Pakistan Journal of Applied Social Sciences
Vol. 16(1), 2025, pp.57-75, ISSN: 2409-0077(Print), ISSN: 2663-8894(Online)

Scatter Collided: A Metamodernist Study of Bilal Tanveer's Novel Scatter Here Is Too Great

Momal Afzal Alvi
Lecturer of English,'
Govt. College of Technology
Jauhrabad, Punjab

Dr. Zareena Qasim
Associate Professor
Department of English
University of Sargodha

Abstract

Metamodernism is defined as a set of developments in philosophy, art, aesthetics, and culture which has evolved from and is reacting toward postmodernism. In the present study, metamodernism is treated and investigated as a potential successor of postmodernism in literary theory and practice. This paper aims to highlight the basic properties of metamodernism in fiction writing and tries to apply them to the analysis of Scatter Here Is Too Great by Bilal Tanveer, a Pakistani writer, and poet. The nature of truth as a state or a trait is also explored in this study with respect to the analysis of themes, narrative structure, character portrayal, meta-commentary on social happenings, or motives behind the language chosen for verbal and nonverbal expression. Although certain references are deployed to the major standpoints of metamodernism, the primary model which will be adopted and discussed for the interpretation is that of Timotheus Vermeulen and Van den Akker in their groundwork, Notes on Metamodernism (2010). The findings of the study show that having one truth or multiple truths is relative to the situation and truth is a fluvial state, so the sense of survival should be in limelight dealing with the truth as one sector of it.

Keywords: Metamodernism, Postmodernism, Modernism, Oscillation, Shifting Paradigm, New Sincerity.

Introduction

Metamodernism is a contemporary cultural pattern, a philosophical movement, and a methodology that has proved to be a useful guide for the emergence of something genuine and sincere through employing the new strategic mode of *Oscillation* between modern and postmodern modes of thought. Metamodernism is a term that has been used in multiple contexts − including Literary and cultural studies since 1970. This research article has taken up the framework as it was pioneered by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker in their 2010 essay, *Notes on Metamodernism*. Their logic for the usage of this term was based on the meaning of the Greek word "meta". They established the view that the Greek-English prefix "meta" refers to three notions such as "with", "between", and "beyond" and so they termed this pattern of feeling

This work is Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License

metamodernism. In accordance with their viewpoint, the new period engraved a tension, an oscillatory motion between—and beyond—the modern as well as the postmodern, and can be rightly called metamodernism. Therefore, metamodernism signals a motion or a movement between/beyond modernist and postmodernist frames of thought. "It oscillates between a modern enthusiasm/holism and a postmodern irony, between hope and despair, between naiveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity" (ibid., p.6). It is not a force to act as a hybrid agent that would, firstly, move to get over contradictions or to "combine the best of both worlds" (van den Akker & Vermeulen, 2017). On the other hand, its essence "should be conceived of as a 'both-neither' dynamic", it is "an informed activity which bounces indefinitely between naïveté and knowingness, unity and plurality, purity and ambiguity" (Vermeulen & van den Akker, 2010, p.6).

Bilal Tanweer's *The Scatter Here is Too Great (2013)* is a novel that is written in the backdrop of a gut-wrenching event that happened in Karachi. The novel seems to be based on the real-life act of terrorism that happened in Karachi, on December 2012. The novel is like a collage of stories. There are nine fragments which are arranged into five main chunks. The novel encompasses the journey of several characters and the torturing bond which they share with one another. Through a diversified range of narrators from a kid to a young boy, to a communist champion and a writer, Tanweer describes the life of the characters in the lap of violence and transgression which deface the serenity of the city. Furthermore, Metanarratives or mini-narratives are the phenomena of the past, what matters now is an oscillating balance that is amendable and stretchable. This struggle and the nature of survival is shown by the communist champion named Comrade Sukhansaz, School violence, bullying, and the generation gap leading to broken and unhealthy relationships are also explored in this novel through a successful businessman, his father, and his careless son.

The current study is carried out to investigate the metamodernist elements with respect to their prevalence and their ontological implications related to the general conditions of humanity living in the awe-stricken environment. This study aims at answering the questions of metamodern standpoints and their role in shaping the ideological and mental frameworks of the people which are materialized in their day-to-day actions and reactions towards certain happenings in their lives. The research design for the study is prescriptive as well as adaptable to three formulations of metamodern truths elucidated and discussed in the section of the theoretical and methodological framework. The general hypothesis that the researcher formulated expounds the notion that metamodern is a common bent of literary studies which is operating systematically on the socio-cultural and literary underpinnings of the 21st century since this century is plagued by the numerous events of warfare which have made the truth more relative than fixed or static. The

objective of this research is to bring south Asian fiction to new horizons of literary and cultural studies after drawing the dominant metamodern perceptual modes with respect to ontological perceptions concerning the idea that whether truth is a state or a trait.

Scope of the Research

This research is exploratory and investigative in nature which dissects the epistemological and ontological aspects of the paradigm shift which is sheerly relevant to this post post modern era. This research will facilitate the future researchers to construe the contemporary analytical mechanism of south Asian literature.

