

1. Michael Jackson: A Critical Overview

This dissertation explores Michael Jackson's life, performance, music videos, songs, body and trials, and it attempts to project him as a true postmodern icon of western civilization, besides his decades-long popularity as the "The King of Pop". Michael Jackson's ever-changing body and performance skill blur the distinction between fact and fiction, reality and construction, and ultimately make him a postmodern icon. So Jackson's life and performance is a mirror to western civilization and its blurring of fact and fiction. Apart from these, Jackson's songs and music videos have broken down cultural, racial, economic, generational and global barriers and they have made incredible contribution in popular culture and to lift up the marginalized voice especially of black Americans. Furthermore, his controversial and mysterious trials are also equally significant to make him a postmodern icon. Michael Jackson is, therefore, such an icon who truly represents all the traits of postmodern civilization.

Michael Jackson, an American superstar referred to "The King of Pop", was born in Gary, Indiana, on August 29, 1958, and entertained audiences nearly his entire life. His father, Joe Jackson, had been a guitarist but was forced to give up his musical ambitions following his marriage to Katherine. Together they prodded their growing family's musical interests at home. By the early 1960s, the older boys Jackie, Tito, and Jermaine had begun performing around the city and by 1964, Michael and Marlon had joined in.

A musical prodigy, Michael's singing and dancing talents were amazingly mature, and he soon became the dominant voice and focus of The Jackson 5. As the product of the 1970s, the boys emerged as one of the most accomplished black pop/soul vocal groups in music history, successfully evolving from a group like The

Temptations to a disco phenomenon. Solo success for Michael was inevitable, and by the 1980s, he had become infinitely more popular than his brotherly group. Record sales consistently orbited, culminating in the biggest selling album of all time, “Thriller” in 1982.

In the 1990s, the downside as an 1980s pop phenomenon began to rear itself. Michael grew terribly child-like and introverted by his peerless celebrity. A rather timorous, androgynous figure to begin with, his physical appearance began to change drastically, and his behavior grew alarmingly bizarre, making him a consistent target for scandal-making, despite his numerous charitable acts. Two brief marriages – one to Elvis Presley’s daughter Lisa Marie Presley - were forged and two children produced by his second wife during that time, but the purpose behind it appeared image oriented. Despite it all, Michael Jackson’s passion and artistry as a singer, dancer, writer, and businessman are unparalleled, and it is these prodigious talents that will ultimately prevail over the extremely negative aspects of his seriously troubled adult life.

For it all to end on July 25, 2009, with his sudden death at the age of 50 of a cardiac arrest just as he was just coming out of a four-year reclusive period and rehearsing for a sold-out London concert “Comeback” in July, seems uncommonly cruel and tragic. Millions upon millions of dedicated and die-heart fans will remember where they were “the day Michael died”.

The Michael Jackson trial has been a paradigmatic in American cultural history, not so much because of the specific criminal allegations, but because of the insights it has offered into the inner life of one of its foremost icons. Dressed in a black suit, his chalk-white face sheltering under a black umbrella, Jackson has cut a spectral figure, rushing to hospital more than once for emergency treatment; opening

the summing-up on the first July, the judge warned the jury against being swayed by pity for the singer. Yet it may be that the singer's entourage and fans who turned up at the courthouse daily, cheering the defence team and booing prosecutors, grasped an essential truth about Jackson: that, for all his weirdness, his fantasies and his perpetual quest for transformation have deep roots in the American psyche.

Each day Jackson arrived at court after a forty-five-minute drive from Neverland where the abuse was alleged to have happened. Neverland is a rich man's playground where the so-called King of Pop – Jackson's monarchical fantasies are evident in the names he gave his first and third children, Prince Michael Joseph Jr. and Prince Michael II – operated his own rules, which included sharing his bedroom with boys. Jackson had become so isolated from the world and its norms that he admitted as much in Martin Bashir's 2003 documentary, failing to realize it was a dangerous revelation for a man around whom rumours of child abuse had swirled for the previous ten years.

One of the problems for the prosecution was that it became clear during the trial that Jackson's weird, self-indulgent lifestyle attracted people as disturbed as himself, either as employees or fans who wanted to be close to him. Some prosecution witnesses contradicted themselves, gave rambling testimonies or were accused by defence lawyers of trying to extort money from Jackson. In essence, the jury had to decide whether the singer was a victim of con artists, or a predatory paedophile who equipped Neverland with features to attract boys whom he then groomed for sex.

Postmodernism and body theory are applied as the tools or methodologies of analysis to achieve the goal of this research. The term "postmodernism" was used in 1930s, and it is often applied to the art and literature after world war second, but its current vogue and sense can be said to have begun with Lyotard's *The Postmodern*

Condition: A Report on Knowledge (1979). He, in this book, defines postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. Postmodernism rejects the center-seeking tendency. It seeks for multiple centers and truths instead of single truth and one center. It subverts binary oppositions and advocates the margin. In other words, postmodernism is tilted toward the margins. In recent years, the body has been radically rethought by both science and philosophy. We can no longer view the body as a natural object. The body is actually a cultural representation, constructed through various media, especially language. Societies produce ideals of the proper body in order to define their identities. Yet time and again, the body's boundaries turn out to be uncertain. The body has also been materially restructured by science through practices such as genetic engineering and artificial insemination, and devices such as life prolonging machines and artificial wombs. The body can be disassembled by plugging parts of one body into another. Various parts of the anatomy can be rebuilt through cosmetic surgery. Ultimately, the human organism may be replaced by automata which can perform quite efficiently many of the tasks once associated with the natural body.

With the application of postmodernism, Jackson's life, songs, videos, performance, and trials are probed and found enmeshed with lots of postmodern characteristics such as alienation, fragmentation, controversies, complexity, breaking of boundaries, lifting up the marginalized and exploited voice, highly innovative experimentation, etc. Body theory or postmodern body is taken as a probe to analyze Jackson's ever-changing body which blurs the fact and fiction and represents the western civilization. His ever-changing body subverts the traditional notion of body and becomes parallel with postmodern body which is always in flux.

Though Michael Jackson is the superstar of Pop music, his life is always enmeshed in diverse types of controversies. Sometimes his own words and actions made him controversial icon and sometimes the different comments of his fans and critics imprisoned him within the realm of contradictions and made him a global figure. One of the critics named J. Randy Taraborrelli comments on his performance like this:

The whole of Michael's performance was spellbinding, but during a brief instrumental interlude, he executed a combination of moves that would seal his reputation as a dance legend. He commenced with a series of split-second locking moves and poses before gliding across the stage via his now-famous sleek graceful moonwalk. (239)

Here, J. Randy Taraborrelli views Michael Jackson as an extraordinary performer.

Similarly, Salil Subedi, a music-critic from Nepal, views Jackson's prematured death and his tremendous name and fame as, "And it's not only the earth which is weeping. Millions of fans around the world mourn the death of the singer" (11). Michael Jackson was a global phenomenon of pop music. Due to his incredible contribution to pop music, he had earned millions of die-heart fans who mourn a lot on his untimely and tragic death.

