those that died, nor rejoice over those that remained to her. When her husband beat her, she did not flinch, and she felt no sense of relief when he died of cholera in the Hotel-Dieu” (9). Such abnormalities aid the availability of magical incidents in the text and creates a space wherein both the magic and the real lookalike.

The narration of the abnormalities and hyperbolic nature supplement the magic that is founded on the deconstruction of the binary of the magic and the real. Different postmodern writers have

utilized this subversive spirit of both magic realism and the carnivalesque as per local and cultural need. In *Sexing the Cherry*, Winterson narrates the historical perspective of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to deconstruct the binary based on sexual identity: father/mother, man/woman, culture/nature, and head/heart. In order to subvert the metanarrative of the patriarchal society, the writer employs both the carnivalesque and magic realism in the novel. Instead of creating any metanarrative, the writer subverts the forms and systems of patriarchy with the postmodern narrative strategy. In one of the incidents of the novel, the fusion of both the carnivalesque and magic realism can be fathomed:

That night two lovers whispering under the lead canopy of the church were killed by their own passion. Their effusion of words, unable to escape through the Saturnian discipline of lead, so filled the spaces of the loft that the air was all driven away. The lovers suffocated, but when the sacristan opened the tiny door the words tumbled him over in their desire to be free, and were seen flying across the city in the shape of doves. (17)

Similar fusion is part and parcel in *What the Crow Said*. However, one can find a stark difference with relation to the agenda behind their inscription in the fictions. It is fathomed that hyperboles, exaggeration, eccentricities, and aberrations play their parts in deconstructing the binaries in postmodern fictions.

In *What the Crow Said*, it is noted that exaggeration, hyperbole, and eccentricities set an appropriate platform that becomes a corresponding tool for both carnivalesque practices and magic realism. Both the terms are inherently liberating and this is what makes them as mutually correspondent. This indefinite liberation allows the characters to dwell in their extremes of their abnormal behavior. For example, to have intimacy towards the insects and animals is normal in

the world, but to take that intimacy to the level of infatuation and copulation is an eccentricity to be made possible by the liberation provided by the carnivalesque practices and magic realism. Both Bakhtinian carnivalesque and magic realism are known for their subversive attitude towards the existing status quo or the conventional officialdom or conventional realism. Magic realism dismantles all the boundaries between reality and the magic, fact and fiction. It dwindles the distinctions between the rational, conventional behavioral patterns, and absurd behavioral patterns (eccentric and unconventional). These eccentricities and absurdities match with the magical elements created in seemingly ordinary events. And this is the reason why magic becomes ordinary and the ordinary becomes magical.

The eccentricity, sometimes, reaches to the status of unbelievable, and close to magic. The writer narrates, "For four weeks they'd been playing on her dining room table. Day and night they played, ignoring the weather, ignoring time, family, duty, season; ignoring everything but their own one passion" (78). This incident just matches with an almost magical incident as they have ignored everything, including basic foods and amenities. It just attempts to cross the logical boundary and tries to cope up with the prevailing magic around the place. For example, Old Lady Lang reads the future of the players through their cards. She says to Liebhaber, "You're going to die of love" (81). Leo Weller sees his own coffin carried by people when he steps out of the room in the dark. The unbelievable, irresistible, and unescapable temptation of the game casts a magical spell on the players, who, despite losing all the time, continue their card games.

Robert Kroetsch takes bawdy body and communication to new and unusual routes. The writer includes the subdued and prohibited bodily functions of human communication in the main stream of the routine life. The restrained bodily functions from public places such as farting and excrement become a usual mode of communication and expression in the routine lives of the



characters. The writer narrates these unusual patterns of communication, “JG sometimes filled his pants: it was almost the only way in which he could express himself. In the excitement of watching the game, at having so many men present in the room next to his, he jumped up and down and waved his arms. The smell of his shit began to permeate the dining room” (69). Hariharan has mentioned in this regards, “Language and excrement are also linked in a more fundamental way in *What the Crow Said*” (72). He further adds, “Such an “expressive” capacity on the part of one who cannot speak makes the body undeniable in more than one ways” (72).

