

T.C.
İSTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES



**REALITY BEYOND POSTMODERNISM: RE-THINKING OF THE
AMERICAN DREAM IN DAVID FOSTER WALLACE'S WRITINGS**

Ph.D. THESIS
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(Y1314.620012)**

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Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Hatice Gönül UÇELE

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Prof. Dr. Ragıp Kutay KARACA
Enstitü Müdürü

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that all information in this thesis document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results which are not original to this thesis. (29/10/2019)

Selin KÜÇÜKALİ



FOREWORD

My earliest memory about literature goes back to my middle and high school years when I was exposed to literature and found it to be quite extraordinary. I decided to study literature after analyzing history, culture, and language through novels. Throughout my university education, the knowledge American and English literature has imparted to me has been a great asset throughout my life and career. Undertaking this PhD has been a truly life-changing experience for me. Since 2016 I have been conducting this research and I have experienced this period as very instructive. It was very difficult to understand and decipher David Foster Wallace's writings. However, history, political and cultural studies, philosophy, media, language, and all other patterns that were related to this study helped me grow into my potential and inspired me. The research was challenging, but conducting extensive investigation has allowed me to answer the questions that were identified.

In more recent years, literature has taken on a more comprehensive role of mirroring society in order for individuals to study themselves and understand the underlying truths common to humanity. The aim of this dissertation is to acquaint the reader with detailed information of the novels of David Foster Wallace and to synthesize the relevant research with challenging and engaging practice for the readers. Because of David Foster Wallace, you can experience the hard times in the USA without going through a detailed historical study. Wallace shows us that to succeed in life today needs not only to meet the standard requirements of a national system through the American Dream but also to fulfill to the utmost individual potential. With the fractured human relationships, the flawed legal system of the land, and the demands of the period, his books will provide a domestic content and an entire picture of the postmodern American society. Postmodernism, post-postmodernism, and American Dream are the fundamental categories in this study and are also central to his novels. Wallace creates a way for people to record their thoughts and experiences in a way that is accessible to others.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the many people who made this thesis possible. Foremost, I wish to express my profound gratitude to my advisor Prof. Dr. Hatice Gönül Uçele for her continuous encouragement, valuable guidance, and unfailing support. I would like to thank her for a precious contribution to my education and academic career. This study has been realized under her valuable guidance and understanding. I appreciate and treasure everything my advisor, who has been much more than an advisor, has taught me. Her mentorship has been an invaluable gift over the past couple of years.

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REALITY BEYOND POSTMODERNISM: RE-THINKING OF THE AMERICAN DREAM IN DAVID FOSTER WALLACE'S WRITINGS

ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on contemporary issues to examine the subjective perceptions of the contemporary individuals regarding the American Dream through postmodern and post-postmodern lenses in American writer David Foster Wallace's books. The selected novels provide divergent portrayals of the American nation, culture, and individuals. They present the paradoxical experience of postmodernism as their starting point and focus on the Americans' emotional responsiveness to how it feels to live in modern times in America while still trying to pursue their national dream as well. The specific reasons and symptoms burdening the self in the contemporary world are analyzed according to the accounts of postmodern approaches of the period. To re-humanize the subject, the self is reconsidered in combination with viewpoints of the recent movement post-postmodernism. The influences of the new era and the American Dream are traced to gain a better insight and manage a deeper investigation. This dissertation takes a closer look at the ideology behind the American Dream and the way it is reflected in contemporary times. The scope of the study covers David Foster Wallace's three novels and situates his stance as an author in postmodern and post-postmodern literature. The nation and its citizens are analyzed from the perspective of Wallace through his three influential novels, and his essays will also provide insight to the study.

Key Words: *David Foster Wallace, American Dream, Postmodernism, Post-postmodernism*

POSTMODERNİZMİN ÖTESİNDEKİ GERÇEKLİK: DAVID FOSTER WALLACE'IN ESERLERİNDE AMERİKAN RÜYASININ YENİDEN DÜŞÜNÜLMESİ

ÖZET

Bu tez, çağdaş bireylerin Amerikan Rüyası'na karşı olan öznel algılarını postmodern ve postpostmodern mercekler aracılığıyla incelemek için Amerikalı yazar David Foster Wallace'ın kitaplarında yer alan çağdaş konulara odaklanmaktadır. Seçilen romanlar Amerikan ulusunun, kültürünün ve bireyinin farklı tasvirlerini sunar. Romanlar, postmodernizmin paradoksal deneyimini başlangıç noktaları olarak ele alırken, modern zamanlarda Amerika'da yaşamının ve hala ulusal hayallerini sürdürmeye çalışmanın Amerikalılar üzerinde nasıl bir duygusal etki bıraktığına da odaklanmaktadır. Günümüz dünyasında, benlik üzerindeki yükün kendine özgü nedenleri ve belirtileri, döneme ait postmodern yaklaşımlarının söylemlerine göre incelenmiştir. Benlik, özneyi yeniden insanlaştırmak için, yeni akımlardan biri olan postpostmodernizmin bakış açısıyla birlikte yeniden ele alınmaktadır. Daha iyi bir anlayış elde etmek ve daha derin bir inceleme için Yeni çağın ve Amerikan Rüyası'nın etkileri izlenmektedir. Bu tez, Amerikan Rüyası'nın ardındaki ideolojiye ve bugünkü durumunun çağdaş dönemdeki mevcut yansımalarına daha yakından bakmaktadır. Çalışmanın alanı David Foster Wallace'ın üç romanını kapsamakta ve Wallace'ın yazar olarak postmodern ve postpostmodern edebiyattaki duruşunu ortaya koymaktadır. Söz konusu ulus ve onun vatandaşları, Wallace'ın gözünden üç etkili romanı ile analiz edilecek ve çalışmaya yazarın makaleleri de ışık tutacaktır.

Key Words: *David Foster Wallace, Amerikan Rüyası, Postmodernism, Post-postmodernism*

I don't know what you're thinking or what it's like inside you and you don't know what it's like inside me. In fiction I think we can leap over that wall itself in a certain way.

David Foster Wallace

1. INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing critique of reason and rationality in the last century. Many changes occurred in postmodern times when the American Dream also underwent changes. Social and technological advancements of the last two centuries altered the literary scene as well. People question the reality, disillusionment of their environment, and the American Dream experience. Postmodernism and post-postmodernism with their distinctive expressions have given the American Dream a new voice.

The history of American literature has notable authors with their outstanding works which are unique to their periods. The American Dream has been defined in various ways in literature according to the narrative, experiences, and the values of the writers in those different periods. American individualism in the nineteenth century is embraced by spiritual ideas such as personal truth and intuition. The works of philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) associate the American Dream with freedom, self-reliance, and self-culture. For Emerson (1841), in his essay 'Self-Reliance', 'To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men,--that is genius' Appelbaum (1993, p.19). Individuals with their '*genius*' means the true uniqueness of responsibility of the individual. Through his philosophical expressions, Emerson gives simple outcomes for the next

generation with his highly motivating and optimistic ideas. In addition, for the philosopher, naturalist, and individualist Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), in his essay *Civil Disobedience*, (1849) individuals possess spiritual powers to maintain their lives.

I am too high-born to be propertied,

To be a secondary at control,

Or useful serving-man and instrument

To any sovereign state throughout the world Smith (1993, p. 3).

With the dream of freedom, Mark Twain's Huck in the novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) resists the hypocrisy of the society that limits their living the American Dream during his real and mental journey on the Mississippi River that is for his individual freedom. In the twentieth century, a critique of the modern world has taken place in American literature. Social status, material gain, and financial betterment became the path to the American Dream. American writers used anti-heroes to reveal their disillusionment with the Dream. Fitzgerald's self-made man *Great Gatsby* (1925) portrays the disillusionment of the American Dream because the basic principles of the Dream had been replaced by the corrupted values of society. Fitzgerald's Gatsby experienced awareness that the Dream had corrupted him and his dream was shattered. In *Of Mice and Men* (1937) John Steinbeck shows how people suffered in modern American society. In *Death of a Salesman* (1949), Arthur Miller shows how the American Dream changes a person into a commodity to achieve a standard of living and makes him fall short of the demands of the Dream. In the end, the protagonist, Willy, has to sacrifice himself to maintain financial security for his family. Salinger's Holden in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) had adolescence problems in his becoming process and he is in search of a meaningful life in the promised land but he has isolated himself from phony society. Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) wants to live the American Dream but no matter how hard he tries, he remains invisible. These protagonists could not experience the Dream as it was promised. David Foster Wallace's characters also participate in their communities and experience the American Dream both in a pragmatic and critical sense. Wallace shows that there is confusion and understanding about the American Dream. It

is not a trustworthy advisor or a safe road to happiness. It only offers opportunities to chart the individual path. Wallace also tries to convey a sense of meaningfulness and hope for a true life. His works demonstrate the rebirth of realism, readership, sincerity, and of honesty as well as the new outlook of the contemporary literature. Wallace, by writing about human conditions, tries to heal the fragmented and disillusioned society.

David Foster Wallace says that American society is the only one he knows (Karmodi 2011). Wallace's novels center on the main events of the period, and his characters' thoughts and attitudes are shaped by the effect of the contemporary issues. Randall Knoper writes in *Mark Twain and Nation*, as a national author, Mark Twain argues that a foreign author just photographs the 'exterior of a nation', but only a native novelist reflects its details such as,

its soul, its life, its speech, its thought, its shames and prides, its joys and griefs, its loves and hates, its prosperities and reverses, its shows and shabbiness, its deep patriotism, its whirlwinds of political passion, its adorations – of flag, and heroic dead, and the glory of a national name Messent & Budd (2005, p.12).

Like Twain, Wallace crystallizes the American experience and culture with the realities and self-deceptions of the self. In the national literature of America, the American Dream has always been a nationality binding metaphor. As an authentic writer with a native psychology, David Foster Wallace writes about America and frames the American identity within the search for the American Dream. The social milieu in Wallace's novels is a collection of people who are trying to reach their own American Dream in various ways. The American Dream is important and the best guide for the majority of Americans. Wallace's contributions focus on the dual nature of the American Dream, and the novels are written by the responses of the contemporary individuals to the events unfolding in American cultural, political, and social scenes.

In the magazine *Five Dials*, in issue number 10 (2016), extraordinary tributes were paid to David Foster Wallace as follows; for Michael Pietsch, the publisher of Little, Brown and Company, the novel *Infinite Jest* is a great work of fiction that depicts contemporary American life. When the executive editor Gerry Howard received *The Broom of the System* in 1986, he understood that it was a new beginning for American fiction. For him, the book is "neo-postmodern extravaganza, ultra-brainy and high-

spirited.” The novelist Don DeLillo finds Wallace’s voice American and his works as fragments of a ‘distant future’. Wallace has ‘inventive rhetorical virtuosity’ for the novelist Jonathan Franzen, with ‘high, low, middle, technical, hipster, nerdy, philosophical vernacular, vaudevillian, hortatory, tough-guy, broken hearted, lyrical diction.’ Most importantly, the novelist George Saunders puts Wallace in the same canon as Whitman and Ginsberg, with his openness, awareness, and alive prose (Fivedials 2008). At The University of Texas in Austin, there is a course designed to study the works of David Foster Wallace and his contributions to the literature of the 20th and 21st centuries. In the description of the course, Wallace is praised as ‘one of the most examined and lauded authors of his generation’ (Houser 2012). According to these tributes to the writer’s personal and professional experience in the United States and the contributions of his novels, it is worthwhile to study and understand the works of David Foster Wallace.

Wallace’s novels critique and reflect details of the individuals and their personal struggles. To examine the trajectory of Wallace, his three novels have been chosen. In *The Broom of the System* and in *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, the individuals, with their deep psychological patterns will be analyzed through the interviews. With *The Pale King*, the close reading of both the system with its institutions and the individuals as being citizens will provide the past and the present way of looking to American Dream through the lenses of postmodernism and post-postmodernism. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how selected works of Wallace contribute to the American literary canon to define the principles of the American Dream in the contemporary age. Wallace’s ideas about American culture and the postmodern world will be presented mostly through his own words. My central argument is that Wallace’s novels release the real inner conflicts within the dazzling complexities of postmodernism. In this regard, my dissertation is motivated by the following questions: What is significant about Wallace’s writing? Why does his writing experience catch readers? How does the cultural landscape affect the individual? Is the American Dream influential in their motives or not? What impact postmodernism and post-postmodernism have upon individuals’ beliefs about the American Dream and the availability of opportunity in the United States are the main study issues of the dissertation.

