



T.C.

**SÜLEYMAN DEMİREL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI**

**THE REPRESENTATION OF THE AMERICAN NATION IN SELECTED
AMERICAN NOVELS (17TH – 20TH CENTURY)**

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DOKTORA TEZİ

**DANIŞMAN
Doc. Dr. BETURE MEMMEDOVA**

ISPARTA, 2017



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SEÇİLİ AMERİKAN ROMANLARINDA AMERİKAN ULUSUNUN TEMSİLİ
(17. - 20. YÜZYILLAR)

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Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü



YEMİN METNİ

Doktora tezi olarak sunduğum “Seçili Amerikan Romanlarında Amerikan Ulusunun Temsili (17. – 20. Yüzyıllar)” adlı çalışmanın, tezin proje safhasından sonuçlanmasına kadar ki bütün süreçlerde bilimsel ahlak ve geleneklere aykırı düşecek bir yardıma başvurulmaksızın yazıldığını ve yararlandığım eserlerin Bibliyografya’da gösterilenlerden oluştuğunu, bunlara atıf yapılarak yararlanılmış olduğunu belirtir ve onurumla beyan ederim.

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Ali Hadi Mulla Al-Adilee'.

Ali Hadi Mulla Al-Adilee

06.07.2017

ABSTRACT

"Nation" and "national identity" are two related phenomena which have become central to contemporary cultural discursive practices. Nation can be considered as a constantly changing social entity. The national identity of an individual is in many ways interrelated to the construction of nation. The construction of a nation and national identity can also be seen as an individual necessity to become a part of a larger group. However, it is not possible to have an absolute understanding of the individual's identification with any larger group, in other words, with the nation. The study deals with the seven selective novels by the Polish born American writer Jerzy Kosinski (1933-1991) and the representation taken of the American nation in the 1970s. Individual identity is, in fact, related to economic, cultural, geographic and social realities. It great importance to understand the construction of a nation in novels because of the "all inclusive" nature of the novel form. Jerzy Kosinski's peculiar status in the United States as an immigrant, ethnic and politically conscious novelist makes him an interesting case in point.

After the introductory first chapter, the second chapter "Theories of nation" discusses various theories regarding the concept of "nation". The attempt here is to give a diachronic account of the concept of nation. Since it is in Europe the American nation was formed for the first time, the chapter analyses the construction of nationality and national identity as they are formed there. The question of an individual's identification with the nation is also part of the concern of this chapter. The chapter above discusses the ideas of early thinkers like Ernest Renan as well as contemporary thinkers like Anthony D. Smith, Eric Hobsbawm, and Benedict Anderson on the nation.

The third chapter "Construction of the American Nation" addresses the problem of analyzing the popular concept of American nationality and the difficulty of comparing the popular discourse with a number of writings and a few instances form the popular culture. This issue is looked at from a long term historical perspective as well as a temporally specific perspective. It is observed that there is a characteristic feature in the conceptualization of the American nation in the 1970s. The third chapter explains the reasons why immigrants are attracted towards the American land and how those immigrants have changed the social and cultural equations in the nation. The concepts like "Melting-Pot" and the "American Dream" are discussed in detailed.

The fourth chapter "Thousand Faces of America: The Nation in Fiction" traces the depiction of America in fiction from the earliest periods to the present. The aim of this chapter is to map out the history of the American nation in relation to the history of American fiction. "Nation writing the novel" is an idea which is discussed in detail here. Some of the historically important novels like *The Scarlet Letter* and *Moby Dick* have been taken as representative examples of particular times. The traditional themes like pioneering, frontier life, and Puritanism are perceived as representative ideologies of the American way of life during the initial years of the nation. The second part of the chapter

is concerned with the thematic and formal characteristics of the post-World War II novelists.

The fifth chapter titled "Jerzy Kosinski and America" concentrate on the fiction of Jerzy Kosinski and places him as a true chronicler of his times. Novels like *Cockpit*, *The Devil Tree*, *Being There*, *Blind Date* and *Pinball* are viewed from the angle of their approach to the nation. The approach of each novel is different from the others. In *Cockpit*, the police force is resented as a repressive state apparatus. *The Devil Tree* and *Blind Date* are testimonials of corporate lives. *Being There* mocks the television watching public who believes that whoever "comes well on TV" is a good for the post of the President of the United States. *Pinball* is perceived as a novel, which goes deep into various manifestations of racial relationships in America.

The chapter analyses Kosinski's novels for and against such American social constructs and events like the American Dream, Melting-Pot, Civil Rights movements and the Vietnam War. The chapter also tries to observe the concept of nation in his novels and finds that America is an individualistic nation wherein the sacrifices and the glory of the past have no value.

In order to arrive at a clear understanding of Jerzy Kosinski's approach to the nation, the last chapter compares Kosinski with the novelist from his previous generation Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) and a contemporary novelist Joseph Heller. The conclusion, draws on the writer's integrity in the depiction and reflection of the American reality without idealization and distortion of the facts, and suggests areas for further research in Kosinski's novels.

Keywords: *Nation, American Nation, National Identity, Melting-pot, American Dream, World War II.*

(AL ADILEE, Ali Hadi Mulla, *Seçili Amerikan Romanlarında Amerikan Ulusunun Temsili (17. Ve 20. Yüzyıllar)*, Doktora Tezi, ISPARTA, 2017)

ÖZET

"Ulus" ve "ulusal kimlik" çağdaş kültürel ve söylemsel uygulamalarda merkez haline gelmiş birbiriyle bağlantılı iki fenomendir. Ulus sürekli değişen sosyal bir varlık olarak ele alınabilmektedir. Bireyin ulusal kimliği bir çok açıdan ulusun oluşumuyla bağlantılıdır. Ulus ve ulusal kimliğin oluşumu daha büyük bir grubun parçası olabilmek için bireysel bir ihtiyaç olarak da görülebilmektedir. Ancak, daha büyük gruplar yoluyla bireylerin tanınmasında kesin bir anlayışa sahip olmak mümkün değildir. Tez Polonya doğumlu Amerikan yazar Jerzy Kosinski'nin (1933- 1991) yedi seçilmiş romanını ve 1970'lerdeki Amerikan ulusunun temsili ele almaktadır. Gerçekte bireysel kimlik ekonomik, kültürel, coğrafi ve sosyal gerçekliklerle bağlantılıdır. Romanın doğayla ve gerçeklikle iç içe olma durumuna binaen, bir ulusun oluşumunu anlayabilmek için romanlar mihenk taşı görevi üstlenmektedirler. Jerzy Kosinski'nin Amerika'daki kendine has göçmen, etnik ve politik farkındalığa sahip bir yazar olma durumuyla kendisini kayda değer kılmaktadır.

Önsöz niteliğinde olan birinci bölümden sonra, "Ulusun Teorileri" başlığı altındaki ikinci bölüm "ulus" kavramıyla alakalı çeşitli teorileri tartışmaktadır. Buradaki amaç, ulus kavramına diyakronik bir bakış açısı getirmektir. Bu bölüm Amerikan ulusunun ilk oluşmaya başlamasından bu yana ulus ve ulusal kimliğin oluşumunu incelemektedir. Bireylerin ulus aracılığıyla tanınması bu bölümün sorunlarından biridir. Mevcut bölüm, Ernest Renan gibi ilk düşünürlerden Anthony D. Smith, Eric Hobsbawm ve Benedict Anderson gibi çağdaş düşünürlerin ulus üzerine görüşlerini de tartışmaktadır.

"Amerikan Ulusunun Oluşumu" başlıklı üçüncü bölüm, popüler bir kavram olan Amerikan ulusu sorununa değinmekle birlikte, bu popüler söylemin sayılı popüler kültür eser örneklemelerindeki karşılaştırma sorunlarından da bahsetmektedir. Mevcut sorunlar uzun vadeli tarihi bir bakış açısı ve sınırlı bir süre içerisinde spesifik bakış açılarıyla ele alınmaktadır. 1970'lerde Amerikan ulusunun kavramsallaştırılmasındaki karakteristik özelliklerinin de var olduğu gözlenmektedir. Üçüncü bölüm göçmenlerin Amerikan topraklarına ilgilerinin sebeplerini ve bu göçmenlerin mevcut uluslar içerisindeki sosyal ve kültürel dengeleri nasıl değiştirdiklerini açıklamaktadır. Yine, "Eritme Potası" ve "Amerikan Rüyası" gibi kavramlar detaylı bir şekilde tartışılacaktır.

"Amerikanın Bin Yüzü: Kurgu Dünyasında ki Ulus" başlıklı dördüncü bölüm, Amerikanın en eski dönemlerden günümüz kurgusuna kadarki betimlemesinin izlerini sürmektedir. Bu bölümün amacı Amerikan ulusunun, Amerikan kurgusu tarihiyle olan ilişkisini detaylandırmaktır. "Roman yazan ulus" fikri bu bölümde detaylı bir şekilde ele alınacaktır. *The Scarlett Letter* ve *Moby Dick* gibi tarihi önem arz eden bazı romanlar belirli dönemlerin temsili örnekleri olarak ele alınmaktadır. Sınır ve akıncı yaşam, ve püritanizm gibi geleneksel temalar ulusun ilk yıllarındaki Amerikan yaşam tarzı ideolojisinin temsilcileri olarak algılanırdı. Bölümün ikinci kısmı ikinci dünya savaşı sonrası roman yazarlarının tematik ve biçimsel özelliklerini ele almaktadır.

“Jerzy Kosinski ve Amerika” başlıklı beşinci bölüm Jerzy Kosinski’nin kurgusu üzerine yoğunlaşmakta ve zamanının gerçek tarihçisi yerine koymaktadır. *Cockpit*, *The Devil Tree*, *Being There*, *Blind Date* ve *Pinball* gibi romanlar ulusa bu bakış açılarıyla görüntülenmektedir. Her romanın yaklaşımı diğerinden farklıdır. *Cockpit*’te polis kuvvetleri baskıcı bir devlet aracı olarak ele alınmaktadır. *Being There* televizyona çıkan herkesin Amerika Birleşik Devlet’i için en iyisi olacağına inanan televizyon izleyici kitlesi ile alay etmektedir. *Pinball* ise Amerika’daki çeşitli ırksal ilişkilerin dışavurumunu detaylı bir şekilde incelemektedir.

Mevcut bölüm Amerikan Rüyası, Eritme Potası, Yurttaşlık Hakları Hareketleri ve Vietnam Savaşı gibi Amerikan sosyal oluşumlarını destekleyici yazan ve eleştirel yazan Kosinski’nin romanlarını ele almaktadır. Bölüm geçmişin kayıpları ve kazanımlarının hiç bir anlam taşımadığı, bireyselci ulus olan Amerika anlayışının romanlardaki yerlerine bakmaya çalışacaktır.

Jerzy’nin ulus yaklaşımında açık bir anlayışa sahip olabilmek için, son bölüm Kosinski’yi Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) ve Joseph Heller ile karşılaştıracaktır. Sonuç bölümü, yazarın Amerikan gerçeğini, gerçekleri idealleştirmeden ve deformasyona uğratmadan dürüst bir şekilde yansıtabilmesini göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte sonuç bölümünde son olarak Kosinski’nin romanlarında ileriye yönelik çalışma konularının önermeleride yapılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Ulus, Amerikan Ulusu, Ulusal Kimlik, Eritme Potası, Amerikan Rüyası, İkinci Dünya Savaşı.*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction and Scope of the study:

"Nation" and "national identity" are two related phenomena which have become central to contemporary cultural discursive practices. Nation can be considered as a constantly changing social entity. The national identity of an individual is in many ways interrelated to the construction of nation. The construction of a nation and national identity can also be seen as an individual necessity to become a part of a larger group. However, it is not possible to have an absolute understanding of the individual's identification with any larger group, in other words, with the nation. The study deals with the seven selective novels by the Polish born American writer Jerzy Kosinski (1933-1991) and the representation taken of the American nation in the 1970s. Individual identity is, in fact, related to economic, cultural, geographic and social realities. It great importance to understand the construction of a nation in novels because of the "all inclusive" nature of the novel form. Jerzy Kosinski's peculiar status in the United States as an immigrant, ethnic and politically conscious novelist makes him an interesting case in point.

It happened to be a long and winding road to the central questions of the nation at the completion of the thesis from the raw materials termed images at the beginning of the research. But the journey had to reach its destination, since it is the concept of nation that keeps on the vigil in most of the creative endeavours that are attempted in virtually every

part of the world. However, it would be appropriate to mention the way the thesis is taking a shape and how the question of nation in fiction has been conceptualized.

Each of his novels has a stunning image as a central metaphor such as the image of the bird with painted feathers in *The Painted Bird*, the tree whose roots grow upwards and whose branches grow downwards in *The Devil Tree*. These images are demanding in that when these powerful images made way toward other images of disparity and the possibilities of meta-images that I was forced to extend my inquiry and look for a coherent and binding image such like Donna playing the piano in *Pinball* is a picture, the next picture in the novel is how the other characters ogle her; how they perceive her physical presence, presenting an expanded awareness. An image being followed by an interpretation, is very typical of Kosinski's style in terms of symbolism.

Consequently, the ideology of fiction reflects the position of a particular novelist/writer in society. For such a study the background of the writer is of prime importance. Kosinski, being an immigrant in the United States, is bound to have a particular notion of the individual in a society. His approach to that society is largely informed by his previous years under the watchful eyes of the totalitarian regimes in Poland and the USSR. Instead of a direct comparison between the totalitarian regime and the federal establishment he went straight into a scrutiny of national identity in the United States in his novels. Nevertheless, the conclusion he reaches is that, in the final analysis in terms of the individual subject's alienation from power, there was no difference between the totalitarian and "democratic" societies, particularly when it comes to the power tactics of the state. The difference also fizzles out when it comes to the ontological underpinning of the relationship between the nation as a unified power center and the

individual subject as an insignificant and far removed category from it, whether it happens to be a totalitarian establishment or federal institution. Kosinski understands the construction of nation in these perspectives. As a result, the question of nation has become the central feature of the second part of his career as a novelist. The research, thus, started off with the images, went further on to the images of the nation, and zeroed in on the dimensions of the relationship between the individual subject and the nation.

It is a rather ironic fact that the very idea of nation has created conflicts in many regions of the world such as Northern Ireland and the northern parts of Sri Lanka to name a few. Nation as a philosophical concept is present everywhere only that its manifestation changes from one geographical locale to another and one person to another resulting in a polity which is unique in all aspects. We understand that the process of formation of nations has never reached completion and that the process will carry on until human beings cease to exist on earth. We also understand that nation is an empirical perception which undergoes changes according to time and various other factors (like economic and social issues). As Anthony Smith puts "It is therefore hardly surprising if an ideal that lacks a central tradition, single prophet or biblical text or canon, should have undergone so many transformations". Thus it is of extreme importance to study nation at a particular point of time since one can only study it specifying a period.

The word "nation" has its roots in the Latin word *natio*. I use the term "nation" in the thesis borrowing largely from Liah Greenfeld's ideas. According to her:

"At the time when the word "nation" acquired its modern meaning and became the synonym of the "people", it meant "an elite", specifically referring to "an elite of representatives of cultural and political authority" [...] the equation of the two concepts-"people" and "nation"-

signified a conceptual revolution, especially since, prior to this, the word "people" commonly denoted the lower classes and was not most frequently used as a synonym of "rabble" or "plebs". The redefinition of the "people" as a "nation" symbolically elevated the populace to the dignity of an elite. (Greenfeld, 1997: 19-20)

In order to understand the various facets of the nation and its implication in the present time one needs to first understand nationalism. Nationalism is really an umbrella term that can only be understood in relation to the national identity or nationality. Nationalism is a set of ideas and sentiments which form the framework of national identity. National identity is distinguished from other identities such as, religious, social, or class, for instance in that the source of identity, in this case, is located with a "people", which is seen as the bearer of sovereignty, the supreme object of loyalty, and the basis of collective solidarity. The "people" is a mass of population whose boundaries and nature are variously defined, but which is necessarily perceived as, in some fundamental sense, a community of equals, only superficially divided by the lines of class, status, locality and (in certain cases) even ethnicity. This distinctiveness, the specificity of nationalism [...] is strictly conceptual. The only foundation of nationalism in general, the only factor without which no nationalism is possible, is the presence of a certain idea-the idea of the "nation".

In the following chapter, "Theories of Nation" which discusses the basics of the construction of national identity. The concept of nation and nationalism are presented in a diachronic way. Hence the first part of the chapter deliberates on the various theories and theoreticians of nation and analyses the ways in which nation is being conceptualized and constructed in various countries. The last part of the chapter revolves around the problem of the construction of nation (be it actual realization or theoretical

understanding). The question raised here is related to the individual subject's identification with the far-fetched establishment which is being termed as nation. The chapter argues that the individual's identification is not a single dimensional one and that it is not always given to the individual to pick and choose his/her nationality. We also attempt to understand the Marxist concept of nation even though Marxists are supposed to be internationalists they understand the centrality of the construction of the national identity in the present-day social and political theories. Keeping up with the new trends in the studies of psychiatry and politics, an effort is made in this chapter to incorporate the basic concepts of Jacques Lacan and Felix Guattari in terms of the relationship between the individual and nation.

If we look closely at the growth of the American nation in relation to its founding ideals, a break can be found in the twentieth century and more precisely in the 1970s. The third chapter focuses on the history of these ideals from the days of the nation's formation up to the 1970s. The fourth chapter, deals with the reasons for this rupture by examining the ways in which the nation is depicted in fiction. The problems of the African American community also gain much importance when we discuss the 1970s.

The third chapter "Construction of the American Nation" analyses the construction of America as a nation. It has been the fate of the American nation, it is said, "not to have ideologies but to be one" (Kohn, 1957: 13). This must be true of every nation, since every nation is primarily a manifestation of an ideology. But when one considers the case of America, one feels that this concept of nation as the manifestation of an ideology is more appropriate to America than to any other nation. For, everything that later became part of the American society was constructed later on. That it is a nation was

the only certainty at the time when nationality was conceived in America. The social reality in the United States has grown independently, without any visible relation to the idea of nation.

With regard to the study of the American nation two fundamental issues are addressed in the third chapter. They are namely; first, understanding the popular concept of American nationality, and second, comparing and contrasting the popular construction of nation with a few instances from popular culture. The chapter further probes the origins of the nation, the ideals on which the nation is being built and the reasons behind such an organization. The chapter brings out the differences between the origins of nation in the United States and elsewhere.

The chapter also looks at the problems faced by the immigrants in the United States and review the various implications of terms of importance like "the American Dream" and "the Melting Pot" in American society. An attempt is also made to differentiate the conceptualization of the nation according to both the native and immigrant perceptions. The third chapter compares the popular notions of American nation with the "outsider's views" of Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco.

The third chapter also discusses the crucial issues that are part of most of the twentieth century enquiries with regard to the American nation like racial disparity and the people's unrest due to the reactions against the Vietnam War. A detailed discussion is attempted by looking at the various facets of the conceptualization of nation in the 1970s. The chapter offers an argument suggest that from 1970 onwards there is a characteristic fissure in the conceptualization of the nation in the United States and that there is a distinctive difference from the earlier ideals which were completely shattered by the

seventies. It is rather a surprising fact that America continue to sail through as a nation even after all these differences of opinions. Some sociologists see the traces of nationalism "as a pathological condition of incomplete 'modernity'" (Krakau, 1997: 8) and some others believe that nationalism has taken with it the positive traces of modernization and reached a state of post-modernity.

The nations of Western Europe and North America have long reached an advanced point on the road of modernization, or have actually become post-modern societies. Yet nationalism has waned and waxed in and among them for obviously very different kinds of reasons. Others, in contrary perspective, see traces of nationalism.

When Englishmen in America, who shared a common history, especially a tradition of rights, laws, and institutions with England, finally wanted to separate because England arbitrarily threatened these very rights, they had to redefine their existence in America in new and different terms. They chose the terms and language of the eighteenth century Enlightenment like the "universal", "individualistic", "egalitarian values", "rights of man", "natural rights", "popular sovereignty" and so on.

Several commentators have pointed to the fact that the novel as a form and the nation as we perceive it in the modern sense came into existence almost at the same period of time. The fourth chapter "Thousand Faces of America: The Nation in Fiction" discusses the taking off points through which one can address the much- debated issue of narration of the nation in novel. American fiction on its part has been instrumental in bringing out various facets of the American nation into light. Hence, we have an abundance of interpretations of the nation from the date of the nation's formation itself. The chapter discusses various themes that are being discussed in the American novel with

and against the history of the nation. In the conclusion, I have used several masterpieces of American fiction from various ages as points of reference in this chapter. The last part of the fourth chapter discusses the reasons behind the emergence of a political consciousness in American fiction. The various ways in which the political/ideological outlook takes shape in the novel are also discussed with examples

The fifth chapter of the thesis entitled "Jerzy Kosinski and America" concentrates on the works of Jerzy Kosinski. I argue that it is not nationalism that we see in Kosinski, on the other hand, we are able to locate several instances in which he and his characters undermine the nationalism of the United States of America. Through his novels he gives voice to the hitherto suppressed voices within the American nation. This trend can be perceived in perfect unison with other contemporaries in writing fiction. One finds images of threat and political terror repeating themselves in his novels. He constantly presents sub-narratives which make the reader think about the social, historical and schizophrenic aspects of an individual's life in the United States.

It is in the second part of his writing career that Kosinski concentrated more on the political concerns of the American nation. Ideology acts as the leitmotiv in all the novels of this second period. Novels like *Being There*, *The Devil Tree*, *Cockpit*, *Blind Date*, and *Pinball* have a perfect vision of the nation built within them. This vision, I shall argue in the chapter, is unique to Kosinski because of his ideological concerns.

It is the borderline between the study of literature and cultural studies that allows one to look at the nature of the relationship between the individual and the nation. The thesis is also a product of the modern studies using the tools of history and sociology. As a matter of fact, it is the intervention of history and sociology that allows a researcher to

contextualize the process of writing and reading and in that process studying literature itself.

1.2. The Aim of the Study

This thesis is a study of the novels written during the second part of Jerzy Kosinski's literary career in relation to the concept of "nation" as it has been dealt with in American history in general and American fiction in particular. The thesis argues that these novels--Blind Date, Being There, The Devil Tree, Cockpit, Pinball, and Passion Play--are predominantly "American Novels" and that an inquiry into the deep political aspects of these novels reveals a unique ideology of American national identity--to be precise the American national identity of the minorities of diverse origins. I have also tried to demonstrate that these novels act as a touchstone to the times in which they were written. The other three novels of Kosinski, *The Painted Bird*, *Steps*, and *The Hermit of 69th Street* were left out of this study for these novels, unlike the ones written during the second part of his career, do not have much in common in terms of thematic unity. (These reasons have been elaborated in the fifth chapter.) Kosinski's non-fiction writings like *The Future is Ours*, *Comrade* and *No Third Path* written well before immigrating to the United States are also left out for the same reasons.