This can be termed as a pure rejection of the conventional etiquettes and mannerism in terms of human communication. It recalls the celebration of the human body in its pure and original form. And communication is not limited to the formal ways, but the bawdy body must be celebrated in human communication. In a carnivalesque world, the bawdy body and the lower functions are exposed rather than hiding them in public. Many examples demonstrating this point can be identified. The writer shows, “JG, locked up in the parlor, hearing the men return was excited beyond all reason; but he couldn’t speak a sound. He farted loudly out of pure joy” (129). Holquist has promoted the carnival view of the body. He opines that, “far from seeking to conceal the body, carnival dramatizes flesh as the site of becoming, and flaunts the orifices which in their activity of ingesting and defecating enact connections between the individual person and the whole world he is *not*, between inner and outer, the self and non-self” (222).

The crow speaks on certain occasions only, but whenever he speaks, its tongue vents only apathy, irony, swear words, and curses. He repeatedly utters the word, “asshole” to Liehaber. Even while it consoles JG on a certain occasion, it is filled with irony and misery. When JG is forced to go to bed, the crow consoles, “Tomorrow will be just as miserable as today” (71). During the unending schmier game, which is played by the ten persons for an indefinite period,

the crow interferes their play ironically. It is essential to note that he speaks human language, and the people around him goes on saying, “caw, caw, caw, caw” on certain occasions. Both the crow and the men use abusive and swear words. The crow says, “Bugger off” to the men. They also reply in a similar fashion. Leo Waller says, “If somebody doesn’t strangle that fucking crow, I’ll do it myself” (76). The crow further calls them, “A bunch of raving idiots” (77).

Kroetsch, with this carnivalesque narration, defies the boundaries between the animal world and the human world. Similar eradication of the boundary between the two worlds is also seen in Haruki Murakami’s novel *Kafka on the Shore*. Murakami, just like Kroetsch, narrates magical and unusual communication between the human and the cats. Satoru Nakata, after having lost her normalcy due to the horrors of the Second World War, develops a magical quality to communicate with the intellectual cats such as Otsuka and Mimi. And in the present novel, Kroetsch intermingles both the worlds inseparably.

It is construed that under the magical spell of the schmier game, they lose the human qualities and change into the crow-like qualities. It almost, metaphorically, diminishes all the differences between the two. Their crow-like existence is recognized when they start saying ‘caw, caw’ to each other instead of the crow or the magpie: “Caw, caw, caw, caw, caw, caw, caw, caw,” the men said, not so much to the waiting magpies, as to each other” (89). Despite playing endlessly, “they knew they must not only go on playing; they must win” (86). The writer mentions their shattered condition:

They looked like a pack of scarecrows. Almost all of them were coughing. One or two at a time, they leaned over the side of the sleigh box, spat into the snow. They farted, and their farts almost warmed them. Their assholes were raw and bleeding from the

combination of diarrhea and prairie hay that was full of thistle and buckbrush. They tried once or twice to sign, but then Alphonse Martz cursed instead, pointing to a magpie that hopped off the road, away from a dead rabbit” (88).

In the description, it is noted that both magical weirdness and carnivalesque picturization of the representation of the bawdy body mingle inseparably. Further, the players, while expressing arguments pertaining to marriage, reject the entire social system of marriage and reduce it to nothing, but the carnivalesque ‘lust or sloth’.

The crow becomes a human entity and the men turn into crows metaphorically as men are cawing and the crow responds them with swear words. It is during this game that allows Tiddy to think that females are better at handling the male jobs. There are many instances, apart from this, when the male dominance is thwarted and the female role, which is generally marginalized, comes to the center stage. In other words, the entire social system is ironized and a disorder is created in the carnival world presented in the novel. The disorder and aberrations are present in both the subject matters and the formal matters. The portrayal of a particular character is, generally, limited to his or her external appearance. Kroetsch transcends those boundaries and enters into the forbidden world of the naked body. He narrates, “Gladys had reddish hair like her mother and delicate breasts with nipples that were almost the color of gold; anyone could tell that, watching her throw the ball” (80). The conventional norms pertaining to character portrayal, narrative point of view, cohesiveness, and the cause-effect agreement are challenged, and a chaos is created in the carnival world.