Rationale of the Research

The present century is a hot mess of multiple ethnicities, nuclear wars, identity crisis, terrorism attacks at national and international level, various psychological/emotional/physical ailments because of which truth has taken the shape of a state rather than a trait. So, this study uncovers the macro-social and metamodern complexes embedded in the novel by conjoining the three stand points of this approach.

Research Questions

This study is made to answer the following research questions based on the standpoints of metamodernism:

1. How do metamodernist strands oscillate between modern enthusiasm/holism and postmodern irony in the novel The Scatter here is too great?

2. How does the formulation of truth comprised of the elements of historioplastic metafiction, neoromantic sensibility and new sincerity affect the structural and thematic outlook of the novel?

3. Is truth a state or trait being portrayed in the said novel?

Objective of the Research

The study is conducted to fulfil the following objectives:

- To draw a connectivity principle among modernism, post modernism and metamodernism

- To explore the nature of truth

- To investigate the epistemological and ontological implications in metamodern sensibility

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework of this study deals with the topic of metamodernism at three different levels which are relatable to the research problem concerning truth being a state or a trait. The researcher has purposefully chosen the three formulations of metamodern truth which are discussed as follows to answer the above-mentioned question.

A. Metamodernism as a New Literary Theory

Metamodernism is a novice field of literary and cultural theories as it reacts towards postmodernism, not as a complete whole but carrying certain essence of critical literacy which complements the fundamental stance of metamodernism. Its oscillatory and yet balancing paradigmatic shift is exerted to dislodge postmodernism as the most dominant cultural paradigm of the twenty-first century. This article aims at presenting metamodernism as a new perspective to life, art, societal structures, culture, and literature, and expresses the idea that how it has something significant to add to literary and cultural studies. Bunnell (2015) states that a number of works have been published and several academic studies exploring the elements of metamodernism in many works of literature have been conducted to announce the entry of a newcomer in the field of current literary theory. In his article, Burn (2008) highlights post-postmodern features in Jonathan Franzen‘s fiction. Biekart (2015) states that “metamodernist fiction treads a middle ground between modernist and postmodernist fiction”.

Metamodernism has invited a great deal of attention in the literary and socio-philosophical scenario, however, most of the research regarding metamodernist literature is based on western fiction and the relevant concept and its practical implications have not been as explored especially in the realm of South Asian fictional scenario. This paper provides a few occurrences of the concept of metamodernism and some of its potentially proposed meanings, by exploring Bilal Tanveer’s novel *The Scatter Here Is Too Great (2013).*

B. Three formulations of truth: New sincerity, Historioplastic Metafiction, and Neoromantic Sensibility

In this part, the researcher will discuss those metamodern essentials which are focal points of the current study that enables a reading which rightly shifts the focus from a postmodern emphasis on a linguistically constructed world where absolute truths are extinct, to a world where there are many other possibilities and avenues to negotiate the truth and its mighty existence.

Oscillation or oscillatory motion is explained by Vermeulen (2012) in one of his interviews with Thank Magazine as "an oscillation, a swinging or swaying with and between future, present and past, here and there and somewhere; with and between ideals, mindsets, and positions". It's all about fluctuation among the several modes at one and the same time since this oscillatory motion is not meant to generate a steady balance or a fixed duality. Vermeulen and Akker (2010:6) argues that there is an equal probability to oscillate between three four or a number of poles, "One should be careful not to think of this oscillation as a balance, however; rather, it is a pendulum swinging between 2, 3, 5, 10, innumerable poles. Each time the metamodern enthusiasm swings toward fanaticism, gravity pulls it back toward irony; the moment its irony sways toward apathy, gravity pulls it back toward enthusiasm".

Neoromantic sensibility is implied in the sense of the emergence of something ordinary into the garb of the extraordinary, something realistically into the light of romance. Likewise, Vermeulen argues that Metamodernism should not merely be understood as re-appropriation; it should be interpreted as re-signification: it is the re-signification of the commonplace with significance, the ordinary with mystery, the familiar with the seemliness of the unfamiliar, and the finite with the semblance of the infinite". He further elucidates the situation that "What characterizes the Romanticism that has been increasingly visible in contemporary culture since the early 2000s is the romantic irony: to strive for infinity in spite of one's finiteness; to hope in spite of one's better judgment" (Interview, 2012). So, "it's all about an earnest reaction towards postmodern deconstruction, ironic distance, and cynicism … [and] a response to changes in society which necessitate a different attitude. It's about addressing 21st-century problems".

Historioplastic metafiction is as Toth (2010) says, "Historioplastic metafiction implies being free to manipulate history as long as the truth remains unfixed; it means embracing postmodern un-decidability as it enables one to dream of utopia". Moreover, it relates to the possibility of truth and the metamodern oscillation seems to be embedded in the process of accepting the potential possibilities hidden in the notion of "undecidability" (Toth, 2017). It is deemed as a "renewalist approach to that type of literature which seeks to access postmodernism by adhering to the stance of "ethics of indecision" (Toth, 2010).