This dissertation represents a timely and contemporary study in U.S. literary studies. It describes the outstanding author David Foster Wallace and his recent literary theories. The dissertation is a study of Wallace's works and the application of postmodernism, post-postmodernism, and American Dream, a heritage of the American nation. This study sketches the analysis of Wallace's texts, interviews, essays, fiction, and non-fiction and helps readers follow the literary and cultural understanding of the recent past. In the first chapter, introductory information is given to aid in the comprehension of the purpose of this study. This chapter starts with a brief introduction of David Foster Wallace as a national author and continues with the tributes of certain literary critics in order to show the readers how he is seen in the American literary scene and how important his writing is becoming for American literature. Since this dissertation studies American Culture and the American Dream, the representations of the Dream in American literature are also given through outstanding examples of the American canon.

The second chapter will be a diagnosis of the postmodern condition and postpostmodern attitude. American literature has sought to redefine itself because there was doubt about the usefulness of contemporary American fiction. Until the 1990s, the attitude of postmodernism continued. When the end of postmodernism was noticed, a new spirit of realism and sincerity was aroused to heal the ironic culture of postmodernism. In order to understand the beginning of the next period, it is important to first define postmodernism with its literary directions and social attitude. Thus, this chapter intends to elaborate the theoretical works of the leading thinkers regarding postmodern culture and postmodern fiction because postmodernism as a cultural theory is an expanded version of contemporary Western thought, including a variety of ideas, practices, and codes. The same chapter will be looking at American Culture, the American Dream, and American fiction in postmodern times since the American Dream is a doctrine of progress for the nation. The aim of this study is not to discuss the historical background of the American Dream. It rather reveals the effects of the Dream on human beings within Wallace's works. Furthermore, in this chapter, contemporary American culture and fiction will be presented through Wallace's own perspective. In the third chapter, Wallace's three books, *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, *The Broom of the System*, and *The Pale King*, will be examined as main sources by relating examples from the books and the author's essays and speeches.

The scope of the study mainly focuses on the diagnosis of the individuals' place in the postmodern condition and the optimistic shift of the post-postmodern approach. The books *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, *The Broom of the System*, and *The Pale King* reflect Wallace's literary response to postmodernism and postpostmodernism. *The Pale King* examines the political and social limits of postmodernism and mirrors the characters' critique of politics. *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* and *The Broom of the System* mirror the characters' critique of self-revelation. In *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, the interviews will provide a rich context in order to understand the journey of individuals during their pursuit of the American Dream. In *The Broom of the System*, through the personal journeys, the experiences of the individuals, their practice, and struggles of American Dream are represented. In *The Pale King*, the economic and political unrest of the last decades and their consequences are incorporated. In the light of the extraordinary vision of David Foster Wallace, the three books will be examined to understand human experiences in the new age. In the last chapter, the main argument will be analyzed and clarified by grounding Wallace's concerns and contributions with postmodern literature. The study focuses on the American Dream and its cultural, political, and social practices within the dynamics of postmodern American society. Regarding the American Dream and its influences on ordinary women and men, the dissertation will examine the Dream in today's world. This dissertation will explore the portrayal of American culture and society through its smallest unit, 'the individual', with the artistic distinctiveness of David Foster Wallace. The ability of the individual to live the American Dream will be analyzed through the individual biographies of Wallace's characters. To understand the dynamics that shape the lives of people in the postindustrial capitalist society, postmodernism and post-postmodernism will provide the best approach to reflect the life experiences of the present day generation.

2. REFLECTIONS OF THE AMERICAN DREAM IN POSTMODERNISM

In the history of America, the American Dream and its images are presented as attainable as long as both men and women devote themselves to hard work for fulfillment. For James Truslow Adams, in *The Epic of America*, the American Dream is an opportunity for everyone, no matter what their status or origin is. He defines the American Dream as,

dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement... it is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position Adams (2001, p. 404).

The American Dream is traced to the Declaration of Independence in 1776. According to this significant document, 'all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness' (Baym, 2003). The American Dream is egalitarian as it embraces all the diversities and provides equal opportunities as long as a person maintains its ideas of hard work and dedication. The American Dream is documented and reflected in the national literature of America in which the Dream is so powerful. Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* is one of the major texts in American literature that shows the promises of America and its Dream. Being a true American, Franklin is a self-made man who through hard work and determination constructed his life. In a letter to his son in 1771, he writes,

Having emerged from the poverty and obscurity in which I was born and bred, to a state of affluence and some degree of reputation in the world, and having gone so far through life with a considerable share of felicity, the conducting

means I made use of, which with the blessing of God well succeeded, my posterity may like to know, as they may find some of them suitable to their own situations and therefore fit to be imitated Franklin (2008, p.1).

Franklin's *Autobiography* presents the hope that human beings have the faculty to re-create themselves and fulfil their dream. As the Founding Fathers were self-made men, this idea of personal success is a common belief in America and kept the Dream alive.

The meaning of American Dream has changed throughout American history and it has connections to the nation's economic opportunities. In the mid-1800s, westward movement and a new beginning for a home and a farm were the American Dream. Later, the Dream of the post-WWII was moving to suburbs, owning a house, raising a family, sending children to school, and supporting oneself when people get old (Starks 2003). After WWII, in order to have a middle class life, a person needs a steady job (Hochschild, 1996). In time, according to Laura D'Olimpio, the ideas of 'living our dream' and 'pursuing our passion' were sold to people (D'Olimpio 2018). Nowadays, there is a contradiction between economic freedom and real freedom in a time in which there is no other way than capitalism. Earning money and transforming it into status is the American notion of success. (Huber, 1971).

Looking at the journey of the American Dream through its history, the changings in its nature and ideology are clearly seen with the words of various outstanding Americans. The Dream emerges with the strong religious beliefs of Puritans that glorify both Jesus and God, his words and presence as Thomas Brooks says (1651) "Till men have faith in Christ, their best services are but glorious sins." He directed people into the right path and truths of life. Faith in religion kept people in a safe position and avoided unhappiness. They were taught not to be very interested in material gain in those times. Thoreau's (1854) words, "Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth" is a good example of people's understanding of truth and meaning. In the modern period, people lost their direction to the old truth and started to follow the wrong path and became unhappy. They are now more interested in materialism and its opportunities that brought mostly sadness, discontent, and dissatisfaction. No matter how politicians tried to handle the situation by attempting to preserve the rights of the citizens, both the politicians and people could not resist the allure of materialism. As Theodore Roosevelt (1894) said,

We cordially believe in the rights of property. We think that normally and in the long run the rights of humanity, coincide with the rights of property... But we feel that if in exceptional cases there is any conflict between the rights of property and the rights of man, then we must stand for the rights of man Roosevelt (1910, p.241).

Blaming an abstract dream will not be a reason for not having a meaningful life. It has always been in the lives and dreams of its citizens consciously or subconsciously. William S. Burroughs (1951) says,

America is not so much a nightmare as a non-dream. The American non-dream is precisely a move to wipe the dream out of existence. The dream is a spontaneous happening and therefore dangerous to a control system set up by the non-dreamers Grauerholz & Silverberg (2007, p. 289).

Being the dreamers, Americans should be in charge of their Dream because the Dream never takes up on itself the responsibility for any failure. It does not care about the individuals' sufferings or their placement in the new period. Howard Zinn presents the indifference of the Dream in the following statement:

I've always resented the smug statements of politicians, media commentators, corporate executives who talked of how, in America, if you worked hard you would become rich. The meaning of that was if you were poor it was because you hadn't worked hard enough Zinn (2009, 151).

Unfortunately, when the promises of the Dream did not meet the demands of modern people, problems arose with various issues. Malcolm X's (1964) quote represents the pessimistic atmosphere of the postmodern period.

And when I speak, I don't speak as a Democrat. Or a Republican. Nor an American. I speak as a victim of America's so-called democracy. You and I have never seen democracy - all we've seen is hypocrisy. When we open our eyes today and look around America, we see America not through the eyes of someone who has enjoyed the fruits of Americanism. We see America through the eyes of someone who has been the victim of Americanism. We don't see any American dream Ellis & Smith (2010, p.11).

However, people are in a state of amnesia and are not aware of the negative nature of their social, mental, and economic issues, and Ronald Wright (2004) paraphrases John Steinbeck and summarizes people's lack of awareness: "Socialism never took root in America because the poor see themselves not as an exploited proletariat but as temporarily embarrassed millionaires." And in the latest decades, the national author David Foster Wallace finalizes the condition through the perception of the Americans: 'The assumption that everyone else is like you. That you are the world. The disease of consumer capitalism. The complacent solipsism' Wallace (2011a, p.516). Living American individualism, people think that what they are experiencing is normal to the alienated and lonely period. As long as they consume, they are proud. For the purpose of human happiness, materialism and capitalism disfigured America. American Dream itself is a desire for recognition and true freedom but for a long time, people lived without noticing these differences. Nevertheless, after the political and social incidents like the 9/11 attacks, people have realized that the Dream is not the ultimate source of happiness. There are improvements in American society in terms of technology and knowledge or power, but the standards of living and the endless consumption of wealth, and technology do not bring the happiness that the Dream promises. Unhappiness is the result of the endless desire to possess more. Status means happiness so people have been striving for a better positioning in life. They have started to consume their own lives. The idea of American Dream mesmerizes people and blindfolds them in their decision-making process. They cannot choose well from the opportunities and the possibilities that the Dream and materialism offer. People ignore their self and human potentials. This situation leads Americans to disregard the meaning of life. They become unaware of and suspicious about what life is for and even what their or others' presence matters for in life. Although the American Dream promises equal opportunity for every citizen, American Reality shows a contrary picture of the inequalities of the system and the struggles of individuals. There are problems that cannot be defeated by an individual's efforts. People realize the Dream is not reflecting the truth, and that there are problems beyond their control. That is why their realities are fragmented. The realities of the period and the social and economical inconsistencies are obvious, but the American Dream still makes people trust it.

The American Dream favors both 'equalities and inequality of rewards' due to meritocratic beliefs which for some means that the Dream can be achieved through talent

and hard work, and for some others, it cannot because of their indolence and extravagance. According to Hochschild, there have been many dreamers with high expectations, but the resources and opportunities were decreasing. For the dreamers, the meaning of success began to alter from 'absolute to relative then to competitive'. People believe that their actions and traits bring them success but they also have to admit that they are responsible from their own failure. They can be hardworking and talented, but they can still fail. The Dream contains no implications of failure. If someone fails, the Dream denies the losers because 'if success implies virtue, failure implies sin' Hochschild (1996, pp. 28-30). Huffington asks whether the American Dream is becoming a 'mirage' or not. The Dream was related to education, hard work, and perseverance, but now it is about luck (Huffington, 2010). In the historical chronology of the American Dream, Truslow shows people's determination for self-improvement. Jefferson thought that the Dream was not about materialism, it was just a concept. After the economic failures of the Great Depression, Truslow this time thought that the Dream was becoming lost. President Franklin Roosevelt tried to revive the Dream by instituting social programs. After World War II, state capital entered in the economy, and this refreshed the hopes. There was a decrease in unemployment rates. In the 1970s and 1990s, inflation increased again. Thomas Jefferson's common working class, which is considered the backbone of the Dream, lost its power. The inequalities affected the American Dream. Opportunities were not available and free for the dreamers anymore. The decline in opportunities and income made the Dream a myth which was being weakened by materialism and greed (Wilson, 2013).