Shahil Mane, a critic from India, also writes in his article "The Last of the Icons": "Michael Jackson came at the right time in the history. He was world-famous at the start of internet revolution, so the generation that grew up on his music was patient with his reclusive eccentricity" (8).

Moreover, Richard Lacayo puts different opinions about multivalent talency of Michael Jackson. He opines:

Before long, Jackson had two well-established and irreconcilable personas. There was the eternal boy so sensitive that his voice in any love song could end on the verge of sob, and there was the raging adult with his yelps and war whoops and his dance moves full of spring-loaded aggression. (48)

Michael's songs, his vocal and dancing performances, his ideas were all on a genius level that nobody had ever created before. His work ethic was incredible. He wanted to give his fans something they had never received before. His deals became legendary in the music industry. And he was simply the best, the top, an icon who comes along once in a lifetime. Nelson George, former Billboard R&B columnist, author and Jackson biographer, highly appreciates Michael's contribution in Hollywood video-music and states:

He elevated music videos to the stature of Hollywood musicals. "Beat It," "Thriller" and "Black or White" created a shared experience that is very much a product of another, less fragmented pop landscape. It's also clear how meticulous he was in the studio, with such a detailed palate of lead and backing vocals. He could use a variety of vocal tones and approaches on any given song, some right in your face and others peeking in and out of the mix. The man was simply a genius in the vocal booth. (24)

The above mentioned literature reviews show that Michael Jackson has been viewed and interpreted from various perspectives and angles. All of these critics have their one-sided perception of Jackson which can not be the complete understanding of him. And none of the above cited critics have presented the postmodern traits deserved by Jackson either. Hence it demands a genuine research on him. This research, therefore,

studies him from the perspectives of postmodernism and postmodern body, and projects him as postmodern icon of western civilization.

This research is divided into four chapters. The first chapter provides the orientation and concise outline of the research work. The second chapter contains the methodological bases on which the whole research is based on. The third chapter includes the analysis of Michael Jackson as a postmodern icon on the basis of theoretical modality outlined in the second chapter. This section also serves as the most significant and gist part of the research. Lastly, the conclusive chapter sums up the whole research along with its findings.

II. Introduction to Postmodernism and Body

Each great epochal transformation in the history of the Western Philosophy appears to have been initiated by a kind of archetypal sacrifice. As if to consecrate the birth of a fundamental new cultural vision, in each case a symbolically resonant trial and martyrdom of some sort was suffered by its central prophet: thus the trial and execution of Socrates at the birth of the classical Greek mind, the trial and crucifixion of Jesus at the birth of Christianity, and the trial and condemnation of Galileo at the birth of modern science. By all accounts the central prophet of the postmodern mind was Friedrich Nietzsche, with his radical perspectivism, his sovereign critical sensibility, and his powerful, poignantly ambivalent anticipation of the emerging nihilism in Western culture. In this context, Richard Tarnas states:

Like Nietzsche, the postmodern intellectual situation is profoundly complex and ambiguous, perhaps this is its very essence. What is called postmodern varies considerably according to context, but in its most general and widespread form, the postmodern mind may be viewed as an open-ended, indeterminate set of attitudes that has been shaped by a great diversity of intellectual and cultural currents [...].

(395)

Thus, the postmodern paradigm is by its nature fundamentally subversive of all paradigms, for at its core is the awareness of reality as being at once multiple, local and temporal, and without demonstrable foundation. Roland Barthes once described the literary text as “a tissue of quotation”. This description could have been used just as accurately for the postmodern. A postmodern text, building, performance, and so on, is usually a mixture of styles, drawing upon different historical movements and

features to produce a hybrid form. This is in direct opposition to modernism, which rejected the past to build a new, enclosed style of its own.

Critics still argue about when the postmodernism actually began. Generally, the term gathered pace during the 1950s and 1960s, but its current sense and vogue can be said to have begun in the late 1970s with the appearance of influential French theorist Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979; English edition 1984). Lyotard gained international fame for this report. The report surveys the status of science and technology and has become something of bible of Postmodernism. In this book, Lyotard states:

When we examine the current status of scientific knowledge – at time when science seems more completely subordinated and, along with the new technologies, is in danger of becoming a major stake in their conflicts – the question of double legitimation, far from receding into the background, necessarily comes to the fore. For it appears in its most complete form, that of reversion, revealing that knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided? In computer age, the question of knowledge is now more than ever a question of government. (8)

According to Lyotard, since World War II, people no longer believe in the grand narratives like science and reason. After applying science and reason to the construction of gas chambers and efficient railroad schedules, the Nazis exterminated millions of human beings. Therefore, people did not experience freedom and liberation as promised by the grand narratives. Because of disbelief in the

metanarratives that had legitimized science, science no longer plays the role of a hero that would lead us slowly towards full freedom and absolute knowledge.

When science encounters paradoxes, such as the electron that goes opposite directions simultaneously, it abandons its search for decidable truths and seeks to legitimize itself through performativity. So science is no longer concerned with truth, but with performativity – performing – producing more of the same kind of research, because the more research you produce and the more you are seen as being right, the more money and power you get. Lyotard, further, defines postmodernism as: “Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives” (xxiv).

For Lyotard, the difference is that where traditional societies are under the narrative, postmodern society is a society in which no one narrative, big or little, dominates. In postmodern societies, many micronarratives are jammed together. “And this carnival of narratives replaces the monolithic presence of one metanarrative” (32). Moreover, postmodern society is made up of zillions of incompatible little stories or micronarratives. And where not one of these little stories can dominate or explain the rest. In fact, Lyotard’s notion is that people have stopped believing in grand narratives because such narratives marginalize minorities and assumes that people universally believe in justice, and that is a metanarrative. Yet, despite its inadequacies, Lyotard’s definition of postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives continues to have a great influence.

A second influential postmodern thinker is Fredric Jameson. Lyotard celebrates the multiple, incompatible, heterogynous, fragmented, contradictory and ambivalent nature of postmodern society while Jameson distrusts and dislikes it. In his famous essay “Postmodernism; or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”,

Jameson does not see the postmodern era as postindustrial – as an ebb in the tide of capitalism. “ Rather, he sees it as an intensification and latest phase of a capitalistic world system” (35).

Jameson was highly influenced by Ernest Mandel’s *Late Capitalism*, which broke down the 19th and 20th centuries into three definite historical periods. First: from 1700 to 1850, the period of market capitalism. Second: monopoly capitalism, during the age of imperialism. Third: the postmodern phase erupted on the world scene with the unrestricted growth of multinational corporations like Coca-Cola. This is the purest form of capitalism yet to emerge – invading nature by destroying the pre-capitalist forms of agriculture – and invading the unconscious mind by advertising. Mandel’s history inspired Jameson to proclaim three cultural periods in which a unique cultural logic dominates. First is the age of Realism, the era of the bourgeois, historical novel. Second is the age of Modernism. Jameson admires modernism because modernist culture expressed its dissatisfaction with the world. And third is the age of Postmodernism. Postmodern cultural forms reflect the dislocation and fragmentation of language communities, splintered into small groups, each speaking: “... a curious private language of its own, each profession developing its private code or dialect, and finally each individual coming to be a kind of linguistic island, separated from everyone else” (114).