The researcher is interested to explore what kind of meta-modern characteristics are present in the story, and how they are visible on different levels of the text: in the terms of its themes, narrative structure, character portrayal, meta-commentary on social happenings, or motives behind the language chosen for verbal and nonverbal expression which ultimately decides the nature and implication of truth.

Significance of Research

The current study is significant in terms of its relevancy to the age where truth has turned into a paradoxical entity because of multiple material, social, political and economic issues which have degenerated society into a morbid cell of torture and violence. Moreover, the metamodernist complexities present in human life and structural pattern of South Asian fiction both are dealt under one umbrella so that it can trace the need of the emergence of a new sensibility. This study will help to facilitate the future researchers to understand, analyze, and pinpoint the dynamics of paradigm shift and stretchability which alone can shape or reshape the literature of twenty first century and the life of the people living in it.

Limitation of Research

The study is limited in the respect that only those characters, situations and perspectives are discussed which come under the umbrella of metamodern sensibility the rest are excluded from the further analysis.

Literature Review

South Asian literature specifically fiction writing in English has entered a new radical era as there is a flood of new and young writers trying their hands to pen down their thrilling and untold stories with a perceptible touch of their peculiar socio-cultural environment. The authors of South Asia, start from the beginning, exploring multiple political, social, ethnic, and domestic issues of its people likewise the separation of East Pakistan and, previously, the massive dislocation and desolation of the people from Pakistan to India and vice versa are the primary subject matters for the writers and historians. Unfortunately, a huge part of South Asia is comprised of third-world countries and their history is marked by threat, violence, trauma, terrorist attacks, poverty, and struggle, which is why its literature portrays this struggle for survival with an ultimate sense of chaos. Most of the Pakistani writers have inculcated the issues related to nationalism, independence, the quest for individualism, and the journey of being the crowd than the one nation with common goals, again this issue leads towards nationalism and collectivism. Politics and the power game have always been the predominant subject for writers such as Zulfiqar Ghose, Salman Rushdie, Tehmina Durrani, and many others.

Bilal Tanweer is a new and marvelous addition to Pakistani English fiction writing. He asserts the idea of reconciliation of beauty and chaos in the panorama of everyday life. He was rightly taken as Granta's "New voice of 2011". *The Scatter Here is Too Great* is Bilal Tanweer's debut novel in which he experimented with novel ideas of fiction writing and that of the human' sense of survival. Hanif (n.d.), the author of *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, regarded his book as, 'A beautiful debut, and a blood-soaked love letter to Karachi'. He wrote the novel in those

distressing times in Pakistani history when the biggest and most populous city of Pakistan was plagued with terrorist attacks and brutal activities of the underworld mafias.

In *The Scatter Here Is Too Great* the writer takes the thematic significance of fiction writing to new heights. He not only gives a detailed account of a blood-stricken city but also provides a novel narrative packaging into the garb of metamodernism. There is a collage of fragments in which there is a lively yet torn-out portrait of a bombing at a railway station in Karachi, narrated from the perspective of victims, witnesses, family members, friends, workers, and lovers. The focus of the author is not on the havoc but on survival with a devastated mind.

Adams (n.d.), writer of *Harbor* states that "In one slim volume of interconnected stories Bilal Tanweer creates characters so deftly alive they illuminate the world's strangest and least-charted megacity in all its soiled and yes, hilarious, splendor". Bilal Tanweer takes Karachi as a setting for his novel but symbolically it portrays the microcosmic picture of violence which has become the insignia for all the third-world countries. People are living with an oscillating sense of existence. They are following a decidable direction in their un-decidability. Alaa Al Aswany (n.d.), the writer of *The Yacoubian Building*, writes; "This is a beautiful, deeply powerful novel. Wise (n.d.) appreciates its experiential outlook by stating, "Intriguing- Each of the voices rings emotionally true".

Though using metamodernist theory to explore the multiple facets of fiction writing is of great interest to researchers, Tanweer's work being a recent one has not been analyzed so far in this direction, especially with reference to the characters of the novel. Moreover, the poetics of meta-modernism Yousef (2018) has been explored with respect to certain poetical elements. The area of fiction isn't explored so far as south Asian and particularly new and young Pakistani writers are concerned. Moreover, the epistemological aspects of this new paradigm shift have remained most popular as in the article *Metamodernism in Post-Millennial Hindi Literature: Geet Chaturvedi's "Gomūtr"* (Rajakoski, 2018).

The researcher has made an attempt to elucidate and explore the multiple strands of meaning being found in metamodern studies with respect to their ontological significance likewise the study of being and the nature of truth being a state or a trait. Bilal Tanveer is certainly a new tint in the south Asian fictional world since he mixed the essence of literary festivity of modernism and postmodernism to evolve a new stream of metamodernism. Everywhere in the novel, there is a touch of stability with fragmented edges whether it is the litter-strewn beach of Sea View, the inside of a small, dingy café in Cantt Station or the noisy streets of Empress Market echoing tiredly with the clatter of people and vehicles. This detached collection of loosely interconnected stories is rightly called a running commentary over a heaving city of Pakistan. Therefore, the characters

and the subsequent situations show an ambivalent relationship with the city likewise what one-character terms ‘this ruinously mad city’ (104).