The ordinary incidents, represented as though they were magical and the magical incidents represented as though they were ordinary, flourish on all the quarters of the novel. Simple

incidents such as the priest going to the basement or a prisoner escaping from the prison are treated with magical mystery. On the other hand, the magical incidents are accepted as though they were normal. For example, Jerry Lepanse eats 420 pounds of bricks to conceal evidence during his attempt to escape from the prison to pursue Rita, who happens to write sensual and titillating letters to him. Their letters are full of carnivalesque picturization as they narrate the bawdy body with an uninhibited spirit. A man cannot eat such an amount of bricks to remove the evidences. This is both unusual and magical.

As the novel progresses, the traces of the carnivalesque world loom large, in which the representation of the bawdy, lower body functions and the breach of common rationality couple with magical elements create a world of chaos and irrationality upstaging the order and status quo. The card players beyond all human possibilities continue their play endlessly. The chaos, absurdities, and the breach of all social conventions create an extreme of the carnival. The card players being infectious transfer their chaos in the entire village. The writer narrates, “Men lay in their own vomit, gagging and crying. Husbands ignored the entreaties of their wives, fathers denied so much as a nickel or dime to the children waiting in parked cars, refused their own offspring the consolation of Oh Henry! Bar or a bottle of Big Orange in the Chinaman’s across the street” (100). The people defy common sense and carry a rule of irrationality and unconventionality. Both the church and the police are incapable of controlling the chaos. The father himself goes to confession rather than having people for confessions. The continuous presence of lower body functions is found on several occasions. “The dispossessed men, drunk, shouting, farting, whining, hollering, cursing, belching, swearing, puking, spitting, were forced out of the beer parlor, into the street” (101). The narrative itself becomes chaotic as it breaks away from the logical and causal representations. The presentation of incidents is marked with

irony and humor that pervades throughout the novel. For example, there are 30 accidents in 24 minutes and no one is injured as they drive through the river and their cars turn waterproof. The nonsensical behavior of the characters is equally backed by the lack of causal approach and magical elements. The senselessness, chaos, disorder, humor, and stark irony prevail in the narration. In addition to this, the card game suggests an alternative world to the official and the normal world. And their alienation from their family and society is suggestive of the carnivalesque subversion rejecting all the societal norms in favor of the chaos and the carnivalesque disorder. Gesicka states that, "the notion of the game (the time of a temporal suspension of existing rules) plays an important role as an element of carnivalesque subversion. All the same, it is a pivotal characteristic of any magical realist text" (400).

As stated earlier, magic realism is a narrative strategy in the novel, which narrates the Bakhtinian carnival world. Both the aberrant elements such as chaos, irrationality, and the lower body functions and the magical elements intensify the impacts of the carnival description. For example, Marvin Straw's ass is severely burned, and yet he continues to play the magical game without further consequences. The players' physicality is shown to have certain magical powers as they survive severe damages and continue their game. It is construed that the carnival world is filled with the magic that provokes further carnival in an ordinary setting and routine life.

The representation of the grotesque or decaying body, as seen in the present novel, and magic realism is a common phenomenon in the novels of Marquez. In *The General in His Labyrinth*, Marquez narrates both the grotesque body, which continuously decays, and the magic that surrounds it. The writer narrates the decaying body of the general, "His body burned in a bonfire of fever, and he was farting stony, foul smelling gas"(10). He also fuses the magic during the time of his death. During his death, "The General had grown so small that the cuffs of his shirt-

sleeves had to be turned up again and an inch was cut off the corduroy trousers" (257). Hence, just like Marquez, Kroetsch, too, narrates the grotesque and the bizarre in a magical environment. The neglected and the world of taboo attains the center stage in the postmodern texts. The hyperboles, the curses and abuses, and uninhibited laughter become inseparable.