1.3. The Significance of the Study

Very few theses and scientific research have been made about Jerzy Kosinski's novels studying the Holocaust, Reality and American dream. There has not been a scientific research done including the specific themes of American nation and its representation in his novels. This thesis will constitute as a source for further studies of

American nation and national identity. For the first time, the present thesis explicates the representations of the American Nation by the writer who was able to see the contradictory features of the community where he settled. At the same time, the present study focuses on a number of other American novels referring to the 19th and 20th century's authors, these presenting a wide range of perspective on nation formation. Thus, the big panorama of literary sources provides a deeper insight into the issue of nation and nationality.

1.4. The Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations of the study. First, the American writer Jerzy Kosinski and his works are not well known in the literary world. For this reason, there are not adequate sources on the subject to explore in order to get a deeper insight into the issue. We mainly relied on the primary sources, periodicals and some internet sources. Second, there is a huge materials on the formation and shaping of the American Nation in fiction as well as non-fiction.

1.5. Method of the Study

This study presented a chronological account of the philosophy of "nation" and "nationality" as it has evolved through the centuries. The framework followed in the thesis is to approach the works of the novelist Kosinski in the light of the discussions on (1) the basic idea of nation and national identity, (2) the history of the novel in the United States and (3) the forms of allegiance of the novel with the ideology of the nation. Since the author's background throws much light on the ways in which he uses the immigrant/deviant's ideology as opposed to the dominant ideology in American society

it cannot be omitted from a study of the national identity in his works. So, the autobiographical approach was unavoidable. Also, the dissertation employed the theories of nation like Ernest Renan, Earnest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and Anthony D. Smith covering the history of various ethnic groups, the rise of nationalism, the religious modes of thought and the impact of World War II on the American nation. Benedict Anderson's 'Imagined Communities' theory is also handled in the study. Also, Marxism, Crowd or mob psychology, Weberian and Durkheimian philosophical views have been applied while researching the issues related to the formation of the American nation.

The social and cultural background of an individual has so much to do with the formation of his/her national identity. Since every artwork is created by an individual with a class, gender and racial identity, it would not be out of place to look at the background of the artist. Essentially, the thesis tries to approach the novel from the historical and sociological points of view. It tries to place the novels of Kosinski in the backdrop of the social contexts and cultural significations of the time.

CHAPTER TWO

2. THEORIES of NATION

The goal of this chapter is to carefully explore in a diachronic way the process of the emergence of nations and nationalism. The concepts of nation and nationality have a relatively recent history when they are compared with the course of the history of humanity. The observers of this particular field have raised major questions of ethical, philosophical, anthropological, political, historical and sociological importance with regard to the individual's identification with a nation.

The first part of this chapter discusses various theories and theoreticians of nation and analyze the ways in which the nation is being constructed in various countries. I would like to attempt a diachronic study of the construction of nationality and nation in Europe, since it is in Europe, the nation, as it is called today, was realized for the first time. (However, Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities* argues that unlike the popular conception it is in the Americas that the nation in its modern form was first established.) In the later part of the chapter I will discuss the national movements in Africa and Asia and examine the special features of these movements

The last part of the chapter focusses on the problem of the construction of nation (be it actual realization or theoretical understanding). The question raised here is related to the individual subject's identification with the far- fetched system which is termed as nation. The choice of a nation is not always in the hands of individual subjects; on the other hand, it has always been in the hands of a group of people who have power, be it physical power or economic, in every country. I arrive at such a conclusion evoking the political perspectives of crowd psychology presented by the psychoanalytical works of Lacan and others.

2.1. The Concept of Nation

The construction of nation-states is a recent phenomenon-in the long history of human beings. It is a rather obvious fact that the idea of nation is bound by the individual's or a group's need for being identified as a specific and distinctive category.

According to Looby "The word *nation*, as has always been recognized, attempts to install the nation within nature as an organic phenomenon (the word nation is derived from the same root as nature and nativity)". The word 'nation', according to the British cultural historian, Raymond Williams, has the same use in English from the thirteenth century, with the primary sense of a racial group rather than a politically organized grouping. Since there is an obvious overlap between these senses, it is not easy to date the emergence of the predominant modern sense of a political formation, and the attempts in this regard have led on the one hand to particularizing definitions of the nation-state and on the other hand to very complex arguments in the context of "nationalist" and "nationalism".

There have been inquiries to find out answers for the much-repeated questions about nation and nationalism: What makes a person identify with a nation or a nationality? Is it true that a person who is usually termed as a certain national can have a different view altogether about his/her own national identity which differs radically from the founding ideals? These are some of the fundamental questions asked repeatedly at some stage in studies of nations and nationalism.

2.2. Theories of Nation

The discussions of nation have a short history starting in Europe and slowly spreading to the other parts of the world. It is basically with the emergence of rational thinking that the people started thinking about the concept of nation seriously. Furthermore, it can be seen that the emergence of the theories of nation has something in common with the historical emergence of modernist thought in Western Europe. The considerations for the concept of nation being modern work in three different levels. Firstly; modern in the sense of being new. Second; nations were the product of modernity. Thirdly; nations and nationalisms were social constructs of modernity. These considerations include the notion that nations are not deeply rooted in history and that they are predictable consequences of the revolutions that constitute modernity and will gradually wither away once the features and conditions that constitute modernity are achieved. According to Anthony Smith these considerations stand as part of the larger paradigm of classical modernism.

The following is a discussion of the major theoreticians of nation and nationality. Benedict Anderson, whose works are of primary importance in this regard, while discussing the origins of nation in various forms and across the continents, discusses the Creoles (to mean persons of pure European descent, but born anywhere outside Europe) who went on to establish some kind of a forerunner to the modern day nations. He points out the examples of Brazil and the United States of America whom he considers the pioneers in ascertaining nationality. Anderson maintains that the 18th century Europe marks the dawning of the age of nationalism. Interesting it also happens to be an age of the decline of all religious modes of thought, even though the two phenomena are not directly related. The religious modes of thought can also be considered as preceding the idea of the nation, as was the case with the innumerable dynasties that were ruling these endless geographical areas, but they were by no means the only factors that opened the path to the rise of nationalism. Benedict Anderson goes on to emphasize that from World War II every successful revolution has well-defined itself in a national terms, still grounded firmly in a territorial and social space inherited from the pre-Revolutionary past.

2.2.1. Ernest Renan

Ernest Renan's analysis constitutes the early idea of nation as an ethno-cultural formation in Europe. He is considered to be the first person to identify the active political commitment of the members of a nation. He starts with a contrast (which is to have a long history) between the fusion of 'races' in the nations of Western Europe, and the retention of ethnic distinctiveness in Eastern Europe

For Renan the idea of 'nation' and 'nationality' depends a lot on the individual's identification with the past and his/her knowledge of the sacrifices that the ancestors have made. In a way, Renan gives more importance to the individual's acquired social identity than to the present-day socio-political equations that cause the individual to identify himself with the particular nation. We should note that Renan discusses the question, what is a nation?, in the backdrop of the polemical debate between French, German, English, Italian scholars and politicians, in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, regarding the disputed title to Alsace and Lorraine, territories which Louis XIV had seized and which the Treaty of Frankfurt had returned to Germany in 1871 (Thom, 1990: 23).

Renan's theory of nation has been criticized by several of the twentieth century critics .Horace B. Davis for example. These critics are of the opinion that a nation is not

just constituted by the components alone and that such a feeling of the component parts will not make a nation distinguishable from a tribe. These critics are also of the opinion that there should be a comprehensive theory (or a number of theories) to discuss the phenomena of nation.

2.2.2. Earnest Gellner

The next major theoretician of the nation is Earnest Gellner. There are of course other important thinkers who attempted studies on the concept of nation during the long period between Renan and Gellner, but the peculiar trajectory Gellner followed in discussing the concept of nation places him directly in relation to Ernest Renan.

Ernest Gellner takes most of the arguments of Ernest Renan into consideration in the political and cultural perspective of the whole issue. His book *Nation and Nationalism* (1983) is regarded as one of the key texts which have historical reach and theoretical power. His definition of nation is basically a political one. The nation, according to Gellner is an abstraction, an allegory, a myth that does not correspond to a reality that can be scientifically defined. He believes that 'nationalism' is "primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent.

Gellner's book, *Nation and Nationalism* was criticised by many in its approach to the whole question of nationality and nationalism for looking at the process of building a nation from a perspective of modernization from above (The term 'above' here is used to mean that the view is essentially from the point of view of the center of the structure within which lies the power. The critics understand now that the movements of modernization of nations are mostly conceived and realized through the governments or whoever is in power and they are never achieved by the inherent and incessant capabilities for modernization by the members that are the citizens themselves, who essentially constitute every nation. Hobsbawm points out that it is quite a difficult task to pay attention to the view from below, since the slow and strenuous process of modernization in a society cannot be completely documented because of the lack of official support and most of the time the visibility of such a process is very insignificant and meagre. This criticism can be applied to most of the books written on nation and nationalism.

2.2.3. Benedict Anderson

In an anthropological spirit Benedict Anderson defines nation as an 'imagined political community' (*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 1983). The nation is 'imagined' according to Anderson and it is both inherently limited and sovereign. Anderson largely follows the arguments of Renan and the historian Hugh Seton-Watson. (Hugh Seton-Watson distinguishes between the 'old, continuous' nations and the deliberately created, new nations - he also claims that "a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one" (Smith, 1998: 173). Anderson puts forward four suggestions on the nature and being of a nation. He asserts that the nation is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. He says that it is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. It is *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which the Enlightenment and the French Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realms. It is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived of as a deep, horizontal comradeship (Anderson, 1991: 6-7).

Anderson goes on to discuss how a nationality is derived, together with the development of the print media and through a long lasting consciousness- building exercise by the people in power. Deliberating on the concept of 'nation', he presents three paradoxes that have troubled the theorists of nationalism:

- (1) The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists.
- (2) The formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept in the modern world everyone can, should, will 'have' a nationality, as he or she 'has' a gender vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations, such that, by definition, 'Greek' nationality is sui

generis. (3) The 'political' power of nationalism vs. their philosophical poverty. (Anderson, 1990: 5)

2.2.4. Anthony D. Smith

Anthony D. Smith in his book *Nationalism and Modernism* (1998) attempts to look at the discussions of nation and nationalism against the backdrop of the debates about modernity. Though Smith's earlier book *Theories of Nationalism* (1971) did try to discuss the issue of modernity, it is in *Nationalism and Modernism* that he elaborates these discussions to include the contemporary theories. He sees nationalism and the creation of the nation-states as the inclusive and liberating force which broke down the various localisms of region, dialect, custom and clan across the continents. He feels that nationalism's appeal was popular and democratic and that it attacked feudal practices and oppressive imperial tyrannies and proclaimed the sovereignty of the people and the right of all peoples to-determine their own destinies, in states of their own.

Smith discusses the intellectual foundations of linking nationalism with the classical modernist paradigm. He believes that there are four major streams of influences on the coherent modernist approach to the understanding of nations and nationalism. These are Marxism, crowd psychology, Weberian (Max Weber) and Durkheimian (Emile Durkheim) streams of philosophy. Marxism, especially when the founding fathers were writing, identified particular nationalist movements in strategic terms, judging their 'progressive' or 'regressive' character in relation to a given revolutionary situation. According to Smith, for Marx, Engels, Lenin and their followers, nations and nationalism were inherent to the development of the modern capitalist era. They were to be understood as manifestations of European capitalism's need for new markets.

Smith believes that the third major influence on the modernist perspective of the debates of nations and nationalism is derived from the work of Max Weber. These were to become the central theme to classical modernism and its subsequent development.

Emile Durkheim's emphasis on community is the third influence on the classical modernist paradigm according to Smith. Durkheim believed that ethnicity and nationalism have a timeless quality about them.

2.3. Reasons for the Emergence of a Nation

There might be several inspiring factors in the emergence of every nation. Most of these reasons are politically oriented and they differ from one nation to another considerably. While sketching the history of the concept of nation and nationality, Benedict Anderson asserts that in Western Europe the eighteenth century marks the dawn of the age of nationalism. Interestingly, it also happens to be an age of the decline of all religious modes of thought, even though the two events are not immediately related. The religious modes of thought can also be considered as preceding the idea of the nation, as was the case with the innumerable dynasties that were ruling these endless geographical areas. But, to say that these were the only factors that paved the way to the rise of nationalism would be untenable. In the same way similar language, common geography and shared history are considered the deciding factors in the emergence of nations. There are instances when external forces (like the colonial powers and their rule in an alien land) inspired the national feelings.

2.3.1 Religion

A common religion was one of the main elements determining the rise and character of nations in the Old World - Calvinism helped to establish the Netherlands, Catholicism to form the nations of Spain, Poland and Ireland. However, religion is considered by some theoreticians of nationalism, as a force that can undermine the comprehensive civil sense and thus as a force which undermines the unity of the nation.

Another classical example for religion paving the way for nation formation is Israel. Through centuries the people of Israel were scattered all over Europe, but they always thought they would go back to the Promised Land according to the wishes of Moses. In fact the Jewish Diaspora community, before they reached Israel soon after the Second World War, were never in unison with the places they have previously lived in. When they first arrived in Israel, it was difficult for them to think in terms of a long history of individuals from other regions of the world, even though s/he was now an Israeli citizen because they did not share the same immediate history. Fifty odd years later the case must

have changed, and now their approach to the nation would be quite different from what it was when it was formed.

2.3.2 Geography

Another element in determining the people's rootedness in a common territory - an island becoming a nation like in the case of England and a river deciding the national character of Egypt. Dormant nationalities were reawakened to national life in the nineteenth century by the revived consciousness of their attachment to a historical soil, which their ancestors had tilled for many generations and in which they had been buried from time immemorial. If frontiers may affect the constitution, and thereby the internal life of a nation, they may affect the character of its projects. It is an understanding common to the people of a specific region that paves the way for geographical interventions in the formation of a nation. The effects of climate (which include more elements than simple temperature, such as modes of cultivation, lifestyles like clothing, and many a time even the food habits) not only throw light on the past development of a nation, they also have a practical and civic importance in the immediate present.

2.3.3 Language

A common language was considered a precondition for a nation's realization. It is presumed that people will choose to be united with others speaking the same language. Words are not only words, but also vehicles of associations. And the bond of common words and their common association can not only be a link between peoples in the present, but may even suggest the transmission to those peoples of some common substance of thought from a dim and forgotten past in which they once lived together.

However, most large nations and many medium and small ones have more than one language. Switzerland has five languages; India has more than a hundred distinctive languages. Hobsbawm dismisses the new linguistic nationalism centered on the vernacular by saying that it is a vested interest of the 'lesser examination- passing classes' (Hobsbawm, 1992:111).

2.3.4. Common History

In the case of the struggle for freedom, it is believed that the inspiration is always from the history of the country. It is through the glory of the past that the people identify themselves with the geographic territory that they are in. It is the binding force that primarily pushes the people who try to find out a way to get rid of the autocrat or an imperialist power. This is the reason why the constituted nation primarily becomes an emotional entity rather than the constraints of the topographical boundaries. It is the same with a person who tries to locate the national culture. He/she will have to look into the roots of the culture and the influence. Giving an insight into the people's struggle against imperialism and national culture's involvement in it Frantz Fanon writes,

Nothing to be ashamed of in the past, but rather dignity, glory and solemnity. The claim to a national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture[...] culture, extracted from the past to be displayed in all its splendor, is not necessarily that of his own country.
(Alessandrini, 1999: 169)

2.3.5 Other Factors Contributing to the Emergence of a Nation

In the case of newly formed African nations, it was the former territorial borders laid down by the European rulers that decided the nation rather than the linguistic unity or the history. Another way of forming a nation has been the economic determination of the constituents. This can be termed as the nations of the Far East (Cambodia and Philippines for example). It is considered to be a weak factor in influencing nation-building because the production and market value depend a lot on the economic powers who decide the market's intricacies. It is the same case with a feudal society which was considered as a humble material for building nation because it has been so decentralized. There are additional factors which determine the construction of nation like the race, literature, blood loyalty, immortal facticity, thought, custom, education among other factors. These open up a broad array of interesting topics but a detailed discussion of these factors are not appropriate to the scope of this chapter.

2.4. Problems in Approaching the Construction of Nation

Nations do not make states and nationalism; rather it is the other way round. But sadly enough the approach has always been top down in academic and social debates on nationalism. The view from below is to focus on the persons who are the objects of the actions and propaganda of governments and the spokespersons. Their view, however, is very difficult to discover. One usually tends to look at a modern nation from what it is today and trace back to its origin the economic, political and social conditions that are located in the past. In the case of a citizen, it is always difficult to pinpoint what is in his or her mind, so the tracing back fails because the national identification is not always a concrete one. The national identification is a temporary and transitory one in the case of a subject in modern nation states. But it is never the mind-set of the subject that decides nationality. On the other hand, it is the forces of power that decide nationality. Hence, nationality and nation are thrust upon the individual subject. A personal concern or individual preference is rather an illusion in these circumstances. A striking example of such a preference not being taken into account can be seen in the separation of Germany into two separate entities after the Second World War by the former Soviet regime.

2.5. Marxist Tradition and the National Question

Let us look briefly at the Marxist approach to 'nation' and 'nationalism'. According to the early Marxian ideals, instead of pinning faith on nationalism, the nations of the world should aspire to a socialist whole. Subsequently Marxism has changed into several interpretations of the same ideal. "Marxists profess to be internationalists, and yet everywhere we find Marxists acting as nationalists" (Davis, 1978: 3). This can be termed as a contradiction at the outset, but probing further one might find a significant attempt to fit nationalism into Marxist theory. Marxists see nationalism as an important movement which is primarily political and cultural. Though Marxist theory is interested predominantly in the conflict of class and economic organization, the par Determination", national ideology ('the national question' as they would call it) can be used to cover up imperialist policies. Adhering to the claims of Engels, Lenin argues that the course of historical development has swallowed up a number of small and non-viable nations which

had been determined by the "language and sympathies" of the population. For Engels these frontiers are "natural".

Louis Althusser provides valuable insights into the distinction between and the functioning of the political constituents of state. 'State' in Althusser's discussions should be understood as the only legitimate political organization and the dominant vehicle of collective identity within a nation. His analysis of the state apparatuses should be seen in the light of the Marxist theory of the state. He follows the *Communist Manifesto* and *Eighteenth Brumaire* to a large extent to formulate his ideas of the apparatuses within the system of the state.

Althusser discusses the ideological apparatuses (like the school) and the repressive apparatuses (police for example) within the state in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. He argues that the repressive State Apparatus, in the perception of the Marxist tradition, belongs entirely to the public domain and functions rather 'violently'- (by *repression*). On the other hand, the ideological apparatuses function 'by ideology' in the private domain. The Police, the courts, the prisons, and the army belong to the former, but even such an apparatus, in Althusser's opinion, may tend to function through ideology. That is, at times, even the repressive apparatuses seek an ideological mode of functioning just as ideological institutions, in the last instance, have had resort to violent measures. In other words, it is a case which cannot be put in a watertight compartment, but which overlaps and incorporates both ideological and repressive methods (Althusser, 1977: 131-141).

Another interesting way of approaching the question of identity is by examining the relationship between the subject and the nation. It becomes a question of power relations as well as a question of political philosophy when one goes into the intricacies of the nature of this relationship. There is an exceedingly important equation between the subject which is in the periphery and the nation (which is believed to be the center of all the power equations. There is no straightforward parameter to gauge this relationship so that it can be dismissed by declaring that it is a kind of love-hate relationship. The ontological problem here is that the subject cannot exist without the existence of the power structure, i.e. the nation and at the same time the nation also cannot exist without the existence of the subject. If one is not reducing the socio-political conception of

subjectivity to individuality, then the subjectivity opens up a road to the understanding of the objective. A political enquiry into the problem will throw light on the impossibility of identity constructions, since a full identity is a myth and one *is* always on the lookout for constructing newer identities. Thus the synthesis with the object of identification becomes elusive.

The way to crack this difficult puzzle is by introducing the concept of "subjectivity". Lacan develops this concept from the psychological idea of split which is in an embryonic form in Freud (Freud's concept is that the subject of psychoanalysis *is* the subject as structured around a radical split or rather the internal division of the psyche). Lacan develops it in terms of the split between the human subject and the conscious ego. Lacan's 'subject' cannot be taken for the 'individual' or the 'conscious subject' in everyday discourse. Lacan argues that there is always a split in subjective positions.

It is obvious that the subject assumes different subject positions in the socio-political realm, and the subject always confronts a fragmented, uncoordinated sense resulting in alienation. If we stretch the argument to the question of national identity, we may find that the identification with the nation is just one of the several subject positions that the subject borrows. In his book *Lacan and the Political* (1999) Stavrkakis discusses the Lacanian concept of symbolic and imaginary codes and its relevance to contemporary social and political phenomena. He says:

If the imaginary, the field of specular images, of spatial unities and totalized representations, is always built on an illusion which is ultimately alienating for the child, his or her only recourse is to turn to the symbolic level, seeking in language a means to acquire a stable identity. (StavrKakis, 1999: 20)

Thus, the nationalism of the modern day can be classified into four categories on the lines of Horace B. Davis and propose a reminiscent way of discussing the whole problem of the relationship between the individual and a nation. The classification attempted here is far from exhaustive and contains overlapping categories.

1. The nationalism of people with a long experience of concurrent development of state power and national consciousness, with citizenship determining nationality (Western Europe);
2. The nationalism of countries without a political experience of long duration but with a common language and a common self-image [Italy and Germany]:
3. The nationalism of countries such as those of southeastern Europe [Bulgaria], without a common political experience of long duration and often without an ethnically homogeneous territory, in which the religion of historical association is usually an important determinant of national consciousness; and
4. The nationalism of anti-colonialism and of the drive for modernity generally associated with the Third World [Argentina, India] but manifest also in southeastern Europe. (Davis, 1978: 5)

CHAPTER THREE

3. CONSTRUCTION of AMERICAN NATION

"In the beginning all the world was America"

--John Locke

This chapter attempts to analyze the construction of the United States of America as a nation. Two fundamental issues with respect to the conceptualizing of the American nation are: one, the problem of analyzing the popular concept of American nationality, and two, the problem of identification or rather the difficulty of comparing the popular construction of nation with a number of writings and a few instances from the popular culture. While attempting such a study I will have to specify the span of time I am interested in, since any study of a specific nation with respect to the construction of nation will have to be temporally restricted. Though the issue is viewed from a historical perspective, the focus will be on the decade starting from 1970, for from 1970 onwards there is a characteristic fissure in the conceptualization of the nation in the United States. And I will further argue and try to illustrate that there is a distinctive difference from the earlier ideals which were completely shattered by the seventies. The reasons for this can be seen in many areas of human endeavor in different walks of life in the United States.

Approaching America is not without problems, especially for a non-American from a far removed place and context without first-hand knowledge of the realities pertaining to it. Mason suggests a theoretical solution to this issue. He says:

The way in which observers of America resorted to the world that was familiar to them is a timeless response by self when faced with the challenge of the other. In using the elements familiar to them, they were in fact engaged in a double process of reduction and construction. In constructing the New World, resemblance was linked with imagination to avoid the endless monotony of the same. The result is a continuing process of construction and reconstruction of a world, which we may therefore call an imaginary world. The frame of reference remains the Old World. (Mason, 1990:25)

He also adds that there is no way in which one can approach America "as it really is" and such an attempt can only be futile. Furthermore he adds that there is no 'essential' Europe (and I would add Asia too) and that it is through discursive practices like texts and images that we make out what Europe is. It is the same case with America: the discourses on America, as presented in texts and images, *are* America.

