

woman openly displaying their resistance against Gilead's oppression of women. Although the most obvious injustice in the Republic of Gilead is the restrictions imposed on women, no other woman shows any outward resistance. Offred does resist in small ways, but these sometimes seems to be more in an effort to appease herself than to bring about any sort of change in society. There is also an underlying tension to this aspect of the novel that makes one believe that the conflict between women and society become more pronounced as the novel progresses. Offred's story is a 'reconstruction' in more senses than one, for not only is it her narrative of memory but it is also the means by which she manages to rehabilitate herself as an individual in Gilead. Though she begins her tale as a nameless woman traumatized by loss and speaking in whispers, Offred refuses to believe that she is nothing but a handmaid: I am alive, I live, I breathe, I put my hand out, unfolded, into the sunlight (Atwood 18).

She insists on chronicling her subjective life from within her own skin, offering her own personal history of physical sensation and the impact of emotion on her body, together with those imaginative transformations through which body space opens out into fantasy landscape. According to Cixous's prescription, 'By writing herself [or in Offred's case "speaking herself"] women will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display' (Cixous 250). From the role played by her, Offred finds her strength to resist, for just as Gilead is obsessed with the female body and its reproductive system so this is where Offred turns her attention, though in terms significantly different from patriarchal prescriptions and closer to feminist polemics. The novel concludes with a meta-fictional epilogue that explains that the events of the novel occurred shortly after the beginning of what is called "the Gilead Period." The epilogue is a "transcription of a Symposium on Gileadean Studies written sometime in the distant future in the year 2195." It is a "partial transcript of the proceedings of the Twelfth Symposium on Gileadean Studies" (Atwood 311) and it takes place more than two hundred years after the events of the novel. In this "transcript," scholars discuss a series of audiotapes that recorded the narrator's story. They try to make assumptions about who the narrator was, where she was, and who else she was talking about. They can't figure out her identity or what happened to her, although the fact that the tapes were made suggests she at least made it to a safe house on her way out of Gilead. The novel becomes an open ended one. She could have gained freedom or been recaptured and killed as Offred says:

Whether this is my end or a new beginning I have no way of knowing: I have given myself over into the hands of strangers, because it can't be helped. And so I step up, into the darkness within; or else the light (Atwood 307).

A "new beginning" would mean freedom, a regained identity, and being allowed to think again. Yet it seems like even death would be preferable to the stagnant, imprisoned life of a Handmaid. According to the symposium's "keynote speaker" Professor Pieixoto, he and colleague Professor Knotly Wade discovered Offred's story recorded onto cassette tapes. They transcribed the tapes, calling them collectively "the handmaid's tale." Through the tone and actions of the professionals in

this final section of the book, the world of academia is highlighted and critiqued (Grace 481–94). The epilogue implies that, following the collapse of the theocratic Republic of Gilead, a more equal society re-emerged with a restoration of full rights of women and freedom of religion. As one of the fictional scholars says at the end of his talk: “As for the ultimate fate of our narrator, it remains obscure” (Atwood 323). Offred attempts to stand up for herself and the reasons why she chooses to fight. Throughout the novel, however small, Offred's physical and mental activism give her hope for the future and empower her to maintain her individual identity. As Offred's time in the oppressed society of Gilead increases, her mental and physical activism feed off one another to produce a more daring and self-assured woman. Although her life will never be the same, Offred comes to realize that the woman she once was is still alive and physically well. The activism she incites, however simple, is enough to remind her who she is and what effect she can have on the world. Offred starts to realize that if she allows her soul to wither she will lose her essence and become what Gilead wants her to be, a dumb subservient slave. The odds of surviving would have been against her, but she at least escaped for long enough to preserve her story. By putting herself into the text, Offred has put herself 'into the world and into history', challenging readers to connect her world with our own present in the hope of averting a nightmare like Gilead for our own future (Howells 147). Offred's treasonable act of speaking out in a society where women are forbidden to read or write or to speak freely affects a significant shift from 'history' to 'her story'. Hence, Offred's only possible gesture of resistance to imprisonment in silence is storytelling and this has also becomes her primary means for her psychological survival as it allows her to escape the prescriptive definitions of Gilead.