For Liebhaber, going back to routine is like surrendering to the old or normal world again. He venomously curses the world and its conventions. He prefers the shit filled carnival world to the clean and hygienic conventional world. His attacks on this world are seen throughout the novel. He calls the world as 'scab and a carbuncle' and describes it as 'a horse turd everlastingly falling'. He further calls the world as "a pimple on an alligator's ass, a rotten fish, a broken hamestrapp, a tub of shit" (112). Abuses, curses, and swear words are common elements of Kroetsch's carnival world.

The writer continuously plays with the thin line between the logical and illogical, the probable and improbable, and the magical and the real. Throughout the novel, such instances are seen. He not only dwindles the traditional distinctions among them, but also ironizes them by juxtaposing them and transgressing the boundaries. This can be seen in the case of Vera Lang's son who is raised by the coyotes, the probability of which is highly unlikely. Such incidents coexist with the magical elements and further confuse the causality and the accepted facts. This lack of causality is an element that refuses the common acceptance of reason, and this rejection of reason is a common factor of both carnival and magic realism.

Vera's boy, with the typical qualities such as predicting weather change, and the lack of formal manners and etiquettes, i.e. squatting on the chair, and showing the signs of the coyotes, represents subversive nature against the status quo. Language, culture, mannerism, formal

etiquette, and the cultural hierarchy turn into chaos and disorder. He uses his typical language that is not comprehended by the people, and yet people follow his predictions and directions in the novel. This is just another paradox, contradiction, or lack of plausibility. The writer presents the magical reality that breaks with common sense and logical plausibility. For example, he says, “Erellthay be nowsay in the orningmay” (120). The statement cannot be comprehended with the common understanding of the English language. It seems that the carnivalesque spirit of defying the order and the status quo enters in the language, which itself turns into chaos and disorder by flouting all the simple rules of grammar and spellings. In the form of Vera’s boy, the carnivalesque enters into the sphere of the language formation and its usage that defies all the authorities and unquestionable norms. It is noted that he not only defies the traditional etiquettes but also presents incomprehensible language with its deformity.

The writer intermittently hints at the human-animal relationship while narrating the character of the boy, and this time, too, it crosses all the common boundaries. The writer hints at his disinterest in women, and just like his mother, his intimate relationship with the female coyotes. The carnivalesque spirit is represented through such unusual relationships against the backdrop of magic realism. The writer narrates, “The strange thing was, though, he had no need of women. It was true that on occasion, especially when the moon was full, he would disappear for a night, return at dawn looking exhausted, spent” (124). The full moon is the favorite time of mating for the coyotes and this indicates his unnatural relations with the animal community.

In the carnivalesque world, the trivial, the serious, and the sacred either change or lose their substance. The writer presents deaths with irony devoid of its conventional regenerative spirit. In the magical or metaphorical war, Nick Droniuk, Eli the Hutterite, Mick O’Holleran, and JG meet with ironical deaths. Nick Droniuk, in an ambition to be the wheat champion of the world finds

all his straw without grain, and he falls in the threshing machine when he vents his anger against the sky. Ironically, “his testicles were blown into granary, the rest of his body into the strawpile” (124). Kroetsch presents the taboo of lower body stratum in the narration of humorous, amorous, and serious incidents. In this case, the grain of the body are testicles and the rest as useless straw. JG, who can only walk in the figure of eight, beholds for the first time a tree in his life; the element of magic realism wherein simple things are treated with awe, just as in the case of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in which ice is treated with awe. In an attempt to fly, like his only friend the black Crow, he falls down through the branches on the crosses of graveyards and finally on the ground and dies without making any sound. Here both the crosses and his death are ironized. His death witnesses a curious emergence of salamanders entering into the human world everywhere. The writer treats this curious and large invasion of salamanders in the human world with carnival taste: “They tried not to flinch. They were sure they felt salamanders crawling into the baggy crotches of their waterproof pants, up onto their hunched backs” (134).