Thus, according to Jameson, postmodern city-dwellers are alienated, living in an hallucination, an exhilarating blur, a reality evaporating into mere images, spectacles, strange new warps in time and space, fixated on commodities, on products, on images, like the explosion of Andy Warhol’s pop art, on flows of images stolen from consumer culture and reproduced with industrial repetition, Campbell’s Soup

cans, Brillo boxes, bottles of Coca-Cola, collages of identical images of Hollywood stars such as Marilyn Monroe, all sameness, all surface, all depthlessness.

Jameson is perhaps most well-known for his distinction between parody and pastiche. One thing that postmodernity has exploded is the subject – ego. In the age of modernity, people still believed in the subject – ego. But postmodernity has fragmented language and the subject, both have become schizoid. Jameson feels that parody and satire are only possible in the era of healthy linguistic normality. But, in the postmodern age, there is no linguistic normality. Thus, we can only produce pastiche.

The next significant map-maker of postmodernism is Jean Baudrillard who seems to suggest a kind of passive surrender to the flow of images in the postmodern media. In this regard Jim Powell says, “You are wired. The passive victim of TV, computer and advertising. You are hypnotized by the tube, by the obscene flow of images” (41).

This, according to the imagery of Postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard, is similar to society’s relationship to the world of mass media, advertising, television, newspapers, magazines. The era of mass communications invades our darkened rooms, embracing us with its cool, lunar light, penetrating into our most private recesses. We succumb to the fatal attraction, surrendering ourselves in an ecstasy of communication.

Just as Nietzsche once proclaimed the death of God, Baudrillard’s thought also declares the death of modernity, the death of the real, and the death of sex. Baudrillard undermines deep foundations of thought in disciplines such as Marxism, semiotics, political science, economics, religious studies, anthropology, literature, film and media studies, and many others. Semiotics is the structuralist study of various systems

of meaning, like myths, traffic signals, language, fashion, etc. Baudrillard's works combine a semiotic, structuralist study of culture with a neo-Marxist analysis. For instance, in his early works – *The System of Objects*, *The Society of Consumption* and *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* – Baudrillard argues, “Just as a young boy who grows among wolves becomes wolflike, people in Postmodern society, growing up in a world of objects, become more object-like” (45).

The postmodern society is based on the consumption of commodities; on buying and using things, but this consumption can never make us happy. In this regard, Christopher Butler, in his book *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*, comments:

For many postmodernists, we live in a society of image, primarily concerned with the production and consumption of mere ‘simulacra’. Information, by now, is just something that we buy. And perhaps the main thing that we buy, in a knowledge dominated technologically driven society. (112)

During the 1970s and 1980s, Baudrillard stopped emphasizing his Marxist leanings and was heralded as the most advanced theorist of media and society in the postmodern era. Postmodern societies, dominated by computers and television, have moved into a new reality, which he outlines in “*The Orders of Simulacra*”. “For Baudrillard, simulacra are copies of real objects or events” (48). According to him, a first-order simulation would be where the representation of the real (say, a novel, a painting or a map) is obviously just a artificial representation. A second-order simulation, however, blurs the boundaries between reality and representation. But third-order simulation goes beyond these positions; third-order simulation produces a “hyperreal”, or the generation by models of a real without origin or reality. In a

reversal of order, in third-order simulation, the model precedes the real, but this does not mean that there is a blurring between reality and representation. Throwing more light into Baudrillard's concept of third-order simulation, Richard J. Lane says:

With first- and second- order simulation, the real exists, and we measure the success of simulation against the real. Baudrillard's worry with third-order simulation is that the model now generates what he calls "hyperreality", that is, a world without a real origin. So with third-order simulation we no longer even have the real as part of the equation. Eventually, Baudrillard thinks that hyperreality will be the dominated way of experiencing and understanding the world.

(86-87)

According to Baudrillard, we are now in the Third Order of Simulation – the era of postmodernity – the era of models. So, the presiding power in this era is the model or the code. "Digitality is its metaphysical principle ... and DNA is its prophet" (52). Just as language is governed by the "code" of grammar and our biological processes are controlled by the DNA code, our cultural life is based on a variety of codes; we have sex videos, how-to manuals, advertising, television and newspapers to provide these codes. These codes not only provide models but also continually test.

Originally, simulacrum, according to Plato, is the false copy that overshadows our experience of the essential and ideal form. But in Baudrillard's view, postmodernity has overthrown the very concept of true copy. And this has happened in stages. In the postmodern era, icons, images, copies – simulation – bear no resemblance to any reality. In fact, "the simulation, the simulacrum, the copy,

becomes the real” (56). Therefore, for Baudrillard, one of the characteristics of postmodern society is that we are all similarly entranced by surfing the simulacra. In the universe of Hollywood, Pop Art, TV, Cyberblitz, and the dazzling spectacle of the mediaspace, signs and images no longer bear any correspondence to the “real” world, but create their own: “hyperreality – an order of representation that is not the unreal, but has replaced ‘reality’ and more than real, more real than real” (58).

If we think about a place such as Disneyland, in the US, we tend to think in terms of a fantasy representation of reality, a simulation of the real taken to extremes. But Baudrillard regards Disneyland, and the country that surrounds it, as partaking of the third-order of simulation. It is to think about Disneyland as a second-order simulation, where fake castle look more real than the real, because they embody all of our childish and romantic notions of what a castle should ideally look like, and the machinery representation is so well hidden that reality and representation blur together. But the implications of Disneyland as third-order simulation are much harder to come to grips with. So, Baudrillard argues:

Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the “real” country, all of “real” America, which is Disneyland ... Disneyland is represented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact, all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and simulation. (25)

Finally, postmodernism is a critique of the aesthetics of the preceding age, but besides mere critique, postmodernism celebrates the very act of dismembering tradition. Postmodernism questions everything rationalist European philosophy held to be true, arguing that it is all contingent and that most cultural constructions have severed the function of empowering members of a dominant social group at the

expense of “Others”. Beginning in the mid 1980s, postmodernism emerged in art, architecture, music, film, literature, sociology, communications, fashion, and other fields.

Intoduction to Body

Body theory, though lately developed, occupies a significant space in postmodern discursive practice. It emerged as a postmodern subject, which therefore, establishes an innovative concept of bodies by destabilizing the conventional notion of hierarchical bodies like male/female, human/animal, subject/object etc. In this regard, body theory portrays transformative subjectivities that express and exhibit the multiple aspects of identity; the different locations from which we see and think. In postmodern paradigm, body theory assumes that elements of identity developed ‘at the margins’ must be brought to the ‘center’ by means of which, the hegemony of existing cultural styles of subjectivity can be challenged. Body theory, in this way, with deconstructive outlook, decentralizes the very notion of the ‘self’ by restructuring the subjectivity.