The American Dream is two myths which define American culture: one the materialistic and the other moralistic one, and in the absence of these myths, there is no past, present, or future of people and a nation. Both myths have their own power and effect. 'The materialistic myth is grounded on the Puritan work ethic and relates to the values of effort, persistence, "playing the game," initiative, self-reliance, achievement, and success'. Competition is important for personal worth and status in the society, and if someone devotes energy and skill, that person will be rewarded by money and status. Nonetheless, the materialistic myth is not persuasive for those who have already tried it but failed and who have witnessed some negativity in reality and experienced 'avarice, resentment, envy, and vindictiveness'. The myth is 'compassionless and selfcentered; it encourages manipulation and leads to exploitation'. The moralistic myth, on the

contrary, involves 'the values of tolerance, charity, compassion, and true regard for the dignity and worth of each and every individual'. Unlike the materialistic myth, it requires self-sacrifice and 'regeneration' Fischer (1973, p.161). The abstract ideals such as, to be happy, to choose the best thing, and to be the best version of yourself, drive a person to anxiety, self-doubt, and over time to a sense of failure. For Fischer, this double-sided nature of the Dream ends with schizophrenia. When one of the myths is more powerful within the culture or individuals, the other myth becomes weaker and draws back (Fischer 1973). Both the corporations and the governmental authorities cause a loss. The corporations have cultural and political power, but they do not have '*conscience or soul*' as human beings used to have (Karmodi 2011). Rewarding the effort is the fundamental structure of American society, and this noble principle influences the majority of individuals. Economic worth is the equivalent of self-worth and valuing others. When the ordinary human feelings of dissatisfaction and inefficiency met with prospect, people misled themselves to gain worth. Means and ends, quantities and quality, doing and being are all misunderstood in the modern period. People and institutions used this human idiocy in politics, and people forgot their own worth and act as 'the bull is expected to' react the 'propagandist matador' Hayes (1998, p.283). For democracy, all citizens begin the race even and for egalitarianism they all finish even. Freedom and equality are given from the beginning but democracy needs equality to begin (Baudrillard, 1989). Still, whether the opportunities are equal or not, it is difficult to define as well as sustain equality. Race is the metaphor of the meaning of equality. Market is the race and incomes are the prizes. Heredity, social environment, family, and being lucky are important during this race McClelland & Tobin (2010, pp.1-4). The American Dream has been reconsidered, redefined, and re-lived in different periods of time and will continue its influence on American culture. Understanding this key concept and its functionality and ties to American values is essential to understanding U.S. culture. When an individual cannot properly consider and evaluate the ongoing mechanism of the American Dream with its offers, options, demands, and drawbacks and deals with its flood of information due to technological developments of the era, the individual starts to become unavoidably suspicious. This affects the society, and skepticism finds a way to be instilled in the culture. However, the American Dream with its pleasures and pain does not lose its power even in this atmosphere of skepticism.

The United States has a marketing society in which people market themselves. Their personality is the product, and personality means ‘*mask*’ in Latin. So the personalities are ‘masks’ that people wear to sell themselves to others—to become popular, to market themselves, to find a job, or a mate. As a part of a postmodern world, in materialistic culture people change constantly to reach their dreams (Berger, 2015). The placement of the individuals in the new cultural system has been altered. Thus, the transcendental ideas of the basic principles of the American Dream have to be reconstructed. In this age of simulation, the American Dream is the simulacra of the period, but the expectations from the Dream are social and cultural. According to McClelland and Tobin (2010), its shared goals are to live in freedom, to have a family and own a house, to have equal choice in the society and maintain financial security, and get a good education. The other targets are economic, to have better standards of living and to move upward. All of these objectives have the same intention for ‘doing better than one’s parents’ and to reach their goals. As long as someone participates in the capitalist system, that person can have a chance to get the opportunities McClelland & Tobin (2010, pp.1-4). When the realities of the new era have changed, the wishes of people also changed but hope for a better life remained.

According to the surveys that were conducted after 2006, for most people, the American Dream is more difficult or improbable to achieve, even not achievable. Yet, according to the Gallup Organizations and USA Today’s founding in 2009, 72% of people yet think that if they work hard and act in accordance with the rules, it is possible for them to reach the Dream. The Dream is mostly a measurement of economic achievements, but between the years 1985-2008, the majority of the responses were emotional as 93% of people preferred to have a good family life, 90% wanted better health care, and 85% wanted to be able to speak their mind. Hence, the American Dream with its quantified measures gets larger with quality measures of life and world issues Hanson & White (2011, pp.9-12). For most Americans, to be born in America, to feel American, and to consider oneself as American as well as to respect one’s culture are important (Schildkraut 2007). However, to believe in the American Dream, people do not need to be American. The Dream becomes new possibilities for millions of immigrants and other people Hochschild (1996, p.28). As John Locke in his *Second Treatise of Government* (1690) says, ‘in the beginning all the world was America’ Macpherson (1980, p.17).

1950s and 1960s were the years of confidence in America because of the prosperity, democracy, its laws, and principles. However, it turned out to be ‘a fool’s paradise... a time of false complacency and of hubristic and dangerous illusions.’ In a few years’ time, the nation, its high expectations and dream started to fade in the face of social, political, and cultural events such as the civil movements, racism, assassinations of presidents, the Vietnam War, and the Watergate Affair. The optimistic perceptions and hopes of the citizens were transformed into uncertainty and lack of confidence. The separation and polarization of the 60s with its societal divisions and opposed groups, emerged as the fragmentation of the future. Americans were unable to become united and heal each other anymore (Fokkema, 1984). In the 70s, America began to experience ‘a soft world order’. This does not mean that it lost the power it had in the 50s. It still holds the political and cultural power through its ascendent dollar. Moreover, in America both governing and advertising are credibility signs with their shared effects and scenarios to be followed (Baudrillard, 1989). Traditional models of democratic inclusion are based on a differentiation model in which democratic inclusion is promised to all identity groups similar to the multiculturalism in Britain or Canada. The de-differentiation that is the other model renounces the differences and holds a neutral position for an abstract individualism such as in France. The United States could avert these two models and used the American Dream Ghosh (2013, pp.112-122). So, American politics is broken down because the principle of ‘one man one vote’ is replaced by the special-interest politics and this replacement affects surrounding Americans, the air, water, food, medication, products, as well as the economic stability which helps people to keep their jobs, afford their housing, and pursue their dream. Middle class stability is a part of the American Dream. However, technological changes, outsourcing, the loss of manufacturing jobs and the rise in productivity all lead to the disappearance of the middle class. The economy for the corporate world and the middle class differs. The corporate group is gaming the system, and the middle class follows the rules. At first, manufacturing jobs carried the poor labour group to the middle class by providing opportunities, and they experienced a ‘general equality of condition’. Now the citizens have become consumers, and they are directed to the fact that the foundation of their country is the market and not the equality of condition anymore. The new economic and social positions redefined the American Dream because the American Reality shows how ‘elusive’ the dream is now Huffington (2010, p.101). In the book

The American Dream in the 21st century, in “Religion and the American Dream A Catholic Reflection in a Generational Context”, William V. D’Antonio says that the ‘Greatest Generation’ experienced the Great Depression and World War II, the ‘Millennial Generation’ on the other hand, has education and Internet access opportunities that enable them to connect to the global world, and they witnessed September 11, and Iraq and Afghanistan wars as well as the economic downfall. All these bring financial and mental costs and affect the American Dream in the social order (Hanson & White 2011). The hope of socialism seems to have collapsed in the period with ‘betrayals, revolutionary dreams, mass murders, and an endless series of self-deceptions’ about the future. In the new millennium optimism takes over although it is difficult to maintain ‘a life beyond the “dream world” of capitalism’ Giroux (2001,p. 227).

After the Renaissance period, which is the ‘counterfeit’ scheme with natural law of value and the industrial ‘production’ scheme with its commercial law of value, the world around now experiences the scheme of ‘simulation’ and it is controlled by the code with the structural law of value. In the age of simulation, both the reality and its models coexist. All the models produce the real repeatedly within this infinity of production, everything is hyperreal without any limitation (Baudrillard, 1983). Objective truth disappears in arbitrary interpretations because reality and meaning are ways of construction and are not pre-given. They are context-based, and the contexts are limitless (Wilber, 2000). As long as any kind of system is produced by the simulations, the distinctions between ‘true’ and ‘false’, ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’ become questionable because they are not natural anymore. Since there is no true or false, I.Q. also becomes an artifact. The meaning process is nothing much than an ‘ability to produce contrasting reactions to a growing series of adequate stimuli.’ Simulation becomes ‘the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreality.’ Simulacra display the social rapports and power, and ‘contemporary “material” production is itself hyperreal’, this is the reason for the desire to restore the real in fact. Simulacrum is not related with the technological progress, it is the reflections of political and cultural hegemony Baudrillard (1983, p.1-5). As Hayes (1998) states,

Postmodernism derives from a lack of thirst for knowledge, and it may be worse than nihilism. Nihilism represents a loss of values, but postmodernism

as a social direction is one in which technique takes over completely. Thus, the symbols and images produced by our highly technological blip culture become more real and more important than anything we ourselves can imagine; they become hyper-real Hayes (1998, p. 125).

The tested reality tests people, and people decode it by using the same codes delivered like the genetic codes. Media is like a generic code that manages the change of real things into hyperreal ones. For instance, Watergate successfully imposed the idea that it was a scandal. Maybe there were not any wars and the ones on TV were just ‘artificial mishaps-abstract, ersatzes of troubles, catastrophes and crisis intended to maintain a historical and psychological investment under hypnosis’, and media was there to serve for this actualization. Models work for the fact that real is not needed anymore. These are not imitations, republications, or parodies but substitutions of the real. This decision making process becomes the attitude towards our environment and towards our reading and decoding of it (Baudrillard, 1983). According to Baudrillard;

America is neither dream nor reality. It is a hyperreality. It is a hyperreality because it is a Utopia which has behaved from the very beginning as though it were already achieved. Everything here is real and pragmatic, and yet it is all the stuff of dreams too. It may be that the truth of America can only be seen by a European, since he alone will discover here the perfect simulacrum - that of the immanence and material transcription of all values Baudrillard (1989, p 27).

American culture is anthropological which is formed by mores and lifestyle. America is fictional but its Disneyland, media, freeways, skylines, and desserts are real. Advertisements with their many images idolize this lifestyle, and America is in a continual ‘present of signs’. Rapid actualizing of models is the allure of American ‘(un)culture’. This real and imaginary break off, and this large country is open to simulation. The aesthetic and its values vanish in kitsch and in hyperreality, as history and the real vanish in TV (Baudrillard, 1989). Since the 1930s, TV has been the most necessary device at home and in lives of families (Lamb, 2011). The culture which is shaped by the TV is called ‘teleculture’. TV is not only for entertainment. It reflects the culture, and at the same time culture is affected by the TV. However, TV focuses on a specific part of the culture, creates heroes, heroines but ignores other cultures and their heroic people. The internet also takes our time and affects both the individual and the

society. TV and the Internet are important elements for ‘socialization and enculturation’ of communities and inevitably of popular culture Berger (2015, p.21). English language as a mass communication tool also has a significant role in the recognition of American culture with its simpler grammar and shorter sentences; it is easier to use in mass media and press. From the early 20th century, American Media has learned new strategies to communicate with its multicultural and multinational audience and to convince them (Daghrir 2013). Media is ridiculously criticized by Alain de Botton. For him, community is harsh on the victims, and he reverses the tragic flaws of the literary characters into today’s media titles to reveal today’s individual understanding and how the media reflect a real pitiful situation. What if Othello, for example, is in the public eye, wouldn’t it be like; ‘Love-crazed Immigrant Kills Senator’s Daughter’, or Madam Bovary as ‘Shopaholic Adulteress Swallows Arsenic after Credit Fraud’, and Oedipus the King as ‘Royal in Incest Shocker’? These comparisons of literature and media show how tyrannical but attractive the language of the press is. The criminals have the right to be listened to. The accused ones of the tragedies simply become the losers of the modern life. Modern societies do not tolerate the hamartia anymore (Botton, 2005). From the beginning, America has been a culture of national and cultural diversity but each ethnic faction has dominated cities of America. The country did not have big changes. People criticize America for not having a revolution or an effective social or political issue, as the European societies had. 19th century social and philosophical aspects could not reach this distant Utopian country which moves with morality and concrete happiness. Europe alters realities into ideas or ideologies, but America creates realities out of them. So the materialized concepts become the way of life (Baudrillard, 1989). At this point, memetics and memes come forward which are highly influential in the modern societies. Memetics is,

part biology and neuroscience, part evolutionary psychology, part old fashioned propaganda, and part marketing campaign driven by the same thinking that goes into figuring out what makes a banner ad clickable. Though memetics currently exists somewhere between science, science fiction, and social science, some enthusiasts present it as a kind of hidden code that can be used to reprogram not only individual behaviors but entire societies (Siegel 2017).