One more ironical death is witnessed when Joe Lighting, who tries to catch an eagle, is caught by the eagle and is unwittingly flying in the sky, and at some point falls on the ground. He is surprised by the ulterior view from the sky, and ironically, he laughs when he falls. He also falls nearby the church. The churchgoers, despite hearing his ironical laugh, do not try to save him. The writer mentions the reason, “But the churchgoers, at the time of the fall, had on their Sunday clothes” (143). Instead of surprise and skepticism, the unbelievable and magical things are treated with laughter. Even the death, the fall of Joe Lighting, is treated with roaring laughter. Similar is the case when a plane flies without a propeller, and the runway made of solid cement soars in the air, people laugh endlessly. Just as abuse and curse, laughter is also an essential tool of expression in the carnival festivities. Again, magic realism with the color of carnival traces



can be seen. It is construed that the carnivalesque humor and laughter repudiates the seriousness of the events like deaths. Gesicka mentions her argument on this line:

What occurs on the carnivalesque stage of magical realism is not the reconciliation, but the ongoing negotiation between disparate elements that are incapable of forming any kind of coherent system. Under the influence of the carnivalesque-grotesque spirit, a simple magical event ("unnatural" event, that otherwise might be ascribed for instance to the fantastic), is transformed into the magical realist event. This is to say that the liberating carnivalesque-grotesque tone undermines the seriousness and gravity of usually disturbing and strange magical events" (398).

Throughout the novel, the presence of the carnival humor is observed, which is, as per Bakhtinian notions regarding humor, ambivalent, mocking, and deriding. It is also degrading and abusive in a way that it incorporates "marketplace language" and hence, applies abusive words and curses with reference to the "lower body stratum". The famous conversations between the speaking crow and Liebhaber are apt examples as their conversations include abusive words such as 'asshole' and other words addressing the world.

The carnival frees the narrator of the obligatory norms of telling the stories faithfully and objectively. In the novel, the narrator on several occasions ceases to be reliable and rejects the meaning and the continuity abruptly keeping the reader gasping for information. Despite having third person narration, the narrator does not assume the traditional omniscience, which is a crucial element in the conventional novel. Gesicka points out that, "the carnivalesque spirit undermines the viability of the narrator, and forces the reader to make sense of the absurdity of the world depicted, by his own means" (402).

It is witnessed that magic realist narration coupled with the Bakhtinian carnivalesque creates a postmodern con/fusion that carries the fusion in the most confusing way wherein it is found that the magic and the carnivalesque supplement each other and confuse all the binaries that could exist in the postmodern world. The magical world with full of shit-like things is observed in the novel. The representation of the carnivalesque traces and its fusion with magic realism intensifies in the never-ending schmier game in which the card players create their own alienated world fused with aberrations, weird magic, and the subversive carnivalesque with its shits-like environment. In one of the situation the writer narrates, “The dispossessed men, drunk, shouting, farting, whining, hollering, cursing, belching, swearing, puking, spitting, were forced out of the beer parlor, into the street” (101). The celestial body, as viewed and narrated by the realists and to some an extent the modernists, transforms into the grotesque indulging in basic and carnival activities. The grotesque representation of the body is usually marginalized or repressed by the writers of the previous eras and never enter at the center stage. Robert Stam mentions the true spirit of the carnivalesque, and Kroetsch represents the same in this work. Robert Stam opines:

In carnival, all that is marginalized and excluded – the mad, the scandalous, the aleatory-takes over the center in a liberating explosion of otherness. The principle of material body – hunger, thirst, defecation, copulation – becomes a positively corrosive force, and festive laughter enjoys a symbolic victory over death, over all that is held sacred, over all that oppressed and restricts (86).

The absurdity of men’s behavior is corresponded by the absurdity unleashed by the sky. Towards the end of the novel, a curious war between the earth and the sky is witnessed, which includes men and the sky with its forces of various weathers. People die ironically and hilariously in this ironical and magical war. Liebhaber is also trapped in a fatal situation during

his preparation of the boat. Despite facing humiliation all over, both from the earth and the sky, he survives. Kroetsch narrates, “Liebhaber’s right foot touched the river bottom. The humiliation melted his arms. He shat himself. At that moment, against the conscripting cold of the spring runoff, his sphincter opened; he felt the warm shit ooze softly into his underwear” (147). The permeating carnival replaces the sadness of possible death with irony and humor.