3.1. Origins of the American Nation

One can locate an interesting figure of speech used in the early national period in the United States of America, as it is actually a nation which is "spoken into being" (Looby, 1996: 4). In fact, this figuration has a densely impacted connotation. The most prominent interpretation of this figure of speech is that the United States is made out of words; without specifying whether they are written or spoken (The importance given to the spoken word in the American society in a later period can be seen in the popularity of the TV talk shows, in 1970s "The Declaration of Independence" is at the same time a declaration (to mean something *spoken* firmly in order to be asserted) and was *written*, as it were (by way of carefully thought and crafted documentation), by the leaders of the war of independence (It has to be remembered at this point that there was a committee constituted to draft the "Declaration" with Thomas Jefferson as the head.)

Nationalism in America is different from the usual pattern of national movements in many other countries. In fact, it is only in the case of America that one can noticeably locate the roots of nationalist movements. Since it has a very recent history, it is easy for the researcher to go back to the origins of the nationalist movements in the United States of America because most of these movements are carefully documented and easily accessible to the researcher

One of the major boosters for the American nationalist movement has been the emergence of the press begun in the first half of the eighteenth century, the beginnings of the colonial periodical press. There were at least twenty-two weekly newspapers in wide circulation in the period between (1713 to 1745) (Degler, 1986: 44). These weeklies were circulated in seven of the thirteen colonies, among a meagre minority. Though the viewpoint was strongly English, these papers linked together the ruling circles in the

various colonies. The value of these newspapers in the building of national consciousness is gauged very high by the historians of the pre-Revolutionary period. These newspapers also addressed the egalitarian sentiments that had gripped the people of the colonies because most of them could read and write . Thus, it can be observed that the people of the thirteen colonies were fond of ideas like freedom, democracy and equality as early as 1700.

However, the Anglo-Americans established a nation without the support of any of those elements (such as a common religion or a historically defined territory) that are generally supposed to constitute a separate nation (Following Hans Kohn I use the term "Anglo-American" in this chapter. The American War of Independence has been viewed by Kohn as basically and originally a movement of the English speaking Americans-it Is also important thus that the American War of Independence was prominent in the states which were under the direct rule of the British empire. However, the term "Anglo-America" raises with regard to the "original" inhabitants of America. Nevertheless, their contribution to the establishment of the nation is minimal given the various ways through which they were marginalized.

Unmistakably, even English-speaking Americans were not of the same descent. Nonetheless, historically speaking, the first settlers were mostly British. As Michel Guillaume Jean de Crevecoer remarked,

Liah Greenfeld takes into account the national identity which the English settlers carried with them when they came to America. As a result of the influence of these English settlers, according to Greenfeld, the nationality of American identity and consciousness demands no explanation. It has its deep roots unquestionably in the oldest of the modern nation states ever established. He adds,

They necessarily conceived of the community to which they belonged as a nation, the idea of the nation was an American inheritance. National identity in America thus preceded not only the formation of the specific American identity (the American sense of uniqueness), but of the institutional framework of the American nation, and even of the national territory, all of which are conventionally thought of as foundations of nationality. Because of this singular development, the

symbolic nature of nationality and its essential autonomy from material or "objective" ethnic and structural factors, is demonstrated here with particular clarity. (Greenfeld, 1997: 21)

In order to interpret the American national character and its underlying conception one has to take into consideration the speculative vision and faulty empiricism of America because the theories of nationhood and nationalism in America blend both of them. In the case of America, the speculative vision of history is based more on tradition or convenience than on fact. This can be seen in the long belief in the "American Dream". Owing to the deterioration of the eighteenth century European ideal of universal man, there can also be found a search for human beings of diverse cultures in the thoughts of the American intelligentsia.

The America of the earlier period can be termed predominantly Puritan. Americans are seen as shaped by the ideas from England and the realities of the New World environment. American thought and behavior were derived from Puritanism. The belief was that God delivered the Puritans safely and he would ratify the covenant but also expect a strict performance of the Articles contained in it. Thus the initial thought in America was related to the Puritan ideals and these ideals had a long and rather unhindered life till at least the first half of the twentieth century.

Important elements in the formation of a nation elsewhere, above all, before the nineteenth century were a common religion and a historically defined territory. Anglo-America had neither. There was no common religion in the thirteen colonies (there were confronting sects of Christianity like Puritans, Protestants, Catholics, and Calvinists. Even by the middle of the eighteenth century religious diversity was recognized as peculiarly American. Christianity underwent profound changes during the eighteenth century. This change was more directed toward secularization and to weaken the influence of religion and the church on the life of the people. One effect of this change can be seen in the decline of Puritanism in New England just before the independence. However, this did not change the effects of Puritanical influence on the American citizen.

In fact, Anglo-America showed even then a unique liberty and diversity in religious life, different therein from all other countries of Western civilization. However, no single religion could be identified with Anglo-America, no single religion inspired its independence, even though the puritans who established themselves in New England made a major contribution to the independent spirit of the Anglo-Americans. As a matter of fact, religious liberty was considered one of the driving forces that made people migrate to America. This religious liberty later became a central element in the emerging sense of American Uniqueness . This notion of religious liberty led to several other kinds of liberty-as time went on. And it was on this notion that the migration picked up momentum. But the state of liberty, which later proved a romantic, unachievable "dream", was the concern of most people in the later part of the twentieth century.

The English settlers in North America in their opposition to the mother country did not act out of the motives which generally moved people in the Age of Nationalism-that means, after the rise of Napoleon-to fight for their nationhood against foreign rulers. The American War for Independence ought not to be compared as it is done so frequently-with any of the later European wars of national liberation or with twentieth century movements for colonial independence. The Anglo-Americans fought England not because they felt themselves alienated from the mother country, but because they were English (Greenfeld, "American Nationalism" 25). In their struggle they did not fight for rights not possessed before; they were upholding English constitutional rights, based upon the English revolutions of the seventeenth century.

Benedict Anderson brings in another dimension to the early nationalism in the United States of America in connection with what he calls "creole nationalisms of the Americas":

For on the one hand, the American states were for many decades weak, effectively decentralized, and rather modest in their educational ambitions. On the other hand, the American societies, in which 'white' settlers were counterpoised to 'black' slaves and half-exterminated 'natives,' were internally riven to a degree quite unmatched in Europe. Yet the imagining of that fraternity, without which the reassurance of fratricide cannot be born, shows up remarkably early, and not without

a curious authentic popularity. In the United States of America this paradox is particularly well exemplified. (Anderson, 1991:202)

Nathan Glazer probes further the same idea of "fraternity", which Anderson discusses, and adds another dimension with regard to the social relationships in America. In an attempt to place the ethnic groups in the national outlook of the United States of America, in his essay entitled "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity-and Ethnicity" Glazer argues:

It has always been difficult for Americans to understand the revolutionary slogan of France, "liberty, equality, fraternity." The first two terms are clear enough: they frame the central issues faced by society and polity in the modern age, neatly juxtaposed and in some sort of inevitable conflict. We all understand that the desire for liberty-for freedom of action-regularly comes into conflict with equality, the overwhelming tendency in modern society to ensure that each man (and woman, and perhaps child) count for one, and no more than one. The conflict can be more or less sharp, but it is impossible except through sophistry to eliminate it[...] the notion that the freedom of individuals was in some substantial measure reduced by the modest taxes that were then required for these jointly determined national efforts to introduce a minimal level of decent living seemed extreme, ideological, and outlandish. (Glazer, 1986: 209)

For Glazer American society has never learned to conceive or practice "fraternity". He argues that this lack of "fraternity" and accommodating temperament is the root cause of most of the ethnic conflicts in America. "Fraternity" can be understood as an issue that was of no great concern in America from the days of the establishment of the nation itself. Lack of "fraternity" becomes more evident when one tries to locate it in the context of the complex interactions between the several social groups and ethnic minorities in the United States. Things only became more complex once immigration reached its peak in the first half of the twentieth century.

3.2. The Melting-Pot: Immigration and the United States

Immigration has always been a phenomenon which many sociologists have shown great interest in. Their major area of research is regarding the numbers of immigrants in the United States. The obvious rider to this question is how the increase in immigration through centuries has changed the society and the national character of America. Carl Degler puts it this way:

Thanks to the massive influx of immigrants from non-English countries, the ethnic character of the colonies was markedly altered in the course of the four or five decades before the Revolution. It has been calculated that by 1776 as much as one half and perhaps more of the population was of non-English origin. This represented more than just the beginning of a long history of diverse immigration into America; it marked the establishment of an ethnic pattern which then, as now, has set America off from England and other European countries. (Degler , 1986: 54)

In 1908, Israel Zangwill, a British national, wrote a play about the immigration experience that gave Americans a term for this special phenomenon. He called the whole phenomenon *The Melting Pot*. (Canadians have a similar term; "Mosaic" which denotes the existence of diversity within the society.) It was in the 1830s that the immigration from Britain reached its high point. This increase was basically because of the encouragement of the cotton traders who had to return to America with largely empty ships after selling all their goods in England. Even though these ships were meant for trading and not congenial for the travelers there were a large number of immigrants on each of their return journeys. People from all over Europe started migrating by the middle of the nineteenth century. In twenty years (1830-1850) the proportion of foreign-born immigrants in America rose from one in a hundred during the time of independence to one in ten.

By the second half of the nineteenth century there was an increase in the immigration of the people from other countries too. There was a steady increase in the numbers from Australia, Argentina, New Zealand, Greece, Portugal, Turkey, Mexico, the Caribbean, China, and Japan. The immigrant community used to live in the factory

towns like Wisconsin, Manhattan, New York and Washington DC. It is after the economic depression of the end of the nineteenth century that they started moving into other unexplored parts of America.

The increase in immigration has influenced the language in particular and the culture in general of America. One can locate the wide-ranging influence of the Dutch language in "American English" (*boom* and *bumpkin* for example have their roots in the Dutch language). There is comparatively no more than a low linguistic influence of German and Yiddish, even though the influence of these nationals on the cultural and political realm is much larger and considerably stronger.

It is imperative to analyze the immigrants' construction of America and their loyalty to the nation. According to Greenfeld the reasons for the immigrants' loyalty to America and the process in which it is formed throws light on the notion of national loyalty in general. The immigrant's commitment did not derive from the love of country; it derived from the uplifting, dignifying effects of liberty and equality, the exhilarating lure of opportunity, and the enjoyment or even the expectation of a greater prosperity.

Even from the early days of the American nation people of African origin were encouraged to spread freely. Initially they were mostly from the Caribbean, brought to work in the plantations and for other physical labor. When there was more demand there was additional import of slaves from African countries. The additional import was related to the prosperity of plantations. However, in the South they were treated as animals. Even in the Northern provinces of America, though they enjoyed freedom, they scarcely enjoyed the fruits of democracy. The Southern plantation engaged a number of mulattos too as bonded laborers.

Initially, the word "American" was an unambiguous reference only to nationality when it was applied to a relatively homogeneous social body consisting of white immigrants from the British Isles, with relatively small numbers from nearby European countries. When the numbers of those not of British origin began to rise, the word "American" became a far more complicated one.

Nevertheless, the so called 'original' Americans became "old" Americans, or "old stock", or "white Anglo-Saxon Protestants," or some other identification which indicated they were not immigrants or descendants of recent immigrants. These 'original' Americans already had a frame in their minds, which became a frame in reality that placed and ordered those who came after them. Those who were like them could easily join them. It was important to be white, of British origin, and Protestant during that time. If one was all three, then, even if one was an immigrant, one was not really taken for an immigrant, or not for long.

The common and largely stereotypical impression about all the 'colored' communities was that they were more than happy with good food and a chance to sing and dance. No one, until Abraham Lincoln entered the scene, cared about their status as human beings. Even thinking about the political and social equality of blacks and whites was considered taboo. Even up to the present day, Hollywood films and popular soap operas on television tend to present a stereotypical representation of the colored in the society.

It was "Buffalo Soldier" (C, a popular song by Bob Marley, and the legendary singer from Jamaica that expressed the cheated feeling of an Afro-American in America. He reminds them that they have been forcefully stolen/taken away from Africa and brought to America.

"Buffalo Soldier" was co-written by Bob Marley and N.G. Williams (King Sporty). It recollects the true story of four post-Civil War regiments of the U.S. Army- the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry. These units had black privates under the command of white Supremes. They fought for almost twenty-five years against the American ethnic groups of Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa, Apache, Ute and Sioux. In the end, fourteen key black campaigners, whom the Indians had dubbed "buffalo soldiers," were awarded the Medal of Honor as part of a public relations move to justify and glorify the genocide of Native Americans, underlining the U.S. government's policy of "manifest destiny". Such were the ploys that, then as now, comprised the politics of neutralization (White, 1996:180). The song should be seen in the larger perspective of "Black Nationalism" and "Black Empowerment" movements during the 1970s, where they stressed the need to go back to the roots of the race.

What we gather out of the endless number of popular African-American stories and songs is that the nation that talks elaborately of liberty and equality is not the "Garden of Eden" it is sometimes in reality it is a nation which closes its eyes when it comes to the point where it has to take into consideration of two or more ethnicities.

Nicholas Lemann in his brilliant piece of narrative history that traces the twentieth century mass migration of black people from the American rural South of America to the urban North and its effects on the nature of life, politics and society, stated perceptively in the concluding chapter of his *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America*:

Thinking about the history of American race relations can easily give rise to bitterness and fatalism, but it is encouraging to remember how often in the past a hopeless situation, which appeared to be completely impervious to change, finally did change for the better. The framers of the Constitution, idealists though they were, couldn't imagine an American nation without slavery-but in the long run slavery was ended. In this century legal segregation looked like an unfortunate given impossible to eliminate, until well after the end of World War II. That black America could become predominately middle class, non-Southern, and non-agrarian would have seemed inconceivable until a bare two generations ago. (Lemann, 1995: 343)

Lemann also puts forward the theory that the racial problems in the American society were addressed only when there was a strong sense of national community. He believes that the Civil War was one such time, at least in the United States, and the long stretch between the New Deal and the Vietnam War was another; these periods brought us emancipation and civil rights. Hobsbawm, on the other hand suggests that ethnic groups are really failed nations, since their credentials as nations have failed to be successfully established. However, that should not mean that the ethnic groups should be considered alien to American nationality. Instead, what is needed is a larger perspective of nationality, within which, being a member of an ethnic minority shall work as an advantage.

The end of free immigration by the 1920s and the shared experiences of the Depression and of the First World War combined all the ethnic elements into an identical mixture. But the non-whites, especially blacks, have not merged into the new mixture that made up the American nation. It is an obvious fact that from 1920s onwards the most telling and obvious change that had occurred is that life, in the material dimension of the term, has, for most people, become more comfortable. Providing a more compact view on the decades from 1920 to 1970s, Daniel Snowman deliberates on the change in the value system and the overall fabric of the society:

With the affluence of modern decades and the-technology through which it was mediated there came a subtle shift in the values and attitudes of the people whose lives it was helping to alter. The more fundamental values were not substantially altered; the traditional American beliefs in liberty and equality, in hard work and deferred gratification, and in the US Constitution and the achievements of the Founding Fathers probably remained largely unshaken, as did beliefs about the sanctity of human life and of the social institutions upon which American civilization was based. But there also developed alongside these traditional values and in somewhat uneasy harness with them a set of attitudes which, while by no means totally 'new', had nonetheless not received quite the same widespread emphasis before. (Snowman, 1978: 209-210)

By the latter half of the twentieth century people started believing in the process in which the American citizens are moved by taking into account those values on which the culture rests. At this point the thinking with regard to the American national character has come to the generalization that it is impossible to propound a single model of an American citizen and that the individual is a collective of several diverse cultures in view of the increase in immigration (the melting pot theory). One needs to look at the concept of the American Dream in this context to understand the unifying element of the same diverse individualities. The term American dream is discussed in more detail in the later part of this chapter.

3.3. Baudrillard and Eco: the "Outsider's Point of View"

America appears to be different things to different people. Baudrillard once said that the whole of America is like a Disney Land. In his book *America* he states:

America is the original version of modernity [...] America ducks the question of origins; it cultivates no origin or mythical authenticity; it has no past and no founding truth. Having known no primitive accumulation of time, it lives in a perpetual present. Having seen no slow, centuries-long accumulation of principle of truth, it lives in perpetual simulation, in a perpetual present of signs. (Baudrillard, 1989:76)

Baudrillard thinks that the charm and power of American culture—he in fact wonders whether it is 'uncultured'-derived from the sudden and unprecedented materialization of models which the European intellectuals consider as the uttermost values of democracy and technological progress. Comparing America with Europe he claims that as a nation and a people America has achieved modernity without the terrors and ambivalence of enlightenment. Repeatedly throughout *America* Baudrillard asserts that Europe and America are "radically different" (Smart, 1993: 62) and adds that all the myths of modernity are American. That is the reason why he calls America a nation where Utopia has been achieved.

Though critics observe in Baudrillard a politically uncommitted, whimsical, and depthless approach to the whole project of *America* and consider it as "offensive to academics" (Turner, 1993: 152), it is nonetheless true that he offers a kind of sociological backbone to the contemporary studies of the construction of nation. His views on America as a nation and as a people are drawn on the lines of his ideas on society, knowledge and power. His construct of America has to be viewed further in the light of his ideas on modernity and postmodernity. As a consequence, his *America* brings forth the concepts and notions of the traveler who has immense knowledge of the correlation between power, politics and ideology. He feels that as a nation America had no history or strong and long cultural identity to boast of. Hence, he calls it a nation of "primitive society".

Umberto Eco observes the entertainment industry of the United States of America with much enthusiasm and provides invaluable insights into the way in which things are perceived. As part of the travelogue and cultural commentary in *Travels in Hyperreality*, he observes:

We must understand, however, from what depth of popular sensibility and craftsmanship today's photorealists draw their inspiration and why they feel called upon to force this tendency to the point of exacerbation. There is, then, an America of furious hyperreality, which is not that of Pop art, of Mickey Mouse, or of Hollywood movies. There is another, more secret America (or rather, just as public, but snubbed by the European visitor and also by the American intellectual); and it creates somehow a network of references and influences that finally spread also to the products of high culture and the entertainment industry. It has to be discovered. (Eco, 1998:7)

Eco thus believes that America still holds promises for those who search for them and the person who searches for these promises is made a consumer rather than a person who can sit back and relax. However, this search for promises never reaches the final destination according to him. That, for Eco, constitutes the means and ends for the person who seeks. In a way these destinations and search are derived out of spectacles like this Disney Land and the endless number of Museums which carry the copies of original works from the world over.

Not everyone needs to have the same idea about the United States of America, especially when one looks at the number of wars and catastrophes that are now part of its history. From a 'nowhere' nation it has achieved the material progress that it boasts of in the present day. Far from being called a nation of settlers has proved itself to become a nation of successful people. We get such colorful pictures about the nation through the press, media, films, fiction and other possible means and signifiers of communication—fast cars, McDonalds, Kentucky Chicken, Hollywood and recently the Silicon Valley. The question then is whether this is the America which one gets to know when one is knee deep in that country, as a traveler, as a settler, or as a citizen.

In the contemporary period many of the most hallowed myths of nation have been challenged and criticized in feature films that contest the basic premises of American ideology—the myth of manifest destiny, for example, or of the progressive extension of liberty longed to displace the lived identity of race or of the existence of a single, homogeneous nation extending from "sea to shining sea". Even within mainstream Hollywood filmmaking (though it functions independently of state support or government guidelines), there has been an unparalleled expression of national culture, one that has molded into the self-image of the nation in decisive and explicit ways (Conversely, Hollywood defines itself purely as an entertainment industry with its manifold marketing possibilities unlike the film industries of countries like France, Australia and Canada which utilize a film form that presents the national life). Robert Burgoyne argues that Hollywood cinema expresses both the mythic and the prosaic dimensions of nation (Burgoyne, 1997: 124).

Nevertheless, the Hollywood genre system can be perceived as an all-inclusive arena which defines what passes as social reality in America. The foundational narratives of nation are increasingly being contested by films that open up the locked doors of the national past and that emphasize the histories forgotten or excluded from dominant accounts.

3.4. The American Dream

It would be appropriate to look at the background and different manifestations of the concept of 'The American Dream' at this juncture. The birth, rise and fall of the American Dream strongly corresponds to the cultural history of the United States of America. Perhaps we can say that there is no nation without a dream. These various kinds of dreams might be at several levels, sometimes they might be at the level of collective hopes, at other times they might be just individual ideals. However, in the United States, the Dream has acquired a very particular meaning. From the early years of the American nation, individual hopes, plans and ideas showed a tendency to amalgamate into a complex configuration of ideals that were later called the "American Dream".

Nevertheless, the term is not easy to define. Some commentators on American society believe that it cannot be defined unequivocally. The dream is an irrational collective hope rather than a logical notion. Specifically the term "American Dream" includes in it numerous and at the same time overtly contradictory perceptions namely (i) the traditional ethics of success, (ii) a utopia of some kind or simply a hope for a better national future and, (iii) the equivalent of the so-called "American way of life.

If one tries to define the American Dream in accordance with the "Declaration of Independence" it could be as follows: the American Dream is a representation of the national democratic development that includes individual hopes for everybody in achieving success, equal opportunities, and the pursuit of happiness (Shestakov, 1984: 584). This representation went through a number of modifications depending on the concrete historical periods. This was the collective dream, which constituted the enduring hope that the nation would progress in accordance with the "truths, ends and purposes" set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, especially its preamble and the Bill of Rights. The ideological and moral connotations that it had gathered over the years range from the propagandist slogans of the democratic ideals through personal success stories of the "self-made man" to all kinds of American exceptionalism and to the power-play rhetoric of the presidents.

Henry Adams in *History of USA* (1884) is believed to have used this term-the 'American Dream'-for the first time. Even after a century, it is one of the permanent themes of American creativity. However, the approach to the Dream need not necessarily be always optimistic. It varies from the belief in material progress and individual freedom to the nightmarish depictions of despair mostly in the post-war period. The recent approach to the American Dream is neither absolutely optimistic nor outright pessimistic. It is a fusion of both. The people who react to the dream are no longer just heralding the great American expectations; they are, at the same time, criticizing the 'Dream' that turned into a 'nightmare'.

If we observe the progression of the American Dream through the ages it becomes easy to understand that it lost most of its shine in the culture of the 1970s. Norman Mailer wrote in 1979: in the 70s we, Americans, had no dreams. Perhaps that was the reason of all our troubles. The last decade we stood like a cow chewing anew

the exciting and apocalyptic events of the 60s. I hope that the 80s will be quite different. This state of the American Dream in the 1970s was brought about because of the crises that engulfed the country which led to a crisis of faith like the ethnic/racial fights, the moral questions that were being raised by keeping in mind the Vietnam War, economic deterioration and so on. Quoting Anthony Smith, Smart argues that the continuing prominence of American culture and the neglect of the dark side of the 'American Dream' is the total lack of any consideration of the relationship between processes of global diffusion and economic and cultural forms of imperialism. Charles C. Alexander noted, the realization of the American dream lay not in central direction and coordination but in a regional approach to national problems". He proclaimed this in the backdrop of the emergence of regionalism as "something of an intellectual fashion and almost an ideology *for* its governmental and academic proponents" in the 1920s and 1930s.