The term 'meme' was used in 1976 by Richard Dawkins to define the way in which ideas are transmitted between people and via internet, the term started to be a material which is used within the culture among the societies very often especially on social media. Dawkins names the unit of cultural transmission and imitation as 'mimeme,' that has a Greek root and sounds like 'gene' Dawkins (1989, p.192). According to Merriam Webster, a meme is 'an idea, behavior, style, or usage that spreads from person to person within a culture' and 'an amusing or interesting item (such as a captioned picture or video) or genre of items that is spread widely online especially through social media'. A meme is 'a culturally resonant item easily shared or spread online' Zakem and Hammerberg (2018, p.i). A meme is 'a manifestation of postfolklore', 'a mechanism of political participation and construction of the social media users' collective identity' Shomova (2019, p.2). For Dawkins, 'We are built as gene machines and cultured as meme machines, but we have the power to turn against our creators. We, alone on earth, can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators' Dawkins (1989, p. 201). Memes are 'culturally specific and situationally narrow' but 'meaningful within specific cultures, languages, and situations'. They can be used by governments, non-governmental organizations, and individuals Zakem and Hammerberg (2018, p.v-vi). Catchy tunes and phrases, fashionable clothing, and opinions are some examples of memes which 'propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain' in the imitation process just like the genes do from body to body. Idea-memes are like the entities which can be transmitted in between brains. And the memes in the brain parasite the brain for propagation in the same way a virus parasitizes the gene Dawkins (1989, p.192-196). Meme genres are important to understand the digital culture. They are not stable, they can change according to 'social, political, and technological ecologies' Shifman (2014, p. 342). Because they are critical and reconstructive, memes allow people how to comment on any political issue such as protesting against government and social topics. When the TV and magazines became popular and influential, the American Dream was promoted through advertisements. They were propagating the idea of happiness with images of happy families. The family members were healthy, rich, and satisfied. In the pictures, they were laughing and taking pleasure from life. The fundamental images in most of the advertisements were houses with big gardens and their owners, families with kids, dogs, and cars. The advertisements were designed to make people believe that they could reach the same standards if only they

could afford and buy that house or that car. In the advertisements, America with its Dream provides the highest standard of living, and there is no other way like the American Dream. Now, in the modern period, memes create the same effect but for the opposite idea. Memes present the idea that American Dream is not the dream as it has been promoted through years. They mostly try to show that the Dream is on as long as you are asleep. They remind people of the current political, economic, and social problems related to national and international conflicts, unemployment rate, health and educational issues. Instead of happy family images, memes use the pictures of political figures, and world issues such as wars in their presentations in a humorous way with funny and ironic statements. Media is influential in American culture and on its Dream. Some memes, however, are more successful in terms of their effects on the individual, and on the society, as does the American Dream. The American Dream is one of the 'firmly entrenched memes in American culture' Seider, Gillmor, Rabinowicz (2010, p.1). As memes are so powerful in influencing or infecting the brains and the viewpoints of people with their sudden and ironic effects, the perception of American people about the Dream will be under these influences. In their real lives, the lonely and aloof individuals are exposed to the memes about the Dream frequently. The hopeless individual who encounters the humor and the irony from the meme, one of the aspects of the postmodernism that creates negativity, will feel worse. Likewise, a successful or a more content person who sees the same meme would again feel worse because that meme presents the reality both for the winner and the loser. In this period, Americans are not able to comprehend the basic truths about life without altering and seeing them in metaphors or in an entertaining or ironizing form such as a meme. Individuals either become aware of the deceptiveness of the Dream or they continue to get lost within it due to the effects of the pop cultural elements.

American popular culture is 'omnipresent' in the twenty-first century via forces such as mass communication, technology, political systems, and the economy. They create culture-shifting products such as iPods and computers that are devices beyond their functions Batchelor (2009, p.3). Cultural control is becoming more significant than political control and borders since it is believed that national diversities will disappear due to homogenization and American consumerism. Through its immigrants, the United States received foreign influences and products and transferred them again back to the world. U.S. popular culture is always in progress, there is a continuous cultural

exchange that turns out to be a new hybrid, not uniformity. American culture (music, movies, media, and software) and products are easily found in every part of the world (Daghrir 2013). Contrary to general and popular belief, globalization develops localization in mind. Especially as an effect of the Post-Cold War, traditions, religious piety, ethnic, and national identities are restored. Postcolonial expert Robert Young assumes that American domination is typical if the antecedent periods such as ancient Greece or Rome, Renaissance arts, and Britain with their philosophy, mythology, governmental systems, and their languages are examined. They also had the power to impose on others. American cultural imperialism is not as dangerous as it is perceived. Drinking Coke, eating McDonalds, watching Hollywood movies, or wearing Nike doesn't mean becoming American because people like the unique diversities of their culture. For instance, McDonald's changes its menus for local taste so an Egyptian can eat McFefafel, and pizzas and sushi are highly popular even more than burgers. Globalization brings understanding and freedom of choice among the many cultural products which indeed cultivates people. Instead of being a uniform world which is not possible for a planet with 6 billion people, local cultures will survive (Daghrir 2013). When the domestic market expands, there will be more economic opportunities and a rise in living standards.

American life has been dominated by popular culture, technological innovations, and the power of the corporate world during the last 150 years. Advertising functions significantly and uses technology as well. Advertising transforms people into shopping machines and the corporate world to working machines. Selling is not the sole aim of marketing; the sellers want to create a 'relationship' between their consumers to their 'trusted' goods Batchelor (2009, p.26). The effects of commercial television which has the greatest role in the American Dream could not be ignored in the twentieth century (Hayes, 1998). But still, the factors that lead to poverty and inequality do not affect the individuals' belief in the Dream (Seider, Gillmor, Rabinowicz, 2010). Americans' belief in God still has power upon their analysis of the Dream, and religious values makes them work hard for success and reach the Dream. According to Jeremy Rifkin's observations, 48% of Americans believe that the United States is protected by God. Moreover, some people believe that the reason of the World Trade Center Towers and Pentagon attacks were signs from God that he was not pleased with America's mistakes (Rifkin, 2004). This attitude shows how they value their Dream and how after rising

unemployment, global stock market declines, and forecast recession, the Dream is still influential to maintain their lives. The American Dream is a democratic inclusion model within the contemporary American political culture. The 2008-2009 financial crisis, unemployment, and mortgage crisis have not affected the belief of people in the American Dream in the recent decades. The Dream itself may be relatively new (and an artifact of the twentieth century), but this interrelationship of works, virtue, and happiness is not Ghosh (2013, p. 4). American political culture has always been obsessed with creating a perfect society that is the 'city upon a hill' Ghosh (2013, p. 124).

Society is becoming more moral than in the past as slavery has been abolished, no witches burned anymore, both genders and minorities allowed to vote. Nevertheless, now self-interest is so high that a sense of community has almost been lost. Compassion, understanding, and responsibilities are the intellectual qualities that get people beyond the American Dream for a meaningful life (Hayes, 1998). Americans are indifferent and pragmatic towards inequality. They prefer to leave the identification, moderation, and eradication task to the governments.

When actual inequities are identified, the common reaction is not to question the intrinsic fairness of the race, but rather to focus upon mitigating or removing the defects in question McClelland & Tobin (2010, p.4).

Americans do not question themselves on whether to trust their leaders or not because questioning brings trouble. Instead they pretend to trust. As long as a leader is credible, no mistakes, scandals, weaknesses, or his stupidity are taken into consideration or taken seriously anymore. The only thing that matters, is the image of the leader and his advertising (Baudrillard, 1989). People only have concerns about what they do not possess instead of what they already have. By consuming, people validate themselves because consumption has religious dimensions when the department stores of today and ancient cathedrals are compared in terms of their functionality. For instance department stores promise 'heaven on Earth now', cathedrals 'heaven in the Future'. Department stores are for merchandising, cathedrals are for salvation. Store sales let us save money, prayer lets us save souls. Big sales are like religious holidays. Catalogs are the new sacred texts. Clergies became clerks. Stores sell products, cathedrals sell God. To buy an expensive product cheaper is like conversion of a sinner. Paying tithe becomes paying taxes. Advertising serves as proselytizing, and brand loyalty is devotion Berger (2015,

p.41). Consumerism affects political action negatively because people become incapable of making a choice or an engagement without spending any money (Kirby, 2009). In the individualistic aspect, the American Dream focuses on the person more than the 'structures, process, and historical patterns'. On the other hand, it is not individualistic because a person pursues the Dream both for one's self and for others, such as their family or another group. It has a deceptive nature, it liberates and tells people to control their destiny but does not assist them to be aware of the constraints that are not related to their talents or wishes Hochschild (1996, pp. 252- 254). An individual cannot reach a point to make self-criticism or self-analysis in a group which acts spontaneously and unconsciously. 'Individual thinking', on the other hand, questions and analyzes the situations or the beliefs with consideration. By the decision-making power, collectivists help politics and media with their mode of hypnotic thought. It is easier for them to influence people and alter their mind (Ryclack 2003). Advertising English affects the consciousness because it knows that people do not pay attention to language. Advertising and politics take place at the mass culture level. Official English deliberately lacks human communication, English especially in public places needs to be used in interpersonal tones for Wallace (Garner, 2013). Political advertising is really significant for the citizens who are apolitical or disinterested in political events or campaigns. There are stages of political advertisements with different functions. The first stage is for recognition of the identity of the politician in order to persuade the voters. In the second stage, the advertisement is more argumentative in reflecting ideology. In the third stage, ads are used to insult the other candidates. In the final stage, advertisements are more positive to reflect the reason for the candidate to be chosen by the voter. The estimated ratio of Americans who are informed by advertising and not by the news is four to one. Consequently, the cost of political advertising is pretty high. For instance, in the 2008 presidential race, the approximate amount was 5.3 billion dollars and this amount of money shows how advertising has such an important role in politics. The advertisements mostly use hope, compassion, ambition, trust, nostalgia, intimacy, reassurance, and local and national pride as emotional values and beliefs. Citizens want to see someone who provides them hope, who cares for others, who still makes them feel proud of being American and someone who is close to them and aware of them. Unconsciously, these emotional values affect the political

decisions of the citizens Berger (2015, pp.112-120). It is said in the book *The Age of American Unreason* (2008) that,

citizens of the “new digital democracy” do not have to vote, or read books, or spend any waking part of their days without the combination of hypnotic comfort and artificial stimulation offered on screen media by the infotainment industry Jacoby (2008, p.306).

President Clinton in 2000 suggested that twenty-first century will be one of the ‘big dreams of the American Revolution’ with its ‘opportunity, responsibility and community’ Halliwell & Morley (2008, p. 211). Americans want policies including the ideas of the Dream such as freedom, equality of opportunity, and individual rights which do not move away. In the book *The American Dream in the 21st century*, in *The Politics of the American Dream, 1980 to 2008*, Kimmage points out that Jimmy Carter in 1980, Walter Mondale in 1984, and Michael Dukakis in 1988 could not take the office as they did not blend their policies with the Dream. Contrary to this, Reagan, Clinton, and Obama integrated optimism about the American future. David Plouffe who was campaign manager for Barack Obama, the 44th president of the United States from 2009 to 2017, says,

We held that North Star in our sights at all times. We made many mistakes along the way, but we always remembered that we were running because as Barack put it, the dreams so many generations had fought for were slipping away Huffington (2010, p. 10).