Throughout the novel, a curious and improbable con/fusion between the humans and the animal world is portrayed. The insects such as bees, salamanders, and horseflies permeate heavily in the region, creating unusual and magical carnivalesque in the novel. This can be seen in other magic realist works too. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the insects encroaching upon the human world is shown quite often. The difference and similarities between the two works are too difficult to ignore. Salat rightly hints at the comparison and the magically carnivalesque relationship between the humans and the insects or the animals. He posits, “*What the Crow said* is relatively a stark novel compared to *Hundred Years* and is carried through by the rapid pace of the narration that begins with the rape of Vera Lang by the bees and finishes when the narrative energy exhausts itself by the very furious pace of its movement” (*The Canadian Novel* 142).

The abnormality of the weather matches with the abnormality in human behavior. These incidents take place in an environment wherein the magic becomes common and the common becomes the magic. With this scenario, the writer destroys all the binaries such as normality and abnormality, human world and animal world, the magical and the real, and even the life and the death. In fact, a conflicting world emerges wherein each factor conflicts with the other, as all the binaries conflict with each other defying the traditional boundaries, and what remains is a world with multiple perspectives and endless point of views. Because of this, the novel becomes an example of Bakhtinian heteroglossia. The writer also presents the third person narrator who is

neither reliable nor knows everything about the characters and the incidents. There are endless incidents when the uncertainty of the narrator is observed. For example, after the death of Ebbie Else, the narrator points out, “Why he entered a corral that enclosed a huge, restless bull and a swarm of stinging horseflies, that was not easy to decide” (151).

The abnormality, whimsicality, and magicality of weather along with the company of the animal world are found in many postmodern magic realist texts. The abnormality of the bees, salamanders, and the famous crow are the typical examples of the work, along with the magical whimsicality of the weather that incessantly follows any one route, i.e. wind blowing ceaselessly, rain falling endlessly, or seasons continue for endless period. Similar examples are seen in either Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or Morrison’s *Beloved*. Morrison narrates one such incident in her novel *Beloved*:

It rained.

Snakes came down from short-leaf pine and hemlock.

It rained.

Cypress, yellow poplar, ash and palmetto drooped under five days of rain without wind. By the eighth day the doves were nowhere in sight, by the ninth even the salamanders were gone. Dogs laid their ears down and stared over their paws. The men could not work. Chain-up was slow, breakfast abandoned, the two-step became a slow drag over soupy grass and unreliable earth. (109)

One of the most typical examples of abnormal human behavior is that of Marvin Straw, who falls in love with Vera Lang, and in his passion, he literally becomes mad; and he follows Vera endlessly despite being rejected by her; so much so that he ends up being a vigilante, who

ceaselessly and abnormally vigils Vera just to see her and stare her continually. Vera chooses Ebbie Else, whose horny spirit can be defined in his statement: “I’m so horny I could fuck a McCormick reaper” (150). The carnival love filled with lust, and the traditional love is juxtaposed here; and ironically, Vera chooses the carnival love. Marquez in his *Love in the Time of Cholera*, subverts the notions such as platonic love, faithfulness, and other celestial things pertaining to love. An inevitable fusion of the carnivalesque with magic realism is noticed when Marquez questions and subverts the celestial notions regarding true love, and juxtaposes with the carnival love against the backdrop of magical incidents. In Florentino Ariza, the writer presents the carnivalesque nature of love, wherein the character, despite having genuine love with Fermina, indulges in countless other affairs. Marquez, just like Kroetsch, juxtaposes the grotesque and the naked body with its sensuality with the notions pertaining to celestial love. Both the writers subvert the celestial aspects of love and highlight the carnival and sensual aspects of bodily love.

