

I. Encroachment of Digital Technology in Helen Schulman's *This Beautiful Life*

The novel *This Beautiful Life* shows the dreadful effect of digital technology. In the novel, the researcher traces the path in which the psychological effects of obsessive longing for digitalized life style. Jake and Daisy Cavanaugh, the main character, develops obsessive bent of mind. The researcher probes into his choices, privileges and haphazard activities and their relation to the context of consumer culture and postmodernism. Similarly, it also explores several aspects of Jake's extreme fondness for crazy culture.

The causes of these two characters' psychic deviations and disintegration are traced within the postmodern context. The dual pressures exerted by the late capitalist enterprise and consumer culture lead to the degeneration and decadence of Jake's psychic integrity. By cultivating extreme attraction towards digitalized life trapped in network, Jake is actually resisting the pressures imposed on him by pervasive impact of rapid technological advancement and innovation

Judged from the normative viewpoint, both Jake and Daisy are the victims of their unrestrained involvement in the postmodern trend of imbibing the ethos and spirit of late capitalist consumer culture. The choices of Jake and Daisy's erratic deeds are the outcomes of their full-fledged exploitation of the trend to go to the excess, waste and deaccumulation. All the normative values fall apart. They appear to be pathological and nihilistic. Their choices and deeds randomly run counter to the established normative ideals of the society.

The researcher makes use of the theoretical ideas and insights of leading postmodern theorists. Arthur Kroke and David Kroke propound the notion of panic culture. The concepts like panic sex, panic body and excremental culture are useful while probing the fearful and morbid disposition of both Vaughan and Bateman.

David Kroke argues that technological society has set an avenue from which the great mythological primitivism can come out revealing the potentiality of men to experience unspeakable anarchy and terror as well as cruelty.

Due to the postmodern trend of simulating double identity in excess, Daisy and Jake fall victims to the harmful effects like narcissism, and obsession. Jake falls prey to the ongoing process of commodity fetishism. His subjectivity is commodified in the cyber world. The consumer culture and the commodification of subjectivity put extreme pressures in him. He is, as a consequence, lost between privilege and choice. The more he immerses in the cyber world, the more mundane and monotonous he feels. He wants to escape from the numbing experiences of digital culture. But he is so forced to compete with his colleagues in the corporate hubs that he can't come out as easily as he assumes. Finally he cherishes pointless fantasies.

Jake is exclusively concerned with outfit. While judging people, he directly looks at the outfits of people. Nine times out of ten, he is preoccupied with the appearance and outfit. In the same way Daisy also develops the same level of obsessive yearning. Homosexual interest, masturbatory practice and deviant passion have governed Jake's life. He is involved in the mission of seeking alternative, new sexuality in relation to the technology. The body dominated by technology and technological innovation needs different locus of sexual affinity.

Daisy's dull life has become the big hindrance. She is so mundane and monotonous that he could not help constructing fantasies in his minds. At the deepest core of his mind, fantasies arise. He simply cherishes those fantasies. When these fantasies crossed the limit, he began to embark on the sporadic spree of murdering his close friends. Jake applies one level of his experience and understanding in the

judgment of other people and things belonging to the other spheres. With the same disdainful attitude, he looks at his friends.

The ungoverned passion for cyber glamour and tendency to rupture the normal and the normative make Jake and Daisy cruel. He has murdered men and women summarily to establish contact with the day to day world of common people. He hardly remains silent about his murderous deeds. He frequently talks about butchering five men, six women, a child and various animals. The domination of human conscience by the technocracy is another cause. The lack of postmodern trend to erase the boundary between the normal and the abnormal is another cause.

In the wake of the era of postmodernism, the symmetrical and well-wrought object hardly evokes an aesthetical impact. Even if the well-shaped and well-ordered thing carries aesthetical hallmark, it hardly has significance. Jake cannot reach the peak of sexual excitement if he does sex in the usual condition. By looking at model's photo, he creates the situation in which his orgasm reaches climax. To notice "the elements of beauty and normalcy in deviant and deformed thing is the distinguishing feature of the postmodern mind. A profound question arises about Jake's growing attachment with the deformed and disordered form" (Baudrillard 34(. If his love and longing for the deviant thing is to be viewed with the modernist bias, it turns out to be a kind of catastrophic condition of the postmodern mind. If the fresh perspective of post-modernity is to be used, all of the so-called malaises of Vaughan seem to be the effects of reality.

For Jake and Daisy, the real and the illusion simply evaporate. The distinction between the right and wrong has no relevance in the structure of thinking marked by postmodernism. When the distinction between the normal and the abnormal, ideal and the real, symmetrical and the grotesque no longer exists, the grotesque

increasingly looms as the resemblance of the symmetrical and shapely. The following extract is illustrative of the intense passion of the narrator including his beloved:

Passion knows no bound. It tends to dominate the debacle of morality. Moral scruple and ethical grudge carry no conviction in postmodern conviction. Even the distorted and deviant thing turns out to be fiercely fascinating. The normal, normative and standard thing hardly arouses him. He is in a quest of new sort of aesthetics and sexuality aroused by ugly and odd things in relation to technology. The postmodern loss of the real and the normal has completely paralyzed Jake. The grotesque, crash, accident, death and disastrous end are the motivating factors that gratify his postmodern longing for the deviant and disordered. (54)

Sexual frenzy and passionate fanaticism seem in conformity with the aesthetics of the normal and the natural. Jake's quest for sexuality in relation with technological innovation is abnormal and anomalous, since it does not match the criterion of the existing heterosexual normativity. His extreme fondness of ugliness, deformity and technological perversion offers unique glimpse of transformed sexuality in the age of postmodernism. The grotesque and macabre is capable of evoking unique postmodern aesthetics.

Literature Review:

Helen Schulman is an American writer. She is a prominent member of the new wave in e-fictions. *This Beautiful Life* is one of the widely popular works of Schulman. She tends to explore the psychological effects of digitalized conditions. Examining the historio-cultural circumstances in which the novel is written, Leigh Claire La Berge passes the following judgment concerning this novel:

This Beautiful Life pushes the lifeless world of the brat-pack commodity aesthetic to its limit with rambling descriptions of branded commodities newly rendered in deadening prose and broken by the representation of lethal violence. The novel is structured through short, interchangeable chapters that detail the habits and banalities of upper-middle class, urban consumerism, the contents of which are reflected in the titles. (273)

Leigh Claire La Berge maintains that *This Beautiful Life* incorporates some of the historical issues and elements which are hidden beneath the plethora of abstract postmodern thinking. It is less concerned with its abstract postmodern cult of going to the excess and heedlessness of normative values. It is increasingly related with the cyber narratives in fiction, autobiography, and economic journalism.

This Beautiful Life has drawn the attentions of a large number of critics.

Different critics have given different sorts of views regarding the shocking content of this novel. Seltzer Schoene has made the following observations about the novel:

What is so shocking about Schulman's novel is not so much Jake's attempt to inhabit the ultimate subject position of vulnerability. He is simply lost because these impulses, albeit psychotic, still remain within the realm of the relatable. The most shocking aspect of the novel is the superlative, entirely redundant vehemence of Jake, its boundless and unremitting atrocity. (45)

Digital mode of escape is a way of escape from the numbing pressures put on him by the stormy events that occur in the cyber hub. What he does seems to be compatible with what sorts of fantasies take room in Jake's mind.