Americans never lost touch with the dream although they felt the loss and incompleteness. Nevertheless, according to Hanson and White, political parties which incorporated the elements of the American Dream could succeed at home but not overseas. After the September 11 trauma, Bush could not set a vision clearly, and bringing democracy to Iraq was considered false optimism. In “The Presidency and the Making of the American Dream”, John Kenneth White says that, the American presidency is not only an office of executive responsibilities; it is a place where the American Dream becomes personified (Hanson & White 2011).

The American Dream is a life view promising that the living condition of a person is determined by his ability and hard work. An important part of the American Dream is pulled in from a Lockean / Puritan ideas of ‘happiness should be pursued through

work'. In addition, religion has always been in the background in American life. The origin of the American Dream is derived from religious ideas but it is 'secular and interdenominational'. So everyone can look forward to success, and the idea of happiness continues as a moral belief among Americans Ghosh (2013, p. 8-11). The September 9/11 2001 terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and Wall Street implosions are the issues that motivated citizens to attempt to understand the world around them. After the 9/11 attacks, the nation became more patriotic and there were many heroic figures (firefighters, police officers) that served the USA. There were military, economic, and domestic security programs to avoid public anxiety. "Ground Zero", with the remains of the World Trade Center and "United We Stand" are their 'rallying cry'. TV focused on tragic 9/11 for the next few years with its programs and documentaries. Wars on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq were considered the right decision by Americans. They united nationally again. America's power and culture are incited by innovations, but demanding things more and faster brought anxiety and nervousness. This speed made life boring. Americans are working, worrying, and consuming more. Institutions like banks and mortgage companies served the system by providing loans. By 2007 and 2008, the country was in a recession and as media addressed this issue, people had fears about the economy, employment, and about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan Batchelor (2009, p.13). The decline of the opposing ideas (China, Cuba, and Vietnam) makes America suffer more than the decline in historical ambition. America cannot celebrate hegemony or monopoly anymore. Instead of being a power, it is a model with its own style. America is in a process in which the reasons have faded away but the results are still ongoing. America is like Jarry's bicycle. The dead cyclists Jarry keeps pedaling to move the Great Machine since he does it better than an anxious living individual. American power is in crisis due to a nothingness which has no resistance, antibodies, or stabilization (Baudrillard, 1989).

Above all, new millennium for the majority is an optimistic period for future but for some others it is a referent to reconsider the mistakes that had been experienced before and find out what is really important, which sounds more realistic in this age of paradoxes with technological advancements, social faux pas, and economic hardships. It is obvious that American Dream is in danger but after each incident Americans began to dream for prosperity again Hayes (1998, pp. 4-5).

Dreams shape our future and the American dream shapes America. But dreams occur because something thought desirable is missing. Our failure to thoroughly comprehend this enigma many explain why we seem to have traded a sense of virtue, based upon self-reliance when material goods were scarce in the nineteenth century, for something called “values”, when material goods are abundant and most of us no longer consider ourselves victims of one kind or another Hayes (1998, pp. 4-5).

America, the nation whose birth was announced by a Declaration, has shown great growth in economic and social areas for many decades. Americans are taught to follow the American Dream and ‘hard work and meritocracy’ are embedded in the cultural being of people Batchelor (2009, p. 25). Huffington thinks that America is not a ‘*done deal*’ and it has the ‘*can-do attitude*’ in its cultural DNA Huffington (2010, p.133). Michael Water, on behalf of Americans says, in this new experience, we begin again, as we must, individually, to find ways to reconstitute such debris into words, into language that will bear the burden of becoming the appropriate gesture, the right response Heyen (2002, p. 390).

It is inevitable for American people not to be affected by the American Dream because they are born into the idea of pursuing the happiness through their national dream. From the establishment of the nation to the present, there is a belief in American Dream in American Culture. American Dream is a need and an impulse for Americans. It is simply there and demands satisfaction. Hope, upward mobility, financial freedom, possibilities, improvement, and empathy are the qualities of the American Dream. The millennium generation is empowered by technology but vulnerable because most individuals get unrealistic success. In fact, what success really means is not defined properly. It is getting more difficult for the individuals to sort out what is right or what is wrong. People thought they were living the Dream but now they are uncertain whether they are living it or not because in their entire life, they were taught to work hard and play by the rules to be rewarded for a better life. However, access to American Dream has changed. In the new reality, there is no limit and lots of opportunities provided by the media and individuals are suffering from competition. To attain their goals, they have to beat others. In the current economic system, there is no time to get a meaning from life. The only thing people

pay attention to is having a job to maintain a good life. Otherwise, there will be no respect, the family relationships will be destroyed, and there will not be a home, which is one of the material aspect of American Dream, to live in. Finally, the notion of happiness will turn out to be a feeling of anxiety. However, this skepticism does not make the impulse disappear.

The New World, in the beginning, seems to be a land of freedom without the authority that dominated the Old World. There was a chance for an improved new life in the new land. This optimism and hope were embedded in the minds and paved the way to the American Dream. The American Dream is in the collective memory of American values and it represents many things belonging to the nation. History has proven that the social, political, and economic situations have changed and these changes are challenging for the dreamers. The American Dream became a myth or a fallacy for most individuals. In order to function for Americans, the American Dream must be trustworthy again for all citizens in this current age of diminished economic and social expectations. This nation's great Dream, symbolizing liberty, freedom, and happiness has been attracting people from inside and outside the country from the beginning to the modern day, with the promise of a new start.

American political culture and social structure are the issues of David Foster Wallace because they display the contemporary mind. TV and its advertising strategies and corporations' power over people's economic standards affect the spiritual direction of individuals. While people are trying to engage themselves within the society, they lose their self-worth and shared values. In this respect, Wallace shows how people try to reconstruct themselves personally and socially in the postmodern period. Wallace creates realities again with his diverse characters who experience social, political, cultural events that affect them deeply and put them in new economic and social positions. Wallace (1997) finds connections between TV and fiction. He thinks that fiction can be as influential as TV for individuals and affect their worldview as well as the way they follow their American Dream. The dream may have a deceptive nature for Hochschild (1996) but in the continuously evolving culture of America, individuals will find a new place and a new way to live in this country. TV is the main device that people use to access the outside world. With its programs, TV takes place in people's lives more than in previous periods. It is very powerful and

influential on the anxieties, boredom, and the distraction of people and it leads people to consume more. David Foster Wallace aims at showing the new way and assists his readers to get aware again after their personal and cultural distractions. According to Thom Hartmann, it is the best time to pay attention and to wake up. 'If the past is any indicator, things will get worse before they get better, but in that tragedy will be both the catalyst and the seeds for a very positive future'. The nation is on a 'radical restart, a reboot' Hartmann (2010, p.202).

2.1. A Call to Reawaken: Postmodernism to Post-postmodernism

Since the 1950s, postmodernism has represented the World via the convictions and sensibility of the individual. It is a democratic, populist, and iconoclastic impulse. Postmodernism rejects the discriminating hierarchies, separations of truth/fiction, past/present, relevant/irrelevant. It discusses the basic philosophical problems of morality, evolution, time, and the infinity of the contemporary mind (Fokkema, 1984).

According to Hayes (2005), in the Western perspective, humanity at first had been in a pre-human world of 'embodiment', then in a primitive one. After that, it had been in the Graeco-Roman world and in Christianity for thirteen centuries, and then it experienced the Enlightenment period. From the mid-twentieth century, it is the time for postmodernism which is a diabolical threat to a universe of absolutes Hayes (1998 p. 124). Hans Bertens quotes in *The Debate on Postmodernism* what Scott Lash (1990) sees as postmodernism. According to Lash, postmodernism is

a reorientation of Western culture. While modernist culture was primarily discursive, formalist, and rational, postmodern culture is figural in its privileging of images and of the spectacle and its sensibility is that of the id rather than that of the (modernist) ego Bertens& Fokkema (1997, p.5).

In the premodern era, art, morals, and science were appreciated and each had their own truths. When it comes to the postmodern era, there is a constructive structure with the

Great Nest of the premodern and the differentiation of modernity. This all-quadrant approach is the best practice to describe the cultural evolution of today's world. Postmodernism as the 'bright promise' embraces all diversities: voices, viewpoints, races, gender, colors without any differentiation and dissociation in its agenda. All the I's, WE's, and IT's are equally respected (Wilber, 2000). Unlike the modernists' essentialism which silences some voices to favor others, postmodernism deconstructs everything to equate. Derrida underlines that deconstruction is justice and his deconstruction (deconjustice) works for jurisprudence as well because it devotes efforts to the other to show the cruelty and deceptiveness that has been forgotten (Feldman, 2000). Postmodernism is a 'far reaching reordering and revaluation' of culture and civilization Hoffmann (2005, p14). Wilber (1996) thinks that postmodernism integrated and healed the Big Three: the self, culture, and nature which were differentiated by modernity which was a dignity (Wilber, 1996).

The center of postmodernism is America, but most theories are European Hoffmann (2005, p. 14). Postmodernism as a word is used by the sociologists and critics in the American continent widely and displays the current existing culture till the transformation of the nineteenth century in science, literature, and the arts (Lyotard, 1984). In 1950s, postmodernism was a negative term, it was not more or less than modern. Perry Anderson exemplifies some of the major scholars' opinions in his book *Origins of Postmodernity* as the following. C. Wright Mills (1959) in *The Sociological Imagination*, used the term as an age in which reason and freedom are separated. For Irwing Howe (1959) in *Mass Society and Post-Modern Fiction*, the term was a 'contemporary fiction' that tries to maintain the modernist tension in a post-war society in which the class distinctions are becoming vague. For Harry Levin (1960) in *What Was Modernism*, the term was 'the sign of a new complicity between artist and bourgeois' where culture and commerce intersect (Anderson, 1998). Although, it is criticized by some scholars, the post-modern becomes the focus and is now at a point of 'a fundamental expression of the present' (Bertens& Fokkema 1997). A 'period' for the literary theorist Ihab Hassan, is 'a diachronic and synchronic construct' and postmodernism is everywhere in Western societies such as in literature, visual arts, architecture, philosophy, communication, science and technology. The Earth is in the planetization, transhumanization process and it is divided into sects, tribes, factions, including 'art and science, high and low culture, male and female principles, parts and

wholes, involving the One and Many' Hassan (1982, p.264-271). Postmodernism covers numerous academic and cultural practices. Language, discourse, and socio-cultural location in the process of making thought and knowledge are highlighted (Edwards & Usher 1994). Postmodernism as an academic ideology, sprouted from the hopeless generation of post-1968 in the times of political failure and late capitalism. Today's culture is amnesiac and devastating of memory. The new era with its new social classes and highly informed character has changed the entire contemporary areas such as finance, media, technology, and new social and cultural ideas. In an anthropological and traditional sense, postmodernism reflects the instability of the changing culture. Postmodernism is considered as a 'superior wisdom' with its grasping of the undervalued aspects of modernism, celebrating pluralism and differences Green (2005, p.23). In his essay, *The Debate on Postmodernism*, Hans Bertens says that, over the last thirty years, the postmodern has become a larger circle, a vortex that swallows everything. In the intellectual agenda, it is highly accepted and in literary studies it became a dominant power in the American academic scene in the late 1970s. After 1970s, 'integrity and autonomy of the subject, the transparency of the language - and its concomitant capacity to represent reality - and the essential character of truth' were the mainstays of the American postmodern and French post-structural academic postmodern culture Bertens & Fokkema (1997, p.5). Faith in science and rationality are lost in postmodernism. It questions the efficiency of modernist scientificity and its objectivity. The unifying truths are not accepted anymore. The importance of modern production and enterprise changed into consumption and entertainment (Edwards & Usher 1994). Now, postmodernism is a life style of consumption and 'relentless aestheticization' of experience for Mike Featherstone (1991). In his *Postmodernism and Lifestyles (or: You Are What You Buy)* Nigel Watson points out that, postmodernism emphasizes the importance of appearance. The construction of personal success and lifestyle is maintained by consumption. People do not consider the quality or usefulness of the goods, they are only interested in the images. Postmodern consumers' dictum is: 'I shop therefore I am'. The ones who cannot shop are 'excluded from the basis of social identity' so consuming means something more than identity construction, it is the 'basis of day-to-day life Sims (2001, p.63).