Consequently, sociologists have tried to look at the apparent rise in violence in America, and the American people's inability to react to it, with respect to the rise of the American television industry and the psychology of the youth during the 1970s.

3.5. American Nation: The twentieth century issues

For most of the twentieth century and in the twentieth, the USA has been the giant of the western world. From the so-called Jazz Age of the 1920s, the Great Depression and the New Deal of the 1930s, the war years, the Eisenhower era, through the domestic dramas of the 1960s, and on to Vietnam and Watergate, modern American history has been packed with spectacular incidents, colorful personalities, and powerful social gains.

Incidents that mark the twentieth century in American history are not always one-dimensional. From "the land of optimism", which it was till the early twentieth century, it had become a nation dreaded by the citizens of the United States and other countries alike. The use of the nuclear bomb, the Vietnam debacle, and the Cold War are considered to go against the foundational ethics of the United States itself. However, the foreign policy alone cannot be blamed for the change in the character of the nation. Events like economic depression in the 1920s and 1930s, the assassination of President Kennedy in

1963, the race riots in the 1960s, the antiwar protests in the major cities and universities 1960 and 1970s; and Watergate are jolts that cannot be erased from the collective memory of the nation. The effects of all these events were exemplary in terms of the changes in the construction of nation in the late twentieth century.

Looking back at the twentieth century state of nationalism in the United States from the point of view of the later 1990s Krakau suggests that there is a distressing feeling among the citizens that the nation's security is in danger given the change in the political circumstances elsewhere. The post-war celebration of national identity has made way to more crucial questions of searching one's own resources and the need for basic security. The re- emergence of this perspective, the world over, according to Krakau, will inevitably generate or reinforce an already resurgent new nationalism. The very efforts to neutralize (or endanger) this tendency might produce the opposite effect in strengthening the basis of a new nationalism . This kind of a tendency can be observed in the case of the neo nationalist movements in the United States too. One immediate example is the emergence of the "black nationalist movement" (a detailed discussion of which follows in the later part of this chapter).

3.6. The American Nation: The 1970s

American society was not qualitatively different in the 1970s from what it had been in 1960s; and there is nothing magical about the turn of a decade. However, American social and cultural history including the construct of nation does fall into a reasonably cogent pattern since about 1970.

There were times in 1968 when it looked as though the social tensions and conflicts of the 1960s had reached a pitch of such intensity that the very fabric of American society was threatened. Urban riots and political assassinations were becoming more frequent, race relations gave every appearance of deteriorating, student disaffection returned, in 1968 came the Tet offensive. Later that spring, public opinion polls began to show for the first time a majority of Americans opposing the war, and anti-war presidential candidates like Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy garnered much of the popularity that Lyndon

Johnson had eroded a few years earlier. Kennedy defeated McCarthy in most of the primary elections and immediately after his final and most vital victory in California in June was shot dead. By the time of the riots in Chicago at the time of the Democratic National Convention in August, an observer might have been forgiven for wondering whether American society was not engaged in some sort of self-destructive spasm. Furthermore, as the repeated volleys of bitter rhetoric and bursts of furious activity helped to alienate social and political groups from one another, it was hard to see either a Humphrey or Nixon administration really getting to grips with problems of a scale and an intensity that were no longer susceptible to merely political, administrative and economic solutions. (Snowman, 1978: 178).

This view on the background of the 1970s' political as well as social scenario is telling in very many ways. Nathan Glazer observes "A common theme [that] seemed to underlie a variety of issues that agitated the country in the 1970s. This idea seems to be in vogue during the discussion on the relationships between ethnic groups in the 1960s and 1970s. The sociological theories of American nationalism suggest that there have been interrelated impacts on the American nation with regards to different historical incidents. In the 1970s these impacts became evident in almost every field of human endeavor. The major causes of concern were the Vietnam War vis-a-vis the increasing unrest among the minorities. At such a crucial juncture, as at all times when there is an unrest, thinkers started looking back at the fabrics that became part of the American nation.

3.7. Vietnam War and after

During the time of the Vietnam War there were protests all over the United States. Television had its own role to play in escalating the growing displeasure among the citizen. They showed footage from the war front time and time again. The casualties were high in number: In all, 56,000 Americans died in Vietnam and 270,000 were wounded in battle. All these led to a kind of divide within the society. There were confronting groups who argued for and against the war. One group believed that it was thoroughly unfair for the United States to attack a nation which was not even half its own size. One of them

was Mohammed Ali who refused to go to war even though it threatened his career. There were radical antiwar activists, who were at the same time part of the establishment. Even the housewives took part in the protest processions. Among the African American intellectuals there was growing displeasure. During the war and as a result of it a belief in integration and assimilation gave way to a belief in separatism. Polenberg here refers to the Black Nationalist movements and the like.

Polenberg discusses how the Vietnam War changed the national consciousness in the United States of America forever:

[...]the public's capacity for indignation was largely, if not entirely, exhausted. It was not surprising that after entering a war the justification for which many came to perceive as at best morally ambiguous, after carrying on this war in a manner that demonstrated the inadequacy of American military power, after withdrawing from the war in a way that exposed the disproportion between the lethal means employed and the ends sought, many people came to regard deception in high places as the rule rather than exception. But Vietnam produced more than an estrangement from the government, for, as Daniel Bell has argued, 'the rejection of the government led many to reject the nation.'" (Polenberg , 1980: 219-220).

A congressional committee concluded their report on the general downfall in the civil society thus: Careers were ruined, friendships severed, reputations sullied, businesses bankrupted and, in some cases, lives endangered.

3.8. Disruption of National Ideals

In order to have a fair idea of how the American nation changed its color with respect to the national ideals during the course of the twentieth century and further in the 1970s one needs to look at the history of the USA from the early years after the revolution through to the present day. The post-revolutionary (1780-1800) period of American history is marked by extreme political conflicts and disunity among the citizens, as well as by a powerful countervailing aspiration to national solidarity-that is, by the unresolved problem of national unity. Trying to find a possible answer to the

question how America failed as a nation from a historical perspective, Hanna Arendt recalls Jefferson to prove the moment of departure:

The failure of post-revolutionary thought to remember the revolutionary spirit and to understand it conceptually was preceded by the failure of the revolution to provide it with a lasting institution. The revolution [...] had come to an end with the establishment of a republic which, according to the men of the revolution, was "the only form of government which is not eternally at open or secret war with the rights of mankind". (Arendt, 1973: 232)

She further argues that In this republic, as it presently turned out, there was no space reserved, no room left for the exercise of precisely those qualities which had been instrumental in building it. She considers the problem as inbuilt in the construction of nation itself. She suggests, If foundation was the aim and the end of revolution, then the revolutionary spirit was not merely the spirit of beginning a permanent and enduring; a lasting institution, embodying this spirit and encouraging it to new achievements, would be self-defeating.

Unlike World War II and to a lesser extent the Cold War, which encouraged feelings of unity and a sense of national purpose, the war in Vietnam produced fragmentation, alienation, confrontation and a greater perplexity in identifying what America actually means. At almost the same time the racial questions also were gaining importance. The importance of the time can be perceived as the critical point in the history when America's foreign policy and the home policy were being questioned by its own people. The Vietnam War thus acted as an eye opener to many other problems as well including minority rights.

3.9. 1950 and 1964, the Civil Rights Acts

In the US, social and political change after 1945, and especially after the Korean War, led to a strong civil rights movement, which achieved considerable success in the 1950s and 1960s, after a fierce struggle. The political objectives that were central to the civil rights movements were the slogans 'equal opportunity' and abolition of adverse

ethnic and racial discrimination. This movement by and large resulted in the Civil Rights Acts of 1950 and 1965. The 1950 act cannot be considered a successful one (the Civil Rights Act of 1957 guaranteed jury trials-that is certain acquittal-to people accused of violating blacks' voting rights, besides many other civil liberties). On the other hand the Act of 1965 barred racial discrimination in theatres, gas stations, hotels, restaurants, and other places of public accommodation. It authorized the Attorney General to eliminate segregation in public schools, libraries, museums, hospitals and playgrounds. It provided for the withholding of funds from federally assisted projects which failed to desegregate.

The Act, however, proved ineffective in safeguarding the right to vote. It made a sixth-grade education a presumption of literacy and prevented the rejection of applicants for slight errors on their registration forms. This Act can be seen as the after effect of the civil rights movement which was active from the 1950s onwards. The civil rights movement raised the question of the status of the largest of American minority groups, the one most closely bound up with American history from its very beginnings. It is clear, however, that even after this Act the African Americans could not achieve their dream. The idea of pluralism, as a consequence, has become a mockery in the case of this major group, even though it might have supported the development of various other groups. Kellas points out that it is reasonable to include long established pockets of minority populations as 'ethnic' rather than 'national' where no nationalist aims or viable nationalist movements have developed.

It is ironical to note that nationalism in America had led earlier to one of the major civil wars in the history of the nation. The southern people believed that their culture was entwined about the institution of Negro slavery and in turn that made them a separate nation. But at the same time another feeling also was prominent that the Union was eternal and indissoluble. The Civil War proved the popular notion that it is in the time of war that people turn to the ideals that shaped the nation.

It is the same kind of turning back to the roots of the founding ideals of the nation that takes place during the 1970s also. However, after the 1970s there is a characteristic change in the way racial difference is perceived. This can be seen as the outcome of the questions which arose from all the issues that were part of the decade. The national

advisory committee on civil disorders (Kenner Commission) itself was prompt in their report which addressed the 1970s.

To conclude this chapter, in a country like America, questions of nationality gain a unique and difficult dimension. It is rather obvious that a multiethnic society will have various ways of identifying with the nation. America had witnessed friction between the races many a time, since the country comprises compound relationships linking diverse communities and groups. Not only the compound relationship but also the differences in origin (Greek, Latin American and Asian), geographical significance (whether South, North, or West etc.) in economic position and even gender, make it difficult to arrive at a conclusion why an individual in America constructs himself or herself as an American. Through the centuries of the existence of the United States of America there have been other critical issues that questioned the very fabric of the American nation. The national commitment is a related question which many commentators addressed with regard to the diversity of America.

One is tempted to say that in America, as in any other country, the choice of nation or nationality is a forced one. The driving forces behind the individual's loyalty to nation might differ from economic individualism to political freedom. Nevertheless, empirically the individual subject far removed from the powers of state and government that make a nation like America what it really is. And at the same time s/he is also far removed from another citizens who might be living hundreds and thousands of miles apart. This is a crucial issue that has been addressed by the numerous novelists of America time and time again.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. THOUSAND FACES of AMERICA: THE NATION in FICTION

"It was wonderful to find America, but it would have been
more wonderful to miss it"

--Mark Twain

This chapter traces the roots of American fiction with the goal of showing how America is depicted in fiction comparing the earlier periods to the contemporary. This chapter also straddles the history of the American nation and the history of American fiction in a possible attempt to read with and against the undercurrents of the American life. In the process, we briefly study the approach in some of the acclaimed novels like *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *Moby Dick* (1851), *Light in August* (1932) and *Portnoy's Complaint* (1967) to the issue of the nation. These novels are taken in this chapter as representative examples of fiction that depict the mindset of the United States at particular times. It is also part of the concern here to look at the question of a Pan-American identity and the issue of representational identity with respect to the oeuvre of American fiction. In a nutshell the inquiry in this chapter is based on the interventions of fiction in the political sphere in America. This chapter recognizes the novel as a discursive formation and not just as an allegorical representation or imaginative vision in which the fictional uses of 'nation' and 'nationalism' are most pronounced.

The second part of this chapter demonstrates the emergence of the 'new' writers of American fiction after the Second World War and tracks down some of the thematic and formal characteristics of these writers. Calling these writers 'new' would be out of place at the present time, nevertheless, I use the word 'new' to imply the difference between the traditional writers; and the writers who brought out a change in the scenario of fiction after 1950s. I would like to show the importance of these writers in giving a distinctive outlook to the nation. In the process, I will be touching upon the main movements in post- World War American fiction. This kind of survey will be in order,

for these 'new' writers of fiction always tried to demonstrate their affinity to the actual reality persisting in the society and the culture of America in general. One can point out the examples of the emergence of the Jewish American writers, women writers, African American writers, Writers from the ethnic minority groups, Asian-American writers, exiled writers, writers from the Chicano community, American-Indian writers, gay and lesbian writers and many others into the forefront, in the recent past. It is also imperative that these writers' approach differs considerably from that of the traditional writers in terms of the concept and construction of the American nation. Moreover, one cannot pinpoint a one-dimensional approach from these writers; instead what one finds are multifarious approaches.

4.1. Nation and Fiction: The Case of America

Timothy Brennan's argument linking the birth of the nation and the birth of the novel also echoes Fiedler's line of thought. However, Fiedler, in his declaration of America's emergence as a leader of the world, has a curious counterpart in Baudrillard who, as we saw in the third chapter, argues that America as a nation attained modernity without going through the perilous and exceptionally long period of the enlightenment.

The 'nation writing the novel' is an idea which needs to be elaborated in some length at this juncture. This idea addresses an issue which is complex and had been developed through elaborate procedures over a long period of time. This metaphorical 'writing' goes on as long as the nation exists. Furthermore, even a novel, which boasts of a completely apolitical stand is also prone to depict some kind of vision of the nation. Thus, putting it in an extreme form, we have as many nations as there are novels.

Brennan develops the idea further with the help of Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of 'heteroglossia' and 'dialogism' wherein one finds a meaningful "dialogue" between several "languages" like "territorial dialects, social and professional dialects and jargons, literary languages, generic languages within literary languages, epochs in language and so on coming together to form a national language. And as for the nation-forming role of the novel it parodies the epic in this respect. Nevertheless, the novel as a genre when compared to the epic ends in the "open ended present" whereas the epic never used to

address the contemporaries. As a consequence the novel "becomes a contemporary, practical means of 'creating' people.

Not every writer of fiction will relish the idea of dealing with the nation in fiction. Most of the time such a treatment is not deliberate and is not done consciously. Nevertheless, the nation expresses itself through various kinds of representations. The themes of novels in various ages would be a pointer towards the nature of society and the conception of nation at those times. It is the subjective dimension of the nation that comes out of the novels. People constitute a nation when they consider themselves to be one. And the novelist's claim for subjective representation has to have some historical identity, some geographical contiguity, [and] some shared cultural characteristics. Thus in the canon of novels of a particular nation various themes specific to a particular point in time also contribute to the larger representation of that nation.

This idea can be further developed in terms of the conflict between nation and state. Beetham says:

The theory is that nation and state should coincide. The reality of course is very different; there is no such simple coincidence almost anywhere. If you look at a world map of historical nationalities, they by no means coincide with the boundaries of nation states. And if you add other cultural communities-based on religion, language or ethnicity-then one could say that it is the exceptional nation state that does not have within its borders one or more minority nations or sub-nations if we may so call them (Beetham , 1993: 217).

4.2. The Treatment of Nation in Early American Fiction

Traditionally American fiction imbibes a symbolic order. This symbolic formation is believed to have its roots in the practice of Puritanism. Fiedler's position with regard to realism in American fiction is rather ambivalent and has to be scrutinized further.

Besides the allegoric and symbolic mode of narration one traces a kind of narrative that gives much scope to the depiction of ordinary life in American fiction. This is more evident in the fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The variation lies in the extremities of the raw materials and life situations that are being depicted. When the reality has, at the heart of it, stark turns and twists with added the background of a hazardous landscape, even a "real" representation can hold the attention of the reader. Accordingly, it becomes inconsequential, which narrative technique is being used by the novelist. When one compares the earlier novels of the United States it is difficult to see the symbolic mode that Fiedler mentions. As a matter of fact, this is precisely where Fiedler's sweeping statement on the "non-realistic" and "anti-realistic" becomes questionable.

Historically speaking, 'pioneering' has long been considered one of the major molding influences of American life. Significant books have been written claiming that pioneering has been the most important single influence in American history and literature. In the context of American history, Pioneering means, to open new vistas and reaching out to new frontiers. One can locate three modes of depiction in accordance with the three distinctive types of frontier life. There was a type of life, mainly in the East, in which the forest was dominant. In another era, and partly in the Great Plains, grassland and the absence of trees determined the way of life. In the Far West, from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, the mountains and the deserts caused men to shape ways of living differently from that of farther east. Wars were also considered an integral part of pioneering. The Wars with the French, the war between the United States and the British for the possession of the North West Territory, and the Mexican war are all parts of this turbulent time.

Novels depicting pioneer life on the grassy prairies and plains have been many in number since about 1890, when the first-generation pioneers began to look back and recollect. These novels recall a gloomy epic of life depicting bleak farmhouses where survival is threatened by blizzards, drought and grasshoppers, and existence is fraught with loneliness and isolation. They show pioneers accustomed to forests and an ample wood supply painfully adjusting themselves to a woodless, semi-arid region which made dry farming, windmills, and barbed wire obligatory. The very fact that pioneering itself

was so complex and perilous contributed to the development of a more realistic treatment of the frontier.

Stories of pioneer life deal with a variety of experiences and situations. Some of these books deal with the overland trips of the easterners moving across the mountains and deserts towards the west, the ecstasy of the railroad building, and the perils of war.

A further theme for novels was farm and village life. There cannot be a chronological understanding of this theme with regard to American fiction basically because this theme continues to exist to the present day as a consequence of the still existing village and farm life except in the cities and their immediate environs. The stories of pioneer, farm and village life has a special importance because after the early hardships the pioneers started looking at a more settled kind of life. When a rurally-raised generation found itself in the cities after the Civil War books about village or small town life or life on the farm became more common. The treatment novelists gave these stories ranged from the starkly realistic to the romantically optimistic. The later farm books have been heavily sociological, taking up tenant farming, disease, decay, and the farm laborer, who is not a farmer in the older sense of the world at all.

A perfect example of the diversity of fiction about the pioneer way of life can be seen in the South. The specific case here is that of the novels from the South before the Civil War and during the war and Reconstruction. Ever since the 1830s, fiction has treated, plantation life from varied viewpoints. Novels have been pro-South, anti-South, pro-Negro, anti-Negro, pro-abolition, anti- abolition, anti-North-but whatever their point of view, they have generally attributed glamour to the vanished plantation civilization, and they have taken up, at least by implication, the problem of human freedom. Novels like Norris's *The Octopus* and Steinbeck's masterpiece *The Grapes of Wrath* dealt with themes ranging from early attempts to establish the small farm to stories of factories in the field respectively. The South had a significantly presence in the fiction of the later period as well. Since about 1880 the South has become mostly the land of the sharecroppers. There has been much realistic and naturalistic writing partly since 1920, but also a persistent reappearance of the old-fashioned romantic story. The Southern literature of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s was marked by the emergence of an unusual number of realistic writers picturing many facets of life in the South. Prominent among

these writers were Erskine Carldwell, Ellen Glasgow, Edith Summers Kelly, George Milburn, Thomas S. Stribling and William Faulkner. Some of these writers tended to present more clearly the psychological patterns emerging from the peculiar stresses of changing ways of life. Among them the most important were William Styron and Robert Penn. From the 1950s onwards one can find writers who deal with the civil rights struggle.

Another major category with regard to the life in the United States is the group of novels depicting the industrial society. Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* presents a vivid picture of the work in the industries and leisure-time activities of the workers. Pioneering was superseded in the United States during the nineteenth century by a more stable way of living in the same way the farm-and-village pattern has been superseded by urban industrial life in the late nineteenth century and twentieth centuries'. While this change was taking place, it was reflected immediately in the work of American writers, who led the world in the production of fiction regarding the complexity of industrial-business endeavors of modern times. The most perceptible effect of the industrial age on literature has been the development of realism, with its twin facets of reform and naturalism, and the fostering of analytical, critical attitudes. The romantic element is still present in fiction, and amid all the realistic and critical treatments of labor, business, the city, modern society, and modern war there are hundreds of books creating a romantic picture of the same elements.

City life is mainly a twentieth century theme, when one considers the vast canon of novels in the United States. One can locate the inauguration of such novels in the United States in the publication of Henry B. Fuller's *The City Dwellers* (1893). The second major novel dealing with the city life is Crane's *Bowery Tales* (1900). The subject matter of these books include the issues of labor, immigrant, leisure class etc. The emphasis on how people live in the city and the peculiar lifestyles, attitudes, and problems which have developed as a consequence of urban life and which stand out against the rural-life pattern of the nineteenth century are characteristic of these novels. While some authors present pleasant or admiring pictures of American cities, a majority of writers are strikingly in agreement in their portrayal of vice, crime, brutality, ugliness, frustration, mental illness, or poverty of spirit and culture. In some books, as in Elmer Rice's *Imperial*

City and Louis Bromfield's *Twenty Four Hours*, the multiplicity of city life itself is the sociological theme. Later books more commonly emphasized psychological themes.

War has a major role to play in the fiction of the United States, basically for the reason that the Spanish American War, the First World War, and the Second World War, and subsequent military invasions in Asia and 'Latin America are so much a part of the modern industrial world. One can find a stream of fiction about the First World War from 1917 to 1940. Among the major novels of the post First World War era Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* (1920) induced much critical acclaim. Hemingway's *In Our Time* (1925) is another example. Some of these novels were apologetic for America's entry into the war and some others were against any war in general (Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1933) and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) are instant examples). The Second World War can be seen as the moment of epiphany in many ways in the history of the modern world affairs. It changed the political equations the world over. The United States played a major role in the Second World War sending forces in large numbers to many battlegrounds across the globe. Participants in the Second World War wrote a great many interpretations of their wartime and post-war experiences. These novels did not just document the experiences that the participants had in the battlegrounds, but they also discussed the role of the American nation in the political undercurrents of the relationship between the modern day nations. Thus, these novels try to place in perspective the role of military power and political might in making the United States a worldleader.

Novels of the wars in Korea and Vietnam deviate from tales of actual combat to stories about other matters like mine sweeping, peace time duty in Hawaii, or assignments to supply depots and airfields in Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East as part of the defense system "against aggressors". Most of these novels discuss the ethical grounds of the modern day wars. They also question the moral integrity of the United States in these battles disputing the ways in which the enemies are labelled and claiming that the real "aggressor" is the United States itself in many of them. ,In many of the novels written from the late 1960s onwards one can find characteristic and critical remarks on the moral issues of the Vietnam War appearing again and again. This reflects the anguish presented in huge protest rallies all over the United States_ during the days of the Vietnam War.

4.3. Puritanism and Other Religions

Stories of the Puritans and Puritanism have had their influence upon the United States at every stage of its history. There are stories of the settlers, stories of the great witchcraft delusion, stories of Puritan fundamentalist beliefs and superstitions carried on through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There are such artistic endeavors as the works of Poe, Melville, and Hawthorne, with their probing of confessions and their obsessions with the problems of evil and retribution. Besides, there had been writers who were at the same time moralistic crusaders and mystical spectators. In the twentieth century one finds several who revolt against Puritanism, who dwell on the frustrations and unhappiness of those who are bound by a too rigid moral code. Several of them attempt to picture 'the last Puritan'- making it is easy to conclude that there are objective researchers among the novelists who work as carefully as historians. However, Puritanism has not lost its importance. It continues to be a major obsession of the novelists, the only differences is that there is a drastic difference between the traditional depiction and the twentieth century one.