Body theory is associated with body politics that detaches its positionality beyond the mainstream notion of what we call ‘body’ as such. These body possibilities deny the existence of any ultimate and pre established scientific, philosophical or religious narratives and truths about body. Since postmodernism comes to mean as anything resisting or deconstructing common assumptions of culture, this oppositional spirit is also reflected in body theory which correspondingly is linked with deconstruction of subjectivity. In this regard, body theory is related with postmodern items of heterogeneity, discontinuity, displacement, and destabilization against cultural registration of body. As a postmodern approach, body theory offers an experience beyond the categories of

identity; a struggle to create new categories from the ruins of old, new ways of being a body within the cultural field. Susan Bordo opines:

There are many who do see both as a living cultural form and as a subject of scholarly theorizing as a significant carrier and register of culture. Within the scholarly arena, arguably, there has been a major paradigm shift over the last hundred years. Formally, the body was dominantly conceptualized as a fixed, unitary, primarily biological reality. Today, more and more scholars have come to regard the body as historical, plural, culturally mediated form. To the degree that such a shift has occurred to the corollary development of a ‘political’ understanding of the body. (166)

Bordo clearly exposes the differences between the perspectives on the body and also shows new kind of thinking on ‘body’ that is being emerged and developed as political understanding or as a politically inscribed entity. Hence, body theory emerged as political entity on the basis of the concepts of deconstruction. Body theory through transgressive instances of body, upsets the boundaries of the ordinary human body which is attributed in social meanings by following the postmodern notion that, “boundaries can be crossed, confused, consolidated and collapsed; they can also be revised, reconceived, redesigned or replaced” (qtd in Butler 4).

The true meaning of the body has been made complicated when a cultural constitution violates the sense of subjectivity. Therefore, Gayatri Spivak also finds meanings of body so complex because it is followed by its value codings by the culture as he says, “If one really thinks about the body as such, there is no possible outline of the body as such. There are thinkings of the systematicity of the body;

there are value codings of the body” (xii). In this sense, the common idea of the body theory lies in the fact that the meaning of the body emerges from its cultural representation. The identity, subjectivity and the body are cultural constructs to be questioned and that all representation is political comprises.

Representation is the organization of the perception of actual bodily differences into comprehensibility, a comprehensibility that is always frail, coded, in other words, human. It exaggerates an already highlighted physical difference when it tends to objectify body oddities by denying them any opportunity for subjectivity or agency and this figure of otherness emerges from positioning, interpreting and conferring meaning upon bodies. In this regard, Rosemarie Garland Thompson states:

Representation is a cultural interpretation of physical transformation or configuration and a comparison of bodies that structures social relations and institutions. It is the attribution of corporeal deviance – not so much a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do. Representation yields cultural identities and categories. In another word it relies upon cultural assumptions to fill in missing details. (10-11)

In the course of representation, the social processes and discourses constitute physical and cultural otherness and figures of otherness are highly marked in power relations. The otherness i.e. strange body varieties are marginalized no longer sustaining its cultural visibility. Cultural representation is the constructed identity among social relations which is outline by the accepted hierarchies of embodiment – valued and devalued. And the corporeal departures like metamorphosed body from

dominant expectations go interpreted and punished and the physical conformities with all physiological facts are always rewarded by cultural stereotypes.

Michael Foucault holds that bodies themselves are constituted within the specific nexus of culture or discourse/ power regimes. He writes, “We believe in any event, that body obeys the exclusive laws of physiology, and that it escapes the influence of history, but this too is false. The body is molded by a great many distinct regimes” (380). Foucault’s concept of body is based on his definition of ‘power’ as he defines:

It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them [...] whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (92-93)

From the angle of Foucauldian notion of power, the role of human body is symbolically and materially understood. This is based on the fact that how powerful groups maintain their upper-hand over the bodies of less powerful though symbolic and material means in the nexus of politics. Foucault’s distinction between two arenas of the social construction of the modern body i.e. ‘the intelligible body’ and the ‘useful body’: ‘the representational’ and ‘the practical’ respectively are the direct locus of social control, through which culture is converted into automatic, habitual bodily activity. The ‘intelligible body’ includes scientific, philosophic and aesthetic representations of the body, norms of beauty, models of health, and so on.

These representations, however, may also be seen as legislating a set of practical rules and regulations through which the living body is trained and shaped.

The way body is constructed, it also demands a rethinking of the meaning of construction itself as Judith Butler opines, “The body which fails to submit to the law or occupies that law in a mode contrary to its dictate, thus loses its sure footing – its cultural gravity – in the symbolic and reappears in its imaginary tenuousness, its fictions direction” (139). Butler reshapes the Foucauldian notion of ‘power’ when she agrees with Foucault that ‘Body’ is recognized as a result of ‘regulatory ideal’. ‘Regulatory ideal’ for Butler is ‘Power’ to Foucault as she opines, “regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce- demarcate, circulate, differentiate- the bodies it controls” (67).

In terms of the understanding of the relationship between power and body, Foucault and Butler have similar analysis. Like Foucault, for Butler too, body is determined by power as she says “Power is that which forms, maintains, sustains, and regulates bodies at once” (34). Her definition of body in terms of power is associated with cultural construction as she further states, “Through the complex cultural exchanges among bodies in which identity itself is ever-shifting, indeed, where identity itself is constructed, disintegrated, and recirculated only within the context of a dynamic field of cultural relations” (161-162).

According to Butler, power of discourse produces/constructs subject. The subjects are formed by what Butler calls ‘exclusionary matrix’. In that matrix, one requires the simultaneous production of a domain to be a subject and who is not fit within the matrix, loses his/her subjectivity or it leads someone to be abject beings. She says, “the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection,

one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, 'inside' the subject as its own founding repudiation" (3).

To sum up, afore discussed insights from some body theories aim to deconstruct the previously existing values on the identity position or subject formation and it meant to suggest that the constructed identity is to be denied, overcome, and erased because the elevation and regulation of identity position is marked primarily by political policy in which identity comes into cultural struggle but it is repudiated and excluded from the domain of coherent subjects that is already constituted. Body theories bring the body minorities as opponents into the light of mainstream culture so as to blur culturally manifested hierarchical position which has excluded other body possibilities. The Body discourse and even a minimally reflexive consideration on the Body reveal that its position in poststructuralist and postmodernist theory is grounded in the participation of theorists in a cultural and historical moment in which the Body has come to occupy a central place in popular discourse, and in academic settings in which materiality is afforded a kind of salience that is denied the immaterial.

III. Michael Jackson: A Postmodern Icon

Michael Jackson is truly a postmodern icon if we view him through postmodern spectacle. Jackson's life, performances, songs and music videos display the traits of postmodernism. Moreover, his ever-changing body blurs the boundary between reality and fiction. So in this research, I will attempt to diagnose the postmodern characteristics like fragmentation, breaking the boundary, bringing the margin to center, blurring fact and fiction in Jackson's life, performances, body, songs and music videos.