In philosophy, postmodernism is identified as a self-styled mode of ‘weak thought’, prizing playfulness above logic, irony above absolutes, paradoxes above resolutions, doubt above demonstration. The ideas either appear liberating or irresponsible, and as dangerous nihilistic. In the arts – literature, photography, architecture, film, performance, painting – postmodernism was identified with a freewheeling use of pastiche, quotation, and collage, methods that some intellectuals saw as innovative and critical, having the potential to undo (or at least put into question) received ideas and established ideologies. Other intellectuals voiced their disapproval or despair. For them, the loose eclecticism of postmodern art, mixing up historical styles, ignoring boundaries between genres, scrambling distinctions between “high” art and low, between original and copy, was of a piece with the laxness of postmodern philosophizing, a sign of the cultural exhaustion of late capitalism, or of the decay produced by the proliferation of mass culture (Bertens & Fokkema 1997). In ‘Beyond Postmodernism’ (2003), Ihab Hassan questions the postmodern evolution itself and the evolution of the individuals in the postmodern period with its cultural codes. For Hassan, the world and its history have changed and so did postmodernism. It is now ‘ectoplasm’ as a result of the ‘hype, kitsch, media, and ideologies’ of the consumer society. Furthermore, what people experience in this period is ‘belatedness, reflexivity, and anxiety’, not the privileged Enlightenment period of Kant anymore. Postmodernism, as a ‘hermeneutic device’, still tries to define and interpret itself (Hassan 2003). Postmodernism comes after modernism and now is in ‘a phase of decadence and decline’. The postmodern period is not the same as when it was in the beginning. ‘The Declaration of independence from modernism no longer seems bold or interesting’ and there is a growing skepticism about the movement. The word postmodernism is ‘hyperbolic and conceptually fuzzy’. ‘The ‘post’ of postmodernism asserts an epochal change without providing any indication of what characterizes the new era’ Green (2005, p.1). Tim Woods describes the situation as ‘an ongoing process of problematisation or subversion of realist (mainstream) aesthetic ideology’ Woods (2009, p. 64).

Just like postmodernism, although the United States is a nation full of immigrants, there is still a balance, a unity among the citizens of this diversity, and this diversity is the uniqueness of the country (Schildkraut 2007). As postmodernism deletes the boundaries, the United States and its American Dream indiscriminately promises

everyone the equal rights. With its embedded values, people who live in America are able to attain success and fulfillment as long as they work hard. Both the American Dream and postmodernism have welcoming natures and give advantages to disadvantaged groups. However, as an attempt to avoid all the differences, postmodernism turns out to be a nihilistic deconstruction by welcoming all qualitative distinctions. Postmodernism avoids ‘foundationalism, essentialism, transcendentalism’... ‘grand narratives’... ‘realism’... ‘big pictures’... ‘canonical descriptions,’. Instead of a single perspective, there is the integral – aperspectivism. Wilber (2000, p.162). Like postmodernism, the American Dream has an ambiguous nature, it is both ‘egalitarian and differentiating’, and it is a ‘shapeless muddle’. As an ideology, the American Dream has a great performance (Hochschild, 1996).

It has distinctive boundaries but capacious content. It provides a unifying vision but allows infinite variations within that vision. It can be used to club the poor into accepting their lot, but it can also be used to make the rich squirm about their luxuries. It encourages people not even to see those aspects of society that make the dream impossible to fulfill for all Americans. It can turn “foreigners” into “Americans” whether they wish such a transformation or not Hochschild (1996, p.250).

Both the American Dream and postmodernism have positive promises but hold negativity and antagonism within their nature. Contemporary individuals are nurtured to frame their own dreams but deceived in their quest to maintain meaningful lives.

According to Charles Hayes postmodernism is a ‘culture shock’. It is a psychological state in which people either believe everything or nothing. Postmodernism is an ‘oxymoron’. For instance, a fundamentalist preacher shares media with political pundits, claiming a new form of life and the publication of the book *The End of Science* happens in the same year. Ideas grow exponentially but postmodernism praises ‘the end of imagination’. Still, the uncertainty of postmodernism brings light over the human predicament Hayes (1998, p.123). The postmodern idea ‘emerged from the constellation of a déclassé ruling order, a mediatized technology and a monochrome politics.’ It brings an ‘unbridled nouveau riche display, teleprompt statecraft, boll-weevil consensus’ together. Postmodern is not ‘delimitation, but intermixture celebrating the cross-over, the hybrid, the pot-pourri’ Anderson (1998, pp.92-93).

Postmodernism is ‘fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political’ Hutcheon (2004, p.4). In the same manner, America is also full of contradictions between capitalism and consumerism some of which come from England and the conflicts of the bourgeoisie and nobility. In the past, people needed money but they were also ashamed of this situation but now consumerism is celebrated. American corporations have a great impact on the society and on individuals’ money (Karmodi 2011).

To interpret the current events in all respects, the disciplines of today’s world are not efficient due to the complexities of realities. Modernist power is not dominant anymore. Power is seen everywhere and within everyone and is reproduced constantly. In postmodern times, cultural symbols and structures are dynamic, unstable, and constantly changing (Feldman, 2000). In his interview with Frank Cioffi, Ihab Hassan accepts that postmodernism has a ‘labile, shifting, and conflicting’ character Cioffi (1999, p. 359). The characteristics of postmodernism seem to be changing into a new form which is called post-postmodernism and its complexities seem to be ceasing (Konstantinou, 2013). For some critics, such as Christian Moraru, Josh Toth, Neil Brooks, Robin van den Akker and Timotheus Vermeulen ‘the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the new millennium, the 9/11 attacks, the so-called “War on Terror” and the wars in the Middle East, the financial crisis and the ensuing global revolutions,’ point to a time where postmodernism is dead. These events also show the failure of global capitalism within postmodernity and created disillusionment and anxiety toward future as well (Gibbons 2017). During this failure the irony culture that mocks and empties the cultural values of American people also affects their understanding of the American Dream and its accessibility because as Friedman (2019) says, ‘the American Dream works only when growth is broadly shared and structural impediments to advancement are scarce. Neither is true today’, and people should understand that like postmodernism, the “American Dream” is dead. Its underlying conditions – strong, consistent economic growth and a meritocracy structured to keep the rich from gaming the system – no longer hold true’ (Friedman 2019).

Postmodern writing was dominant in literature between 1960 and 1990, and this period was not an easy one due to the changes in technology and uncertainties of ideas

says Barry Lewis in his essay *Postmodernism and Literature (or: Word Salad DAYS, 1960-90)*. The death of Kennedy, terrorism, the fall of the Berlin Wall created suspicion and doubt, and the postmodern writers in these years did not believe that the cultural values of the past could be recovered, especially after the Holocaust. They stopped having conflicts and had pleasure in 'delirium' with the alienation effect of their fiction which in fact expresses their own alienation Sims (2001, p.123). Berry and Jeffrey explain the doubt about the usefulness of contemporary fiction;

many feel that recent military, economic, and environmental threats demand more direct forms of verbal intervention, for example, essays, polemics, autobiographies, journalistic accounts, critiques, and treatises. The war in Iraq, the September 11, 2001, attacks, the rise of globalization, resurgent neoconservatism, and ubiquitous religious conflicts all hold the potential to energize or enervate literary practice, transforming fiction's present from a natural juncture of past and future into a question: To be present, what must fiction now do? Berry & Di Leo (2008, pp.1-2).

American writers of the early 90s tried to 'elucidate the terms on which that fiction was unfolding' with their new kinds of fiction. Most of them attempted to define the 'nature of this shift' which is not 'a radical break' in fact, to show the 'development of or refocusing on certain neglected aspect of postmodernist literature' Savvas & Coffman (2019, pp.195-196). What is happening in these times according to Morawski,

is the gradual transformation of socio-economic mechanisms, which steers the majority of citizens to think in categories of exchange, market, advertisement, plenty of goods, etc., installing slowly the postmodern consciousness which would like to get rid of any worldview Morawski (2003, p.109).

According to John Storey in his *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* postmodern culture is 'suffering from 'historical amnesia', locked into the discontinuous flow of perpetual presents'. Postmodern culture 'has lost its sense of history (and its sense of a future different from the present)' Sims (2001, p.151). People are now living in a different period from the 80s and 90s culturally, politically and economically. There is a dramatic change in these issues. The new cultural shift is 'not exactly new, hardly "better" or "worse," but something that's certainly different: cultural and economic

post-postmodernism' Nealon (2012, p.65). After 2001, fiction detached itself from postmodern and found a way towards constructive possibility with its own literary history. Now, literary forms are the means 'to enact affectively powerful and authentic considerations of the present in relation to the reality of the past' Savvas & Coffman (2019, p.201).

Postmodernism is not relevant to America's current times, especially after the 9/11 attacks since the attacks changed the cultural life of the nation. The postmodern 'ironical detachment' and 'ethical relativism' do not resonate with the post-9/11 American realities. Postmodernism has a cultural dominance and in postmodern cultures, people could stay 'in a state of inaction and self-absorption'. However, its harmful effects are clear especially after the 9/11 events and now the focus is more on the objective realities and subjective worlds Ahn (2019, p.236-237). John Storey in his *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* thinks that, postmodernism is in relation with the development of popular culture in the latest century in the 'capitalist democracies of the West'. As it is considered 'as a new historical moment, a new sensibility or a new cultural style', popular culture is the place where these changes can be found Sims (2001, p.147). After the 9/11 attacks, 'reality became real again, meaning fathomable, truth extant' and it is a new world now with a 'fundamental cultural shift' that is seen 'only once, perhaps twice, every century or so' (Keller 2001). Postmodernism, 'despite its wordplay for the sake of wordplay; its skepticism toward narrative as a meaning providing structure, its making opaque the process of representation, nevertheless does not as a rule abjure literature's potential to intervene in the social world' (McLaughlin, 2004, p. 59). There is a perception that postmodernism is dead. The reason is, it detached itself from the social world. For this change, McLaughlin uses the term 'aesthetic sea change'. In this change, the desire is to reconnect language to the social sphere or 'reenergize literature's social mission' McLaughlin (2004, p.55). Society now is a communication web, not an organic one as Parson thinks or dualistic field of conflict as Marx thinks. The logic of the modernist culture,

had come to permeate the texture of capitalist society, weakening its moral fibre and undermining its work discipline with a cult of unrestrained subjectivity, at

the very moment that this culture had ceased to be a source of creative art
Anderson (1998, p. 37).

Hayes thinks that, the conflict between romanticist or traditionalist worldviews with their inner creativity and inspiration; and modernist and rejectionist views such as 'reason, enlightenment, objectivity, and logic' are like the terms left-brain and right-brain of the popular culture in reflecting the postmodern situation Hayes (1998, p.16). For Kenneth J. Gergen (1991), from the nineteenth century, people inherited the romanticist view with its soul, creativity, and moral aspects which were necessities for better relationships and life purposes. In the twentieth century, beliefs considering the self were in danger in the postmodern period. The personal depths of the self, and moral worth all disappeared; there was nothing to believe in. American is now the leftovers of a media that instructs about what to do, what to think, what to value, and even what to dream about (Hayes, 1998). The modern and postmodern individual was 'underestimated, unvoiced, aloof' and was an 'inactive spectator and one-way communicator and connector'. On the contrary, post-postmodern individuals experience a self-discovery with 'technology, innovation, correspondence and communication' Goudarzi (2018, p.201317). Timmer points out some problems of the postmodern conceptions regarding the self and community. The problem is to find a meaningful sense of the self. There is a friction between postmodern cultural conceptions and values and the feelings and needs that are not uttered in the postmodern discourse. That is why there is a need for alternative ways to represent the self such as 'a post-postmodern sensibility' because human beings presented in fiction do not suit postmodern experience Timmer (2010, p. 301). So, the self still tries to engage in social and cultural reconstruction even if it does not have a direct control over them but can disturb and change the ongoing process of construction. Postmodernism is self-reflexive and wants to be aware of social practices. All kinds of different assumptions can find a place in which to be criticized in postmodernism. Postmodernism decenters the self and postmodern self is constructed within the society by its structures and cultural symbols; it has intersections, voices, and identities. It is fragmented as the postmodern society (Feldman, 2000). Kenneth Gergen (2000), shares the same idea that in this postmodern period people are always in the construction and reconstruction stages (Gergen, 2000). As long as people get far from

their inner self, they lose their belief in the American Dream during their competing and consuming race.