Juliet Flower traces the relationship between human being and machine. She does not think that Schulman is against the unrestrained use of machine in handling the discomforts and troubles of life. The following lines show her view about

Schulman's *This Beautiful Life*:

Schulman is a gentle, courteous man with a soft southern American accent. Yet she had a vision of startling originality. His fiction, which explored our hidden obsessions with media, technologies, landscapes, gained him a solid international readership. Perhaps more than any other, Schulman drew attention to the new - often powerfully subversive - ways that mainstream cultures appear to be undermined by the very tools and innovations that sustain them. This ambiguity is one of the driving forces of the mythologies that emerged in his work.

(78)

Schulman's novel is located in or near climactic upheavals; even there the dominant landscapes are internal. He appeared more interested in dreams, myths, psychology, the personal and social constructions of reality, than in technology per se. In his universe such elements are all inextricably intertwined; fiction and reality are not separate.

Jennifer Philips explores lots of incompatibilities in the novel, *This Beautiful Life*. She laments that Schulman does not deliver any kind of commentary the emergence of the perverted. Philips describes how Jake happens to commit such dreadful acts. Philips's views are presented in the following lines:

This Beautiful Life is structured to be read on the explicit narrative level as the personal confession of the narrator Jay, a young, attractive psychopath. The novel traces numerous acts of violence which are

narrated in the same cool and detached tone in which Jay catalogues the objects he owns and the designer labels his companions are wearing. What ties these random acts of violence together is the fact that all of Jay's enemies are "othered" by him either because of their financial status, their ethnic background, sexual preference, age or gender. (4)

Jay is badly affected by the traces of anti-Semitism, other businessmen's show of business card, vanity of women and sexual preferences of his friends. Even the normal reaction and responses of his friends create uncontrollable and stormy feelings in Jay. He is bent upon avenging them. He seeks to other them. The only way of 'othering' them is by murdering them mercilessly and summarily.

Richard Smithson is of the opinion that Schulman's *This Beautiful Life* is characterized by the theme of the loss of optimism. The catastrophic effects of postmodern conditions have invaded the orbit of human consciousness. He argues:

The last secrets of human consciousness may emerge from that kind of work. The emergence of a different consciousness is projected in *This Beautiful Life*. There's no reason why not - after all the brain is a mass of circuitry - there's no mystery about the units that make up the brain - it's a mass of neural networks. There's absolutely no reason why the operation of this complex system of neural networks shouldn't be understood in its entirety. Now I think this will lead to manipulation of the brain in any way - so that everything from transcendental experiences to the creation of sort of ad hoc religions will be possible. I mean you will be able to run up a new religion for yourself and be completely convinced by it at the press of a switch. (53)

The manipulation of molecular biology will uncover all that needs to be known about the genetic structures in the chromosome, allowing us to manipulate the human organism in any way we wish. If they come on stream (as they seem likely to), people are on the threshold of devising systems in which the computer-simulated reality will contain more units of information than is currently provided by the optical systems of the brain.

Tarja Laine examines every postmodern text in the light of characters' exposure to panic stricken mentality. Panic body, panic mind, panic jealousy, panic sexuality and the panic sense are some of the chronic fates that have happened to the modernist characters. Laine puts Jay in the same category. Laine discloses the following view concerning the hallucinatory identity of *Jay*:

Daisy is constantly confronted with the possibility of his hallucinatory identity as every yuppie fading away. When her colleagues seem to have more elegant and stylish visiting card than she has, she suffers a panic attack. His corporeal body is brought into asynchrony with its environment as it collapses under the fancy suit: we can see sweat drops appearing on his well-groomed skin and we can hear his heartbeat speeding up. (5)

Jay overreacts to the common moment and event in a more frightening way. Being a normal being he does not know how to react to the normal thing in a normal way. Panic body and panic attack are recurrent things that have happened to him. His identity is tainted with the hallucinatory elements. Hallucination is what affects him constantly.

The most profound contradiction in Schulman's work relates to time. In flight from her memories for much of his life, he used his fiction to envision a moment in

which the passage of time was stilled. According to John Baxter, it amounts to a kind of secular mysticism, only to conclude that Schulman deployed the psychopath's reverence for the instant present. John Baxter delivers the following remarks:

Yet what he was struggling to achieve in the several genres of fiction he deployed was a reconciliation between conflicting impulses that were not his alone. From the dream-haunted landscape of the cyber world to the deadpan surrealist comedy of *Hello America*, from the experimental novels to the thrillers of his later years, it was the universally human conflict between seeking to preserve meaning in memory and the need to shake off the burden of the past that Schulman explored. (27)

Schulman's own contact with his subject seems to have been meticulous.

Demystifying literary biography can be illuminating but what Baxter gives us is something quite different. It is like a fictitious ogre constructed from irrelevant facts, scraps of gossip and random inferences. Return to the universal appeal of human relationship is subtly hinted in the novel.

Carroll Noel detects the elements of nothingness which underlies Daisy's intense hankering after the chilling sense of sadistic joy. At the cost of his usual identity, Daisy comes out on the lookout for a new kind of identity based on terror of passion. Noel says that this sort of search led by Daisy is doomed to end in illusion. Noel throws spotlight on the following aspect of Daisy's search:

The image of Daisy is merely an imaginary double construction. The chase scene, where Daisy runs aimlessly and in a hysterical state along the empty streets of New York, resembles a nightmare. Daisy's double identity simulacrum is finally falling apart. She is able to attach

meaning to his life as a yuppie, and porn star. But now he cannot find his way back anymore, because there really is nothing beyond the movie. (9)

Daisy's acquired double appearances have irrevocably replaced the substance of his self--if it ever was there in the first place. Her attempt to achieve an identity of a yuppie is thus no more than an illusion, a set-up, and an alter ego.

Ted Gioia argues that this disturbing novel, *This Beautiful Life*, is often classified as science fiction, though at first glance the label may seem unjustified. The most advanced technologies described in this book are cars and airplanes—and very conventional ones at that. Ted Gioia makes the following observation about this novel and his literary commitment:

This Beautiful Life describes a world that apparently is just like our own. Well, on second thought, maybe not. The technology in *This Beautiful Life* may be familiar, but the people can hardly be from this planet. This might be plausible, but when we find that the narrator Ballard is also fixated on the sexual potential of car crashes, the reader is doubtful. (76)

The survey of all the major works of Schulman is likely to yield the fruitful message that human emotions and feelings should change in parallel to the shifting context of technology and scientific innovation. In the new world characterized by the constant search for newness, violent forms of the real and constructed are the effects of the conflict.

Although all these critics have examined, *This Beautiful Life*, from different perspectives, none of them concentrated upon the detrimental effects of excessive digitalization and its rampant abuse. The sense of the loss of normal invites the doom

and destruction of the narrator. What is the loss of the beautiful, symmetrical and the normal is a new kind of anarchic awakening. In the postmodern condition, even the grotesque and disordered entity can generate a new aesthetical sense. The postmodern aesthetic perception brings closer to its domain the grotesque and the horrible. As a consequence, characters have to pay the heavy prices. Their mental integrity, normal psychic makeup, commitment to normative ideals of life gradually shatters due to the exploitation of postmodern cult and convention in excess.