Even though the traditional novels discuss puritan notions in America, these discussions have most of the time have followed the notions that are intact. The traditional writers never dared to venture into the other side of the nation. They took pride in picturizing the rosy side of the nation. The change came in the latter half of the twentieth century when they also talk of the dark side of the nation, more so with the advent of themes like minority issues, racial imbalance and immigrants

Even though there is a kind of critical observation found in *The Scarlet Letter*, it largely follows the traditional scheme in looking at the nation. In the novel the letter A stands as the spiritual birth of the new world, of America. It may in fact be taken to be an allegoric representation of America itself.

The scarlet letter A becomes thus the centre of the romance and the sacred centre of the new world. The tale unfolds the promise offered in this first vision and acts as a revelation of the richness of the meanings of the mystic symbol. As the letter A and Hester form one inseparable entity, the question arises whether she possesses and

embodies features of character upon which a new moral order might be founded. (Sachs, 1973: 19)

Ahab in *Moby Dick* is modelled on several major characters in literature and mythology like Satan, Faust, Lear, Prometheus, Oedipus, and 2nd Narcissus. The novel itself roots back to the Bible, Milton, Rabelais, Cervantes, and Shakespeare. Robert Clark sees the novel as a political allegory of the American belief in Manifest Destiny. Further on, the novel escapes from the studies of symbolism with regard to its Christian inheritance by its emphasis on the Americans in their relationship to nature.

Melville discovers a framework of political allusions that would allow his whaling narrative to pass comment on recent national events. It is the allegoric and symbolic structure that motivates the reader into reading further in the novel. The reader might be able to reach an analysis wherein images and symbols indicate, that America has set off on her quest for the Promised Land burdened with the blood of the Indian and Negro races.

In *The Scarlet Letter* and *Moby Dick* the nation is represented allegorically; the case is somewhat different in the case of *Huckleberry Finn* by M. Twain and *Light in August* by W. Faulkner. In *Light in August*, the novelist still toils with realism and allegory in the plot-line. As Leslie Fiedler rightly pointed out traditional American fiction does not completely do away with allegory. Given the unique association of fiction with the American society it is not very surprising if novelists indulge in allegoric representations. Nation, when it comes to representation, is made available through allegories. Allegory with its empirical status proves its affinity with biblical narration.

Since Hawthorne began writing, there has been a steady tradition of depicting and psychoanalyzing Puritans and their descendants in New England and to the west. For example, Evangelical religion has been treated in moods varying from the sentimentality of Lloyd Douglas to the satire of Sinclair Lewis. The various minority religions have attracted many novelists. Since the Second World War, with the Catholic Church making many adjustments to the American environment, Catholic novelists have been stimulated to interpret aspects of their church.

Although the Jewish writers' two themes can be termed as prominent: the struggles for adjustment of various immigrant groups as they find their religious traditions in conflict with the customs and habits of the United States. As in stories of other religions, the revolt of the young against the restrictions of their elders is a common theme. The questions that the reader finds interesting in terms of these Jewish fictions are related to the issues of national identity in very many ways. One finds a sense of alienation because of the uniqueness of the religion in these novels which is given complex dimensions. The uniqueness presented in the Jewish novels reaches up to the level of finding a sub-nation or minority nation within the boundaries of the American nation itself. This alienation from the nation is much more openly depicted in the Jewish writers like Philip Roth who came after the Second World War.

4.4. Innocence and the Image of Garden

The biblical notion of innocence and the Garden of Eden are motives that the novelists of various ages have reacted to in America. They looked at America in terms of Eden regained. Several critics have termed this notion of America as a central myth. The reaction to this central myth has gone through several interpretations and reinterpretations. Stretching the same argument Viola Sachs argues that all the novelists of America are one way or the other reacting to this central myth.

Looking at the history of the representation of innocence in American fiction, it can be seen that even this perception changes according to changing history and society. Thus, one might understand Huck (in *Huckleberry Finn*) who wanders in the uninhibited landscapes as innocence epitomized. A scrutiny of the heroes in American fiction will provide more examples to prove this idea. Traditionally the American hero is being attributed with three fundamental qualities; innocence, harmony with nature and independence. Though ideological attributes of an individual novel change from one author to another and one era to another this basic equation of innocence and the Garden of Eden seems to have persisted.

Another important motive that keeps repeating itself in American Fiction is the journey. The foremost examples are *Huckleberry Finn* and *Moby Dick*. One can count

several types of journeys in American fiction. A possible symbolic interpretation of the journey relates to life itself. In a set of circumstances the journey can be compared to the birth, life and death of the hero. This model of journey also goes through changes according to the context of each novel. The motive for the journey could be seen as changing in terms of maturation in the novels of the nineteenth century. It is the maturation of innocence to adulthood, or in Biblical terms the fall from the Garden of Eden. The life of the hero thus is appalling. Leslie Fiedler would call it "a world of fear and loneliness, a haunted world" and thus he concludes that "the American novel is pre-eminently a novel of terror" (xxi). By the latter half of the twentieth century this notion changes to a more complex fall from the Garden. The novelists by now understand that Eden, which the others have been propounding, is no more a heavenly setting.

These discussions of the major themes and motives in American fiction point to a definitive understanding of American fiction. We see that the concept of nation fits well with the important themes that we observe in American fiction. These discussions also make the readers feel the importance of the nation writing itself in these novels. These studies are on the one hand a product of the study of the major themes in the novels, which can be called the deep structure of the American novel. On the other hand, one can also find various representations of the American nation in these fictions. However, by far it is a matter of an unconscious assortment of themes

4.5. The Politics of the Twentieth Century Novelists

Twentieth century American novelists and novels differ from their predecessors in very many ways. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries excepting a few examples (like *Moby Dick*, *The Scarlet Letter* and *Huckleberry Finn*) the novels concentrated on the possibilities of the geography and the landscapes in the new nation. The 'pioneers' in American fiction were interested in projecting the newfound land as some sort of a heaven on earth and they found particular delight in showing the positive features of most of the attributes of the early American life. The most important criticism that is raised against these novelists is that they were not critical in their approach to the raw materials that

they handled in their novels. An excess of contemplation on the realistic narrative style found in these novels is an indicator of this lack of a critical perspective. Over the course of time, this approach to the nation itself has undergone considerable change. By the twentieth century the traditional uninhibited notion of the nation in fiction has transformed into a more meaningful and critical understanding. By now the novelists started looking at from multiple perspectives.

All the major themes of the novelists during the twentieth century have something in common: the rootedness in and the enquiry into the divergent intricacies of politics. It might be interesting to see the approach of the novelists by and large to two kinds of politics. Some novelists are interested in the straightforward manifestations of politics in socialism, conservatism, capitalism, courses of the modern war, and gangsterism, the revival of the Ku Klux Klan and so on. On the other hand certain other novelists concentrated on the more subtle questions of politics in nationality, the relation between the minority and the majority and the questions of gender and sexuality. Other themes which can be observed in the twentieth century novels are atomic research and congressional investigations that were the fashion during the 1940s, McCarthyism, and so on. In the 1950s and 1960s the interest of the novelists lay in the use of public relations men by politicians and ultra-right pressure groups.

Pre-war America, as a society, was not such a long way from the so-called 'European' stream of thought. Hence, the developments in the fields of science (e.g. the theory of evolution of Darwin), psychology (Freud and his discoveries), sociology and economics (Marx and Communism) and philosophy and theology (Nietzsche and the discussions on God), all had their impact on American society too. However, in literature (and particularly in fiction), right from the beginning of the American tradition there had been a dividing line between European interests and American interests.

When there was a general downward motion in the beginning of the twentieth century, like the First World War and the economic depression that followed, Europe started looking at life and human beings with an alienated sensibility; and a kind of philosophy that projected cynicism and existentialism came to the forefront. This movement had followers in literature in Kafka and Camus. Some commentators point out that this path of philosophy actually is designed by the pattern of these writers along with the overpowering influence of Nietzsche. Another trend during this period in the history of Western culture is the characteristic movement towards experimentation in every form of art (painting, sculpture, music, architecture, and literature). All these movements found resonance in American literature also. Moreover, the influence of these was greater in the case of American fiction when compared to other forms.

One can locate Hemingway, Dos Passos, and Faulkner as the counterparts to the European existentialist/modernist authors. At the same time these American authors followed the tradition of the American masters. There are traceable influences of the forefathers of American fiction like Melville, Hawthorne and Mark Twain in these writers. Critics call these writers optimistic modernists, taking into account their differences with the European existentialists, whose worldview happens to be bleaker when compared to these American contemporaries.

It is not easy to call a novel, post-World War novel, or a novelist, post-World War novelist in the context of American fiction. For writers like Hemingway, whose literary career spans from the 1920s to the 1960s and Faulkner, who was writing almost from the beginning of the century to the 1970s, such a terminology would be out of place. The task one has to face while accommodating them under such a term is then, to determine the characteristics of the post-World-War fiction and then to include in it the writers who write according to this pattern and discuss these themes. A further problem arises when a single author himself/herself writes several novels in different modes. It would not be easy to call a novelist just a post-World War novelist (for example, Philip Roth outgrows the anxieties and reservations that he had expressed while writing *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969) and *When She was Good* (1970) in the novels like *Operation Shylock* (1995) in the later part of his career).

However, a comparative study of the representative novels of these two periods, namely pre-World War and post-World War, will throw light on the differences in thematic and formal components. A discussion of William Faulkner's *Light in August* and Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* in this respect shows the differences in attitudes in the Pre-World War fiction and Post World War American fiction.

William Faulkner's *Light in August* stands out as a novel of sex and violence. There appear a large number of characters, more than any of Faulkner's other novels, and three almost unrelated protagonists. The plot is complex and at times puzzling, but at the same time, the narrative is concentrated. Three plot lines follow the three protagonists, namely, Joe Christmas, Lena Grove and Gail Hightower and several themes intermingle throughout the plots. Acceptance or rejection of the values of the community, the alienation of man, man's relationship to God as revealed in Christian symbolism, and man's relationship with nature are some of the basic themes of the novel. The character of Joe Christmas in the novel shows man's doomed rebellion against himself and the whole of mankind. There is a certain amount of ambiguity about his birth. His color shows that he is either a Negro or a Mexican. (Being a person who does not know his race is worse than being a Negro, says his Negro friend at the orphanage.) He is in search of his identity, and is in constant travel. He meets Joanna, who is equally lonely, and they have a sexual relationship (without knowing each other properly). He does not conform to the norms of society. He neither goes along with the black community nor does he socialize with the white folk.

Joe Christmas' life confirms that all the alienated beings are alone. Usually, such a theme of alienation in literature will be set in big cities (as in the case of Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* and *Oriental Express*), in *Light in August*, Faulkner shows the same depth of alienation in a poor and small town where there are not many people. In spite of this, for the inhabitants of the town communication among them in the proper sense is not possible. Gail Hightower is an extended example of society's alienation for he even physically lives outside the bounds of the society and does not care to communicate with the rest of society.

Joe Christmas does not discover his roots. He is presented in the novel more or less as a bastardised individual in a country full of different ethnicities. His color

pronounces that he is neither an African American nor a White Anglo Saxon Protestant. Hence his alienation finds a symbolic affinity with the national identity. However, after all the bleak representation of alienation in the form of Joe Christmas and his eventful wanderings, Faulkner does provide some kind of optimism to the reader, in the form of Lena Grove and her baby. Together, they represent the future-the title of the novel also suggests the optimism of the novelist-when most of the other characters seem to have been too much obsessed with the past.

In a sense, all the characters in the novel are shaped by their past. The main characters alone are aware of it and they alone fight against it. Francois Pitavi suggests, while Christmas represents alienation, violence, and sterility, Lena is a fulfilled being, accepting nature and futility". In the beginning of the novel, she is pregnant and reaches the town completely exhausted in search of the father of her baby. She is the opposite of Joe's character, in the sense that she does not destroy herself, even though she had reason to do so. "Memory believes before knowing remembers," says Faulkner in the beginning of chapter six. This remark stands as an epigraph of the novel, as it were. Moreover, we find in Lena's baby a symbol of the nation itself which holds a nice and bright future, where, according to Faulkner's optimism, there will not be any discrimination. We might add that when the color of the skin has no value in judging the nationality, the future is going to be bright.

Faulkner built his work on a grand scale. Apart from the symbolic and allegoric grandeur of his narrative he also took care to portray the framework of the Southern life.

He related even his minor personages with one another, he elaborated their genealogy from generation to generation, he gave them a countryside: a deep land of Baptists, of brothels, of attic secrets, of swamps and shadows. "Jefferson," Mississippi, is the capital of this world which reaches backward in time to the origins of Southern culture and forward to the horrid prophecies of its extinction[...]
(Spiller, 1966: 1304)

The America (rather the South) represented in Faulkner captured the pulse of the time. His novels including *Light in August* carried forward an essential part of the older American life. The picture of the nation in Faulkner's novel depicts the Populist reforms

of the early twentieth century and revolts against the Victorian gentility, Anglo-Saxon taboos, and bourgeois virtues.

Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* also is about sex and violence (sex in the overt sense and on the other hand violence not so overtly). The narrative is a *bildungsroman*. Alexander Portnoy's complaints are presented in the form of a conversation between a psychiatrist and Alexander. The psychiatrist is silent for the better part of the novel and in a "diarrhea of talk" Portnoy goes on talking about himself.

Alexander's problem is typical of a Jew in America. He has a strong and closed home environment, and also a strong tradition behind him. His search, strangely enough, is for pleasure, particularly forbidden pleasures. He suppresses his instincts but masturbates every day in order to satisfy himself, but when meeting the psychiatrist he complains about his guilt feeling because of the extensive masturbating. He is of the opinion that his parents especially his mother is the reason for his suppressed sexuality. He is anxious about replacing another person in bed, or put it in another way, whenever he looks at a woman with sexual feelings he is reminded of his mother-there are hints in the narrative to Portnoy's Oedipal relationship with his mother. He tries in vain to find a solution for this fixation. He is skeptical of his upbringing. He says a home situation like his will only make a boy a homosexual. Portnoy can never be a heterosexual, though he desires to become one.

"Portnoy is simply crying out to be left alone, to be released from the claims of distinctiveness and the burdens of the past, so that, out of his own nothingness, he may create himself a "human being". However, if at all there exists some kind of existential angle to Portnoy's story, the narrative of Roth does not allow the reader to ponder over it. The narrative is comic and the torrent of Portnoy's complaints does not make the reader uneasy; instead, s/he becomes more interested in the background and qualifying factors of the protagonist. "Roth's novel is extremely funny, indeed hysterically so; yet it is in some ways as painful as that strange and troubling work by Kafka, and equally fixated on the minute details of the familial and social past and the focal point at the centre of it all - the uncertain, suffering self" says Tanner who also compares the novel with Kafka's *Amerika*. In fact, Portnoy sees the wrong influence of Jewish tradition also in himself. Herzog, the eponymous protagonist of Saul Bellow's novel (1966) laments

over western civilization as the principal cause of his divorce; for Portnoy all of western and Jewish history has only led him to masturbate (Baumgarten and Gottfried, 1990: 81)

Reading *Portnoy's Complaint* against the question of national identity of a person from a minority community would emphasize the attitudinal change in the conception of nationality from traditional fiction. It is an inability that overpowers all the negotiations with the nation that is presented through Portnoy's difficulty. The closed and tradition-bound religious identity bars him from taking a step forward to a complete naturalization. In Roth's (and several of his contemporaries) terms even if one is born and brought up in America, nationality is a puzzle which can never be solved.

Comparing *Light in August* with *Portnoy's Complaint* one can easily see that the focal point shifts from the society to the family as the cause of the problems of the individual. This is the shift that happened in American fiction soon after the war. Though there are existential questions raised in both the novels, the transformation from high seriousness in narrative to the comic set up changes the mode of reception. In Faulkner, the only possible way out for the characters is a compromise with the social set up, whereas, in Roth the character presents himself as a moral-although he finds problems with his sexuality, the readers know that there is nothing wrong with it-and the only possible solution would be the society coming to terms with the individual. Hence, in Roth, unlike Faulkner and his contemporaries, memory is not the problem, the knowing itself is the predicament and Portnoy and the multitude of protagonists and characters in post-world war fiction show that self-understanding is the right direction to live in American society, especially after the World War. This also shows an attitudinal change in the conception of national identity. For Faulkner even though it is important to think of national identity it is not always problematic. On the other hand, for Philip Roth it is all the while problematic for he feels that religious identity makes him feel uncomfortable in most of the living spaces in America.

Faulkner's anxieties with respect to *Light in August* are usually not comparable, for several reasons, with the anxieties of post-war novelists like Philip Roth. Since there is a long and disastrous war in between these two writers, calling them equal and comparable itself is inappropriate taking into account the contextual differences. Moreover, Faulkner's novel was written well before the World War, whereas Roth's was written almost twenty years after the Great War. Still, these novels very well represent

their respective ages and the characteristics of the different formal and thematic strata of novels.

4.6. Post-World War American Fiction: Roots, Themes and Movements

World War II saw the creation of many terms in the history of the world. The political, economic and social equations of most of the world nations had changed drastically by the end of the war. In America, the aftermath of the World War related mainly to the economic, social and political consciousness. America became the most powerful nation in the world after the Allies vanquished the German. After the disastrous bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and all the cruel experiences on the war front, as Ihab Hassan puts it, "millions of young men climbed out of the uniform, a new age was ushered in" (Hassan, 1973: 62). For some time there was unemployment and unrest. All these insecurities changed quickly for good.

What resulted was an economically strong, independent and socially free society, which was not much affected by the cold war which followed World War II between the United States and the former Soviet Union. The people believed in a stable and powerful nation. Thanks to its phenomenal economic progress, the United States started inviting many more immigrants. The foremost attraction was the monetary benefits that America proudly exhibited in front of other countries. For example, the average salary of the workforce had doubled by the end of the fifties. The political, social, and economic situation of many European countries also helped to increase the rate of immigration in the late 1940s and 1950s. Basically, the United States of America was viewed as a nation proclaiming freedom and equality by many of the immigrants. As manifested in the term, "the American Dream," America was a fantastic dream more than a nation and the immigrants as well as the citizens looked forward to the bright future they were about to obtain.

In American literature too, the effect of World War was tremendous, when one considers the issues and consequences that were to follow. As far as American Literature is concerned it had resulted in bringing forth new writers and new themes. However, most of the critics who commented on this age do not necessarily exhibit optimism about the

age (Olderman is pessimistic and he calls it, though ironically, *Beyond the Waste Land* (1972)). As far as the fiction is concerned, there was no direct break from the tradition of Hawthorne and Melville immediately. Writers like Faulkner and Hemingway were still writing fiction following the traditional narratives and themes. It took years to get new literature representing all the social and economic undercurrents. One particular aspect we can think about is the breakup of tradition by a group of young writers—one thinks of in particular the Beat Generation—in the 1950s and 1960s. Though it took time for them to get critical acclamation, their presence was categorically felt. Their quarrel was not just with the American tradition but with the European tradition as well. The modernist and existentialist trends that were prevalent in the first half of the twentieth century in American fiction and elsewhere were dethroned with many new trends being established.

What we find in the post-World War writers is not the continuation of the early modernist vision of imagination and society; but rather a version of that vision, literally a revision of the modern context. They set off on an attempt to locate in the contemporary evidence of psychic survival and social, political health. The early modernists were optimistic, traditional and moralistic, on the other hand the contemporary phase defined by the writers like William Burroughs is marked by its complete and even joyful acceptance of the fact of apocalypse, without recourse to any of the traditional, quasi-religious beliefs. In the early modernists one can usually find a myth of the "Good City" (one can find such images of the city in *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*). This has roots in the moral values and cultural consolidation that the modernists unconsciously accepted. The new writers are rupturing this and the concentration now is on the "true field of human civilization": the human city constructed on the foundation of the fictiveness of existence. Hence the language itself becomes self-conscious. The language of the post-World War II novelists shows a return of the word from the clutches of all other things to the world of the human beings capturing all the senses of manic-brooding and the surreal.

In the post-World War novels a universal pointlessness is projected, concentrating and focusing on a particular theme or vision. In addition to looking at a particular theme in such a way these writers have a free choice to look at the other issues also. Their vision is not blinkered unlike the traditional modernists. Their focal point is disrupted or rather all the points become focal points.

By the sixties, new voices had gained ground in the realm of fiction. Whether it is acknowledged or not, there has been a relevant presence of a thick dividing line between the popular and the high literature in America (Leslie Fiedler was the first critic to try to demolish the dividing wall between high culture and mass culture in America, in his essay titled, "Cross the Border and Close that Gap" (1969)). For the popular writers the "American Dream" was a virtual reality and they praised and dealt with it elaborately in order to exalt the position of the individual in American society. At least this was the way they projected the individual in the novels during this time. On the other hand, the other so-called "serious" writers were not so optimistic about the whole agenda. They also looked into the matter of the "American Dream," but their approach was decisively distinguished from that of the popular fiction writers. They were not just interested in the American Dream; they had many more crucial issues to deal with. In fact, there were the bleak and at the same time vital realities (like the issue of racial discrimination) for the post-world war writers to face. Hence, there are numerous voices and manifestations in fiction as well as in the other arts.

Soon after the World War, there was a concentrated interest in experiments with form in fiction. Writers like Thomas Pynchon, John Barth had tried to experiment with the form and themes in their writing. This fascination, however, seems to have died out by the end of the seventies. The interest now is to look into the depths of the life and see the differences of self and identity. This kind of political writing gained ground all over the world by the end of the twentieth century. The writers understand the need for raising their voice for the marginalized, or in other words, the writers by now understand the importance of representation as a possible political strategy in gaining ground within the society.

A major voice in the post-World War II American fiction is that of the exiled writers: from Isaac Bashevis Singer to Nabakov and Sholzhenitzin. Post-World War II American fiction asserts its debts to these immigrant writers at many levels. These writers, in spite of their many differences, have at least one thing in common: they keep the reality of their past green in their memory. It is that which enables these writers to write unique and characteristic novels with vivid descriptions. The literature of the exiled writers does not end in the fifties or sixties. As the immigration continues, the literature

of exile also continues. Unlike in the fifties, the new writers are not just 'from Europe. By the end of the last century there is a flow of immigrants from the Asian and African countries as well. There are new writers also from these countries (the latest among the lot being Jhumpa Lahiri with her prize winning short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies*, 1999). Hence, the interpretation of America becomes complicated with respect to the approach of the immigrant writers, for these writers try to compare and contrast the realities of their past with the present life in the United States.