Research Methodology

The methodology will be close reading of the novel with special attention to the meta-modern framework as discussed above and some of the new concepts being added to the progression of this critical theory. The methodological approach employed in this article is diagnostic, investigative and analytical in nature. This study aims to adopt a qualitative approach for data collection. Moreover, secondary sources like certain reviews, research articles and critical books written on meta-modernist perspectives and frameworks are also incorporated in this study. The research design chosen for this purpose is hermeneutic and interpretive since it is expounded by the social scholars that researchers are required to devote their attention towards the interpretation of the meanings of social actions (Weber, 1949; Dilthey, 1989).

Analysis

By taking certain cues from the representations of metamodernism in contemporary literature, the researcher will explore the idea that how oscillation along with many other metamodernist devices such as Historioplastic Metafiction and the New Sincerity lays the foundation of the novel *The Scatter Here Is Too Great.* Moreover, “while modernism creates complete hierarchies, and postmodernism creates destabilized ones, metamodernism creates a paradoxical middle ground between modernism and postmodernism where a subject’s oscillating performance implies hierarchy and destabilization (deconstruction) at the same time” (Yousef, 2018). The novel under discussion contains both the modern and the postmodern elements, leaving space for metamodern elements to show themselves as a reaction to the emergence of a movement between the two binaries but without permanently adhering to any one of them.

The novel is written in stereotypical local surroundings of Pakistan (Karachi) presenting a panoramic view that how people, their actions, and the language they use to communicate with others generate a screen through which the film about the complex happening of life can be watched through realistic lenses. It unveils the middle side of a thinking structure that the current vista of living is embellished with a diorama of absolute truths and, at the same time, multiple individual truths. The world has been going through such a tremendous change that multiple agonizing events of violence and brutality urge the people to evolve their pace of living and be their own persons regardless of religion, ethnicity, race, or geographical boundaries.

Starting from the title and its introductory accounts which set the ground for the metamodernist era to jeopardize the concept of going with the flow and enjoying the show in its tragic beauty.

> *Ever seen a bullet-smashed windscreen? The hole at the center throws a sharp clean web around itself and becomes crowded with tiny crystals. That's the metaphor for my world, this city: broken, beautiful, and born of tremendous violence…My mind is a stiff skein of voices. I will yank out the threads and find the edges…Listen (V).*

The above-quotedines indicate the idea that the ultimate combination of beauty and chaos is the reality of this universe which needs to be acknowledged. This combination itself is an individual phenomenon, like beauty and chaos, and carries a metamodernist perspective of sheer acceptance of the opposed polarities at the single ground (Hassan, 1987, p.94). Moreover, this situation is explained by Yousef (2018) states that "it gives way to a new polarity, an oscillation between the two states (modern and postmodern) with neither side of the polarity ever staying for long or perpetually prevailing. There is no stable condition for either side of the equation. A postmodernist reading would entail a sense of doubt about this situation viewing it ironically and with a lot of apathy and skepticism'' (p. 59). Further, he explains that the metamodern view "would look at the matter as an oscillation between an optimistic modern attitude and an ironic/skeptical postmodern view, trying to surpass any complete adherence to any of them. The ―either–or postmodern equation gives way to a ―both-neither metamodern one."

The setting of the novel is an immensely populated city named Karachi where all the incidents happened and shaped the personalities of the characters. This city is presented as a personality that also carries a dual pattering in its disposition. This city portrays the picture of the coolest abode and a burning hell. It is littered with the torturing elements of death and misery but also provides a space for people to move away and trudge the same paths with numb yet rational minds.

The concepts of assimilation, association, and accommodation are evident in the novel. The three parts of the book exhibit the step-by-step development of the writer's mind likewise in the very first extract, he terms Karachi as a broken city, but still beautiful because it takes birth out of a severe tragedy. The second extract shows its partially repaired outlook when he says, "*The hole at the center becomes the eye. You see less through it but you gain focus, sharpness. That's how it is—our wounds become our eyes. Seeing outside becomes seeing inside. Listen"* (p. 34) - and the scatter generated from the cracked glass gleams outwards right from the center. This metaphor points to the idea that the blast is not associated with a genuine bullet but is employed to show the fact that the blast affects people's lives in fragmented ways. In the third and last part of the book, *Maps of the New*

City, he rightly calls the cracks as new paths and boundaries. The City is used as an extended-metaphor expounding a bigger-than-life protagonist. He focuses on the idea that some of the things are more beautiful and breathe-giving after their breakage. Explosions, violent attacks, and bomb blasts can deface the serenity of the city and makes life a hectic thing to live by. It still grants them their identity and a complete sense of belonging. There is light and glow in the environment of the novel showing "The World does not End" which suggests that if one truth is not satisfying, there is always a space to search for the other one which is better/soliciting than the first one. This view links with that of Seth Abramson's (2015) study titled *Ten Basic Principles of Metamodernism* in which he starts the discussion with an image with the words "IT'S ALRIGHT" written ten times shows that gaining equilibrium and composure is more important in this era of aggression and violence than the detachment with self and others. "Metamodernists are as aware of political, economic, climatological, and other forms of chaos as is anyone else, but they choose to remain optimistic and to engage their communities proactively even when and where they believe a cause has been lost" (Abramson, 2015).