Jackson's Life

Michael Jackson, referred to as the "King of Pop", is the most commercially successful and one of the most influential entertainers of all time. His unique contributions to music, dance, and fashion, along with a highly publicized personal life, made him a global figure in popular culture for over four decades. Despite his such a great popularity and influence all over the world, his persona life became never coherent, constant, and well-managed. Rather, if we watch closely, we find his personal life embedded with the postmodern characteristics like alienation, fragmentation, and many controversies. It becomes more obvious from his own saying:

People think they know me, but they don't. Not really. Actually, I am one of the loneliest people on this earth. I cry sometimes, because it hurts. It does. To be honest, I guess you could say that it hurts to be me. (8)

Michael Jackson had opened his eyes first on August 29, 1958, as the eighth of ten children in Gary, Indiana, an industrial suburb of Chicago, to an African American working-class family. But with bad fate, he got himself deprived of all the joys of

childhood by his strict father, Joseph Walter “Joe” Jackson. Michael never got chance to be and play with other children in the place. So he had a trouble relationship with his father. Regarding such a troubles relationship between them, J. Randy Taraborrelli states in his book:

Today, Michael Jackson often speaks about the abuse he suffered at the hand of his father. When he gave his controversial 2003 interview to Martin Bashir, quick tears came to his eyes when remembered the way his father treated him. ‘I was bad’, he said of the beatings. ‘Real bad’. Watching Michael as he took himself back to the days in the Gary when his father hit him was truely painful. Clearly, all these years later, he is still traumatized by the part of his childhood. (20)

Michael was physically and emotionally abused during incessant rehearsals, with whippings, and name-calling, though he admitted his father’s strict discipline played a large role in his success. In an altercation, infuriated Joseph grabbed Mihael and, according to Marlon, held him upside down by one leg, and pummeled him over and over again with his hand, hitting him on his back and buttocks. “Soon, Michael was crying and screaming so loudly it seemed as if he was trying to summon the entire neighborhood to his aid” (21).

Joseph would also grab his sons and push them with a great force against the wall. One night when Michael was asleep, climbed into his room through the bedroom window, wearing a fright mask and screamed in hopes to scare him. He said he wanted to teach the children not to leave the window open when they went to asleep. For years afterward, Michael said he suffered nightmares about being

kidnapped from his bedroom. Joseph also acknowledged in 2003 that he regularly whipped Michael as a child.

Michael first spoke openly about his childhood abuse in an interview with Oprah Winfrey broadcast on February 10, 1993 live from around the world. He admitted that he had often cried from loneliness and would sometimes even vomit when he saw his father. Michael's father was also said to have regularly made fun of Michael's physical appearance, and called him "fat nose" in public on multiple occasions. In fact, Michael Jackson's deep dissatisfaction with his appearance, his nightmares, and chronic sleep problems, his tendency to remain hyper-complaint especially with his father, and to remain childlike through his adult life are in many ways consistent with the effects of this chronic maltreatment he endured as a young child.

Michael's personal relationships and life generated controversy for years. His changing appearance was noticed from the late 1970s onwards. His skin had been a medium-brown color for the entire duration of his youth, but starting in the mid 1980s, it gradually grew paler. The change gained widespread media coverage, including rumors that he was bleaching his skin. According to J. Randy Taraborrelli's biography, in 1986, Jackson was diagnosed with vitiligo and lupus; the vitiligo partially lightened his skin, and the lupus was in remission. Both illnesses made him sensitive to sunlight. The structure of his face had also changed. Several surgeons speculated that he had undergone multiple nasal surgeries, a forehead lift, thinned lips, and cheekbone surgery.

Michael lost weight in the early 1980s because of a change in diet and desire for "a dancer's body". Witnesses reported that he was often dizzy and speculated that he was suffering from anorexia nervosa; periods of weight loss would become a

recurring problem later in life. Some medical professionals have further speculated that he was suffering from body dimorphic disorder, a psychological condition whereby the sufferer dislikes his appearance and has no concept of how he is viewed by others. Jackson claimed that he had only two rhinoplasties and no other surgery on his face, although at one point he mentioned having a dimple created in his chin.

In 1986, the tabloids ran a story claiming that Jackson slept in a hyperbaric oxygen chamber to slow the aging process; he was pictured lying down in a glass box. Although the claim was untrue, Jackson had disseminated the fabricated story himself. When Jackson bought a chimpanzee called Bubbles from a laboratory, it was reported as an example of increasing detachment from reality. It was reported that Jackson had offered to buy the bones of Joseph Merrick and although untrue, Jackson did not deny the story. Although, initially he saw these stories as publicity, he stopped leaking untruths to the press as they became sensational, so the media began making up their own stories.

These reports became embedded in the public consciousness, inspiring the nickname “Wacko Jacko”, which Jackson came to despise. Responding to the gossip, Jackson remarked to a reporter:

Why not just tell people I’m an alien from Mars. Tell them I eat live chickens and do a voodoo dance at midnight. They will believe anything you say, because you’re a reporter. But if I, Michael Jackson, were to say, “I’m an alien from Mars and eat live chickens and do a voodoo dance at midnight”, people would say, “Oh, man, that Michael Jackson is nuts. He’s cracked up. You can’t believe a single word that comes out of his mouth.” (61)

Similarly, Jackson's multiple and instable marriages portrays the postmodern civilization of American society. He married twice but both marriages could not last for life long period. Jackson married the singer and song-writer Lisa Marie Presley, the daughter of Elvis Presley, on May 26,1994. They had first met in 1975. They stayed in contact everyday over the telephone. As the child molestation accusations became public, Jackson became dependent on Presley for emotional support; she was concerned about his faltering health and addiction to drugs. The marriage was in Presley's words, "a married couple's life ... that was sexually active" (567). Moreover, Michael's soul purpose of marriage was to get children with Presley, which she always denied. According to J. Randy Taraborrelli, "A major problem for them in their marriage was that Michael insisted that he still be free to go on vacations with young male friends, even though he was now a married man" (566).

But Presley was against of it. She felt that any public display with youngsters, and especially with boys, would only serve to spark more rumor and innuendo about him and, extension, her. However, Michael was not compromising in nature. When the two fought about the ongoing presence of youngsters in his life, he laid down the law: "he was going to do what he wanted to do and, if Lisa loved him, she would have to accept his choices" (566). Lisa could not understand hoe Michael could disregard her feelings. Michael became so selfish man in her eyes. At that time, the tabloid media speculated the wedding was a play to prop up Jackson's public image. Due to such towering misunderstanding and disagreement between Michael and Lisa, they divorced in less than two years of their marriage, remaining friendly.

Jackson did his second marriage with a dermatology nurse Deborah Jeanne Rowe on November 14, 1996. She gave birth to Michael's first two children; a son named Michael Joseph Jr., and a daughter, Paris-Michael Katherine. Rowe and Jackson first met in the mid 1980s, when Jackson was diagnosed with vitiligo. She spent many years treating his illness as well as providing emotional support. They built a strong friendship, and then became romantically involved. Originally, there were no plans to marry, but following Rowe's first pregnancy, Jackson's mother intervened and persuaded them to do so. The couple divorced in 1999 but remained friendly and Rowe gave full custody of the children to Jackson.

Jackson's third child, Prince Michael Jackson II (nicknamed "blanket") was born in 2002. The mother's identity is unknown, but Jackson has said the child was the result of artificial insemination from a surrogate mother and his own sperm cells. In November of 2000, Jackson brought his newborn son onto the balcony of his room at the Hotel Adoln in Berlin, as fans stood below, holding in his right arm, with a cloth loosely draped over the baby's face. The baby was briefly extended over a railing, four stories above ground level, causing widespread criticism in the media. Jackson later apologized for the incident, calling it "a terrible mistake".