To conduct the research, several characteristics of the postmodern studies, ranging from Baudrillard's simulation to Foucauldian sexuality, will be taken into account. The conceptions like the loss of the real and ambivalence towards realism are the key ideas related to the postmodern condition. These ideas will help to identify the postmodern condition. Lyotard's concept of "postmodern condition" lays the basis for the methodological framework. Jencks's ideas of self-reflexivity and double-coding contribute to theoretical perspective. Baudrillard's notion of simulation or relation as reflected on digital technology can be of some help. Jameson puts forward the term cognitive mapping. Cognitive mapping is the technique of identifying and analyzing the obsessive effects of the postmodern condition. Depravity, radical undesirability, obsessive and sadistic thirst are the crucial components of psychic disorder and deviation provoked by character immersion in the postmodern condition.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter deals with the introduction of the issue, the elaboration of hypothesis and departure. The second chapter is concerned with the thorough analysis of the text from the perspective of simulation and postmodern stand on cyber culture. The last chapter contains the finding of this research.

II. Detrimental Effect of Digital Technology in Helen Schulman's *This Beautiful Life*

This research concentrates on how Schulman's novel *This Beautiful Life* conducts an inquiry into the impact of technology and cyber culture. At the inception of postmodern era, it was widely believed that postmodernism will uplift the consciousness of people. People have some of the naive expectations from the architects of postmodern theory. Contrary to the expectation of people, the pervasive impact of postmodern thinking weakened psychological vigor and creative faculty of those who embraced the doctrine of postmodernism. The more influence of postmodernism increased, the more it debilitated people psychologically. To be more specific, the postmodern thinking ruined harmfully the psychological integrity and strength of people. Schulman's *This Beautiful Life* is a case in this point.

Schulman's *This Beautiful Life* explores the extent to which postmodern assumption of psychic harm. The whole novel is a narrative survey and commentary of the first-person narrator on the deviant, psychotic and abnormal longing of the character Jake. Jake is the most unique oddball, whose taste and impulse know no bound. He acts, behaves and reacts as though it is suffocating for him to live in the world of normal practice and thinking. To live a normal life with moderate expectation is to imprison oneself within the framework of normal pattern of socio-cultural life. He is exposed to digitalized culture. His normal pattern of thinking and acting are perfectly under the grip of cyber culture. To him, the dividing line between the normal and the abnormal, the normative and the constructed simply does not exist. He is of the opinion that only experience counts and others are just irrelevant.

According to Jake, the intensity of experience rather than the categorical nature of experience are of utmost importance. That sort of thinking puts him on the

path of extremity. In Jake's time, life was driven wholeheartedly by digital technology. The normal moderate culture dwindled down gradually and it gave way to techno-culture. It is obviously true that technology, and technological innovation in digital field exists to upgrade, facilitate and invigorate human beings. Technology seeks to minimize human efforts and maximize the outcome of their efforts. But in the postmodern era, all such naive illusions and expectations fell flat.

Contrary to the collective expectations and assumptions of human beings, techno-culture, let's say machine culture, colonized human bodies. In this context, it can be affirmed that Jake's body also came under the colonizing grip of digital technology and technological device. Beset by the impact of cyber culture and technological dependence, Jake had only one option to assert his individuality. The intensity of experience is instrumental in compelling Jake to break all the existing codes and conventions sporadically. Only by going to the extreme, Daisy had a chance to free his body and bodily passion. That is why, Daisy puts himself on the path of extremity. He acts as though dividing boundaries of morality and normality do not lie.

Dream and fantasy of Jake show the eerie and arcane nature of his passion. He cherishes those dreams which sharply run counter to the normal dream which a rational man dreams in the regular course of his life. Sometimes Jake cherishes violent fantasy of dying at the moment of the orgasm with Daisy. Extreme deviation and departure from the normal level of life is found in Jake's stylistic choice. He is psychologically deviated. His choices and fantasies are shocking and stunning to those who cling to the track of the normality and moderation. His only one fantasy is enough to know how intense his death-wish is. The following extract illustrates how much sadomasochistic his fantasy is:

The broken postures of his legs and arms, the bloody geometry of his face, seemed to parody the photographs of crash injuries that covered the walls of his apartment. I looked down for the last time at his huge groin, engorged with blood. Twenty yards away illuminated by the revolving lamps, the actress hovered on the arm of her chauffeur.

Vaughan had dreamed of dying at the moment of her orgasm. Two months earlier I found him on the lower deck of the airport flyover after the first rehearsal of his own death. (7)

One after the other violent and frenzied desire comes and pushes Jake to chase the postmodern game full of pitfalls and perils. Jake tries to go to any extreme to get his dream and desire fulfilled. Heedless of consequences of his actions, he imagines his own death. Not only this, he wants to give a dramatic rehearsal to his death. Since all the ideals and ethics disintegrated in the solipsistic world of Jake, fantasizing a violent event and breaking the boundary of normal life became the ritual of his life. As a result, he had to face the problem of psychological retardation. The tendency to make a rehearsal of his death can be understood as the effect of his immersion in risk society which is another name for a postmodern society.

This research is conducted from the viewpoint of postmodernism. There are plenty of postmodern concepts and insights which exemplify and justify that the doctrine of postmodernism produces the adverse effects in the thoughts and behavioral pattern of people. Of course, postmodernism has brighter sides. It has liberated human beings from the bondage of absolute dogma, restrictive pretension of universal notions and the killing sense of complacency. The postmodern conception has facilitated the wider and broader angle of observing the thoughts and activities of people.

Postmodernism is an umbrella term that is used in different ways by different speakers. Speakers invoking postmodernism are committed to exploring the complex relationships of power, knowledge, and discourse created in the struggle between social groups. Additionally, it is mixed with several other perspectives that challenge the normative and socially approved conduct. Postmodernism is an object of celebration and scorn, both in intellectual discourse and in cultural vernacular. Through repeated use and enduring controversy, it has assumed several forms, including a powerful theoretical resource, a political lightning rod and a cultural cliché. The ambiguity of this term stems partly from the enormous work that readers normally try to understand. That work involves adequately conceptualizing and engaging the phenomena of post-modernity.

The theoretical doctrine of postmodernism brought a local sense of salvation from the terror of rigid thought and practice. Yet it has darker side too. It has its own Achilles heels. The disastrous effects of postmodern thinking are unimaginable and unthinkable. The dread and danger of clinging to the tenet of postmodernism is generative of the detrimental consequences. The fundamental feature of postmodernism is that there is no dividing line between the real and its representation. What is represented is not substantially different from what exists. Moreover, the disciples of postmodernism tend to believe in the constructed or simulated reality. What comes to the domain of screen, digital screen or the sphere of representation is true. People are so inclined to believe in the nature of constructed or fabricated reality that they are almost ignorant about the fact that the real or the transcendently crucial essence exists.