For Green, because of its style, with parataxis, ironies, incompleteness, aleatory, playful, and arbitrary rules, indeterminacy with chaos, and use of popular elements, postmodernism is considered as difficult. Irony, self-reflexivity, intertextuality, pastiche are the aspects of its style which are also used in films and TV programs (Green, 2005). The common points of the postmodern works of Barth, Pynchon, Barthelme, and more others are the structure of the works that are parodies with playfulness. The postmodern writers speak to the readers intimately. The works are 'self-referential' with fragmented structures. In postmodern fiction, the 'subjective sense of rightness' of the writers is presented Wagner (2013, pp: 101-102). In terms of textual structures, ungrammaticality, semantic incompatibility, unusual typographical order, textual fragmentation, discontinuity or redundancy are all aspects of the postmodern writings (Bertens & Fokkema 1997). Barry Lewis states in his essay *Postmodernism and Literature (or: Word Salad DAYS, 1960-90)* some of the features of postmodern fiction as:

temporal disorder; the erosion of the sense of time; a pervasive and pointless use of pastiche; a foregrounding of words as fragmenting material signs; the loose association of ideas; paranoia; and vicious circles, or a loss of distinction between logically separate levels of discourse Sims (2001, p.123).

'Double coded language or, more popularly, irony; self-referentiality; experiments in form and style', 'multiple, dialogic narratives' are the features of US Postmodern fiction in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s that challenges readers about how fiction works, how the world is known, and how someone stands in the world. Postmodern fiction turns the world into fiction to display the 'mendacity' of the culture McLaughlin (2013, p.285). The works of recent United States fiction shows that there is 'no pattern, no one set of conventions, no one place, no one ideal or idealized protagonist' Wagner (2013, p.357). In postmodern fiction, through deconstruction, the pluralism of perspective, narrative, and reflections is achieved but the values of coherence, continuity, and wholeness and reconstruction are ignored and there is a search for new forms. Postmodernism does not try to understand the unity of the fragments and the chaos of the period, it intends to evaluate or play with the

‘non- interpretability’ of the world. Postmodern fiction finds previously accepted literary standards as conventional and artificial and does not have any relation with them. It is self- reflexive and has new forms such as ‘grotesque, irony, parody, comedy, and satire’ which reveal the imperfections, insecurities, and skepticism of the social period by forming confusions such as the following postmodern paradigms: ‘disappearance versus appearance; absence versus presence, or presence in absence; possibility versus actuality; isolated segmentation versus logical continuation; force versus form’ Hoffmann (2005, pp.28-29).

Ihab Hassan has his own list of postmodern features as following: Indeterminacies such as ‘ambiguities, ruptures, displacements’ that affect ‘knowledge and society’. Fragmentation that a postmodernist who disgraces ‘totalization’ trusts is the second one. Decanonizing that includes the derision and the revision of the authority and its power, decanonizing the culture, demystifying knowledge is the third and self-less-ness or depth-less-ness through which postmodernism ‘vacates’ the self and stimulates ‘self-effacement’ is the fourth one. The unrepresentable and unrepresentable is the other aspect of postmodernism because its literature explores its own limits. To clarify demystification, irony as the sixth one is used along with perspectivism and reflexiveness. It is used to express the recreations of the mind which looks for the truth. The next one is the hybridization in which ‘image and replica, continuity or discontinuity, high and low culture, Now and Not Now, Same and Other’ come together not to ‘imitate but to expand the past in the present’. The next one is the carnivalization which embraces all the features above. Performance, participation, and constructionism are the other ones that a postmodern text requires to be written, revised, answered, and acted out. The last one is the immanence that refers to the enlarging potential of mind that makes assumptions with symbols because of media and technology (Hassan 1986). In the novels that Timmer studies, there are three common problems, the lack of decision making tools, the lack of feeling as postmodernism disconnected the self from feelings, and solipsism of the fictional selves. They are experiencing an imprisonment in their minds but do not trust ‘private’ mind either because it is not stable enough to direct them and they are isolated from the world and from the others Timmer (2010, p. 305).

The term postmodernism has always had circumstantial consequences. Fiedler in *The New Mutants* (1965), talks about a new sensibility of the young Americans who he

calls as cultural mutants that ‘drop-outs from history’ and whose ‘nonchalance, disconnexion, hallucinogens, civil rights’ were able to find themselves expression in postmodern literature (Anderson, 1998). Postmodern fiction with its young white male writers is coming from the ‘rebellious youth culture’ of the 60s and 70s Wallace (1997, p.65). A postmodern author does not mind the text status, its connectors or linguistic signs. The text may have multiple beginnings and endings. For Lyotard, in ‘Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?’:

A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and the cannot be judged according to a determining Judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done (Lyotard 1982).

Postmodern fiction has a labyrinthine plot. Other unrelated texts or fragments can find themselves places in the sequence. Postmodernists justify their world views by words and imagination. Readers are emphasized, addressed, instructed, and questioned by the texts. Readers learn to understand the codes of the texts. The way the story is told is the concern of the postmodernists not the mere story. In this nonselectiveness approach of postmodernism, what is relevant or irrelevant is one of the contradictions and impossibilities of the movement itself. With perception, observation, reading, listening, and talking, postmodernism assimilates, absorbs, and possesses the world without regarding how to structure it (Fokkema, 1984). In the new linguistic turn, language ‘creates, distorts, discloses, hides, allows, oppresses, and enriches’ many worlds. That’s why; there is a need to analyze this tool as a new power (Wilber, 2000). In the first issue of *Journal of Post-modern Literature and Culture* with the subtitle *boundary 2* which was the turning point in 1972, David Antin in his *Modernism and Postmodernism* considers the American canon as a ‘surreptitiously provincial and regressive tradition whose metrical moral propensities had nothing to do with genuine international modernism’ (Anderson, 1998). In his New York Times essay 2005, Chris Cleave says,

It is as if the expectations of books have risen after September 11. The world today is to the pre-September 11 world what falling glass shards are to a window, and the job of a novelist is to describe the new view through those glittering fragments. Yet somehow we expect writers, while they be at it, to show us how to glue the window back together: to give us meaning, hope, and even happy endings. It is extremely demanding and incredibly unfair (Cleave 2005).

After 9/11, American writers used the themes in response to the September 11 event and tried to understand or make sense of 'the other'. Writing about the self has always been a part of American writing but post-9/11 writings are not the same as the previous ones but in these times the writings are less ebullient Halliwell & Morley (2008 pp. 247-248). Without doubt, the 9/11 terrorist attack had a deep impact on Americans' psychological and social lives. They felt the sense of violation and loss. The trauma was very visual in the eyes, minds and the consciousness of Americans Wagner (2013, p.286). The American writer Don DeLillo mentions in *In the Ruins of the Future*, in *Harpers* in 2001 that the September 11 attacks represent a seizure of the global narrative in which writers get their narrative power back.

The event itself has no purchase on the mercies of analogy or simile. We have to take the shock and horror as it is. But living language is not diminished. The writer wants to understand what this day has done to us... But language is inseparable from the world that provokes it. The writer begins in the towers, trying to imagine the moment, desperately. Before politics, before history and religion, there is the primal terror. People falling from the towers hand in hand. This is part of the counter narrative, hands and spirits joining, human beauty in the crush of meshed steel. In its desertion of every basis for comparison, the event asserts its singularity. There is something empty in the sky. The writer tries to give memory, tenderness and meaning to all that howling space Halliwell & Morley (2008 p. 250).

There are two main reasons why writing becomes challenging for the writers of this period. Firstly, the capital and culture relationships affect the literary area, production, consumption, evolution, and comprehension way of the works. Canonizing, reading publics, the sense of tradition, and literary value are changed. In the publishing world,

there is greater control of the editorials over the content. Marketing on media which cannot be affordable for small publishers chooses profitable books not ones that are different or extraordinary. The publishing industry is controlled by the big companies' choices of the books that will become the bestsellers. The new consumer and information economies put pressure on the cultural authority and evaluation criteria which affect the future of literature and the emerging illiterate class. Now the book is the marginalized object of culture. Literacy and fiction readership are in decline. The universities relinquish teaching the classics, and academic, and general literary culture dissociated. These are the dangers to literature, the individual, and democracy (Green, 2005).

Secondly, being an influential device of this new culture, TV itself is a self-serving commercial enterprise and it is difficult to for a fiction writer to make people critical about the televisual culture by using the TV, to make them rebel against it, or make readers aware of the fact that TV is 'cynical, narcissistic, essentially empty' Wallace (1997, p.69). Wallace exemplifies Don DeLillo's character's significant question from the novel *White Noise* (1985) about photographing the barns.

What was the barn like before it was photographed?" he said. "What did it look like, how was it different from other barns, how was it similar to other barns? We can't answer these questions because we've read the signs, seen the people snapping the picture. We can't get outside the aura. We're part of the aura. We're here, we're now DeLillo (2016a, p.10).

When communication boundaries are removed, TV uses absurdism and irony as the answer to the hypocritical U.S.A. and the ridiculous world. U.S. irony means 'I don't really mean what I'm saying.' Irony today says 'How totally banal of you to ask what I really mean.' Nobody understands the meaning of irony as a cultural norm Wallace (1997, pp. 67-68). Americans could access the information via technological devices and this resulted in more awareness as well as anxiety. Airplanes, cars, and t-communication devices lessened the 'isolationist spirit of the time' (Lamb 2011). However, the technoculture undermines the capacity of the 'citizen-subject' with its 'superficiality, passivity, and the overload of information' and as it used to be in the previous periods, writing can be 'a form of resistance' Green (2005, p.8-9) but technology changes the way people consume entertainment and literature. Don

DeLillo's character Bill Gray in *Mao II* comments on this issue in the following statement:

The novel used to feed our search for meaning... It was the great secular transcendence. The Latin mass of language, character, occasional new truth. But our desperation has led us toward something larger and darker. So we turn to the news, which provides an unremitting mood of catastrophe. This is where we find emotional experience not available elsewhere. We don't need the novel DeLillo (2016b, p.81).

When people are more concerned with technology, they become more distant from the other art forms (McNamara 1962). In America, thoughts become daily life practices, like a director says 'action' in filming (Baudrillard, 1989). In this manner, visual memes fetch information from the brain quicker than a text does Zakem and Hammerberg (2018, p.12). Especially, advertisements use memes frequently. Shifman says that advertising is experiencing 'a stage of hypersignification' in which the code becomes a sign and 'since the process of imitation relates to a coded template-and not only to semantic meanings- the code is always there' Shifman (2014, p. 344-345). Memes contain cultural references and they use 'humor, irony, and sarcasm to evoke emotions. Visual memes 'transcend individual cultures and languages, and can reach broad communities'. Memes are a means of communication, not just online images, and they are 'intentional and purposeful' Zakem and Hammerberg (2018, p.10). Memes are the productions of digital reproduction. People now are engaging with images which did not exist in the past. Individuals are given opportunities to alter the colors, sizes, and backgrounds of the images that are targeted at several viewers (Langlois 2014). Memes are simple and easy to create and they are performative for everyone because people can express themselves without any pressure and become subjects again in the provided digital sphere. People spend a lot of time online and it is inevitable for them not to encounter memes which are in circulation. Through personal and social interactions, people create their own slogans, jokes, concepts, and pictures that are the small units of cultural information presented as images. This aspect of memes reminds one of the post-postmodern interaction of the individuals. They can find a place in society by creating their own meme or by just sharing one already made to express their worldviews.