John Barth in his essay, "The Literature of Exhaustion" (1956), defines the life and role of a post-World War II American writer. By coining the term "literature of Exhaustion", Barth disputes the attitudes of the modernist writers. He does not believe in the concept of existentialism and optimistic modernism as reflected in the works of Faulkner and Dos Passos. His primary concern in fiction is experimentation with the form and the theme. He is not alone in this regard. He has followers in William Burroughs, Sukenick, Kurt Vonnegut and Thomas Pincheon. But Barth theorizes the environment in his essays in a fashion, which many of his contemporaries could not do. He argues that all the possibilities of literature have been exhausted by the writers who had passed by and that there is not much left for the new writers. John O. Stark says that Barth uses the word, "exhaustion," in two ways: one that, literature is, or nearly, used up; the other, that, given its current condition, writers should invent and exhaust possibilities and thus create for literature an infinite scope.

Stretching the same idea of exhaustion into Barth's novels, one can see that his primary concern is with the same idea of existentialism that the modernist writers dealt with. For example in *The Floating Opera* (1956), Todd Andrews tries to commit suicide because he feels that there is nothing new in life. Then he ponders over the idea of suicide and finds out that there is no meaning in committing suicide either. Hence, he decides to come back to life. Barth's cynical attitude towards the philosophy of existentialism (which is in a way a European construction) is presented in the novel in brilliant terms. The audience, watching the floating opera of *Hamlet*, pooh-poohs Hamlet's existential dilemma, which otherwise is believed to be the supreme expression of modern man's existential angst.. This ironic reversal of existential questions can be perceived as an American reaction to the Western philosophies. Barth's novels *Letters* (1979) as well as

Sot-Weed Factor (1960) show the commitment of the author to the new forms. He being a master of techniques uses them as an integral part of his fiction itself, for him, it is more than simple discovery. Klinkowitz says, "in some of his stories:

Barth brought American fiction to the level of innovation and self-discovery" (Klinkowitz, 1985: 5).

Another of the prominent voices of the post-World War II American Fiction, Philip Roth, is more skeptical about the role of the writer in the contemporary world.

There is a constant attempt in the novels of Philip Roth to blur the distinction between fact and fiction. A group of critics like Susan Sontag, George Steiner and Richard Poirier reflect about these new writers' obsession with experimentation. Sontag calls it the aesthetics of "style as radical will", for Poirier it is the "art of performing self", and for Steiner, Pythagorean genre. According to these critics the direction of this writing is toward a radical, revolutionary redefinition of the idea of human personality and human freedom. And the final effect of the same would be to dissolve the ancient strictures with which society binds the individual and to liberate everyone into a free-form, guiltless celebration of the life of the senses, of self-conscious delight, the rationalistic, critical spirit.

4.7. Other Voices in the Fifties and Beyond

In this part of the chapter I would like to discuss the themes and reservations of some of the major groups of novelists in the United States over the past fifty years. I would like to suggest that most of these writers who belong to the marginalized communities (like the ethnic writers) or marginalized categories (like the women writers and Afro-American Writers). Marginalized works are, largely, the products of groups who have relatively less access to political, economic, or social power. To put it in another way, the works generally considered central to a culture are those composed and promoted by persons from groups holding power within it. Thus, I am concerned with the work of minority men and women-for while there are profound differences between a culture defined significantly in terms of gender and one defined significantly in terms of race or national origin, nevertheless the burdens and opportunities posed by marginality

generate unusually significant parallels. And thus, the discussion here is of the writings of a group of people of the American nation, whose cultures continue to be less than fully understood or appreciated by virtue of the factors that are discussed here briefly.

The minorities are not usually settled into the nation state. This can be seen in the works of the writers from the Jewish religion and African American communities in the United States. The African American novels concentrated on the Civil Rights issues during the 1960s and 1970s. These novels voice a challenge to the constitution of the nation state when people from these communities come to demand a measure of political autonomy for themselves. Going back to the roots-to the African roots that is-was considered a fashion during the 1970s. Alex Hailey's novel *Roots* (1976) shows such a metaphoric journey. Minorities asserting themselves against the nation state is a common problem that these novelists addressed in large measure during the 1970s.

4.8. Jewish Fiction

By the nineteen fifties, an important new group of Jewish-American novelists had emerged. These writers drew on their Yiddish traditions. I. B. Singer was one of the prime practitioners of this and on Russian and European Modernism. The older tradition of the Jewish-American writing has been transformed by the new writers like Norman Mailer, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, and Philip Roth, who had concentrated more on the immigrant victim trying for a place and recognition in the New World. For the new Jewish-American novelists, the Jew is a modern victim forced by history into existential self-definition. This definition is not completely religious, political or ethnic. These writers are realistic about the history and sociology of the country in which they live. Along with a sound knowledge of their own tradition they also are aware of the individualistic attitudes of their fellow citizens, a fundamental knowledge that the Jewish writers possessed when compared to the popular writers of the same age (whereas popular writers many a time celebrate the individualistic way of life). According to many critics (Bradbury and others), these are the writers who molded American fiction after the Second World War. But looking at the history of American post-World War fiction only from the point of view of Jewish-American fiction would be a grave error.

Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth present an uneasy and absurd situation of the self. An individual who is troubled by a complex history is always tempted to look ahead. Bellow presents such a situation in *Herzog*, so does Roth in *Portnoy's Complaint*. Kafka's nightmarish situations are projected in various Jewish-American novels like Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* and Saul Bellow's *The Dangling Man*. Most of the time, the heroes of these Jewish-American authors go on searching for their own identity and confronting a friction between the individual and the system. In an extensive study of *The New Novel in America* (1970), Helen Weinberg argues that Bellow, Mailer and Salinger show great affinity towards the works of Franz Kafka especially, *The Trial*, *Amerika*, *The Castle* and *Metamorphosis*. Weinberg presents the heroes of these Jewish-American writers as spiritual activists who wage their wars in intellectual plains in an attempt to place the Jewish individuals in the scheme of things in America. Bernard Malamud is usually not classed with the other Jewish-American novelists.

4.9. Fiction Written by Women Writers

Unlike Europe, there are not many women novelists in the history of American fiction. A consciousness of the 'female experience' came into existence only in the mid-1960s in the realm of American Fiction. By the 1970s this consciousness had ripened to include various other aspects of being a woman in the United States. Joyce Carol Oates' fiction is in one way or another concerned with the female experience. In *Do With Me What You Will* (1973) and *Wonderland* (1971), she talks about the sufferings of women in general. They are a form of self-punishment for their disabilities. For Joyce Oates and many others the women are part of an American tragedy, programmed to bad marriages and imprisonment. They felt that men have more control over their lives than they have themselves. In Erika Jong, Marilyn French, Judith Rossner, Alix Kates Shulman and Marge Piercy; there is a tendency in these novels for the female characters to move towards lesbian relationships after failing in their heterosexual and marital/familial relationships. Their aim in their novels is to find out the real self as in the case of African American Women writers. Their novels present the wish fulfillment of their quest.

4.10. African American Fiction

It is another kind of self-awareness that we see in *Invisible Man* (1952) by Ralph Ellison and many of the novels written by African-American writers. The basic theme of African-American fiction has been the search for identity of the African-American individual in a predominantly white Anglo Saxon society. In *Invisible Man*, the protagonist tries to find out his role in the predominantly white society and at last he understands that, "I am, what I am!" The unnamed hero in Ellison's novel reminds us of Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* and proves that introspection is always retrospection. Ellison has powerful followers in James Baldwin and Richard Wright. From the fifties to the eighties the voice of African-American is heard because of their fiction's power. The African-American individual is on the lookout for an exclusive opening in American society, a space in the realms of "power in the society. At times, these writers also try to show the dialectics in American society. Though American society projects liberty and equality, these ideas are still a myth. Ellison talks about it in his novel and many of his interviews. One might remember the remarks made by Nathan Glazer on the status of fraternity in America when one thinks of the African American fiction. He argues that "fraternity" was never a concern of average Americans. Most of the African American novelists also believe the same way and they express their anguish in their novels.

The other major voices in the African-American fiction, in the sixties, were Eldridge Cleaver, Julius Lester, and Malcolm X. The fundamental aim of these writers, just like their predecessors James Baldwin and Ellison, was the African-American individual's position and role in the white society. The next generation of African-American writers consists of writers like Ishmael Reed and Charles Wright. Reed's fiction is rooted in a radical aesthetics. Charles Wright on the other hand follows the same theme of search for meaning. He practices a new form of imaginative literature using the ultimate fantasy. In the beginning of the seventies, African-American fiction showed the traits of going militantly political. Writers like LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), William Demby, Clarence Major and John Edgar Wideman are the prominent voices of this extremist phase. They wanted to write of their own social, political and ethnic reality in

America in a radical way. The general interest was to project such writers who produced materials of an uncompromising political mode.

4.11. African American Women's Fiction

Along the same lines is the position of black women writers who emerged in the later part of the last century. Alice Walker and Toni Morrison are the two major writers of fiction among this group. These writers specifically talk and discuss the problems of African-American women in American society. The basic argument of these writers is that African- American women face three or four kinds of oppression. They face oppression from the white male, black male and even from white women. Toni Morrison and Alice Walker question the position of black woman, who is usually portrayed as the symbol of sex and lust in the dominant narratives. They are cynical about the language and even the medium of fiction. For all these forms are contaminated by the chauvinism persistent in the society. That is the reason why they have to find new forms of expression. Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) is an attempt to find such a new form. Here the story is presented in the form of letters written by a woman with an extremely troubling history or life story. "Epistolary novel" can be considered as an old form; however, Walker uses several new dimensions to it making the form suit her character's anguish and anxiety. These writers not only believe in questioning the accepted structures of society they- also try to explore alternatives. Alice Walker's alternative is a society of women. (Rather than feminism, she calls it sisterhood or womanism).

4.12. The Beat Novels

In the 1950s another group of novelists proclaimed their presence. They were involved in opening up new or alternative experiences. They also pioneered in developing a new terminology. George Mandel's *Flee the Angry Strangers* (1950) and John Clellon Holmes' *Go* (1952) are considered the most influential novels of this kind. William Burroughs is also regarded as another follower of this group. Grederick R. Karl is of the opinion that the language of the succeeding decades is derived from the early Beats. Their concentration on the counter cultural elements like marijuana and free sex was manifested in the novels of the coming decades also. Another interest these novelists had been jazz

music. They also display an unending thirst to travel, as in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1953). These writers' philosophy in a nutshell follows that of the existential masters of the west. Like those European novelists they believed that 'life is a perpetual defeat'.

In conclusion, the nation expresses itself through various means in a novel. It is in fact one of the possible readings of any novel. It can be argued that the various themes that are dealt with in American fiction actually point to a pattern. The argument is not that there is a single, unified nation emerging through the works, instead it can be said that the novel brings out the questions related to national identity which are special and peculiar to the particular age in which the novel is written. However, it should also be added that the argument here is not related to the nation which is present in a single work of fiction, rather, the approach is to the manifestations and the representation of the nation which is spread across the works of fiction irrespective of the time and the individual author. From a holistic point of view, I am interested in the American nation which comes through all the novels written in America.

America being a nation of different cultures and societies, there are plenty of opportunities for the new writers to live and write there. The progress of America without any rivals in world politics and economy was bound to affect the writing in some way or the other. The case of Jerzy Kosinski turns out to be very important with respect to the issues that are part of the post -World War writings in America. Being an outsider in one sense in America, he reflects on most of the issues and angsts that are part of the age. Nearly all of the concerns that make the post-World War writer's political stand have a culminating presence in his novels. His works are taken in the next chapter as a reference point to ponder over the depiction of nation in the 1970s of America.

Kosinski's works play a part in the representation of the American nation, in the sense that every novel presents one kind of interpretation. These interpretations have an importance with regard to the nation, because the themes central to him are central to the time he lived in too. That time has further importance when we consider it from the perspective of the disruption of the American national ideals and the questions raised with respect to the national identity.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. JERZY KOSINSKI and AMERICA

"In some big cities in America, going from one street into the next is like changing tribes"

--Felix Guattari

It is difficult to discuss Jerzy Kosinski's life in terms of the accomplishments alone, basically because, Kosinski, as is now known, is just an immigrant who managed to fake a passport and deceive governmental agencies to reach the United States. We know very little about his life in Poland, which he left at the age of twenty-four. We know that he holds a master's degree in sociology and history. Through his novels we come to know of his deep knowledge of the intrinsic nature of a society's political existence. In his novels there is always an undercurrent of criticism of every kind of power being thrust upon the individual be it through a totalitarian regime or through propagandist means.

What we know about Kosinski's life is always mediated through the author's own accounts in the novels and interviews. His novels are essentially autobiographical in nature and that fact and fiction have a very thin line between them in the case of Kosinski's novels. Thus critics always had difficulty in extracting the objective truths of his life. They, however, argue that whatever we get as instances of Kosinski's actual life have to be verified and scrutinized properly before reaching any kind of conclusion. There is another group of critics who have held that Kosinski never writes novels and that he just records his extraordinary life. Norman Lavers writes, "Ironically, however, there is a disadvantage for such a novelist: we can become more interested in his life than in his art, or, a more subtle danger, we can confuse the two" (Lavers, 1982: 1). Many of the critics of the modern fiction have termed Kosinski's accounts of his own life as fictitious (Klinkowitz alludes to this view in his introduction to the interview with Jerzy Kosinski,; Klinkowitz concludes his lengthy affidavit of the inconsistencies

among the autobiographical stories that Kosinski had told him this way, to tell stories is to generate secrets, and that is the central point of Kosinski's life and art. Moreover, he is as secretive as some of his secret agent heroes. Besides the unavailability of objective facts about his life, there was a big controversy regarding the real authorship of Kosinski's works too in the later part of his career. He never successfully countered this charge till his suicide in 1991. Thus it becomes extremely problematic and difficult to give an all-encompassing introduction to Kosinski's life.

These controversies of authorship and life are however not our concern here. Instead the aim of this chapter is to carefully analyze the works of Jerzy Kosinski and find out how he looks at and represents the United States as a nation through his novels. It is the specific outlook of the immigrant about the nation that can be extracted from the novels of Kosinski. Interestingly, in his novels the immigrant, because of the complex nature of his/her identity, becomes aware of the other marginalized identities too. In consequence Kosinski's representation of the nation carries specific interest in the wake of the complex social relations of the 1970s.

Before attempting to elucidate the major novels which are important for this study and the actual concern in the present chapter, it is fitting to discuss the other novels by Kosinski at some length. This is to provide an insight into the underlying threads of unity in all his works. Kosinski, during his lifetime, was considered a popular novelist. After the sweeping first novel, *The Painted Bird* (1965), on the World War II and the Nazi brutality Jerzy Kosinski concentrated more on the life in America, till his last-novel, *Hermit of the 69th Street: the Working Papers of Norbert Koski* (1989), which goes beyond his previous works in narrative style, thematic concerns and in the manifold structures he used.

5.1. *The Painted Bird* (1966)

The first feeling one gets of *The Painted Bird* is of awe as well as revulsion. The novel presents an abyss of moral chaos devoid of reason, a landscape not systematically sculpted according to the sins of the sufferers but ripe with terrors that seem like the offspring of human creatures who are prey to superstition and a latent bestiality.

Kosinski's theme is humanity's inescapable complicity in evil, according to Langer (*The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* 167). Barbara Tapa Lupack believes that *The Painted Bird* is a "parable of demonic totalitarianism" (Lupack, 1995: 136).

Kosinski banishes from his fictional scene in *The Painted Bird* the power of discourse, which is considered the distinguishing feature of civilized human beings. It is literally a "speechless" novel. Its setting is an unidentified area of Eastern Europe, more precisely a series of peasant villages already overrun by the Germans. In this setting an unnamed boy of six wanders almost alone in an idiosyncratic way and, because of the brutal experiences he had undergone, becomes dumb. The characters in the novel converse with their environment through rituals. There is a lot of violence, passion, fear and superstition in the air. And at the same time there are atrocities in the background, which most of the time is absent from the actual narrative of the novel in the sense that it is the silence in the novel that loudly pronounces the atrocities throughout. And the reader on his/her part is quite aware of this.

Critics have called *The Painted Bird* an autobiographical work. Kosinski has insisted that the entire story is based on fact and was a way for his wife to learn of his past. But the importance of this work lies in the way Kosinski approaches the materials available for him in writing the novel. Since the background of the novel is an important event in history, how the novelist views history becomes extremely important. For Kosinski, it is evident from the novel that history does not have its primal function of coherence, since modern history has forced the language to abdicate its role. That is why he presents dissociated sequences of incidents in the novel and encourages the reader to find out the meaning himself/herself. It used to be a practice in the fiction of the Holocaust to present old and fragile beings or a matured enterprising youth caught up in the extremity of agony. This gives the writer ample liberty in forming a peculiar reaction to the atrocity. In the case of *The Painted Bird*, on the other hand, it is a tender youth-the unnamed boy is just four years in the beginning of the novel-the center of difficult life situations. As a consequence Kosinski attains a response to the atrocity which was never attempted by any novelist of the Holocaust before him.

Through the recurrent use of potential metaphors-the central metaphor of the painted bird itself is a powerful one in this respect-the novelist wants the reader to feel

himself or herself a victim and to understand that the incidents and scenes in the novel are "too horrible to-be real". To a large extent he succeeds in doing so. The reader might reject the realistic narrations of incidents like gouging the eyeballs and squashing them with heavy boots. But the very extremity of cruelty and suffering in modern experience, conspiring with the reader's reluctance to acknowledge such possibilities, unconsciously insulates him/her. Kosinski attains such possibilities through language and metaphor.

The central metaphor of the novel; the bird (a raven) with painted wings and body sent by the bird-catcher and attacked by the birds of the same flock, is a stunning image which could capture the problem of Jews in the wake of German propaganda. The painted one is attacked and put to death by its own kind and kin when it flies to them without knowing that it has become an unwanted one just because its color has been changed ("one bird after another would peel off in a fierce attack" (*The Painted Bird* 50)). Kosinski creates a parallel with the Jews and their story here by mildly observing that the Jews are also part of the same species as their oppressors, and that color and race should not matter. He also equates humans to animals through his images and states indirectly that humans are no way better than the animals.

Kosinski's major contribution to Holocaust fiction is that he tells us more about the peasants and their actual society in detail away from the death camps. Most Holocaust fiction concentrates on the victim and the unhygienic conditions of the concentration camp. Kosinski, on the other hand, is more worried about the reach of the Third Reich (Nazi) propaganda even to the far off villages where there are no means of communication with the towns or centers of power. (The people in the village only see the train passing with half-dead Jews, but they do not know who they are and where they are taken to.) The people in these villages are supposed to be in unison with Nature as opposed to the towns where the extremities can be seen almost everywhere. But in *The Painted Bird*, even the villagers are presented as not sympathetic towards the little boy who is lost there. This is the reason why he wants to take revenge on the people who have done wrong to him. His laws are those of Nature and not of the cultured groups in the city who might think of several things before getting into action. The boy concludes (as if to put the philosophy of the novel in a nutshell).

A person should take revenge for every wrong or humiliation. There were far too many injustices in the world to have them all weighed and judged. A man should consider every wrong he had suffered and decide on the appropriate revenge. Only the conviction that one was as strong as the enemy and that one could pay him back double, enabled people to survive. (Kosinski, 1970: 214)

It is because of this philosophy that Kosinski was criticised vehemently by many critics (Leslie Epstein for example). They feel that this kind of a revenge is something which should not be propagated even in a novel based on the Holocaust.

Jerzy Kosinski adds to the problems which Epstein presents adding a dimension to the problem of Western thought's failure to recognize the Holocaust literature in all its meaning Epstein says, the very act of writing, the exercise of the will of the poet, the shape and form of his poem, implied a kind of meaning, and gave a degree of pleasure, that tended to mitigate if not contradict the very horror, the chaos, that he wished to depict. What other solution, then, but silence? Epstein introduces the seemingly volatile nature of the relationship between the Holocaust fiction writer and the reader. He articulates the problems related to this in an interview: When you describe the atrocity of the concentration camp you are immediately reminding the reader that this is not his reality. It happened, you say, it happened in such and such a time. It is the same argument that Elie Wiesel presents. He argues that at last when one tries to tell "what happened" (in the concentration camp and how one has survived), the first impression that the person has is that the listener (reader too) would not *understand*. When they think back, the survivors too do not *understand*. Hence, there is a limit for expression. As Wiesel points out "a novel about Auschwitz is either not a novel or it is not about Auschwitz" (Wiesel, 1984: 155).

5.2. *Steps* (1968)

Steps also contains autobiographical episodes, besides the thirty five odd, seemingly isolated, narrative pieces. Critics have observed that there is the lack of a protagonist who is dependably the same protagonist throughout. Here again the author

wants the reader to ponder over the individual incidents, and that is the reason why one finds the lack of a proper "plot".

The other novels like *Being There* (1970), *The Devil Tree* (1973), *Cockpit* (1975), *Blind Date* (1977), and *Pinball* (1982) become more important when one attempts the study of the concept of nation in Kosinski's novels for they present vivid descriptions of the life in society. These "American" novels constitute the second part of his career, if one has to classify his novels according to the thematic concerns. At the same time novels like *Steps* and *Hermit of the 69th Street: the Working Papers of Norbert Koski* are not so related to the life in a country or society, since they concentrate more on the individual and individual relationships. On the whole, these novels discuss the concerns of life in the vibrant years of modern American history.

Even though Kosinski proclaims as a consequence in these novels of the second part of his career, the repercussions of these incidents can be detected more than the actual historical events. It was the time when Americans waged war against a nation which was not even half its own size (the Vietnam War (1967-1972)), and it was the time when John Kennedy, the then president, was assassinated. The conditions and forms in which the citizen reacted to these very incidents do give some idea about this nation, and Kosinski reflects on these to create his novels.

Kosinski is against the self being disturbed and traumatized in a political state. According to Lavers, It is the power of the event and the cumulative impact of the actions that create the effects in Kosinski's novels, not the richness of language. The language does what is necessary, then gets out of the way. Most of the characters in Kosinski's novels are in the state of becoming and they all are passionate enemies of any kind of totalitarian oppression. Even in *The Painted Bird*, the brutalities and catastrophes of the war become the prime factor that pushes the narrative forward. In the case of *Blind Date* it is the notorious Sharon Tate murder that acts as the backdrop. These novels discuss the role that chance plays in the life of the characters besides their concern for capturing the voices of the marginalized. All these novels are about manifold dichotomies, destiny and chance in the world of power abuse.

5.3. *Cockpit* (1975)

In *Cockpit* it is the 'T' who speaks from the beginning to the end of the novel. It is almost a stream of consciousness technique that Kosinski uses here and one feels that there is more to this narration than merely the technique, which makes the novel exceptional. Here the protagonist's name is uttered only once; Tarden, which the reader might reject as a pseudonym, because he always talks about adopting different names for different purposes. It is stated in the novel that he was working in an intelligence Service, after a point the reader comes to know that this is the Secret Service Agency of the United States and that this particular agent is so powerful that he can plot against and kill anybody. He is free to go anywhere irrespective of the country or continent. He can also sleep with anyone he prefers. He sometimes acts as a gentleman and most of the time acts as a person of vengeance. His past, as is true with most of the protagonists of Kosinski, is not given. There is no mention of his childhood or any of the sentimental relationships. His youth is presented and therein the reader gets to know the society and the people he mingles with.