According to van der Merwe (2017), "the themes ... most commonly addressed" in metamodern criticism are usually a "postmodern ... solipsism and the lack of a stable subject... that limit the possibility of meaningful inter-subjective communication" (p. 40). So, the theme of the novel is also an oscillating idea of enjoying the pain and celebrating the chaos merged into a kind of aesthetically pleasing beauty. Moreover, for the modernist, chaos and tumultuous sufferings are some of the acute miseries through which humanity is going through yet they can be healed by the panacea of spiritual reawakening and association with religion. For postmodernists, it carries an absurdist view of ambivalence which questions or doubts the essence of being. So, this idea has carried a step forward by meta-modernism which adds celebration and beauty to the solipsism of the post-modernist idea of suffering and misery.

The characters of the novel are also influenced by the meta-modernist cult of mind and thought. They don't try to adhere to some staunch reality but try to move away from the metanarratives from time to time as per their convenience. In this regard, the unnamed boy who starts the narrative with a first-person pronoun and ends it in the same way through his soliloquy has the connections with rest of the characters in one way or another and is specifically remarked as a typical product of metamodernism as he switches from one to another stance with an unpredictable pace. His oscillatory approach can be traced through several dialogues in which modern enthusiasm and postmodern irony are jumbled together.

While drawing I would sometimes forget what I was drawing
and listen to the chalk's sounds—taktakka-tak-tak and sss-hisssss.

> *But I did not tell Baba this. I knew he would not believe…The color of shadows is also black, which is the color of empty things. Blackboard is also black …* (p. 4-5).

The above dialogue shows the boys' ambivalent outlook towards the mental slate (blackboard) through which one can sustain his/her fantastical optimistic outlook likewise after getting left out of the school, the boy starts getting the energetic beams by portraying the sun and even each sun for each segment of the day- a sun for the morning, a sun for the evening and a sun for the night. Mental slate is a great thing but it's black in color and empty from the inside. Thus, Reality can't be changed or rectified, yet it's exigent to move forward. Another thing that is remarkable to note is that the boy doesn't tell his father all the happening and sounds being generated in his mind because he wouldn't believe him. "Read in this light the PostScript with its repeated… No one is going to believe" is an expression of this dilemma: his sincerity about his confusion could induce more doubt in another, instead of fostering belief (Rajakoski, 2018). Timmer establishes the fact in her analysis of post-postmodern American literature, that "subjective experience is crying out for recognition by another" (2010, p. 115). But the boy isn't telling the outburst of a strong and accelerating outburst of auditory experience to his father or anyone out there as he is afraid to get recognized by his real self which sounds irrational to him.

The very definition of a hero has changed throughout time. To give brief details about this notion of a hero, the researcher is proposing to divide the heroes into five distinguished categories: Classical or epic hero who is acknowledged for his military conquests and unearthly potential capabilities; the romantic hero who is a sublime and an aloof personality completely self-sufficient; the modern hero who is more than average person suffered by internal conflicts, philosophical questions of being, and deemed as a role model; the postmodern hero who is an anti-hero; and a metamodern hero who oscillates and takes ambivalence as a common 'mantra' to live by. Within all of these aforementioned divisions, a number of variations can take place. In one of her research studies, Madison (2004) points out, "the presence of ethical and emotional heroes at the present times have more resemblance with their romantic predecessors than the resemblance with the anti-hero of the modernists". She sums up the discussion by saying that "many critics believe that postmodern fiction consists of anti-hero that developed against the reaction of modernism" page no. Both of these categories of heroes get appeared in 21st-century literature with an equal ratio. The metamodern hero as portrayed in Tanweer's novel could be that one who continuously oscillates and switches between the modern and the postmodern perceptions of the hero, "a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony" (Vermeulen and Akker, p. 5-8). Transmuted into more humanistic terms, Tanweer's hero is someone who could be involved in internal conflicts as well as the genuine explorations for knowledge or self-

discovery ultimately leading to self-consummation, but, at the same time, defined by postmodern irony as well as the notion of the anti-hero. It is a modernist consciousness that is colored by postmodernist reality, consequently giving way to a constant dialogue between the two. Vermeulen and Akker (2010) argue, “The metamodern is constituted by the tension, no, the double-bind, of a modern desire for *sens* and a postmodern doubt about the sense of it all”. The purpose of this dichotomy is to acquire a greater sense of universalism determined by the notions of individualism and coherence. So, the metamodern hero of this novel is portrayed as the wanderer/adventurer of the city, a humble writer discovering the truths of being and questioning the conventional hierarchies of life. He is trying to move ahead so that he may find the answers to the darkest realities of life and search for some sacred treasure for self-discovery. This viewpoint is associated with that the idea of Dumitrescu (2014) that “within a metamodern paradigm, the power to inspire does not rest with the gifted and talented alone, but also with the ordinary householder, whose story and living example is [sic] apt to guide others”.