Jackson's songs

The song "They don't really care about us" is one of the hit numbers from Jackson's History album. This song represents the voice of Black American people who were and are dominated and marginalized by the white people. Here, "they" refers to the white people and "us" refers to the Black Americans. The song implies that the white government really ignores black people and their problems. The whites do not take seriously to the pain, sufferings, and crying of the black people.

Skin head, dead head

Everybody gone bad
 Situation, aggravation
 Everybody allegation
 In the suit, on the news
 Everybody dog food
 Bang Bang, shot dead
 Everybody's gone mad

These are the first lines of the song, which suggest that black people are accused without any evidence, and they are shot dead. Such irrational and animalistic actions of the whites against the blacks have made the situation worse. Not only these, they have also destroyed the harmonious and beautiful family life of the black people. Blacks have become the victim of police brutality too. They are tired being the victim of hatred and injustice. The whites have raped them of their pride. They are chained, deprived of liberty. So the black people want to be free from the suppression, oppression, and repression of the whites. The following lines of the song speak the black voice more bluntly.

Tell me what has become of my life
 I have a wife and two children who love me
 I am the victim of police brutality, now
 I am tired being the victim of hate
 You are raping me of my pride
 Oh, for God's sake
 I look to heaven to fulfill its prophecy
 Set me free

The white government is not giving the chance to enjoy their rights which were promised by the proclamation. The proclamation declared to give the black people full freedom, but the white government has not applied it in practice yet. So black people are being the victim of shame. They are discriminated as a lower class with bad name though the proclamation has promised of equality. However, the black Americans are hopeless. They believe that the whites can not finish them and one day, they will succeed to get their freedom.

In this way, Michael Jackson represents the marginalized voice of the whole black Americans in this song. He has contributed a lot to bring the black people in the center through this song. Apart from this, Jackson has used his own black music which was in margin. But singing this song, he made black music popular among the white audiences too. So we can regard this song as a postmodern song.

The song “Scream” is a duet song. Michael’s own younger sister Janet Jackson has given female vocal in this song. This song also supports Michael Jackson to make him a postmodern icon because in it, he has shown the media’s misrepresentations of the marginalized black people, in the presence of power influence of the white governance. Moreover, this song implies that the whole system of the white people are sucking the life of black people, and which make them scream.

Tired of injustice

Tired of the schemes

The lies are disgusting

So what does it mean?

Kicking me down

I got to get up

As jacked as it sounds

The whole system sucks

The black people have become the victim of inequality. Justice is only for whites, not for blacks. Blacks have been tortured by the plots of whites. They make different schemes to get success over the black people. The black people try to get up, but each and every system sucks and kicks them down.

I've got to get stronger

And I won't give up the fight

Though black people are tired of injustice, schemes, lies, pressuring, they have not found them weaker. Instead, they have awakened being stronger and more determined to fight for their rights. They will keep struggling for gaining their rights until the blood runs in their nerves.

You keep changing the rules

While I keep playing the game

I can't take it much longer

I think I might go insane.

The above lines of the song suggest that white people are extremely selfish, cruel and fraud. They keep on changing the rules and regulations or laws of the society only for their own convenience, and make the black people act accordingly. In other words, the white people want to make all black people play like a puppet in their hand. The lines further suggest that now the black people can not bear the whites' inhuman behaviors and injustice. Their very self-centered activities have deeply affected the mind of black people and have left them to be insane.

“Oh my god, can't believe what I saw

As I turned on the TV this evening
 I was disgusted by all the injustice
 All the injustice”
 (news man)
 “a man has been brutally beaten
 to death by police after being wrongly
 identified as a Robbery suspect. The man
 was an 18 year old black male...”

This extract of this song implies the twisted representations of media and injustice over the black innocent people. Under the power influence of white people, medias like TV, radio are misrepresenting the black people twisting the news knowingly. Through medias, white people want to prove that their evil acts are right and the black people are always condemnable. Here, the eighteen-year-old black male represents the all black people who are wrongly identified as Robbery or illegal work suspect and have become the victim of police brutality.

In such a way, Jackson speaks the suppressed or marginalized voice of the African Americans in this song. He has used this song as a powerful means of protest against the center or white people and their governance. Here, Jackson has challenged the whites' injustice, inequality, lies, plots, and he has inspired all marginalized black people not to give up to fight for rights. Because of such characteristics of this song, it has made Michael Jackson a postmodern icon.

Environmental crisis is one of the major issues of this postmodern era. Due to irresponsible and irrational activities of human beings, the ecosystem of the earth is imbalanced and as a result, mankind along with all living creatures have become

the victim of inevitable disasters. So Michael Jackson's earth song has played an inexplicable role to bring environmental awareness in the people of this time.

What about sunrise

What about rain

What about all the things

That you said we were to gain

What about killing fields

Is there a time

What about all the things

That you said was yours and mine...

Did you ever stop to notice

All the bloods we've shed before

Did you ever stop to notice

The crying Earth the weeping shores

Deforestation, illegal fishing and hunting wild animals, carbon-mixed smoke released from industry and factories are the major causes for spoiling the environment. Moreover, wars have made this situation more complex. Because of the wars, innocent children have become the pray of death, and beautiful worlds of many young men and women have been destroyed. People are dying due to starvation resulted from draught. Whales are crying, elephants are dying, and the nature is being destroyed.

Michael Jackson truly depicts the environmental problems and its bad effects on human beings and all other creatures. Through this song, he appeals all human kinds to be aware of the relation between their evil acts and other creatures in the earth. To say more, this song advocates that not only man, but all the

creatures like whale, elephant, etc. are equally important in the ecosystem of this earth. And, in this postmodern era, Jackson's earth song has definitely done something more to bring improvements in the deteriorating environment, making people aware of it.

Jackson's Music Videos and Performance

With magical stage performances and music videos, Michael Jackson popularized a number of physically complicated dance techniques, such as the robot and the moonwalk. His distinctive musical sound, vocal style, and choreography, is credited with stretching across and breaking down cultural, racial, economic, generational and global barriers that have inspired countless pop, rock, R&B, and hip hop artists. He was also notable philanthropist and humanitarian who donated and raised over three hundred million dollars through support of thirty-nine charities and his own Heal the World Foundation.

Time described Jackson's influence at that point as:

Star of records, radio, rock, and video. A one-man rescue team for the music business. A songwriter who sets the beat for a decade. A dancer with the fanciest feet on the street. A singer who cuts across all boundaries of taste and style and color too. (36)

The New York Time wrote that, "in the world of pop music, there is Michael Jackson and there is everybody else" (38). The moonwalk that he made famous is an apt metaphor for his dance style. As a technician, he is great illusionist, a genuine mime. His ability to keep one leg straight as he glides while the other bends and seems to walk with perfect timing. Ian Inglis, an author of *Performance and Popular Music: History, Place and Time*, noted Jackson had created a pivotal turning point in the history of popular music. As he states it:

His performance marked the shift of emphasis from musical performance to visual presentation. In stark contrast to the other, live performances of Motown 25, Jackson performed to a pre-recorded soundtrack, lip-syncing to his multi-layered pre-recorded voice, thus, indicating that the visual reenactment of music video imagery had become an integral, and perhaps dominant part of live performances.