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Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* as Historiographic Metafiction

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Abstract: In postmodern fiction, historiographic metafiction is a kind of narration of the past where history and fiction merges to form a new form of fiction. The metafiction sets to explore the dilemma between the world of fiction and the world outside fiction. Therefore in historiographic metafiction the reader can experience not just one string of story but two. The one string is fictitious and the other historical. But there is no distinction between the history and fiction. The fictitious characters appear not to be made but to exist in the history. Also, it should be taken into account that historiographic metafiction is not an historical novel. Unlike historical novel, historiographic metafiction plays upon truth and lies of historical records. So it is neither an authentic representation nor inauthentic copy. To make a brief study of historiographic metafiction, here, Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* has been taken. In this novel, the fiction is taken back to the period of Vasco da Gama. He had been assumed to have landed and settled in India for pepper business. The novel has a long family tree where the chief character of each generation remains to be Camoens da Gama, Aurora da Gama and Moraes Zogoiby. Camoens is placed in the pre-independent India; while Aurora plays her role in the independence struggle and enjoys its fruit. Moraes Zogoiby has his major part in the post-independent India. The characters, thus, run along with neither authentic representation nor inauthentic copy of history to form a fictitious story.

Keywords: Historiographic, Metafiction, Postmodernism, self-reflexivity, intertextuality, paradoxical, History

Postmodernism gained popularity in 1950s and dominated art and literature in 1960s. It is in opposition to the ideologies of modernism, introducing traditional or classical elements; or simply returns to tradition. There are various aspects of postmodernism and "Metafiction" is one among them. Metafiction is a border line between fiction and criticism. It balances fundamental mode of fiction and intellectual perspective of fiction. The term 'meta' means the relationship between arbitrary linguistic system and the world it refers that is the world of fiction and the world outside the fiction. Metafiction sets to explore the dilemma. The language of metafiction is both self-conscious and dialogic. It creates a fiction and makes a statement about that fiction. Metafiction rejects well-made plot, chronological sequence, authoritative omniscient author, rational connection between what the character do and what they are. In postmodern era, when history and fiction merges, we get a new form of fiction called historiographic metafiction. "The term postmodernism, when used in fiction, should, by analogy, best be reserved to describe fiction that is at once metafictional and historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past." (Hutcheon 3) Among the

four ways of narrating the past, historiographic metafiction is one kind. According to Linda Hutcheon, in fiction postmodernism is equated with metafiction; and metafiction is equally self-conscious dimension of history. Postmodernism in literature is characterized “by intense self-reflexivity and overtly parodic intertextuality.” (Hutcheon) To distinguish this “paradoxical beast” from traditional historical fiction, it is labeled as “historiographic metafiction” Historiographic metafiction problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge as there is no reconciliation. History says what it was and fiction says what it could be and both include travel. Historiographical metafiction pretends that their work is not made but simply exists. Therefore it rejects both 'authentic' representation and 'inauthentic' copy alike. Historiographic metafiction plays upon-- truth and lies of historical records and the way in which they use historical details. There is no presence, no external truth but only self-reference. Historiographic metafiction shows fiction to be historically conditioned. It is a kind of ironic parody which effect both history and fiction. The intertextual parody of the metafiction “offers a sense of the presence of the past, but this is a past that are only be known from its texts, its traces—be they literary or historical.” Thus postmodernism is prone to most confusing self-contradictions. Historiographic metafiction, even though is historical, in ironic and problematic ways it acknowledges that history is not the transparent record of any such “truth”. It uses any possible means to narrate the story. Parody sometimes ends in satire. “Postmodern fiction sometimes suggests that to re-write or to re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological.” (Hutcheon 77)