In this case, the discovery does not get completed at the end of the novel for the hero but transforms into an accessible path to be followed with a calm yet melancholic heart.

> *I waved to a bus. My dread and fear had been replaced with an enormous sadness for things that I had lost…. Yes, this city was unknown and the noise was great. But this scatter must be gathered. You are listening* (p. 110).

Turner (2011) states in his study titled *The Metamodernist Manifesto* that "an exercise in simultaneously defining and embodying the metamodern spirit," and remarks it as "a romantic reaction to our crisis-ridden moment" page no So, the above-mentioned realization of the writer is also an insignia to address the masses so that they can listen to something which restores the chaos and brings beauty within/after it.

The second instance of the metamodern portrayal of characters is that of a communist poet Sukhansaz who left his everything- the son, the wife, and the mother just to be an ardent revolutionary leader but ultimately got jailed during Zia’s reign to promote the baser feelings of aggression and violence among the Muslims by promoting the nefarious philosophy of non-Muslims (p. 113). He recites one of his poems in the bus which shows the knowledge as well as the peak of ignorance caused by that knowledge since human conditions and power dynamics that have plagued human society cannot be defined or explained through words or questions because the proposed questions lead to a series of questions with no physical ending.

> *The argument between this lover with the other is who loves more. After this, both are ignorant. The tussle of this believer with the other is how to*

worship. After this, both are ignorant. The brawl of this politician with the other is how to gain power. After this, both are ignorant (p. 112).

The poem is asserting the fact of comrade Sukhansaz who is detached from the culture of his country and has embraced the outlook of a leftist. The above lyrics are the representation of truth for him but a false mockery for the rest of the masses on the bus as they start hooting upon him when they come to know that he is a communist and an uncanny man with a divergent set of opposing ideas against religion. Seth Abramson (2015) states that "Metamodernism posits that certain ideas can be "objectively" true for an individual even though the individual also understands that they are not universally true. The paradox of something being "objectively true for me simply means that each of us does, in fact, respond to guiding "metanarratives" (the stories we tell ourselves about our lives and what they mean) which operate as absolutely true to us even as we recognize they are not shared — or even necessarily understood — by others" page no. Further, this situation is explained by him as "this paradoxical relationship between how we conceive of truth "locally" and how we conceive of it at the level of society allows us to constantly exhibit and participate in paradoxes, as we are simultaneously aware and accepting of how we individually operate and how that differs dramatically from how others do" page no.

The other noticeable character, which appeared in the section of the novel, *Turning into Stones,* is of a girl, Asma, who tells unbelievable stories to distract her younger brother and conceal her love affair. He gets amused by them but doesn't believe them as they are far away from reality at least in the stereotypical surroundings of Pakistani society. Her stories comprise of women extremely powerful and vouchsafe with marvelous powers of magic and sometimes of beauty and charm which can turn the men into mere stones and alternatively into dead ones/ alive ones. She is a girl who has lost her honor and prestige in the traditionally male-dominated society where a scandalous man lives with as much respect and grace as a nobleman with a crystal-clear past. Asma along with her brother got to her grandmother's house to spend the winter vacation because their parents were outside of Karachi. While living there she developed a love affair with a boy living in a nearby apartment but, after some time, she was caught red-handedly by her grandmother with a boy, Sadiq, while they both were making love to each other incessantly and unmindful of the whole world. She was disgraced in front of the people of that colony and sent back to the place of her parents by her grandmother who shouted at her and said "We're faceless. We can't show our face to anyone. It is all gone, our honor, our respect, all gone ..." (p. 63). She was sent back to her home. There, she was imprisoned by her father who ordered her not to get out of the house as a punishment for her irredeemable sin. In order to give vent to her suppressed self, she starts narrating surreal stories to her younger brother. The last story she told was about a beautiful girl who is loved by three princesses but there

is one special that she loves but cannot marry him because the other two will kill her for this act. She ordered them to bring a speaking bird and a singing tree, but they are not able to do so and turned into stones out of magic. She herself went there to bring both her favorite speaking bird and singing tree, and she transforms the stone princesses into living beings. But to the reader's surprise, she refuses to marry anyone of them even the one whom she loves (p. 52- 78).

> *"When she tapped the branch of the speaking tree on them and they all turned into humans again, they were all the same to her. The one she loved and those she didn't had turned all the same" (p. 64).*

Asma's stories are signifying the concept of Histroplastic metafiction as Toth (2010) says, "Historioplastic metafiction implies being free to manipulate history as long as the truth remains unfixed; it means embracing postmodern un-decidability as it enables one to dream of utopia". Asma is dreaming by telling the stories to her brother and the stories are impossible to get related to reality. However, there is a cheerful oscillation between the truth and its impossibility and an emphasis on human conditions. There is another aspect that is evident through these stories that the girls of this metamodern era are not in search of a man to have a hold of them, but they are potentially free as they have refused to stick to one standard of truth which makes them bound to have one man in their life. They can make their Utopias and be happy in them.