Fredriech Jameson is the leading Marxist theorist who modifies and adapts the classical concept of Marxism to the new circumstance of inequalities created by late

capitalist system. He points out new ways in which the dynamics of late capitalism penetrate existing socio-political spheres. The striking aspect of his theory is that ideology has chosen both coercive and cogent ways to manipulate and maneuver consciousness of people. He views postmodernism as the stratification of capitalist system. It is not according to Jameson the dominant cultural force. It is just the alteration of the extant system so that it could pave the way for the birth of new awakening and excitement. It does hardly mark the return of history. Jameson tends to understand and explain the logic of postmodernism within the changing framework of late capitalist enterprise. Jameson's view is explicitly mentioned in the following citation:

Despite the delirium of some of its celebrants and apologists, a truly new culture could only emerge through the collective struggle to create a new social system. The constitutive impurity of all Postmodernism theory, then confirms the insight of a periodization that must be insisted on over and over again, namely, that Postmodernism is not the cultural dominant of a wholly new social order, but only the reflex and the concomitant of yet another systemic modification of capitalism itself. This return of history in the midst of the prognosis of the demise of historical telos, suggests a second feature of Postmodernism theory which requires attention. (4)

To some extent, Jameson comes to terms with Raymond Williams's notion of structure of feeling or cultural category. The newness of the postmodern trend is disbelieved by Jameson. If postmodernism corresponds to what Raymond Williams meant by his fundamental cultural category or a structure of feeling, then it can only enjoy that status by dint of profound collective self-transformation, a reworking and

rewriting of an older system. That ensures novelty and gives intellectuals and ideologues fresh and socially useful tasks.

Jake is fed up with the normal sexual relation. He embarks on the quest for the new notion of sexuality. Only in the disastrous moment of car accident, he will be thrilled with sexual ecstasy. Only the disintegrated psychology and corrupted self can choose such a path of anomaly. The following extract gives the glimpse of Jake's degrading and deviant taste:

Their tight faces and strained thighs were lit by his Polaroid flash, like startled survivors of a submarine disaster. These aspiring whores, whom Jake met in the all-night cafes and supermarkets, were the first cousins of the patients illustrated in his surgical textbooks. During his studied courtship of injured women, Jake was obsessed with the buboes of gas bacillus infections by facial injuries and genital wounds.

(8)

Jake develops fascination with injuries and wounds. He sometimes fantasizes paying courtship with women of disabled bodies. Easy sex acts and comfortable sex postures are nauseous to him. A serious question arises here as to how Jake happens to develop this kind of morbid erotic. The standard set up by the doctrine of postmodernism and Jake's immersion in the postmodern cult and concept jointly pushed him to the hazardous track of pursuing deviant pleasures of life. All these activities of Jake are enough evidences to prove his degeneration.

The loss of the real creates many hazards. The loss of the real and the normal puts the followers of postmodernism creed in risk. Once the idea that the real no longer exists is firmly rooted in the mind, people begin to act out of whim, impulse, urge, erratic emotion. As a consequence, the existing normative and established

boundaries are likely to be violated. The postmodern thinking gives birth to the tendency towards extremity, anomaly and obsessive morbidity. The loss of the normal and the normative paves the way for the anarchic indulgence.

Obsessive desire flourishes when the postmodern thinking penetrates the normative spheres of life. The idea of maintaining balance and moderation in one's impulses hardly exist since the dividing line between the normative and the anomalous ceases to demarcate. One resembles the other. Clear cut boundaries fade, paving the way for the emergence of anarchic irruption, as well as obsessive and morbid longings.

Extreme self-reflexivity is the fatal effect of unrestrained exposure to postmodern thinking. The more an individual is exposed to postmodern practices, the more he or she is tempted to think upon oneself. Much more preoccupation with one's self leads to nowhere. Self-reflexivity is no less than isolationist and self-erasing practice which ultimately puts one's life in further unprecedented conditions. Unrestrained reflection on one's self begets narcissism, delusions, and depression. Total disconnection from the external world and the subsequent arrival of malaises like split mentality are doubtless the effects of overt exposure to the dreadful doctrine of postmodernism.

As a consequence of implementing postmodern assumptions in practices, people would lose the normal framework to evaluate what they are doing and where they are heading. The followers of postmodern mentality are ignorant about the fact that there is an ironic disparity between their thoughts and deeds. The growing ironic characteristics of postmodern existence render the life entirely parodic.

Parodic and ironic sense of life is doubtless the effects of postmodern practices. The breakdown between high and low cultural forms is facilitated by the

pervasive influence of postmodernism. When people give follow on the footsteps of postmodernism, what they encounter is the culture of pandering to their violent spree and fervent passions that are invincible. The socio-cultural trend to cater to one's ego, impulse and fervent longing at the cost of normative ethics takes momentum. The more people plunge into the morass of postmodern pride and prejudice, the more they lose freedom and finally become trapped in the maelstrom of chaos and confusion.

Jake's sex-instinct is spoiled by factors which are known and unknown. Normal condition of sex-instinct and sexuality-friendly environment hardly stimulates his erotic desire. His style of being sexually thrilled and eroticized differs sharply from normal man's process of being erotic. Without judging Jake's erotic propensity, it can undoubtedly be said that his erotic passion has put on the path of impending doom and disaster. The following extract discloses this fact:

Jake unfolded for me all his obsessions with the mysterious eroticism of wounds. The perverse logic of blood-soaked instrument panels, seat-belts smeared with excrement, sun-visors lined with brain tissue. For Jake each crashed car set off a tremor of excitement, in the complex geometries of a dented fender, in the unexpected variations of crushed radiator grilles, in the grotesque overhang of an instrument panel forced on to a driver's crotch as if in some calibrated act of machine fellatio. The intimate time and space of a single human being had been fossilized forever in this web of chromium knives and frosted glass.

(10)

Jake arrived at the state of deriving thrilling sense of sexual ecstasy. This sort of fascination enables the present researcher to contend that Jake's psychological make-up is hovering on the verge of virtual disintegration. In the absence of underlying

thread of normative ideals and saving graces, he is fully unable to bridle his deviant hyper-aesthetics and distorted search for sexual virility.

Jean Baudrillard is the major proponent of postmodernism. His notion of simulation is key to describing the psychological effects of undue alliance with the postmodern passion. The postmodern trend sets the stage for simulation. To simulate is more than to pretend to have what one does not have. Of course, pretension is also one of the core components of postmodern simulation. But simulation is more than pretending to have what one does not have. In the simulated state there is the danger of the loss of the real. The difference between the real object and imaginary object snaps.

The growing resemblance between the real and the imaginary puts the simulator in jeopardy. The simulator begins to mistake the imaginary as the real. He or she is totally detached from the real. The imaginary begins to perform as the real. The imaginary no longer serves as the substitute of the real but it works as the real. When the object concocted by the mind, by the fantasy and delusion work as the real, the simulator falls into the unthinkable and unimaginable situation. When the place of the real is taken by the imaginary, the postmodern dreamer is lost in the fictitious world of his fantasy. He or she begins to judge each and every thing from his or her simulated world that is quite detached from the real world. Moreover, they become so detached from the real and normal that they are simply under the illusion whether the real exists or not.

There are several factors which compel and tempt citizens to simulate. In the late capitalist-consumer society, the excessive domination of technology and massive dependence on technology make daily lives of people entirely drab and dreary. Fed up with the mundane and monotonous lives, the postmodern consumers isolate

themselves from the drab and arid world. They prefer to remain in the world of simulated reality. Confined nostalgically in the simulated world, consumers sometimes try to involve in the murderous acts, dreadful fantasies and formidable delusions. The moment the connection between the real and the imaginary snaps, the simulator's sufferings start.