(41)

From this performance emerged the origin of music videos as the primary source through which artists promote popular music. Michael Jackson transformed the music video into an art form and promotional tool through complex story lines, dance routines, special effects and famous cameo appearances; simultaneously breaking down racial barriers. Jackson also conceptualized many of the darker, bleak themes in his filmography. Sony Music boss Tommy Mottola comments referring to the Jackson's contribution in the field of music videos:

There was nobody before Michael Jackson, and there will never be anybody after Michael Jackson, that can do for video what he did. It put the MTV culture into the forefront... He totally defined the video age. (33)

Before *Thriller*, Jackson struggled to receive coverage on MTV, allegedly because he was African American. Pressure from CBS Records persuaded MTV to start showing "Billie Jean" and later "Beat It", leading to a lengthy partnership with Jackson, also helping other black music artists gain recognition. MTV employees deny any racism in their coverage, or pressure to change their stance. MTV maintains that they played rock music, regardless of race. The popularity of his

videos on MTV helped to put the relatively young channel “on the map”, MTV’s focus shifted in favor of pop and R & B.

Michael Jackson’s performance on Motown, forever changed the scope of live stage show. He created an era in which artist re-creates the spectacle of music video imagery on stage. Short films like *Thriller* largely remained unique to Jackson, while the group dance sequence in “Beat It” has frequently been imitated. The choreography in *Thriller* has become a part of global pop culture, replicated everywhere from Indian films to prisons in the Philippines. The *Thriller* short film marked an increasing scale for music videos, and has been named the most successful music video ever by the Guinness World Records.

Jackson seems innovative and extremely experimental in his creation of music videos. In the nineteen-minute music video for “Bad”, Jackson began using sexual imagery and choreography not previously seen in his work. He occasionally grabbed or touched his chest, torso, and crotch. For “Smooth Criminal”, Jackson experimented with an innovative “anti-gravity” lean in his performances. Similarly, “Black or White” was accompanied by a controversial music video, which, on November 14, 1991, simultaneously premiered in twenty-seven countries with an estimated audience of five hundred million people, the largest viewing ever for a music video. It featured scenes construed as having a sexual nature as well as depictions of violence. The offending scenes in the final half of the fourteen-minute version were edited out to prevent the video from being banned, and Jackson apologized.

“Remember the Time” was an elaborate production, and became one of his longest videos at over nine minutes. Set in ancient Egypt, it featured groundbreaking visual effects and appearances, along with complex dance routine.

The video for “In the Closet” was Jackson’s most sexually provocative piece. It featured supermodel Naomi Campbell in a courtship dance with Jackson. The video was banned in South Africa because of its imagery.

“Earth Song” was accompanied by an expensive and well-received music video. The video had an environmental theme, showing images of animal cruelty, deforestation, pollution, and war. Using special effects, time is reversed so that life returns, war ends, and the forests re-grow. Regarding this Earth Song video, Sahil Subedi, a music critic, writes:

The Earth Song music video shows the felling of Amazon forest trees, a war-torn family in a shattered town, a raging wind, and suffering of people... Unknowingly, it had evoked a feeling of planetary harmony at a time when the initial jolts of major global warming and natural calamities were starting to take their toll on Planet Earth at exponential rates. (11)

There are war-torn villages and cities in real life. The Amazon forests are under attack from commercial giants, and species are endangered by mass killing and poaching. These facts, along with the impact of the melting polar icecaps, go unnoticed to a large portion of human societies on the planet with people simply struggling for food and safe shelters in countries ravaged by stupid politicians and greedy business people.

The Earth Song music video ends with fallen trees suddenly reversing and standing in their original form. War tanks and soldiers suddenly exit the frames, and a family finds their son alive again as the video shows a bullet going back to the barrel of a gun.

Jackson's Body and His Trials

Michael Jackson's ever-changing body and his trial hold a mirror to modern western civilization and its blurring of fact and fiction. Jackson's body is a postmodern body because it deconstructs the traditional notion of body, that is fixed and culturally constructed. Jackson's original root is Black American, but through multiple plastic surgeries, he has made his body white. So here, Michael Jackson blurs the culturally constructed notion of body and makes people confused with his original root. To say more, he has surpassed the traditional boundary of black and white. In this regard, Terry Eagleton, professor of cultural theory at Manchester University, comments:

Jackson's freakish body represents the struggle of fantasy against reality, the pyrrhic victory of culture over biology. Quite a few young people are not even aware that he is black. If postmodern theory won't acknowledge that there is any such thing as raw nature, neither will this decaying infant. It is hardly surprising that he has expressed a wish to live forever, given that death is the only victory of nature over culture. (29)

It seems that Michael Jackson, changing his body black to white, has overcome the nature or biology. In other words, his fantasies have got victory over reality. Again, relating postmodernism to Michael's plastic surgeons, Terry Eagleton argues:

Like Jackson's cosmetic surgeons, postmodernism believes in the infinite plasticity of the material world. Reality, like Jackson's over-chiseled nose, is just meaningless matter for you to carve as you chose. Just as Jackson has bleached his skin, so postmodernism bleaches the world of inherent meaning. (29)

What it means is that there is nothing to stop us creating whatever our fancy; but for the same reason our creations are bound to be drained of value. For what is the point of imposing our will on a meaningless reality? The individual is now a self-fashioning creature, whose supreme achievement is to treat himself as a work of art. Michael Jackson's trial is sometimes loosely called postmodern, meaning that it is media spectacular thronged with character who are only doubtfully real. But, he is also postmodern in a more interesting sense. So Terry Eagleton says:

Courtrooms, like novels, blur the distinction between fact and fiction. They are self-enclosed spheres in which what matters is not so much what actually took place in the real world, but now it gets presented to the jury. The jury judge not on the facts, but between rival versions of them. (30)

Since postmodernists believe that there are no facts in any case, just interpretations, law courts nearly exemplify their view of the world. Another thing which blurs the distinction between fact and fiction is Michael Jackson himself. There is a double unreality about staging the fiction of a criminal trial around a figure who has been assembled by cosmetic surgeons.

Postmodern culture rejects the charge that it is superficial. Because we can only have surfaces if we also have depths to contrast them with. Nowadays, appearance and reality are one, so that what we see is what we get. But if reality seems to have dwindled to an image of itself, we are all the more sorely tempted to peer behind it. This is the case with Jackson's Neverland. It is really the kitschy, two-dimensional paradise it appears to be, or there is some sinisterly unspeakable truth lurking beneath it. It is a spectacle or a screen.

If courtrooms are quintessentially postmodern, it is because they lay bare relations between truth and power, which for postmodernism come to much the same thing. Truth for them, as for the ancient Sophists, is really a question of who can practice the most persuasive rhetoric. In front of the jury, he with the smoothest tongue is likely to triumph. On this view, all truth is partisan: the judge's summing up is simply an interpretation of interpretations, and Michael Jackson's trial is also not more than this.