Tarden's love towards women is at times gentle and at other times perverse. He acts as a rogue with people whom he does not like and he behaves rather kindly with people whom he wants for some purpose or the other. His ways are different from all the others for he has good faith in his memory and other people's carelessness. One could say his memory always makes him the master in all his dealings. His ways of taking revenge are at all times unique, for he always uses unconventional weapons and uses them with genuine shrewdness: he keeps poison filled inside his ring as a syringe, as a suicide weapon, in case he is caught; to kill a person slowly by cancer he uses a radar signal, he uses a bomb tied to a dog and in a stunning way kills an ambassador; he kills a former secret agent who broke away with the agency using his own peculiar lock system in the car; and he kills a famous writer by motivating him to go to an unwanted and unmanned border. There are as many as ten murders in the novel, which are all cold-blooded and executed (as well as narrated) in a masterly way.

If one feels that these are unimaginable incidents, and purely fiction, the novelist has an answer. Kosinski was very vocal about his conception of horror in a seemingly peaceful environment. He says in the interview given to George Plimpton,

I see no essential difference between war and any other traumatic experience. For example, I know many people whose adolescence in the peaceful United States or Sweden was in its own way just as traumatic as was the war or Stalinist oppression for millions of Central and East Europeans. (Plimpton, 1981: 320)

In *Cockpit*, it is the description of the police force and the secret agency that attract the attention of the reader. It is this particular narrative of the secret agency that gives the reader space to ponder over the power of the state and nation. If one can leave out the personal and individual characteristics of the protagonist, one is left with a stunning description about the nature of the state's political power, its manifold ways of dealing with the citizen and the brutal ways through which it works. It shows that in America, even though it projects itself as a nation of the uppermost individual freedom, in fact, the individual's life is always under scrutiny and constant threat.

Cockpit thus becomes a narrative of the state's ideological apparatus. It also proves that the United States acts as a nation through the state's totalitarian apparatuses rather than its history or spiritual glory.

5.4. *The Devil Tree* (1973)

The Devil Tree begins with a stunning reference to the city of New York. The protagonist, Whalen, is presented surveying the city from a hired helicopter. The pilot and the clerk in the office of the flying agency seem to have some doubts about Whalen because of his untidy clothes and foreign looks even after he shows the money he has with him. When the helicopter takes off the pilot turns to Whalen,

"Now, listen," he said. "We're gonna do the metropolitan area, see all the sights, and come right back here. No tricks. Start acting funny, and I'll dump you out over the Statue of Liberty. Get it?"... "Every time I fly in a helicopter," Whalen said, "it reminds me of the model gyros I had when I was a kid. It's like being guided by remote control." "Yeah," said the pilot. "Well, now I'll show you where they keep all the money." The helicopter turned south towards the Battery. As they approached Wall Street, Whalen pointed to the old-fashioned

skyscraper to the right of the Stock Exchange. "Could you fly over that one for a second?" he asked. "I've never looked down on it. I always saw the tops of other buildings from it. My father used to tell me their names." (Kosinski, 1974: 3-5)

The officials at the office ring up the police before Whalen comes down because they mistake him for a miscreant and the officers were waiting for him in the office. He is interrogated and in order to escape, he gives the name of his advocate, after which the policemen become friendly since they know now that he is the heir apparent of a wealthy family.

This reference to the process of 'looking down' at the poor in the city as well as in the country has been taken to the heights in the novel, where the life of the wealthy class is the prime thrust. 'Looking down' from a helicopter then becomes a convenient metaphor for the politics of the bourgeoisies. The novel shows the victims of the mechanized society that imprisons people's minds under the most openly totalitarian regime (which the novelist has a thorough experience of). The significance of the novel's title-is explained in the note given at the beginning of the novel.

This note provides the reader with the symbolic formula through which s/he can analyze the whole text. Here the tree stands for the wealth and the business empire that Whalen's father created exploiting the poor for many years. It also stands for the wealthy nation of the United States. An experienced youth like Whalen would reject the past, the roots, in the symbolic order of the novel. At the same time his power and freedom of action depend a lot on the same power which he would reject due to his idealism feeling that it is immoral. It is the picture of the American youth who reject wealth because of the immorality behind its acquisition. The assertion here is very clear, capitalism is self-destructive.

Kosinski must have been referring to the Vietnam War, which killed many American youths, just as the devil killed the young trees in the anecdote given at the beginning of the novel. Like *Blind Date*, *The Devil Tree* also has an allegorical dimension. Because of the constant reference to the factors concerning the nation, the reader is justified in thinking that it is the nation that the novelist is primarily concerned with in

The Devil Tree. Though equating the use of allegory with the narration of nation in this particular case would not be out of place, it is not appropriate to assert that it is just the allegorical formula that works in an understanding of *The Devil Tree*. But depending upon the ways in which one looks at the symbolic structure of the novel the interpretation also changes. It is absolutely normal to look at this novel as a documentary of sub-narratives. The reading changes accordingly with different understandings of the symbolic formula, even though the novelist takes care in restricting the reading possibilities.

5.5. *Blind Date* (1977)

Blind Date is about chance. Chance has more or less a major role to play in every character's life in *Blind Date*, unlike *Being There*, where Chance is the name of a character but plays a role only in the life of the 'unnamed' protagonist. *Blind Date* is about an investor, an "idea man", George Laventer. Kosinski's impeccable control over the plot construction is evident in the various incidents narrated in the novel. There is hardly any linear movement in the narrative structure; instead what we have are small incidents cutting through time and space by means of which Laventer reaches his destinations. He is a traveler, a man popular among women, a trained skier, a trickster, a friend to many a dignitary and celebrity, and to put everything in perspective, an upstart immigrant.

Blind Date revolves around the individual perceptions of and the problems faced by the members of various immigrant communities. Transnationality acts as a leitmotiv in the novel. It also depicts the viewpoints of several social outcasts and vagrants who are normally not included in discourses of any kind. Kosinski gives voice to these outcasts like prostitutes, people from the lower strata of society, transsexuals, dwarfs, children, African-Americans and most importantly the immigrants and refugees. *Blind Date* thus becomes a novel that looks at the nation from far below. It is this polyphonic nature of the novel that makes it important in a political reading of the text. There are significant references to 'no man's lands' throughout this novel like the unclaimed land in between the boundaries of two nations, towns that are neither big nor small and have no specific role in the mainland's concerns and mountain plains covered with snow, which is neither water nor ice, all of which provide an ample background to the theme discussed.

Kosinski provides a perfect comparison between the two extremes in society by contrasting the lives of the business magnates and the rich with those of the lower class and poor. The instance where Laventer takes Mary Jane Kirkland, the young widow of the billionaire William Kirkland, out on a blind date is a perfect example of this kind of a treatment. Laventer takes Mary Jane Kirkland to one of New York's most expensive restaurants. She acts as Mrs. Kirkland's secretary fooling Laventer with her own maiden name, Madeleine Saxon; since he thought, guessing the age of William Kirkland and comparing it with his wife's, that she would be too old. He asks her when she wanted to share the check with him, "Where were you when I dined here a few years ago and needed such an offer?" (*Blind Date* 194). Afterwards, when they go for a stroll he tells her what happened when he went to that restaurant for the first time. It was soon after he had arrived in America. He wanted to celebrate a fellowship, he had just gotten for his studies. Until then, he was living on an income provided by parking cars. He had with him a girl on a date whom he had just met. Without bothering about the menu and the rates they had a perfect dinner. And when the bill came he was surprised and did not understand how dinner for two could cost almost as much as he had to live on for a month.

The maître' politely informed me that his little restaurant was justly known to be not only one of the very best in this country but also-because of its insistence on French excellence-one of the most expensive. My date and I had about thirty dollars between us. Madeleine laughed. "Poor you! How did you pay for the dinner?" "The maître took me aside and he agreed on a ten-month instalment plan.

There is another instance too in the novel where the story of a wealthy WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) is juxtaposed with that of an immigrant. Kosinski successfully deals with the fear a WASP individual has about dealing with an immigrant. The immigrant is a non- entity for them and s/he is without personal and political histories. A WASP lives with a constant fear about the stranger (an immigrant) with an erased past, who, in terms of a political interpretation, can be perceived as the "other" or the "marginalized". Here Laventer, soon after his marriage with her, agrees along with Mary-Jane to visit one of her former husband's friends. The latter shows the shelter he made underground to Laventer and Mary-Jane and remarks that the stock of food and medical supplies was sufficient for eight people to subsist for six months and thus outlive

the immediate danger of an atomic war, and he continually revised the list of people he would invite to join him.

"if you're cooped up underground, six months is a long time," said the host, "and you have to know all about someone you're going to be cooped up with." "I understand," said Laventer. [...] "You're a survivor, George. The war. The Russkies. Parking cars. You have survived it all. And look at you now." He paused, as if to let the implication sink in. "Married to Mary- Jane, the nicest girl there is, who also happens to be one of the richest widows in America, with the most powerful friends around."

"Mary-Jane and I met on a blind date," said Laventer. "Sure you did, George," he agreed quickly. "But have all your survivals begun on blind dates?" He looked at Laventer, then continued, his lips pursed. "What if there was some deed, some awful price you had to pay to emerge unscathed? How do we know that there wasn't?" He glanced at Laventer and, as if afraid he might have hurt his feelings, quickly added, "Take me, for instance. Like every other WASP, I'm completely documented; city state, federal records exist for every facet of my history; schools, hospitals, clubs have files on me; and there are people who have known me at every stage of my private and professional life. But where can one find out about you?" He lowered his voice. "What does Mary-Jane, your own wife, really know about who you are?" Laventer did not know what to say. (Kosinski, 1977: 202-203)

Kosinski being an immigrant has an eye for what is not considered accepted in the "normal" lifestyle in America. He understands that being an immigrant means being under the watchful eyes of the authorities all the time. It also means that he is watched suspiciously by the fellow human beings too. Kosinski asserts that this is a constant fear that Americans cannot get over. More than the language and the economic status, the physical appearance, color and shape of the skull are the major concerns of a society that claims of "equality", "freedom" and "liberty". What Kosinski asserts through these instances fundamentally is that even in the so called most "modern" living conditions,

the same outrageous ethnic hatred that killed millions in Europe previous to the Second World War, of which Kosinski himself is a survivor, still holds. This is the reason why, probably, Kosinski provides a comparison between the lives under the communist regime in Russia and democratic rule in the United States. The reference to little people in this respect becomes extremely important for its multifaceted possibilities of interpretation. Kosinski adds this reference with a bit of allegorical underpinning, which one can also find in *Being There*.

One stretches the allegory to the problems of the marginalized automatically because of the concerns that Kosinski presents all through the novel. There are other instances in the novel where the minority life in its-vividness is portrayed. Kosinski makes it a point in *Blind Date* to observe how an individual from a minority community is looked down upon in public spheres. While taking a stroll in the afternoon Laventer stopped in front of a general store which sported an array of handguns, shotguns, rifles and holsters.

If someone thinks that this is just an animated story, Kosinski gives more examples from daily life. His novels are about people and their relationships with themselves and with each other. He says, "'I'm myself-it's the ultimate risk,' says a character in *Blind Date*. My novels are about such characters- and about taking such risks. The greatest risks there are" (Plimpton, 1981: 322).

5.6. *Being There* (1971)

Being There is about the audience of TV shows. In America people spend more time watching TV shows, especially the "chat shows", than in any other activity. *Being There* had a code name in the beginning when Kosinski was writing it. (He usually used code names while writing and apparently settled on a title at the end.) The code name was a philosophical term, *Dasein*, which is difficult to translate, which could mean the state in which one is and is not at the same time. The reactions to this novel focused mainly on Chauncey Gardiner (or Chance), a formidable tribute to corporate image making. The image is a created image like that of the image building of the political

leaders that is being represented in this novel. It was the first novel in which Kosinski treated an American protagonist in an American setting.

According to Tapa Lupack, Kosinski described the television image as something "subjected to various collective influences, collective editing, collective simplifying, and collective sponsorship" (Lupack, 1995: 141). She argues that Chance is being tipped for the most influential post in the world for just his superficial charisma. His only actual political assets are that "he's personable, well-spoken, and he comes across well on TV. This approach to TV is not very surprising if we take census figures into consideration:

In 1950 about 5 million American families had a television set; by 1960 the total was about 45 million and growing rapidly. By 1970 the average American was watching TV for about seventeen hours each week-roughly the equivalent of one-third of the entire leisure time of an industrial worker [...] Politically television helped to win supporters for such telegenic candidates as John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan (Snowman, 1978: 221).

In America "coming across well" on TV, means going up in the social ladder, in politics and in entrepreneurship. This is basically because of the American society's snobbish temperament and their interest in the TV shows.

Being There is a novel about the corporate world in which Chance sees his benevolent figure in the 'lone wolf in American industry, Ben Rand. Kosinski is satirical about this character's benevolence. Ben is a powerful entrepreneur who can make things happen in the American political and industrial scenario. However, he is of no use to the common person. The case of Chance's meteoric rise to celebrity is distinguished from Ben's tempestuous climb to the top of the corporate world. One can see Kosinski making judgments on the two generations in America through these characters. Ben, who belongs to the older generation, is more sober about the material benefits since he knows the world around him much better with all his financial/political constraints. In the case of Chance the material benefits are making him exult, although his knowledge about the world is strictly and completely through the television set he has in his room. He belongs to the youth of America whose material success is made only because of chance. Thus, his name is allegorical.

There are many curious streams of coincidences in the novel like the one in which Chance is struck by EE Rand's limousine, which injures his leg and then his striking an impulsive friendship with her, upon which contemplates: "Everything that happened had its sequel" (*Being There* 38). Thanks to the media hype Chance becomes a celebrity even though he does not have any records to prove his past or family story. This unusual story of success reminds us of the remarks of Baudrillard on America, that it does not have a history of long narratives of culture. The success of Chance is the allegorical story of American society's insistence on mindless images and success as distinguished from attaining greatness through intellectual struggles. The audience do believe in the success of Chance for they unconsciously feel that he will be able to do justice to their superficial expectations. *Being There* hence talks about the place which a successful person should take heed of. It is the success story of public relations and the fictitious exposure of success.

5.7. *Pinball* (1982)

Pinball goes deeper into various manifestations of racial relationships in America. It is a novel about one of the most passionate endeavors of the human beings. It is about music of all kinds. It contains matters related to popular music, classical music, the music industry and the individuals who wither away in the complex and fervent inner plays of the music industry. *Pinball* can also be easily taken for a composite mixture of emotional bonding and abandoning of relationships for personal achievements as well as all the revenge and bloodshed related to it. Thus, in a nutshell, the novel is about genius and evil. However, one cannot deny or ignore the issues the novel raises in terms of the racial relationships in the United States during the 1970s. The attention the novel pays to the racial question makes it the most important in the Kosinski canon. In *Pinball* he denies the criticism people made about him that his novels are always individual-oriented and overdramatic through straightforward narratives and down to earth characters.

By placing three 'others' as the core characters in *Pinball*, Kosinski invites the reader's attention to the complexities of American society. In this novel Kosinski's interest lies predominantly in the intricacies of ethnic and racial relationships, which can

be easily observed from the interpersonal relations he presents in the novel. As a part of the discussion on the matters related to the minorities he equates the emergence of popular music and rock music with the ethnic resurgence in America. Nonetheless, Kosinski's attempt in this regard cannot be considered ground breaking, since, many sociologists who worked on the racial realities of the United States of the 1970s in general and the twentieth century in particular have also propounded this view.

Kosinski's importance, however, lies in the fact that he builds on this argument through situations and characters, and presents them before the readers so that they can arrive at their own conclusions. As a matter of fact, *Pinball* relies more on the underlying racial relationships and the politics thereof than on individual relationships and plot structure as such. Furthermore, the novel raises questions of the individual's identification with the nation in terms of the multipart identity of the immigrant minority and African American communities in the United States. The novel stops just short of giving any conclusions. Rightly so, given the issues that are raised, such conclusions can never be final and are most of the time meaningless. Even if there are solutions, in the context of the changing scenario, they should be regarded as time bound and not eternal. Since the issues change color according to the environment and other political movements, raising such issues itself can be considered an important achievement.

All the major characters in the novel are "mark[ed by] the music". Gerhard Osten, one of the fringe characters in *Pinball*, who has had the misfortune to lose his entire family to Nazi persecution, feels that only through music (classical music) "could he, and others like him, be lifted beyond the memory of all the hideous events of his young manhood and the terrible destruction of his family in the holocaust" (*Pinball* 141).

Kosinski's attitude towards music (and art in general) can be equated with Gerhard Osten's philosophy of music.

He believed that an individual risked being viewed as totalitarian if he was original enough to produce art, for the very act of imposing an image of the world on others demanded their approval or disapproval; it polarized people into friends and enemies, leading them to see art not in terms of its own merit but as an image of the artist. Thus, life

and art necessarily became confused in the eyes of the audience, and any success the artist might have he would have to pay for with his happiness and with the happiness of those dear to him. (Kosinski, 1982: 141)

Though a classicist by training, Osten never practiced his knowledge. He was against knowledge being institutionalized. His interest was primarily in the Greeks, beginning with Pythagoras, and their investigations relating mathematics to music. Furthermore, the interesting thing about Osten's philosophy (and Kosinski's) is that he connects originality in art with totalitarianism. In this attitude one can see the slight influence of a person who had undergone trauma of the extreme kind. In the case of Osten as well as Kosinski this trauma can be traced back to the Holocaust, of which they both are survivors.

Three of the four major characters in the novel belong to either an ethnic minority or are first or second-generation immigrants. Patrick Domostroy is an immigrant, Goddard alias Jimmy alias James Osten is a second generation immigrant, Donna Downes is an African American.. Goddard, the most famous rock superstar in the country, great care not to let others know who is behind his voice (he does not perform on stage and never meets anyone in the music industry in person) and lives as a common man without the hassles of the superstardom. Donna Downes' interest in classical music and deep love for Chopin helps her pull herself up the ladder of inequality. The fourth major character, Andrea Gwynplaine, is a student of theatre and music, and fakes intense passion for Goddard but she is really plotting to possess the tremendous amount of wealth that he owns.

The novel has four sections, told loosely from the point of view of two characters; Goddard and Domostroy. The storyline moves around Domostroy's enquiry into who Goddard actually is. Since no one in the United States knows who the actual face behind the most famous rock musician is, it turns out to be a difficult task. Domostroy tries all the possible ways to catch him on the insistence of Andrea. He tries the most obvious ways like contacting the people in the industry for a possible lead without success. He uses letters in which there are naked photographs of a fan, who is passionate about his music. Then he uses his own knowledge of music. He listens to

Goddard albums again and again for a possible clue, a musical influence that cannot be kept a secret from the trained ears of Domostroy. He finds out the clues in Goddard's music in the form of two not so famous musicians namely Goddard Lieberson (from whom Goddard has taken the pseudonym) and Boris Pregel and discusses these possible influences in Goddard's music in the letters sent by the anonymous admirer in order to annoy Goddard in his anonymity. Nevertheless, he is unable to reach to the actual person behind it because James Osten is too careful in all his dealings, including the recording of his songs (which he does all alone using state-of-the-art equipment in a deserted outhouse) and always uses a different voice to communicate with all the others even to his father whom he loves the most. Domostroy finds out the actual person by the end of the novel. But the circumstances in which he identifies Goddard are eerie with Andrea, whose love to Goddard Domostroy is genuine, acting as a psychopath to grab all the wealth Goddard has. The description of the incidents leading to Domostroy's meeting with Goddard has the quality of a suspense thriller. Meanwhile, after training under the watchful eyes of Domostroy, Donna wins the most prestigious Chopin competition held in Vienna. In the end Domostroy keeps all his options open and this leaves Domostroy and Donna pursue for their own destinies while he returns to his old role of the entertainer in the small bars and restaurants.

Music thus has a major role to play in the novel; so does the internal politics of the music industry. Kosinski's background in music his mother was a piano teacher-helps in dealing with the complex details of classical music. His experience as the president of the American centre of P.E.N. (an international association of Poets, Novelists and Essayists) makes it easier for him to discuss the intricacies of the industry. These intimate associations establish the backbone of the novel.

Kosinski presents almost every problem that is faced by an immigrant and a member of a minority community in *Pinball*. He suggests that white immigrants are also treated the same way as the non-white minorities in the United States of America. His ideas of the ethnic and racial groups resemble those of Glazer who claims that we cannot separate ethnic and racial groups into two classes: those that have suffered, economically and culturally, in American society and therefore deserve redress; and those that have not. As far as discrimination is concerned Kosinski is quick to add that

the white immigrants also are comparable with the "majorities" in discriminating against the colored people.

This instance shows the complex ways in which the American people react to the notion of the "other". It does not matter whether one is a successful businessman, or dressed well or in sports attires that show one is an entrepreneur, the fear that there is something which might harm an individual's selfish preference as an American always shows up essentially. It also shows that for an immigrant this constant reminder that s/he is not a "natural" citizen adds to the alienation with the new nation. Robert Blauner says:

Of course every human group is unique, forged in its special mold of history and circumstance. The uniqueness of human groups, a reality that is inevitably violated by the sociological impulse to generalize and classify, is particularly salient for ethnic peoples. For out of a distinctiveness of culture and history, ethnic and racial groups define their identities, their sense of nationality, and their particular relation to the world. Yet self-contradictory as the question may appear, are not the experiences of some groups more unique than those of others? The stories of the various immigrant nationalities in the United States contain very similar chapters-despite important differences in cultural background and old country condition, in the social and economic "welcome" received, and in the character of collective response to the New World. (Blauner, 1972: 244)

And these ethnic and racial groups are not opposed to "naturalization", "integration", "assimilation" or more bluntly "Americanization", even though it happens to be a lengthy and painful procedure for them (Wilson, 1972: 260-262). There are any number of such cases in the United States. Nevertheless, even after such adaptation and integration, the distinctiveness is perceived as the discernible "otherness". This is the major theme that Kosinski discusses in *Pinball* time and time again.

Kosinski shows an example of the immigrants' motivation to maintain their individuality when he describes the Cuban expatriate association's annual formal party. Cubans who declare themselves as the Jews of Latin America are always alert about the way Cuba is perceived in America.

Domostroy's story is the most arresting one in the whole novel, since the readers get most the novel through his point of view. He is not an "original American", on the other hand, he has come to America from Poland through Russia, with his music.

In fact, James himself is a second-generation immigrant. His father, Gerard Osten had reached America after losing all his relatives and friends in the Holocaust. But James was born and brought up in the United States itself, and considers himself more an American than a second-generation immigrant. He is thus a "naturalized"

On the other hand, even Domostroy is branded a racist. Domostroy's case is curiously poised. He is an "outsider" of sorts in America since he is an immigrant, at the same time he is also being accused of racial discrimination because his color is almost the same as the whites.

Donna knows her musical lineage perfectly well. Her music is rooted in the tradition of her people. And it is equally genuine and down to earth. Thus her music has the traces of all that her people had gone through by way of physical and mental agonies. And these traits are characteristically different from the western tradition of musical practices.