Baudrillard is of the view that the identifying feature of postmodern world is its dependence on technology. Technology has largely structured the postmodern world. The postmodern world is defined in terms of its heavy reliance upon technology. The narrative of technological progress contains elements which eulogize the possibility of the collective liberation of mankind from their discomforts through the medium of technological advancement. As a postmodern theorist, Baudrillard dwells upon the darker sides of technological dependence. Baudrillard shows the contexts in which total dependence upon technology turns out to be counterproductive. By manufacturing and distributing consumer objects in abundance, the late capitalist industries try to glut the market and compel consumers to buy goods and commodities.

In the name of innovation and technological breakthrough, the outmoded medicines and military technology are sent by the developed countries to the developing countries. Postmodern subject experiences technology as a part of life. Lyotard highlights postmodern narrative of technology as the redeemer of mankind from their discomforts and hardships. On the contrary, there are some eco-protesters who simply take the aggressive march of technological innovation as the foreboding of apocalypse.

As the postmodern theorist, Baudrillard explores the impact of technology in lives of postmodern subjects. The pervasive impact of technology is found in the trend

towards simulation. Baudrillard talks about three levels of simulation. Richard J. Lane illustrates Baudrillard's notion of simulation which takes place at three levels. Lane's clarification runs as follows:

Baudrillard argues that there are three levels of simulation, where the first level is an obvious copy of reality and the second level is a copy so good that it blurs the boundaries between reality and representation. The third level is one which produces a reality of its own without being based upon any particular bit of the real world. The best example is probably virtual reality, which is a world generated by computer languages or code. Virtual reality is thus a world generated by mathematical models which are abstract entities. It is this third level of simulation, where the model comes before the constructed, that Baudrillard calls the hyper-real. (30)

Simulation around which the modern digital technology moves undergoes three successive stages. In the first stage, the simulated object is just a copy only. The second phase is that level of copy which blurs the boundaries between reality and representation. The second stage of simulation too is productive of detrimental consequences. If the distinction between reality and representation does not exist, how can healthy and creative acts become transparently different from neurotic and obsessive one? In the third phase of simulation, the simulated object begins to serve itself as the real. It leaves no space for the real. In the third stage of simulation, the simulated object appears to be the powerful reminder of the real. It tends to be as sovereign as the real. The power of simulation has had the detrimental effect in the psyche of people at large. The propensity towards extremity and obsessive yearning takes root when the third stage of simulation arrives at the mature state.

Excessive dependence on sexuality creates perversity. Jake comes to perceive this sort of reality. That is what the narrator of this novel says “For Jake these wounds were the keys to a new sexuality born from a perverse technology. The images of these wounds hung in the gallery of his mind like exhibits in the museum” (11). Under the oppressive influence of technology life has begun to cower. The forces of technology and cyber intimacy are so intimidating that human bodies are completely penetrated by it. Even the postmodern philosophy of extremity has weakened human life. The life of Jake conforms to these problems. He is fully subdued and overpowered by the confining and intimidating forces of technology. The only way to come out of the formidable forces of technology is to concoct violent fantasies. Such a mental tendency to visualize goads him to hallucinate. The following excerpt reveals important facts concerning Jake’s hallucinatory proclivity:

Jake visualized the specialized crashes of escaping criminals, of off-duty hotel receptionists trapped between their lovers whom they were masturbating. He thought of the romantic encounter of honeymoon couples, seated together after their impacts with the rear suspension units of runaway sugar-tankers. He thought of the withdrawal of digital stylists, the most abstract of all possible deaths. (11)

Jake visualizes those events and situations which seldom exist in real life. Sometimes he simulates an event which could take him closer to what his perverted and deviant faculty of taste demands. Visualizing the encounter of honeymoon couples and masturbatory practice of broken lovers is one way to gratify his degraded passion for oddity and deformity. The process of simulation is also engaged in this activity.

Lyotard defines postmodernism in a somewhat different way. His version of postmodernism differs substantially from other postmodernists. To Lyotard,

postmodernism is the collapse of grand narrative. Science as a grand narrative appeared to be the means of domination. In his famous book *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard presents postmodernism as the stepping stone for modernism. Lyotard portrays scientific and technological innovation as a form of domination. Consumers are simply cheated and exploited by the ongoing advancement and innovation in science and technology. This idea of Lyotard is further explained in the following extract:

The Postmodern Condition resembles the bulk of postmodernist writing. One could say that, often in spite of itself, much postmodernism remains pre-political. Its political credentials –its implication for the existing distribution and legitimacy of power crystallized in state and non-state institutions-remain wholly ambiguous. Postmodernism is said to involve the practice of resistance; challenging master narratives with the discourse of others; questioning rather than exploiting cultural codes; opening closed systems to the heterogeneity of texts. (89)

In the era of postmodernism, science has sought to seek legitimacy via narrative. To Lyotard, science appears as a separate sphere that is no less than grand narrative. On the one hand, science achieves power and legitimacy through narrative. When scientific discourses and claims tend to take the form of grand narrative, those who pursue science begin to feel adversely affected by it. Rather than valorizing science as another grand narrative, it would be better to let it function as language game. The concept of language game is crucial in understanding Lyotard's notion of postmodernism.

The narrator is the close friend of Jake. He too is involved in the postmodern spree like his friend Jake. But he is aware of the pros and cons of choosing a postmodern mode of existence. If Jake is the typical victim of postmodern condition, the narrator is the perspective from which Jake has viewed Daisy's life. To borrow the narrator's viewpoint and terms, it won't be wrong to say that Jake's present life is beset with nascent symptoms of insanity, schizophrenia and depressive silence as well as sporadic reaction.

The deviant disciples of postmodern trend like Jake and the dead person are involved in the task of stylizing violence. In no way violence can be stylized. Jake has cultivated desire to evaluate things from their inherent sexual possibilities. He has had unbounded obsession with sexual possibilities of things that surround him. Desire arose from his internalized post-modern thought. For its instant and instantaneous gratification, desire seeks unnatural, amoral, abnormal and eccentric ways. The unnatural and unapproved ways entails repeated efforts and endeavor. In these anarchic pursuits, desire takes the form of obsession. In the extreme state of unbounded obsession, Jake begins to judge and perceive things in terms of their sexual possibilities. His angle of understanding is sexualized. Jake's attempt to create the sexual possibilities of everything is an index to the detrimental effect of post-modern condition. The following lines are illustrative of the probable harm which can accrue to Jake from his tendency to look at things in terms of their sexual possibilities:

Jake imagined the ward filled with convalescing air-disaster victims, each of their minds a brothel of images. The crash between our two cars was a model of some ultimate and yet undreamt sexual union. The injuries of still-to-be-admitted patients beckoned to me, an immense

encyclopedia of accessible dreams. Obsession is a natural outcome of an individual's intense struggle for accomplishing an intended object.

(38)

Jake and Catherine have come up with peculiar obsession. They are obsessed with exploring the sexual possibilities of everything. It is difficult to know the sexual possibilities of everything. Jake's defunct and distorted sex instinct put him on the quest for the sexual possibilities of everything. It can mean that mainstream heterosexual normativity is suffocating for him.