Fragmentation and collages are the prime features of this novel. According to Peter Barry (1995), the modernists lament fragmentation while postmodernists celebrate it. On the other hand, metamodernists find the fragments as the coherent wholes carrying the meaning and unveiling the pungent realities of the world caught under the web of torturing blasts and inhuman acts of violence and transgression. Tanweer produces the series of interconnected but freewheeling stories in which certain natural connections are to be found among the character to gather them on a single ground but with alternative identities yet carrying a basic and common essence of being. Fragments are necessary in this era where everybody has his/her own truths which are products of relativism.

> *We were all just broken parts and so were our stories. True stories are fragments. Anything longer is a lie, a fabrication* (p. 103).

But the writer takes another turn and through employing the metamodernist device of "Oscillation" shifts his approach from fragments to something else the stories greater than the fragments to celebrate the whole truths of metamodernism.

> *Reasons were invented, and stories were reasons that allowed us to connect ourselves to the world, to compose ourselves in ways that others could*

read…Yes, this city was unknown, and the noise was great. But this scatter must be gathered (p. 110).

The above lines illustrate another oral aspect of the novel which goes on repeating the word "Listen" which, actually, gives instructions to the readers to listen to the heavenly preaching of hope which, by time, reconciles the living condition regardless of the fact that how much violence-stricken and worse they may be.

The above discussion aims at exploring the metamodernist trends of Tanweer' novel with respect to the title and exposition of the novel, the characters, the setting, the thematic significance, and the ideological rifts and shifts being exposed through the clever manipulation of language. There is the inclusion of varied voices, in the novel, from a number of social groups and cultural packages — some of them are libidinous and extremely abusive, and others are uncanny, simple, fearful, or bereaved. The voices, sometimes, go beyond the control, and it appears as if the writer is not in the position to reduce them into manageable entities, for instance, the concluding part invoking the "Bird of Death" lacks coherence which delineates the limitations of metamodernist belief system to inculcate every single edge of human perceptual disposition.

Discussion

The above analysis extrapolates the idea of collective yet different reactions towards a single event and how it can shape the whole new ideological and sociocultural setups of a society. All the characters of the novels are carrying one thing which is constantly unified in their mental dispositions namely the truth being a state which always in a process of evolution. The schoolboy who used to have a blackboard in his mind and play with certain colors and imageries has turned into a stoic gallant for whom death isn't a big annoying deal but being disturbed at his job is more annoying. The girl Asma who once found paradise and tortured hell in love is more indefatigable and his ability to turn men into stones but only in her stories and utopian world.

So, the characters, imagery, settings of the novel show that being on the earth is uncommonly common were having one truth or multiple truths isn't important but being able to remain alive and survive is more noteworthy. Everything being the best or the worst is ultimately losing its flavor only if you are alive. So, the metamodern stance is congruent with its mantra of "It's all right" (Abramson, 2015). More resilience and perseverance is required to tread on in this awe stricken universe where pop postmodernism has lost its control and metamodernism has gained sovereignty because of its prescriptive and moldable nature.

Conclusion

Metamodernism being a philosophical, cultural, and literary movement is superseding the era of postmodernism in literature, a paradigm that has certain characteristic features i.e., lack of genuine emotions, irony, fragmentation, and the loss of real or simulacra. The oscillation between modernist and postmodernist sentiments produces a new metamodernist spectrum of literature and culture. Investigation of the metamodern elements in literature always takes postmodernism into account, thus providing a clear and more comprehensive understanding of contemporary literary texts. It would be quite true to state "that modernism, postmodernism, and metamodernism coexist, and that metamodernism's main achievement is its synthesis of the best features of its predecessors" (Yousef, 2018). Although there is unending debate among the metamodernists over the accurate definition of "New Sentiments" and "New Sincerity", yet Vermeulen and Akker's interpretation of metamodernism has given the foundation for the current debate. Oscillation and constant switching between modern and postmodern features are rampant in the novel *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*. The novel is, in fact, neither modern nor postmodern but a synthesis of the most appropriate qualities of both of them which are not apparent but artistically hidden and giving a way to the new epoch of world literature termed metamodernism. Being investigated into metamodern theory, the current analysis shows the paradigm shift from postmodern inconclusiveness and cold irony to metamodern resilience, eventually, transformed into a hopeful mellifluous voice heralding the arrival of the renaissance for the devastated city. The novel shows an epic journey of the consummation of five stories which permits the writer to employ the technique of "Fragmentation" but, simultaneously, he is endeavoring to knit a coherent narrative in which there is a unique merger of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person pronouns to show the totality of individual experiences. There are nine fragments which are arranged into five main chunks. The novel encompasses the journey of several characters and the torturing bond which they share with one another. Through a diversified range of narrators from a kid to a young boy, to a communist champion and a writer, Tanweer describes the life of the characters in the lap of violence and transgression which deface the serenity of the city. The author portrays the horror and terror of that inhuman act and skillfully embeds the narrative into a cogent whole. The novel throws light on the various modes of perception that the characters adapt in order to move on in a world where having an absolute truth is relative to the situation, where everyone can live and survive on his own mode of conduct. Metanarrative or mini narratives are the phenomena of the past, what matters now is an oscillating balance that is amendable and stretchable. This struggle and the nature of survival is shown by the communist champion named Comrade Sukhansaz, School violence, bullying, and the generation gap leading to broken and unhealthy relationships are also explored in this novel through a successful businessman, his father, and his careless son.