Salman Rushdie's novel *The Moor's Last Sigh* fulfills the various aspects of the metafictional narrative. The novel is divided into four parts namely- A house Divided, Malabar Masala, Bombay Central, and 'The Moor's Last Sigh' and it is narrated by the protagonist of the novel, Moraes Zogoiby, called Moor. The entire novel is a flashback, where Moor is in Benegeli, Spain, writing his life story. At the end of the “story-writing act” the Readers are taken back to Benegeli; and Moor finishes his story and escapes from the clutches of Vasco Miranda, a Goan painter, who had returned to Spain after working at Aurora and Abraham (Moor's parents) for thirty-two years. Vasco has love and admiration for Aurora from the first day whereas he hates her husband, Abraham till his death. He, at the end of the novel, reveals Moor the murderer of Aurora to be none but his own father, Abraham. He tries to kill Moor for he is the heir of Abraham but rather he dies and Moor luckily escapes. The opening of the novel reveals to the readers that it is “self-reflexive”. The narrator, one of the characters in the novel gives the story from his great-grandparents to date- but not in a chronological sequence. He starts the story from the chief character, Aurora, his mother. He says, at the age of thirteen my mother Aurora da Gama took to wandering barefoot around her grandparents' large, odorous house on Cabral Island... (TMLS 7) The text, now and then, highlights the existing condition of Moor who is kept

as a prisoner by Vasco Miranda at Benengeli. "...Vasco Miranda's bizarre redoubt, his 'Little Alhambra' in Benengeli, Spain, was, is, and will in this telling become, my last." (TMLS 15) The novel is filled with so many characters and incidents. Aurora, the central character in the novel is the daughter of Isabella and Camoens, the son of Epifania and Francisco da Gama. The family is said to be a direct heir of Vasco da Gama. They fully rely on spice business.... "What was true of history in general was true of our family's fortunes in particular-pepper... merchants in Cochin, who without any evidence save centuries of tradition claimed wrong- side-of -the-blanket descent from great Vasco da Gama himself..." (TMLS 6) Francisco da Gama is said to be a disciple of Bertrand Russell and Mrs. Annie Besant. During the thirty-eighth birthday, when the Great War (First World War) broke out, he announces solemnly "the British must go" (TMLS 18). He fully supports for the Indian independence. His son, Camoens da Gama was also for Indian independence, while Epifania and Aires da Gama supported the British.

In 1916 Francisco da Gama joined the Home Rule Campaign of Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. As per the request of Annie Besant, Francisco worked to found a Home Rule League in Cochin and he started inviting people of all classes. "Masses and classes in same club! Shame and scandal! Sense is gone from the man, she (Epifania) expostulated faintly..." (TMLS 19) The fictitious character, Francisco da Gama, seems to be linked with Annie Besant, a historical personage, which problematizes the reading. A few days later, there is a clash in Ernakulam district. The next day the League is formally banned and Francisco is arrested. Later, he stopped answering the letters of request for rejoining the Home Rule League which included Motilal Nehru himself. While Francisco was fully devoted towards India, Epifania even after Russian Revolution, Great War, Amritsar Massacre and when Anglophilia was destroyed continued to believe that British were omnipotent. The first part which is named as "The House Divided" has also a trace of historiographic metafiction. The house divided refers to the division of people as per their attitude towards the British rule and Indian Independence; and also the literal separation of the house after the entry of Isabella Ximena Souza. The former division stands for the "history" while the latter for the "fiction". Isabella, the wife of Camoens, encourages him by reciting the speech of Nehru and motivates him to read a lot. "Attar, Khayyam, Tagore, Carlyle, Ruskin, Wells, Poe, Shelley, Raja Rammohan Roy. 'You see?' Belle encouraged him." (TMLS 24) Later, Camoens is influenced by V.I. Lenin, Russian communist revolutionary, politician and political theorist. The hunt of Lenin is a rewriting of history in a way that has not been previously recorded. "...in the hot season of 1924, he had his reward...there arrived in Cochin a genuine, card-carrying member of the Special Lenin Troupe, a Lenin first class, with the power to approve and further instruct the members of the Troupe's new Cochin Branch." (TMLS 30) The incident is also an ironical parody. In order to bring his policies in India Camoens arranges for local Lenins who adapted the great leader. But unfortunately they are