As Smith writes, "Postmodernism is not incredulity toward narrative or myth; on the contrary, it unveils that all knowledge is grounded in such." (Smith, 2005 cited in Robinson, 2005, Web Blog). Lyotard goes on to make clear that "what legitimates knowledge in the postmodern condition is how well it performs, or enables a person to perform, in particular roles" (*The Postmodern Condition* 14). The writings of Lyotard were strongly influenced by the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. This short quote bears out Nietzsche's own incredulity toward an understanding of truth as universal—"What is truth? It is a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms. Truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions" (Felicilda 198). Lyotard sees reason not as a universal and immutable human faculty or principle but as a specific and variable human production. Reason, it is believed, is a product of human intelligence and not as something that inevitably leads to an apprehension of the truth. It is preferable to view ultimate legitimation of all actions, scientific or otherwise, as understood through a variety of faculties, including reason.

The notion of knowledge is basic to understanding some of the important tenets of postmodernism. Knowledge has become informational commodity in the

wake of postmodern scenario. Manufacturing commodities are replaced by the digitalized or computerized form of knowledge. Hans Bertens has exemplified this kind of postmodernist conception. Bertens elaborates thus:

The scenario in which information replaces the manufacture of material goods is the central concern in the most advanced economies. This computerization of society will affect the nature of our knowledge. It is not very clear how exactly our knowledge will change, but Lyotard offers the prediction that the direction of new research will be dictated by the possibility of its eventual results being translatable into computer language. (119)

Bertens subscribes to the conviction that metanarratives have been replaced by a great number of language games. These language games range from models of discourse, various forms of utterance--denotative, performative, and prescriptive. Narrative language games can accommodate elements such as deontic statements prescribing what should be done with respect to kinship, the difference between the sexes, children, neighbors, and foreigners. Narrative language games have only limited social and historical validity.

The long succession of anesthetics benumbs Jake. It is uncertain to which experience he would be exposed. Prior to this realization, he might have clung to the false belief in the existence of core self and identity. Posterior to this realization his approach to identity underwent sweeping change. Social ideals and normative values shattered giving way to the rampant immorality. The narrator is incapacitated to take any strong action when his wife and Daisy are engaged in lesbian sexual activities.

Daisy's sexual desire has reached the bottom-line of degeneration. She is sexually drawn towards her secretary. Her secretary is a male. There is heterosexual

attraction between Daisy and her secretary. She is blunt in her heterosexual pursuit. The idea of marital loyalty is a figment of fantasy to her. In her sexual relation with her secretary, she is unable to reach orgasm. In Daisy's intense and ecstatic sexual experience, there is no boundary amidst heterosexuality, lesbian sexuality, marital loyalty and sexual fantasies and reveries. Her sexual life is an extreme case of perversion and moral disgrace. The following extract discloses truths regarding Daisy's perverted and ignominious life:

Daisy's unrestrained erotic interest in her secretary seemed an interest as much in the idea of making love to her as in the physical pleasures of the sex-act itself. Nonetheless, these pursuits had begun to make all our relationships, both between ourselves and with other people, more and more abstract. She soon became unable to reach an orgasm without elaborate fantasies of a lesbian sex-act. These descriptions seemed to be a language in search of objects, or even perhaps, the beginning of a new sexuality divorced from any possible physical expressions. (28)

Extramarital relation is the site of sexual relation in which she intends to reach orgasm. She is clearly heading towards the direction of betrayal and marital disloyalty. She is too confused to know how the harboring of lesbian sexual fantasy enables her to reach orgasm. It is troublesome to know whether her search for a new version of sexuality is efficacious. In no way it is wholesome and healthy.

In Jake, empathetic concern is dead. Feelings of pity are utterly defunct in the followers of post-modern cult of seeking the alternative of any experience at the cost of established saving graces of life. Having seen the miserable death of a man, the narrator is unable to show genuine humanistic concern. Rather, he talks to himself and concludes that performing moralistic and humanistic gymnastics has no value at all.

The sharp disintegration of philanthropic concern is the straightforward consequences of assimilating postmodern view on life. The narrator's indifference to the suffering of man is demonstrative of how cold-hearted he has become due to his frantic exposure to the command and dictation of postmodern life. The following lines exemplify this point:

I stared pointedly at the clock over the door, hoping that she would soon leave. This bogus commiseration over the dead man irritated me, merely an excuse for an exercise in moral gymnastics. The brusqueness of the young nurses was part of the same pantomime of regret. I had thought for hours about the dead man, visualizing the effects of his death on his wife and family. I had thought of his last moment's alive, frantic milliseconds of pain and violence in which he had been catapulted from a pleasant domestic interlude into a concertina of metalized death. (29)

To feel pity for the victims of unexpected disaster is to make a pantomime of genuine human feeling. It is bogus to display commiseration over the dead man. Worst of all, the idea of pitying the dead man is irritating to him. He is too sterile to throw pity for others. Since pity does not well up in his heart, he has been living under the spell of machine-like forces. The events like death and disasters produce lingering effect in his mind.

Arthur Crooker and David Crooker concentrate on how the postmodern tendency gives birth to the thrill of catastrophe and the ecstatic implosion of postmodern culture into excess, waste and disaccumulation. The trend to excess, waste and sense of anarchic jubilation receives momentum in the high days of

postmodernism. The following lines cited from Arthur Crooker and David Crooker throw further spotlight on this aspect:

For who can now speak with confidence of the future of a postmodern scene when what is truly fascinating is the thrill of catastrophe, and where what drives onward economy, politics, culture, sex and even eating is not the will to accumulation or the search for lost coherences, but just the opposite – the postmodern culture into excess, waste, and accumulation. When technology of the quantum order produces human beings who are part-metal and part-flesh; when robo-beings constitute the growing majority of a western culture which fulfills, then excess, Weber’s grim prophecy of the coming age of specialists without spirit.

(30)

The postmodern trend opens a new path for the pathological symptoms of nihilism. The gradual loss of established norms and the much hallowed cult of hyper-aesthetics as well as excremental culture jointly generate nihilistic impact. To a certain time span, the nihilistic cult gives the unique dose of freedom from the restrictive measures of universalistic pretensions and absolutist claims. But in the long run, its adverse impact appears in the prospect of humanity. Viewed from the normative perspective, this impact seems to be normative. But it is the constant source of jubilation approved within the framework of postmodern context.

Wild fantasy and sexuality are the part and parcel of the lives of Jake and Daisy. Wild fantasy changes into hallucination and visualization. The narrator “visualized her as a glamorous but overworked medical student, breaking out of a long adolescence when she qualified as a doctor into a series of uncertain sexual affairs” (35). They seek to undergo the hyper-excitement in the consummation of

alternative sexuality. In the following extract, their search for hyper-excitement can be seen clearly:

Hoping to soothe away the hyper-excitement which my crash had generated in Daisy -- now ever larger in memory, crueler and more spectacular – began to stroke her clitoris. Distracted, she soon left, kissing me firmly on the mouth as if she barely expected to see me alive again. She talked on as if she thought that my crash had not yet occurred. (37)

The narrator titillates and stimulates both sexual and non-sexual organs of Daisy to feel the hyper-excitement. To maximize sexual pleasure they can go to any extent. They can perform any stroke of action. All the erected boundaries of normative conceptions and outlooks explode, leaving them in the lurch.