Several examples can be found in the novel, which suggest an eradication of the binary of life and death. As per Bakhtinian carnivalesque, death is not an end of life, but viewed as a regenerative spirit. The examples of the ghosts, the dead people’s coexistence with the living people, or the corpse making movements show the regenerative spirit. However, Kroetsch adds irony and black humor that stall the prevalent notion of regenerative spirit to some an extent. One of the examples is as follows: “The corpse, at the wake, as if startled or afraid, three times sat up in the coffin. In the heat it began to smell, just faintly, and Vera asked that the vigil be held for one night only, that the funeral be set forward one day” (152). The carnival traces are present even at the time of serious events like deaths or funeral. Vera, instead of observing the social conventions, caresses the bones of her husband in an obscene way, i.e. “lift(ing) the

knuckles of a thumb to her mouth and tongue” (152). The death is hardly treated seriously in the novel. The irony of the deaths lies in the fact that they are caused by trivial, unusual, or magical causes.

An ironical and magical war with the sky becomes carnival towards the end. The sky continues to unleash its forces towards the earth, and the people are affected by it. Liebhaber, in his desperate attempt, fertilizes the sky. The writer puts it, “Liebhaber, in the sweat of his need, stooping and rising, stooping and rising, would fertilize the barren sky” (163). The writer adds, “alone and alone, he charged his gun” (163). Here, the entire scene has sexual connotations, and ‘gun’ can be understood as his penis. Magic realism and the carnivalesque work simultaneously in the novel and prove to be inseparable. Their corresponding nature heightens their combined impact in the novel. Both Bakhtinian carnival and magic realism are equally liberating. Magic realism, on the one hand, liberates the writer from the bounds of conventional logic and causality, subversive carnivalesque, on the other hand, liberates the writer from the conventional, social, and artistic bounds.

Improbable and absurd hyperboles suffused with humor permeate throughout the novel. With hyperbolic quality, both carnival and magic realism heighten their intensity and impact. Jerry Lapanne in his carnival passion to meet Rita invents a flying machine to escape from the prison. Ironically, in his haste he forgets to include a way to bring back the machine to earth. The hyperbole turns into an ironic humor that equally flourishes in the novel. The improbability is seen when the villagers easily see flying machine, and the RCMP cannot find the machine despite their efforts. The liberating forces of carnivalesque spirit and magic realism allow the writer to flout all the norms of time and its linearity, action and causality, and probability in human behavior.

Apart from that, there are ample examples of narratorial gaps that flout the norms of conventional forming of the fiction. The subversive carnival and magic realism allow the writer to be unreliable and leave the reader guessing on several occasions. The bounding of narratorial duties are heavy, and the freedom from those duties allows the writer to take the novel into multifarious ways that are fused with new directions of creativity. Kroetsch challenges the all-know status of the third person narrator and brings down the magnanimous status of the narrator to an ignorant and unreliable. The point can be seen in the following example: "She'd been there hardly half an hour when the rising flood waters lifted the granary out of the mud, set it afloat. And why she took off her simple clothing, her undergarments as well, that, too, was never explained by any one person to another's satisfaction" (178). Such narratorial gaps can also be attributed to the flouting of all the norms of rationality and common sense. Such narratorial gaps add to the improbability and create an atmosphere wherein the magical and the real become inseparable.

Towards the end of the novel, the carnival spirit coupled with magic realism reaches to its extremity. The naked, the hidden, the ignored lower body strata comes to not only to the center of the novel but also to the public, defying all the social norms, conventions and etiquettes for a while. The narrator presents, "Vera appeared, of a sudden, in the open door of the floating granary. She appeared in the doorway, as naked as the day she was born. She raised up her full breasts, like skeps, like two perfect beehives, to the startled onlookers. She caressed her belly, her own thighs; she let a finger stray into the matted blonde public hairs where a few bees, lovingly, clung to the damp strands" (178).

The obscene replaces the commonplace reality or common etiquettes; and all the social conventions pertaining to morality, decency, and social customs pave way to the naked and

grotesque reality of the body. The granary magically holds its place on the water and Vera takes her route of extreme carnival. They prove to be inseparable and indistinguishable. The subversive tendencies of the two equally destroy rationality and commonality. The carnivalesque spirit, from the beginning to the end, is juxtaposed with religious and social customs, and the carnival passion subverts them by favoring the naked and the lower body strata. The social customs pertaining to marriage and funeral are juxtaposed with the naked reality of the body. Tiddy invites or lures Liebhaber to sleep with her in bed instead of following the religious customs of marriage. In fact, the writer ironizes the sermon itself, when the Father interchanges the burial sermon with the marriage sermon repeatedly. The writer says, “But it was a bed and he was caressing Tiddy’s breasts, touching his tongue to the hard nipple of her right breasts, daring to bite, when he thought of the horse. At exactly the moment when Father Basil was concluding his magnificent sermon” (190).