IV. Conclusion

Michael Jackson is a legend, the King of Pop, Moonwalker, and more than this he is a postmodern icon, not only a black American icon. He started to touch the hearts and minds of people ever since he was eleven years old. His voice with his songs and dance made him an outstanding performer. His innocence and charm quickly excelled him into a deserving and loving megastar. From North America to South America, Australia to Europe and countless countries along the way, Michael traveled the globe for more than three decades and did three world tours earning him the status of entertainment ambassador. He is the one who did not see any borders and conflicts or divisions, only human beings.

Michael's life is a postmodern life. We find alienation, fragmentation, and controversies in his life. He suffered a lot from the sense of alienation during his stay in this world. He admitted himself that he was one of the loneliest persons in this globe despite the fact that he had millions of die-heart fans around the world. During his childhood, he was made alienated from his friends by his strict and cruel father. Unlike his brothers, he had a trouble relationship with his father, which represents the father-son relationship in postmodern western civilization. Michael's married life was not a successful one. It was fragmented. He married twice, but both marriages ended in divorce within few years. The marriage was sexually more active than pure love, and the second marriage was just to quench Michael's thirst to have his own babies. So, Michael's marriages were image-oriented. Controversies never left Michael. Both his life and even death are plunged into the ocean of controversies.

Michael's songs like "Black or White", "Scream", "They don't care about us", and "Earth Song", etc. are the typical postmodern songs. The song "Black or White" deals with the theme that we are only human beings, neither black nor white, we are

all equal. This song significantly transcends all the racial, generational, economic, and geographical boundaries. Similarly, next songs “Scream” and “They don’t care about us” represent the voice of black Americans who were exploited, dominated, suppressed, ignored, tortured and marginalized by the white Americans from years long. Deteriorating environment and crisis in ecosystem are the major issues of postmodern time, and these issues are well addressed in the “Earth Song”. Michael Jackson, through this song, has given incredible contribution to make people aware enough of the deteriorating world environment.

Michael Jackson’s magical performance skill and music videos produced applying the latest digital technologies have blurred the fact and fiction. He introduced very innovative dance steps like moonwalk, anti-gravity lean in the field performance and dance. He totally defined the video age and made it inseparable part of the song. He brought revolution in music and music videos. Jackson also made black music and culture popular among the white audiences and all over the world as well through his extraordinary songs and music videos.

In the beginning, MTV used to deny any space for the black artists. But when MTV broadcasted Jackson’s “Thriller” music video for the first time, it earned worldwide popularity. After this, MTV began to keep its door open for other black artists too. Therefore, it can be said that Michael Jackson’s song and music videos made to their marginalized, forgotten and long ignored culture, music and songs all over the world through MTV. He was the first black artist whose music videos were broadcasted from MTV.

Michael’s ever-changing body also subverts the distinction between fact and fiction. His body, to say more, blurs the traditional notion of human body. So his body truly represents the postmodern body. He made his body changed into white from

black undergoing multiple plastic surgeries. Thus, his body has dismantled the traditional notion of body which is static, natural and culturally constructed. His ever-changing body had confused of his root or origin.

Like Jackson's cosmetic surgeons, postmodernism believes in the infinite plasticity of the material world. Reality, like Jackson's over-chiseled nose, is just meaningless matter to carve as one chooses. Just as Jackson has bleached his skin, so postmodernism bleaches the world of inherent meaning. Jackson's trial is also postmodern in more interesting sense. Because courtrooms, like novels, blur the distinction between fact and fiction. They are self-enclosed spheres in which what matters is not so much what actually took place in the real world, but how it gets present to the jury. The jury judge not on the facts, but between rival versions of them. Since postmodernists believe that there are no facts in any case, just interpretations, law courts nearly exemplify their view of the world.

It is, eventually, concluded that Michael Jackson is not merely the "King of Pop", but he is also a postmodern icon who represents the western civilization of this postmodern era. His life, performance, songs, music videos are entangled with the traits of postmodernism. Moreover, Jackson's ever-changing body and his trial blur the distinction between fact and fiction. That is why, on the basis of that aforementioned deep analysis and abound evidences, it is asserted that Michael Jackson is a postmodern icon.

Works Cited

- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulations*. Trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Bordo, Susan. "Postmodern Subjects, Postmodern Bodies." *Feminist Studies* 18.1 (Spring 1992): 159-75.
- Butler, Christopher. *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York: Routledge, 1993. 3-162.
- Eagleton, Terry. "The Ultimate Postmodern Spectacle." *The Guardian* (May 2005): 28-30.
- Foucault, Michael. *The History of Sexuality*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990.
- Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." *Postmodern Culture*. Hal Foster, Ed. London and Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985.
- Lacayo, Richard. "Deformed by Surgery, Warped by Fame, The Sad End of an American Icon." *Time* (July 2009): 48-50.
- "Rest in Peace King of Pop." *The Himalayan Times* (June 2009): 8-9.
- Lane, Richard J. *Jean Baudrillard*. India: Brijbusi Art Press, 2007.
- Lyotard, Jean-Frocois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. New York: Manchester University Press, 1984.
- Mane, Sahil. "The Last of the Icons." *Times of India* (June 2009): 7-9.
- Newman, Melinda. "How 'Thriller' Changed the Music Business." *Billboard* (July 2009): 22-25.

Powel, Jim. *Postmodernism: For Beginners*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2001.

32-58.

Subedi, Salil. "An Ode to Michael Jackson." *Republica* (July 2009): 8-12.

Taraborrelli, J. Randy. *Michael Jackson: The Magic and Madness*. Rev. Ed.

London: Pan Books, 2004. 20-566.

Tarnas, Richard. *The Passion of the Western Mind*. New York: Ballantine, 1991.

Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Works Cited

- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulations*. Trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Bordo, Susan. "Postmodern Subjects, Postmodern Bodies." *Feminist Studies* 18.1 (Spring 1992): 159-75.
- Butler, Christopher. *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York: Routledge, 1993. 3-162.
- Eagleton, Terry. "The Ultimate Postmodern Spectacle." *The Guardian* (May 2005): 28-30.
- Foucault, Michael. *The History of Sexuality*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990.
- Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." *Postmodern Culture*. Hal Foster, Ed. London and Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985.
- Lacayo, Richard. "Deformed by Surgery, Warped by Fame, The Sad End of an American Icon." *Time* (July 2009): 48-50.
- "Rest in Peace King of Pop." *The Himalayan Times* (June 2009): 8-9.
- Lane, Richard J. *Jean Baudrillard*. India: Brijbusi Art Press, 2007.
- Lyotard, Jean-Frocois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. New York: Manchester University Press, 1984.
- Mane, Sahil. "The Last of the Icons." *Times of India* (June 2009): 7-9.
- Newman, Melinda. "How 'Thriller' Changed the Music Business." *Billboard* (July 2009): 22-25.

Powel, Jim. *Postmodernism: For Beginners*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2001.

32-58.

Subedi, Salil. "An Ode to Michael Jackson." *Republica* (July 2009): 8-12.

Taraborrelli, J. Randy. *Michael Jackson: The Magic and Madness*. Rev. Ed.

London: Pan Books, 2004. 20-566.

Tarnas, Richard. *The Passion of the Western Mind*. New York: Ballantine, 1991.

Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.