The frequent references to technology, violence and sexual fantasies enable the researcher to stake a claim that violent and wild sexual pursuits are means to break the stasis of life. Motionless and inert life is described with special importance. The narrator himself says “at one time Daisy’s body lying beside me in bed had seemed as inert and motionless as a sexual exercise doll fitted with a neoprene vagina. Those who are on the way to breaking the stasis of existence are far removed from perceiving reality. Reality is an anathema to them. Only fantasies and reveries are enchanting and mystifying to them. They are tortured and tormented with the sinister premonition of danger and disaster. The following extract throws spotlight on this aspect:

These premonitions of disaster remained with me. During my first days at home I spent all my time on the veranda, watching the traffic move along the motorway, determined to spot the first signs of this end of

the world by automobile, for which the accident had been my own private rehearsal. Whether the accident has occurred really on the ground or is this mental projection of his psychotic frenzy and fantasy is utterly unclear. (66)

The narrator himself says that the entire scene of accident is his private rehearsal. So it can be clearly said that the real is lost and the fantasy that is fabricated looms realistic to them. This is an authentic instance of hallucination and insanity.

Postmodern spectrum of thought is marked by the loss of the real. So the unreal and anomalous looms as the real to those pathetic acolytes of postmodern thought.

The postmodern ethos is the ethos of transgression which is equal to violating the established boundary. It is the 'lightning-flash' which illuminates the sky for an instant only to reveal the immensity of the darkness within. Postmodernism is not a gesture of the cut. Whatever transgression takes place, it would further reveal latent primitive instinct in its crude and raw form. David Crooker makes the further disclosure:

Transgression is not limited to the limit as black to white, the prohibited to the lawful, the outside to the inside, or as the open area of a building to its enclosed spaces. Rather their relationship takes the form of spiral which no simple infraction can exhaust. Perhaps it is like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night which it denies, which lights up the night from the inside, from top to bottom. (8)

When the surface of normative and the rationally approved conception are torn apart, entire human becomes vulnerable and enervated. The dark forces and instinctive urges put life on the path of anomaly, incompatibility and gruesome track. At the

postmodern moment of the eruption of latent primitive and dark forces, people can hover between ecstasy and decay. When the primitive instinct and passion come out in an irresistible way, people will have to live on the violent edge between the body as a torture chamber and pleasure palace. They will have no option other than getting lost between fascination and lament.

Digitalized conception of life forbids the real. Only the simulated copy exists. Even the characters in this novel hardly seek the real. They always hunt for perspective. Through visualization and tantalization, they try to locate their bodies in sexual perspective. At the time of being surrounded by things, they naturally tend to place their bodies in sexual perspective. Thereby, they try to create sexual possibility of things that surround them. The narrator assumes “My body, which she had placed in a particular sexual perspective within a year or so of our marriage, now aroused her again. She was fascinated by the scars on my chest” (40). At present, exploration of sexual possibilities of everything has become a mode of asserting their freedom. But such an assertive mode has corrupted their moral conscience.

In his choice of the model of car, sexual perspective stands as the decisive factors. Obsession for placing things in sexual perceptible took the messianic form. The narrator himself says “Luckily, my messianic obsessions soon made themselves evident, my partner. He arranged with Daisy to restrict my visits to the studio offices to an hour a day” (52). Obsession has reached messianic level. In search for the extreme and heightened level of sexual bliss, each and every part of body, each and every organ is stimulated. Sometimes this process of stimulating and sexualizing the non-sexual organs takes the form of ludicrous act. It sometimes appears as sexual assault. It is evident that no trace of affect persists in such frenetic game of violent gratification instinctive urge. The following extract describes the narrator’s attempt to

sexualize the nonsexual organs of Daisy and then turn bodies into instinct gratifying digital machine:

Seizing me with her body in this arbor of glass, metal and vinyl, Helen moved her hand inside my shirt, feeling for my nipples. I took her fingers and placed them around my penis. Through the rear-view mirror I saw a water-board maintenance truck approaching. It moved past in a roar of dust and diesel exhaust that drummed against the doors. (63)

The vibrating sounds of truck further helped him to prolong the duration of orgasm. While experiencing diverse sexual experiences, they try to look like digitalized cyborg. It is only after making oneself machine-like object that they can counter the influences of technology over their bodies.

Daisy is prone to morbid depression. Most of the time, she awaits sexual assault. If violence comes in the form of sexual advance, she wholeheartedly welcomes it. The stunning fact is that she hopes for a revelation of moment in which her second personality emerges. Her expressionless face and bizarre fantasies prove that she is a pathetic victim of postmodern schooling and exposure. The following lines throw light on Daisy's condition:

Her expressionless face looked up at the fireman as he held his torch, almost as if waiting for some bizarre sexual assault. In the later photographs the bruises that were to mask her face began to appear, like the outlines of a second personality, a preview of the hidden faces of her psyche which would have emerged only in late middle age. I was struck by the prim lines these bruises formed around her broad

mouth. These morbid depressions were like those of a self-centered spinster with a history of unhappy affairs. (76)

Daisy's fate is no less than the fate of other characters. Circumstances have subjected her to delusional fantasy and psychosis. In the above-cited extract evidences about being split personality can easily be found. Her relation with her people is mediated by technology. Like other victims, she too is invaded and assaulted by the grotesque experience. The pattern of her life is increasingly grotesque. But to her, only the grotesque is real. It is the ultimate target of her postmodern struggle.

Digital simulation of reality is also a factor which hastened the disintegration of Jake's rational conscience and psychological framework. In several digitally animated photos and visual representation, technological landscape and automobiles pervade. In this visual representation, violence and sexuality are represented. Many television programs yoke violence and sexuality together. The following lines describe how Jake faces the disintegration of his psyche after his frequent exposure to violence and sexuality ridden television programs:

Jake's interest in myself was clearly minimal; what concerned him was not the behavior of a 40-year old producer of television commercials but the interaction between an anonymous individual and his car, the transits of his body across the polished cellulose panels and vinyl seating, his face silhouetted against the instrument dials. The leitmotiv of this photographic record emerged as I recovered from my injuries: my relationships, mediated by the automobile and its technological landscape, with Daisy. (79)

Both general and electronic media are full of stuffs about violence and sexualities. News about violence and sexualities has received top priorities in media coverage.

The more individuals are exposed to such media representation, the more their deranged desires get stimulated. Much more preoccupation would result in the gradual disintegration of normal psychology.

Frequent exposure to news, discourses and media representations are full of various sexual activities devoid of erotic dimension. In various peripheral sexualities they happened to explore, erotic dimension was absent. What the dominant sexual practice excludes as immoral and disgusting practices are brought to the surface. Media is playing a big part in exposing the socially forbidden deviant sexual relations. Their carnal act of sodomy appears to be ludicrous. Yet they hardly care for the responses of others.

Printed media opened new threshold for sexual degradation. The narrator records, in the following extract, how he is tantalized by various sexual scenes captured torridly in magazine pages:

I looked through the color photographs in the magazines; in all of them the motor- car in one style or another figured as the centerpiece- pleasant images of young couples in group intercourse around an American convertible parked in a placid meadow; a middle-aged businessman naked with his secretary in the rear seat of his Mercedes; homosexuals undressing each other at a roadside picnic; teenagers in an orgy of motorized sex on a two tier vehicle transporter. (82)

On some pages of magazine articles, young couples are attempting intercourse freely in park. A middle aged man is loitering naked. Homosexuals are undressing each other at a roadside picnic. Teenagers too are trying to reach extreme level of sexual bliss by doing sex on their automobile. These sexual activities that are represented in different kinds of media have transgressive qualities. Human life hovers on the verge

of wretchedness and deplorable plight. The limitless assimilation of the subversive postmodern ethos puts the lives of Vaughan and the narrator in jeopardy.