On the other hand Chopin does not have that relationship with the rhythm of the people. Western classical music itself is being criticised for its elite leanings, because of the royal patronage it enjoyed. Nevertheless, Chopin's music has never been considered universal and it has never inspired the masses. The nineteenth century Polish born composer, Chopin, lived most of his life in France and was an esoteric in more ways than one. Though he composed solely for the piano and was an idol of literary coteries, his works are delicate creations, illustrative and tinged with melancholy, highly personal in their harmonic coloring, and richly ornamented. Because of its sentimentality his music is considered part of the Romantic tradition of Western classical music. "Chopin was 'another composer who is best heard after seeing a bootlegger.

Kosinski makes it clear in the novel that a white, even if he is Donna's lover, will not understand what she and her family found so exciting in Chopin. She, like her ragtime predecessors in Missouri and Louisiana, might have found some rich hidden

meaning which was essential to her but which, so far at least, had eluded her white lover altogether. It can also be that, as Glazer pointed out, "the extermination of their cultural traits was almost total, while the white immigrants could, if they wished, maintain their cultures in churches, afternoon schools, and parochial schools.

The conclusion could be that in America, what are regarded as normal are always the practices of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant and not anybody else's. If any other culture or practice is presented in public, it is always looked down upon with contempt or with some kind of disgust. This is one trait that the Americans have not learned to discard. As Blauner puts it, the norm of 'Anglo-conformity' has been a dynamic of domination central to American life.

However, Kosinski is extremely clear about his role as a writer. He tries to present the incidents that can be difficult and sensitive in terms of the racial questions, with the most possible straightforwardness and wants the reader to reflect on them. He never tries to be the spokesman of any of these groups that are being discussed in the novel. He understands the problems and politics of patronizing a community. And African American individuals in America would never be able to stand such a possibility. This would be the reason why he presents Demostroy as helping Donna in her pursuit but not accepting her love in the first instance itself, even though he also had the same feeling. Kosinski thus understands that there is a characteristic difference between the white immigrant and an African American. According to William J. Wilson who explores the relationship between the races in America,

If we accept the assimilationist's argument that the experience of black Americans differs from the experience of European immigrants only in a matter of degree and not of kind, then it is a propos to ask why only blacks (and occasionally Puerto Ricans) have revolted thus far, and also, why earlier urban ethnic groups-the European immigrants-failed to resort to Spontaneous

rebellions against the symbols or agents of the dominant group.
(Wilson, 1972: 264)

It is clear thus, the question of identity and racial relationships is extremely convoluted and Kosinski has done justice to the issues he raised in the novel in a politically positive sense. In fact, treating African Americans in fiction was itself a daunting task for a white American. Kosinski's success in this lies in the fact that he could present the racial relationships with all the complexity in which it appears in American society.

In conclusion, almost all novels of Kosinski contain several references to the subculture present in the United States. These references give the reader ample opening to look at the other side of the much discussed "American Dream".

Juxtaposing the theories of nation that are discussed in the Second Chapter with that of the nation that is presented in the novels of Jerzy Kosinski. It is easy to see that through his novels Kosinski implicitly questions/attacks the concepts of nation that have been proposed by many of the theoreticians. His concept of the nation is far from idealistic or idealizing. His depiction of nation shows that it is not one which has a glorious history or past to boast off (which Renan puts as the primary constituent of any nation), instead, it is a nation which gives more prominence to the present. Through Kosinski's novels we come to understand that it is a nation which tries to live the life according to the economic equations of the present. His nation does not project the glory of the past or history that all nations boast of. That is the reason why his protagonists do not have a past, be it troublesome or nostalgic, most of the time. His characters and his concepts of nation follow what Baudrillard has constituted' in his book (*America*), where he discusses America's lack of a past and its attaining modernity without going through the long and perilous journey of enlightenment.

Kosinski's America is an individualistic nation wherein the sacrifices of the past have no value other than as textbook references. The solidarity of the people from all the corners cannot be attained in this nation since the people belong to different ethnic and moral concerns. The people are not bothered about the way in which the United States attained freedom and nor do they esteem the perils or sacrifices that their forefathers had

gone through. Timothy Brennan says that as for the 'nation', it is both historically determined and general. As a term, it refers both to the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous. Kosinski agrees that America has no ancient past. Also he confirms that the United States is more a totalitarian state than a welfare state of social liberty.

It is not nationalism in an ordinary or ideal sense that we see in Kosinski. On the contrary, we would be able to locate several instances in which he and his characters undermine the nationalism of the United States of America. Homi Bhabha in his essay "DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation", discusses the complex procedure of people to find a metaphor for their own nation (like for example the English weather). He says:

I have taken the measure of Fanon's occult instability and Kristeva's parallel times into the 'incommensurable narrative' of Benjamin's modern storyteller to suggest no salvation, but a strange cultural survival of the people. For it is by living on the borderline of history and language, on the limits of race and gender, that we are in a position to translate the differences between them into a kind of solidarity.
(Bhabha, 1990: 320)

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION:

6. The American Nation Through the Novels of Jerzy Kosinski

The aim of this dissertation has been the exploration of selective novels by the American writer Jerzy Kosinski with the main focus on the representation of the concept of 'nation'. This thesis is a study of the novels written during the second part of Jerzy Kosinski's literary career in relation to the concept of "nation" as it has been dealt with in American history in general and American fiction in particular. The novels under study are *Blind Date*, *Being There*, *The Devil Tree*, *Cockpit*, *Pinball*, and *Passion Play*—are predominantly "American Novels" and that an inquiry into the deep political aspects of these novels reveals a unique ideology of American national identity—to be precise the American national identity of the minorities of diverse origins. I have also tried to demonstrate that these novels act as a touchstone to the times in which they were written. The other three novels of Kosinski, *The Painted Bird*, *Steps*, and *The Hermit of 69th Street* were left out of this study on the ground that these novels, unlike the ones written during the second part of his career, deals with different themes. (See ch.5). Kosinski's non-fiction writings like *The Future is Ours*, *Comrade* and *No Third Path* (which were written well before he reached the United States) are also left out for the same reasons.

After the introductory first chapter, the second chapter presented a chronological account of the philosophy of "nation" and "nationality" as it has evolved through the centuries. The framework I followed in the thesis is to approach the works of the novelist Kosinski in the light of the discussions on (1) the basic idea of nation and national identity, (2) the history of the novel in the United States and (3) the forms of allegiance of the novel with the ideology of the nation. Since the author's background throws much light on the ways in which he uses the immigrant/deviant's ideology as opposed to the dominant ideology in American society it cannot be omitted from a study of the national identity in his works. The social and cultural background of an individual has so much to do with the formation of his/her national identity. Since every artwork is created by an individual with a class, gender and racial identity, it would not be out of place to look

at the background of the artist. Essentially, the thesis tries to approach the novel from the historical and sociological points of view. It tries to place the novels of Kosinski in the backdrop of the social contexts and cultural significations of the time.

Any discussion of the philosophical attributes of the "nation" has to address the question of the individual citizen and his/her identification with the "nation" as a unifying factor. These discussions also have to address the choice of being a subject to a far-flung political system which is the nation state. Chapter two elaborates the assumptions of the theoreticians of various ages like Ernest Renan (eighteenth century) who argued that the nation is primarily a spiritual principle and Hobsbawm (twentieth century), who believes that nations are dual phenomena but constructed essentially by the powerful in the social ladder and that to understand these phenomena one has to fundamentally analyze the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people. The chapter also examines various ideologies such as Marxism where nationalism is historically perceived as the manifestation of European capitalism's need for raw markets), structuralism (in particular, the work of the structuralist Marxist, Louis Althusser, who analyzed the state as an ideological apparatus which is used as a means of domination, an idea which he draws from Antonio Gramsci's fragmented writings) and post-colonialism, where a national identity is being termed as one opposed to the Imperial powers.

Even though, the second chapter does not try to give any conclusion for the problems of the individual's identification with the nation it addresses these questions in an attempt to problematize the issue and to provide the groundwork for the discussions that follow in the thesis. As a matter of fact, the different schools of thought on the concept of nation through ages have failed to propose a conclusive equation vis-a-vis the individual citizen and the nation. One needs to look into other disciplines like psychoanalysis and anthropology for a further understanding of the problem. A brief attempt in this direction can be seen in the second chapter in the discussion of Lacan and a political interpretation of his ideas. The chapter also tries to locate the intricacies of the relation between the subject and the state and concludes that it is even more complex than the relationship between the citizen and the nation. Another point of discussion in

the chapter is the modernization of the citizen and its implications with regard to the politics of relation between the ruler and the ruled.

The third chapter "Construction of the American Nation" moves to the more specific issues related to the conceptualization of American nation. With respect to the changes that had taken place in the manifestation of the American nation an issue-based approach is attempted in this chapter rather than a diachronic or factual one.

Moreover, the third chapter tries to track the attitudinal changes in terms of the individual citizen's identification with the United States of America. The chapter further tries to examine the foundational ideals of the American nation like "liberty" and "equality" as they are presented in "the Declaration of Independence". It is also part of the concern in the third chapter to study the foundational ethics of the United States in relation to what are termed as the "destructive forces" within the nation. These so called disruptive elements are scrutinized in relation to the changing realities of the nation in the context of the emerging immigrant population. The impact of the increase in immigrant population can be found in two abstract terms like the "American Dream" and the "Melting Pot". These concepts are studied accordingly in the third chapter looking at the most minute changes that had taken place to these terms during each historical point in time; special attention being given to the twentieth century and in particular the nineteen seventies. The relation of the national ideals and these abstract terms with respect to the racial and ethnic minorities is also part of the concern in this chapter. A study of the nineteen seventies in isolation would not suggest a characteristic shift in the perception of American national character. However, the national character of the nineteen seventies can be perceived as the outcome of the problems that had emerged after the Second World War and the resulting increase in immigration to the United States. The thesis locates this decade as a period of transition from grand, age-old and unidimensional society into a society in which differences make their presence felt.

It is argued that in America racial relationships have reached a culmination point. Such an observation can be substantiated citing a few instances from American popular culture. It is a recent trend in the popular culture to discuss the negative side of the American nation. It can be observed that till very recently the popular media like fiction,

film and music were part of the mainstream discourse of the American nationality. From the image epitomized as the Garden of Eden the American nation has slowly metamorphosed into an inferno and to a Melting Pot where only the voices of the powerful (read white Anglo-Saxon Protestant in the American context) are heard. Accordingly, the third chapter further arrives at a conclusion that identity of any single group, be it the majority or minority, depends a lot on differentiation. The chapter argues that in the case of the majorities the national identity depends on affirmation and negation, more so with the heightened relationships between the ethnic groups. On the other hand, the identity of the minorities depends a lot on reaffirmation. The human rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s and the resonance of the African national struggles in the United States during the 1970s can be seen in terms of such a reaffirmation.

There is bound to be a difference in the ways in which an "insider" and an "outsider" perceive the nation. ("Outsider" in this context might mean a person whose origins are outside the bounds of the United States and in a more intricate sense anyone other than a white Anglo-Saxon heterosexual male.) As Mason puts it, an objective perception of the nation cannot but be from outside for if it is from within there would always be a chance of personal preferences and subjective attributes coming into the picture. As a matter of fact, the American nation can only be perceived from outside, since; the discourses (like texts and images) collectively and independently make America. Thus a study of the perceptions of America from outside the boundaries of the United States of America incurs much importance. Baudrillard's *America* and Eco's *Travels in Hyperreality* are two accounts of travelers (even though in actual effect they turn out to be anything other than travelogue writers) from outside and they present clear and unique points of view.

In the light of the discussions of the concept of nation in the second chapter and the American nation in the third, the fourth chapter, "Thousand Faces of America: The Nation in Fiction", explores how America is represented in fiction. 'Nation writing the novel' is an idea which is discussed at some length in this chapter. It has been argued that it is not always in an allegoric or symbolic narrative where we find the nation in the novels.

Instead, any kind of political attempt in the novel induces the reader to read nation in it. A novel, according to Timothy Brennan, is open to go through such a theoretical framework and in actual effect includes/brings out such a theoretical framework. According to him the novel at the same time reaffirms and creates the people of a nation. The fourth chapter looks at the history of American fiction in terms of its various manifestations during various ages. The parallels between the birth of the American nation (the new nation) and the birth of novel (the new form) are striking. Critics have tried to compare the changes in American fiction with those in the history of the American nation. The fourth chapter also looks at the central metaphors and patterns that are part of the American fiction.

It is an unprecedented occurrence in the history of literature that a single nation expresses its multitudinous faces through ages in the fiction of the United States. Any scrutiny of American fiction will throw light on the infinite number of manifestations of the nation, which sometimes present a pessimistic and at other times positive viewpoints. Every specific period of time in the history of the United States was being represented in the novels of that time and there have also been several ways in which writers conceived this process of creating a nationality through signification. These novels belong to particular times and simultaneously they created the times. The writers have been instrumental in creating as well as reflecting different ways of life and landscapes in their work. Most times the representation of nation in the history of American fiction has been Janus-faced. In a specific point of time itself one can find the presence of an illustrious representation celebrating the United States and its glory, and, an intimidating representation collecting and presenting the depressing features.

Another effort in the fourth chapter is to analyze some of the "classics" of American fiction with regard to their approach to the American nation. Novels such as *The Scarlet Letter*, *Moby Dick*, *Light in August* and *Portnoy's Complaint* are taken as representative examples of their respective times. The chapter discusses the history of the American novel with respect to the treatment of American nation. It touches upon various themes and patterns evolved during the two-century long history of American fiction. The chapter also looks at the ways in which the religions in the United States are represented in the fiction: for example, it marks the changes from the conventional to

the more contemporary treatment of religions. In an attempt to illustrate the difference between the traditional writers' treatment of the nation and the post-world war II writers' treatment of the nation, an extensive discussion of two novels is attempted. These novels are *Light in August* and *Portnoy's Complaint* written by William Faulkner and Philip Roth respectively.

The second part of the chapter looks at the changes that had taken place in the twentieth century American fiction. It is argued that there is a sea of difference in the attitudes of the conventional pre-war writers and the post-World War writers. The difference lies primarily in the fact that these "new" writers started treating their novels as political statements even though one might not find overt declarations to this effect. The argument here is that the way in which the world politics itself is conceived by the novelists had undergone some change. The post-world war writers were interested in the politics of the relationship between the powerful and the powerless in a variety of living spaces. This is when the emergence of ethnic writers and writers from the minorities becomes important.

At this point in the history of the United States there are two facts worth mentioning. Both these facts are interrelated in a way. After the Second World War, as the world changed its perspectives, there has been an inflow of immigrants from the European countries to the United States. Many of these immigrants carried along with them the horrid memories of the Holocaust and Nazi brutality. Some of them reached America with the hope that they have reached their preordained destination. Their understanding of the United States would have been that it is the nation which holds up values such as liberty and equality, an impression America has always proudly propounded around the world. Like the eighteenth and nineteenth century perception of America as the Promised Land this also happened to be one of the popular notions of the United States of America in the outside world. This would certainly have been true of the religious rights. The people who had decided to migrate to the United States from the East European countries soon after the Second World War would have been happy about the religious freedom at the first instance for they had been hunted down in the country of their birth mainly because of their religious difference. The writers from such a background perceived the American nation from a distinctive angle. They carried with

them the unpleasant memories of the fascist and totalitarian regimes and tried comparing America with the autocratic systems that were prevalent in those countries. Accordingly, their approach was unique in their attitudes towards national identity.

The chapter concludes that there is no single, unified nation emerging through American fiction. But it is fairly certain, the chapter demonstrates, with respect to national identity that any novel is sure to have an ideology which is true to the particular age and which might impart the spirit of the society.

With this understanding of the concept of nation, the American nation and the nation in American fiction, the thesis approaches the fiction of Jerzy Kosinski. The fifth chapter "Jerzy Kosinski and America" looks at the second part of Kosinski's career closely. Kosinski is admittedly not among the best-known writers of the twentieth century. During the time he was writing, he enjoyed much popularity, but after his suicide in 1991, his fame receded greatly. Then, the question, why does one study his novels. The answer to this is that though he may not be a famous writer, he is a very important author in any study of the representation of nation in fiction especially in America.

In Kosinski's novels the nation expresses itself as a repressive mechanism. He gives voices to the silenced through sub-narratives of several kinds like the graffiti on a toilet wall. In *Cockpit* it is the brutality of the police force and the secret agency in the United States that is highlighted and critiqued. The novel questions the state's political and repressive power. *Cockpit* argues that even though America propagates individual freedom, the individual's life is always in scrutiny and constant threat. *The Devil Tree* uses the techniques of allegory and symbolism to its maximum. It presents a bird's eye view of the difference between the poor and the wealthy in America. Kosinski engages in an enquiry of American capitalism in *The Devil Tree*.

Being there in America at a time when most of the people are interested in the Television talk shows is the major theme of Kosinski's *Being There*. He questions the authority of the power politics in the United States in particular, especially the Presidential politics. Kosinski is interested in a scrutiny of the totalitarian politics in *Being There*.

The fifth chapter of the thesis contains a lengthy discussion of the novel *Pinball*. The chapter argues that it is in *Pinball* that Kosinski's actual politics comes out clearly. It is a novel of passion, music and swindle. All the major characters in the novel are the "others" of the American society. Kosinski here looks at the complexities of the ethnic and racial relationship in the United States, especially the relations between the African Americans and the whites, however, although he presents these characters and viewpoints in *Pinball* he never tries to be the spokesman of their problems. He leaves the value judgment to the discretion of the reader.

Even though, I have not elaborated the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin anywhere in the thesis; my arguments in the fifth chapter do have their basis on his theories of fiction. Bakhtin assumed that the novel as a form utilizes all the (including the suppressed) voices in the society. One also finds in the Bakhtinian conception that (unlike in the post-structural/reader response theories) the author's voice is also of some importance, for Bakhtin argues that the author's voice is one, an important one at that, among the many voices present. Bakhtinian concept of dialogue asserts the presence of several voices (ideologies) existing side by side in the society and these voices are in dialogue with each other. These voices are not in confrontation with each other, and do not result in chaos. I did not pursue this line of inquiry that far because it would have changed the whole focus of the thesis. However, a study of these novels from the Bakhtinian point of view holds potential for further research in the field.

It would also have been of much interest if I had tried to locate Kosinski's fiction in terms of the popular novels which came out in the 1970s. One finds several novels based on the stories of powerful tycoons, political leaders and business magnets in this period. An understanding of Kosinski's novels in the backdrop of the non-canonical works would be fascinating. It is not difficult to understand that Joseph Heller's novels try to unravel out the intricacies of the democratic materialism of America. His first three novels namely, *Catch-22* (1961), *Something Happened* (1974) and *Good as Gold* (1976) are about public institutions which are indisputably political in nature. In *Catch-22*, it was the military bureaucracy (thematically comparable to Kosinski's *Cockpit*) that Heller wanted to scrutinize, in *Something Happened* it was the Corporate Business (*The Devil Tree* and *Blind Date* are Kosinski counterparts in this direction) and in *Good as*

Gold, the United States government itself. In an attempt which would fit in the framework that Irving Howe proposed for the 'Political novel', Heller discusses the role of political institutions in influencing, even controlling the lives and destinies of a large number of persons. Heller provides insights into the working of these power structures in order to bring out their complete social, moral, and political significance. Heller seems to have understood that unlike the previous social and political evils of feudalism and fascism, the new sources which endanger the individual are large and amorphous institutions like multinational cartels, oil companies and bureaucracies. It is in such institutions that destructive power gets concentrated.

If we consider Kosinski's works as political novels, we find that they are characteristically different in nature and approach. As in the case of novels like *A Farewell to Arms* (Ernest Hemingway) and *The Naked and the Dead* (Norman Mailer) we find a few individuals trying to preserve their identity and their lives in Kosinski's novels too. If in *Cockpit* it is the giant machine of bureaucracy, it is the meaninglessness of the public's over dependency on the image making of the television that we find in *Blind Date*. In Heller's *Good as Gold* also we find almost the same approach to the presidency of the United States as in Kosinski's *Being There*. For Kosinski, a person stands a better chance of winning the presidential election of the United States if "he comes across well on TV". Chance in *Being There* is being tipped as the Presidential candidate just because he is impressive on television. The readers of the novel know that Chance actually is not very intelligent or politically informed. Kosinski makes a concealed criticism of the political structure of the presidency in the United States. On the other hand, Heller is overt in his criticism. It can be seen in Gold's selection as the advisor to the president and his aspiration to write a book on Kissinger. The president in *Good as Gold* is more a metaphor than an actual character in the novel. We find the mocking spirit of Heller when he presents this president as a very busy man. He has to keep doing so many things a lot faster than he's able to write about them, even when he's doing nothing more than writing about all the things he supposed to be doing. There are many more instances in the novel which mock the institution of president. When Gold goes to see the president at eleven o'clock in the morning as he is given an appointment, he finds him in deep sleep and he is told that the president is an early riser. He is up at five every morning, takes two sleeping pills and a tranquilizer, and goes right back to

bed for as long as he can sleep. With regards to the national identity, Heller's novel ridicules the way it is formed in the United States at the moment. He is critical of the presidential position and all of the other government structures. Gold in the novel finds his identity through his proposed book on the Jewish Experience in America; if he had not attempted such a work he would have lost his identity forever. On the other hand, Kosinski's characters formulate their national identity through their dialogue/context within a social sphere.

In order to see the individual quality in the approach of Kosinski in his novels, one has also to compare Kosinski's themes with those of a writer from another generation. The contrast is also visible in the mode of characterization. Let us look at another novelist who is proudly associated with heroism and image building, Ernest Hemingway. Even though his novels might move about in the direction of pessimism, it is easy to perceive him as a true representative of the American modernist tradition in fiction. Hemingway's themes for the most part are war and related issues. Many of his novels discussed the horrors of war together with an illustration of human life in the battlefields mostly during the First World War and the Spanish Civil War (like *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *A Farewell to Arms*). However, Hemingway, being truthful to his generation of American writers, maintains humanity, human values and human feelings at the centre of his arguments. One does not fail to notice that, his themes are centered on feelings and emotions of human beings and their intensity whenever "normality" is threatened. Hemingway believed and placed human values as the most crucial concern for the characters in his novels. Moreover, these heroes (most of whom have an autobiographical relation with the author) rise far above the others who might fumble in the face of adversities. On the other hand, what one finds in Kosinski's novels are human beings removed from the centre position as individuals and presented characteristically in social contexts and critical situations. Kosinski's characters are socially conscious, rounded beings, who might sometimes deserve a position of a hero and at other times the status of a villain (Demostroy in *Pinball* is a perfect example) according to the situation in which they find themselves entangled. In trickiest situations they do not always long for human values, neither are they allegoric 'representations of all good values one can think of. They are much too informed not to maintain that the ideas of values are arbitrary and that there is no single emotion/feeling which is common

to two individuals. Values for them are always already constructed and not needed to be followed in the contemporary circumstances.

This study of Kosinski and of the "nation" does not claim to be complete in any sense. There is a lot to be done in the area of fiction studies with regard to the national identity. There are other areas like the diasporic image of the nation, the power politics of the United States' presidents and the like. My idea was to attempt to fill a gap in American fiction studies, where one does not find many attempts to study the nation as presented in novels. My aim was to study fiction using the tools provided by other disciplines in humanities like history and sociology. This thesis can be regarded as a humble beginning in these directions.



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