In this way, through the experiences of these characters, Tanweer presents the nature of life spent by the people living in a city which is surrounded by the insecurity of lives and properties, yet the chaos is reconstructing its inhabitants' psyche and making them normal with their absurdist activities. Some are lamenting the chaos, and some are fine with it which shows the era of metamodernist belief were the main agenda is going with the flow and going through the general drama of life-the concepts of enjoyment, suffering, misery, and satisfaction vary from one individual to another.

Recommendations

The researchers attempted to analyze not only the defining characteristic features of metamodernism but also tried to encompass the journey of the remarkable change between the belief systems of 1st generation' and the 2nd one. Moreover, some of the socio-economical and socio-historical issues like women subjugation, economic disparity between have and have not, the ravaging impacts of Marxism on the 3rd world countries are also presented which are not included in the frame of this research. in the domain of this analysis. Future researchers are recommended to work on these areas to explore the new critical dimensions of South Asian fictional world.

References

Abramson, S. (2014). *Metamodernism: The basics*. *HuffPost*. Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/metamodernism-the-basics-_b_5980326

Abramson, S. (2015a). *Metamodern literature and the metaverse*. *HuffPost*.

Abramson, S. (2015b). *Ten basic principles of metamodernism; Five more basic principles of metamodernism*. *HuffPost*.

Adams. (n.d.). In one slim volume [Review of the book *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*, by B. Tanweer]. *The Editorial Media Reviews*. Retrieved from https://www.amazon.com/Scatter-Here-Great-P

Bunnell, N. (2015). *Oscillating from a distance: A study of metamodernism in theory and practice*. *Undergraduate Journal of Humanistic Studies*, 1, 1–8.

Dali Kadagishvili, F. P. (2013). *Metamodernism as we perceive it (quick review)*. *European Scientific Institute*, 559.

DeToy, T. (2015). *It's all in the family—Metamodernism and the contemporary (Anglo-) "American" novel* (Doctoral dissertation, Tufts University).

Dilthey, W. (1989). *Introduction to the human sciences* (R. A. Makkreel & F. Rodi, Eds., 2011). Princeton University Press.

Dumitrescu, A. E. (2014). *Towards a metamodern literature* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Otago).

Habib, M. A. R. (2008). *A history of literary criticism: From Plato to the present*. John Wiley & Sons.

Hanif, M. (n.d.). A beautiful debut [Review of the book *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*, by B. Tanweer]. *The Editorial Media Reviews*. Retrieved from https://www.amazon.com/Scatter-Here-Great-P-S-Paperback/dp/0062304453

Hassan, I. (1987). *The postmodern turn: Essays in postmodern theory and culture*. Ohio State University Press.

Holland, M. K. (2013). *Succeeding postmodernism: Language and humanism in contemporary American literature*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Hutcheon, L. (2002). *The politics of postmodernism* (Original work published 1989). Routledge.

Kelly, A. (2010). David Foster Wallace and the new sincerity in American fiction. In *Consider David Foster Wallace: Critical essays* (pp. 131–146).

Kelly, A. (2016). The new sincerity. In *Postmodern/Postwar and after: Rethinking American literature* (pp. 197–208).

Rajakoski, A. (2018). Metamodernism in post-millennial Hindi literature: Geet Chaturvedi's "Gomūtr".

Sethi, A. (2014). KLF-5: Book launch: *The Scatter Here Is Too Great* by Bilal Tanweer. Interview with Bilal Tanweer. Oxford University Press.

Sethi, M. (2014). "Karachi" by Laurent Gayer. *The Wall Street Journal*.

Toulmin, S. (2001). *Return to reason*. Harvard University Press.

Turner, L. (2011). *The metamodernist manifesto*.

Tanweer, B. (2013). *The scatter here is too great*. HarperCollins.

Vermeulen, T., & van den Akker, R. (2010). Notes on metamodernism. *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture, 2*(1), 1–14.

Vermeulen, T., & van den Akker, R. (2015). Utopia, sort of: A case study in metamodernism. *Studia Neophilologica, 87*(1), 55–67.

Weber, M. (1949). *The methodology of the social sciences*. Free Press.

Yousef, T. (2018). Metamodernism poetics and its manifestations in Billy Collins's "My Hero". *International Journal*, 6(1), 54–63.

Yousef, T. (2017). Modernism, postmodernism, and metamodernism: A critique. *International Journal of Language and Literature*, 5(1), 33–43.

Momal Afzal Alvi is a Lecturer of English at Govt. College of Technology Jauhrabad, Punjab.

Dr. Zareena Qasim is an Associate Professor at Department of English, University of Sargodha.