Without a short span of time Jake's mind travels from anticipation to nostalgia, exuberance to agony, loneliness to lassitude. He comes to relish in the several activities which ultimately make him feel empty and desolate. While surveying things that happen in the busy station, platform and fallow land his eyes fall on those things which match with his desolate and fantasy-driven mind. He says "I feel empty, hardly here at all, but even the arrival of the police seems an insufficient reason to move and I stand with the crowd outside the penguin habitat" (208). His eyes happen to fall on an owl's eyes which are an objective correlative to his own harsh existence. In his own words "for some reason this break the tension I started feeling when I first noticed the showy owl's eyes and then when it recurred after the boy was dragged out of the penguin habitat" (208). From imaginative stand to the painful sense of nostalgia, Jake moves, leaving no comprehensible clues about his downfall and degradation.

No matter what sort of crimes he commits and the dreadful path he chooses, the troubled relation between individuals and deadening socio-economic phenomena are to be held accountable for the degradation and insanity of youths like Jake. Jake himself says that he is unable to go back from his homicidal activities because his engagement in homicidal activities helped him to express his blocked need. The postmodern trends like counting life in terms of extreme financial profit, frequenting malls and restaurants to bring variations in pleasure, going to the extreme joy, exploiting life's all possibilities for alternative pleasure put Jake on such conditions. The following extract is related with the conversation between Jake and Daisy:

Evelyn nods approvingly. My need to engage in homicidal behavior on a massive scale cannot be, um, corrected; I tell her measuring each word carefully. But I have no other way to express my blocked needs. I am surprised at how emotional this admission makes me, and it wears me down. I feel light-headed. As unusual, Evelyn misses the essence of what I am saying, and I wonder how long it will take to finally rid myself of her. (237)

For the most part his own tendency to seek unusual and uncanny joy in everything he does is the main factor of his insane life. Other social factors and postmodern outlook on life are responsible for it. Going to restaurant with different sorts of girls, and bringing them to his apartment and then killing them have become means to externalize his blocked needs. His humiliation at being the second comer in holding business card boggles his mind and chills his heart. He feels drowned in the matrix of misery, desolation and inferiority. His mind is wholly devoid of self-awareness. As a result, he has to engage in homicidal activities to knock the closed door of his consciousness.

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owl's eyes and then when it recurred after the boy was dragged out of the penguin habitat" (208). From imaginative stand to the painful sense of nostalgia, Jake moves, leaving no comprehensible clues about his downfall and degradation.

Jake tempts girls with the power of wealth. He spends a good deal of money on girls. He takes them to shopping malls and restaurant. It is just the technique of tempting girls convincing them and bringing them to his apartment. Once girls are impressed by him, he enacts violent sexual relation with them and kills them. Therefore his outward show of gentle and seemingly normal life is just the subterfuge to create setting for simulation. The following extract is illustrative of this point:

Once it is placed on its stand and running on automatic, with a pair of scissors I start to cut off her dress and when I get up to her chest I occasionally stab at her breasts, accidentally slicing off one of her nipples through the bra. She starts screaming again once I have ripped her dress off, leaving Bethany in only her bra, its right cup darkened with blood, and her panties, which are soaked with urine, saving them for later. I lean in above her and shout, over her screams, try to scream, keep screaming. (171)

Headache, inner sense of alienation, anxiety attack, oscillating mood and uncontrollable outburst of sadistic urge and other factor overpower him. Once he came under the assault of amnesia which badly harmed in professional schedule. Over-exposure to digital technology is infected with anxiety-attack, amnesia, physiological disorder and corroding sense of fear with a very short span of time.

Thus it can be summed up that *This Beautiful Life* foregrounds the detrimental effects which can arise from an individual's unrestrained immersion and engagement in the cult of handling life after the postmodern fashion. Since no normative ethics

and values are credited by postmodern doctrine, unrestrained immersion in postmodern ethos leads to the disintegration and degradation of an individual's psyche.

III. Schulman's Concern with Digital Literacy

The core finding of this research is that uncontrolled reliance on digital technology produces harmful psychological effects in Jay and Daisy. Schulman's *This Beautiful Life* shows this point with a realistic touch. This novel presents dramatically the worst effects caused by the excessive participation in cyber culture. In the novel, Jake gives free rein to these passions. He does not restrain his emotional urges. He gives free rein to his passions. He tends to go to the extreme. He is obsessively preoccupied with deformed objects. Jake is hardly tempted by shapely and symmetrical objects.

Sexual passions at normal level hardly tempt him. He has to take resort to violence in order to reach the height of sexual ecstasy. All the choices and experiences of Jake appear to be odd, deviant, deadly and detrimental if judged from the perspective of the normative. But Jake takes his search for solace in the deformity and the ugly as the normal experience. Ungoverned and unguided by normative ethos and values, Jake's passions and experiences take the messy and meandering direction. Gradually he falls into the bad matrix of obsession, debauchery, self-deception, ignominy and narcissism. His search for new sexuality in relation to violence puts his existence on the verge of instant evaporation.

The cyber space puts heavy pressures on him. Even for his friends who slightly insult Jake while dealing with cyber issues, Jake could not help feeling consumed by jealousy and vindictive desire. He determines to take revenge on them. He invites them to his apartment, feeds them and finally kills them by using hatchet. In his romantic life also Jake commits the same error. He dates with several girls. He does not hesitate to enjoy with them. At the same moment, Jake enacts sexual

relations with two girls. Then he kills these girls. Jake demonstrates cruelty and compassion at the same time. He represents sanity and insanity at the same moment.

It is true that Jake is compelled to simulate the personality which he is incapable of achieving. By the same token, he dissimulates his real nature for some time and gives vent to his repressed desires in a maddening way. He is totally unable to exercise and exert moral pressures, sense of restraint and firm sense of control over his haphazard and meandering passions. Simulation and dissimulation confine Jake in a narrow cell of solipsism and distorted ambition. To come out of this sort of miserable plight, Jake has no option other than concocting violent fantasy.

Jake performs several things at the same time. He talks to his girlfriend. At the same time he visualizes the scene of exploiting her sexually and then murdering her. When he sits close to her, he derives a thrilling sense of romantic warmth. At that moment he hallucinates a vivid scene in which extreme festivity takes place. In a single moment Bateman's mind acts dangerously. He goes on hallucinating and then behaving like a gentle man with his girlfriend in restaurant.

Jake's mind has become a storehouse of insanity, hallucinatory fantasy and murder plans. Even the slightest disorder in the outer world provokes Jake to act dreadfully. Inner psychic malaises have put Jake in confinement. To achieve a temporary moment of freedom from his inner psychic malaises lets his mind operate in whichever way his mind dictates. Jake performs several things at the same time. He talks to his girlfriend. At the same time he visualizes the scene of exploiting her sexually.

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