Copulation and obscenity become a common custom, instead of a taboo or a private thing. Theresa publicly enters her hand into “a pocket of Darryl’s denim cut-offs” (182) during the presence of the Father. Rita’s letters, too, are filled with carnival passions; she writes absurdly to those prisoners without ever reading their replies. She writes, “I want the strength of your hands, holding me. I want the hardness of your cock...” (191). Thus, both the Bakhtinian carnivalesque and magic realism are con/fused together inseparably, and they create a magical text with their abnormality, improbability, magical traces, and carnivalesque spirit, which are engrossed in each and every section of the novel.

Robert Kroetsch has utilized carnivalesque practices in all of his works. In *Alibi*, carnivalesque practices are shown as an alternative route to life. The carnivalesque is presented as having healing capabilities. It can be viewed in Dorf’s narration as he says during mud bath, “I slept like



a log. When the men woke me to go back into the mud I was refreshed beyond all expectations. I was into the mud this time, no hesitating, and the man who had lured me earlier only smiled now, smiled his bad teeth white in approval; that fat old man indicated that I was to cover my face this time” (170). In *What the Crow Said*, both carnivalesque practices and magic realism combine together to create a subversive irony that destabilizes social norms, and formal and literary binaries. Indeed, the fusion and confusion of the carnivalesque and magic realism in the text prepares an ideal platform for irony to emerge, as it is, too, subversive in nature.

The Bakhtinian carnivalesque being equally subversive finds a perfect ally in magic realism in the novel. However, it is important to reiterate the point that different writers of the postmodern era have utilized this narrative technique for different purposes. This, in fact, adds to the plurality of postmodern fiction, which generates endless narrative possibilities. Each writer creates a unique magic realism contextualizing it with his or her local culture. Subversiveness of magic realism provides a proper platform to the writers of various cultures. Magic realism found in the writings of the urban writers, feminist writers, African writers, and post-colonial writers vary in their purpose and style. For example, D H Thomas, an urban writer, in *The White Hotel* creates an unusual magic realism, which deals with historical and psychological subjects. Foster states, “Thomas’ decision to highlight the central European experience is significant, because in doing so he has recreated the distinctive historical conditions which originally led to the emergence of magical realism” (270). Toward the end of his novel, Frau Lisa, with her magical powers, prophesies future, and with such magical qualities in a seemingly ordinary life, the novel subverts several binaries. Unlike Kroetsch and Marquez, his magic realism is different vis-à-vis purposes, as he explores psychological and historical issues in the novel. Similarly, American writer William Kennedy presents his different magic realism in *Ironweed*. In this novel, the

writer mixes the supernatural elements such as the existence of ghosts with the living people, and just like Kroetsch, defies the binary of the life and the death. The writer, however, presents magic realism in an urban area to represent the issues of homelessness and the binary of life and death.

C.E. Medford in his *Magic America* presents the magical story set in urban localities to highlight the growing concerns of the urban life against the backdrop of magical incidents such as inherited tattoos, magical biker group, and fairy godmother. Haruki Murakami, a Japanese writer, employs magic realism to present the unconscious, the sub-conscious, and the question of identity from the historical and cultural perspective of Japan. With the help of magic realism, the sub-conscious and the unconscious are actualized in the textual world. For example, in *A 'Poor Aunt' Story* one of the characters envisions an idea of poor and middle aged woman and the same is created in the textual world. She becomes a real person, as everyone can see and notify her presence in the book. Thus, magic realism is seen in the works of major writers of different localities with their different adaptations vis-à-vis their local, cultural, historical, political, psychological, and ideological issues.

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