The role of literature seems to be weakened and it is not effective anymore. People prefer easy, fast, and short sorts of information as they live hectic lives. This kind of information is enough and entertaining for them as well as time-saving. The advertising industry has a powerful effect on people's thoughts and preferences. Being precise and to the point, they create emotional bonds with the viewers in seconds. Also, the internet and its social sites with their short messages have the same kind of power on individuals' perceptions. Among the several opportunities, people choose what to watch and be entertained with and what to believe in. Media, advertisements, and the internet provide freedom to the individual but on the other hand, they put barriers between literature and the individuals. People become alienated from the reading process and almost forget the sense of pleasure one can get from reading that is freely chosen.

Wallace thinks that technology makes the advertising industry more confident because people are dependent on the technology through which they reach the advertisements. Advertising is even more interesting than the TV shows and the programs are more like commercials. People do not need power because now there is the Internet which does things for them easily and instantaneously. Watching TV and eating candies are not a part of a grown-ups' world for Wallace. But they both create an illusionary fantasy, a person can see everything but on the other side of the screen there is no one who can see that person. That's why they do not have to make any effort but get entertainment and pleasure. On the contrary, if reality is on the stage, people need to do something to please others and there comes the people-based anxiety which on the other hand is healthier and nutrimental (Lipsky, 2010).

The nineteenth century was a period in which a novel was a powerful way to reveal the desperate working class. For instance, British statesman Benjamin Disraeli wrote the book *Sybil* in 1845 to warn about the disintegration of England. On the contrary, being today's powerful tool, TV does not reflect the reality as books did. Many Americans are having difficulties. They are not represented in the popular culture (Huffington, 2010). Postmodernism in literature is a reaction against the earlier 20th century modernist canonization and a break with the grand narratives of modernity (Green, 2005). Green asks two significant questions.

Can the novel retain its claim to authority if the cultural landscape is in fact dominated by electronic mass culture? What resources does fiction have available – resources that include stylistic practices, the ingenuity and patience of readers, sustaining ideas of literary value - in this emerging cultural landscape? Green (2005, p. 43).

The answer to these questions is given by Philip Roth in *Late Postmodernism: American Fiction at the Millennium* by Green (2005), a novel is a ‘weapon against the inert consciousness and collective nostrum of an age dominated by electronic mass media’. Roth tells us the reason for the end of the literary era as follows;

The evidence is the culture, the evidence is the society, the progression from the movie screen to the television screen to the computer. There’s only so much time, so much room, and there are only so many habits of mind that can determine how people use the free time they have. Literature takes a habit of mind that has disappeared. It requires silence, some form of isolation, and sustained concentration in the presence of an enigmatic thing Green (2005, p. 63).

There is a distinction for Roth between the literate and post literate generations. In the first half of the twentieth century, investigating consciousness was important but now it is not for the post literate new generation whose consciousness is reshaped by technology and this is the transformation of American culture. ‘American branch of the species is being retooled’ Green (2005, p.63). Postmodernism locates ‘an absolute break in all human experience between the disappeared past and the stranded present’ but it has lost the ‘plausibility’ Kirby (2009, p. 2). Most Americans do not realize how language is important to construct their roles in culture. In this respect, post-postmodernism seeks not to reify the cynicism, the disconnect, the atomized privacy of our society nor to escape or mask it (as much art, serious and pop, does), but, by engaging the language-based nature of its operations, to make us newly aware of the reality that has been made for us and to remind us - because we live in a culture where we’re encouraged to forget- that other realities are possible’ (McLaughlin, 2004, p. 67). Against the detachment of postmodernism, realism emerges one more time and emotions find a place in literature and writers work on people’s relations and human connections and represent people with their fictional characters in real-world problems

(Postmodernism is dead. What comes next?). In this new linguistic turn, there is participation

in a general movement away from the postmodern metaphors of socially constructed mediation (the literary problem par excellence, filling gaps and working through undecidabilities), to examining more direct modes of biopolitical and economic manipulation. From a focus on understanding something to a concern with manipulating it—from (postmodern) meaning to (post-postmodern) usage Nealon (2012, p.148).

Wolfe's call for a turn to social realism is the end of American literary postmodernism and beginning of post-postmodernism. He complains that contemporary American writers could not work on social issues since the beginning of postmodernism because they think that a realistic novel is no longer possible (Wolfe 1989). Postmodern writers also realize that their tools are becoming 'clichéd' and there is an exhaustion of ideas and imagination in literature, as already argued by Barth as early as 1982 in 'The Literature of Exhaustion' and 'The Literature of Replenishment' (Woods, 2009). Literature is out of date both because of its obsolete sentences and language and visual images and because it cannot create anything new Nealon (2012, p.155). During the nineteenth century, novels were means of social instruction. Now, there is a problem with the novel as a means of 'cultural engagement.' It matters less to the Americans. The reason of this decline of the social novel is technology. It is also difficult for the writers because they cannot find 'solid cultural referents' and the average man or woman do not interact with each other to avoid conflicts. Now, 'rudeness, irresponsibility, duplicity, and stupidity are hallmarks of real human interaction'. Fiction's response to poor manners is to explain them as comical. So readers have fun and feel less alone. People are living in a binary culture. They are either healthy or sick, they either function or don't. Consumerism and spending money cannot solve this problem Franzen (2007, p.69). When postmodernism was nearly ended, the social novel became visible again by the 1990s and post-postmodernism emerged with its engagement with the social world (Dubey, 2011). Postmodernism dedifferentiated the differentiation of modernity. It combines the political, economic, social realms into a single cultural realm (Riley 2002). Iain Hamilton Grant in his *Postmodernism and Science and Technology*, says that although postmodernism appears to be fragmented,

postmodern societies have never networked as they do now because ‘philosophy, science, nature, culture, technology, politics, the real, and the artificial’ joined in a way that makes it impossible for them to be separated Sims (2001, p.77). Nevertheless, in the twenty-first century, postmodernism needs reconsideration for four reasons which were already discussed in the previous chapter. The first one is a swing to the right wing with a ‘pervasive political and cultural conservatism’, the next one is a tired culture due to the usefulness of irony used to engage the culture. The third reason is the 9/11 attacks and the fourth reason is the globalization in which the international and intercultural relations are characterized by economics McLaughlin (2013, p.285). Clare thinks that the biopolitics of post-postmodern fiction creates ‘new literary forms, new potential affects and affective relationships, and new subjectivities’ by sharing and forming affect between readers and writers (Clare 2019). Post-postmodernism has a vocabulary to talk about the “new economies” (post-Fordism, globalization, the centrality of market economics, the new surveillance techniques of the war on terrorism, etc.)’ and the relation of these to cultural production at present Nealon (2012, p.15). It does not mean that postmodernism will not be a part of the culture anymore (Kirby, 2009). However, post-postmodernism points to an ‘intensification’ and ‘historical mutation’ within postmodernism Nealon (2012, p.ix). Post-postmodern texts have ‘sincerity and post-ironic belief’ that are possible and they also balance the power of ‘irony and skepticism’ (Doyle 2018). Post-postmodernism is,

intensifying certain strains within postmodernism in order to render it not so much a “new” postmodernism, but a kind of intense, hyper-postmodernism of positive usage—a power of the false not derived from the powers of the true, but one that remains the ground of any truth-effects Nealon (2012, p.168).

Modern art had a break from tradition starting from the 19th century. Then, in the 20th century post-modernism took part and it started to be exhausted because there was nothing left, everything had already been created. Now there is a search for a new ground.

Literature is the ‘shared spiritual essence of humanity’ Green (2005, p.35). More theorists of narratology are also interested in human beings and their experiences. Ihab Hassan thinks that there is no culture without a sense of the spiritual which is difficult to define. It is more related to ‘noetic experiences like intuition, mystical

revelation, and aesthetic appreciation, sentiment of the sublime, inspiration, and intimation of immortality'. So Hassan has moved in a spiritual direction because he finds human beings to be as 'multifaceted creatures' who cannot be degraded into material or political terms, to 'Spirit or Beauty, Truth or Language.' He focuses his interest on the possibilities of a spirituality that approaches the postmodern turn in all phases Cioffi (1999, p.368). Ihab Hassan thinks that human beings are 'multifaceted creatures' and he is interested in them Cioffi (1999, p.368). For Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, (1996) it is 're-humanize subjectivity', George Butte (2004) calls it 'phenomenological criticism' which deals with the human subjectivity, Uri Margolin (2003) thinks that mental functioning is vital to being human and it enhances the experientiality and the meaning of being human. For Lois Tyson (1994) the first and major concern of literary works should be human experience. Similarly, David Foster Wallace (McCaffery 1993), says that fiction, which does not explore the meaning of human, is not good art. As all these outstanding literary figures focus on the subjectivity and self, a post-postmodern idea of the self fits their desire to welcome the self again to the literary field. The post-postmodern novels are trying to combine the two ideas of the self; one of which is the self as 'a self-sufficient monad' and the other is the self as 'nothing but a node in a differential desiring network' Timmer (2010, p.334). In post-postmodernism, people who have the same pain come closer and share their inner thoughts and feelings. They do not stay silent or alienated as they do in modernism and postmodernism. The fragmented individuals start to share and express their thoughts as they gain a place in the social network sites like Facebook. People with shared interests and pains come together at these platforms and become active. Due to postmodern media and TV, people become passive and alienated Goudarzi (2018, p.20310-20311). Subjects had no interest in 'traditional concerns of modern literature, interiority, ethical choice, social vision' Green (2005, p.2). Postmodern fiction could not reflect the qualities of the fiction of the past such as 'psychological insight and moral observation' Green (2005, p.17). For the self who is experiencing existential crisis, the post-postmodern novel is searching for new narrative strategies. Timmer (2010) has a list of post-postmodern novel aspects in his book 'Do you feel it too?: The post-postmodern syndrome in American fiction at the turn of the millennium.' According to his list, "sameness" is highlighted in the post-postmodern novel and inclusiveness is significant in post-postmodernism. Characters are looking

for 'decision-makers, borders, limits, rules'. The post-postmodern self cannot identify the feelings, 'it hurts, I can't feel anything', the self says. The techniques in the postmodern novel are the same in the post-postmodern novel but with different functions. They are realistic devices. In the post-postmodern novel, irony is not so important. It is not a 'social convention' or 'cultural norm' anymore. It still creates empathy among characters, narrator, and the readers. There is 'a turn to the human' in the post-postmodern novel. It focuses on empathy, human interaction, and their existentialistic concerns Timmer (2010, p.359-360). The concepts postmodernism, postmodern melancholia, posthumanism, and post-postmodernism emphasize and improve each other (Cofer 2018). The post-postmodern call,

is not simply to abandon slowness, the work of the negative, or even nostalgia as a mode of literature's engagement with the globalized world; but it is rather a call to reinvigorate those more "positive" powers of the false and modes of engagement with that world, and with literature's myriad positive critical connections to it, outside the purely negative suture of undecidability Nealon (2012, p.169).

Since the late 20th century, both postmodernism and post-post modernism have been influential in culture and literature and they have some contradictions. In postmodernism, fragmentation, in post-postmodernism a new way of humanism take place Goudarzi (2018, p.20310). Post-postmodern authors renew 'historical awareness' for the sake of 'the recovery of the real', 'dissatisfaction with the ironic', and 'postmodern rejection of the possibility of the authentic'. Their engagement with the deep truth past allows people to understand today's historical situation Savvas & Coffman (2019, pp.202-203). The late postmodern fiction embraces the cultural and social changes together with the anxieties and hopes (Green, 2005).

In the abstract social order of capitalism, technology and politics have significant impacts both on literature and the perception of individuals. Social and cultural references of America lost their values because of postmodern politics. But now, American post-postmodernist literature focuses on the realities of the world by paying attention to human connections and it values their emotions and thoughts. It weakens the irony culture of the postmodernism. To free themselves from the persuasive strategies of TV and alienating feelings of postmodernism, identity construction is

necessary. The emphasis on personal emotions and surroundings can provide meaning for society. The new movement post-postmodernism marks a sincere direction that shows optimism is possible again. The American Dream wants citizens to hope for a better life but post-postmodernism offers even a more hopeful vision to a community within a system of global capitalism in which individuals are having financial, social, and personal problems. Literature of the contemporary era is still valuable. The American Dream promises but never shows a way. If someone wants betterment in life, that person has to work really hard and cover the demands. Literature also promises but its promises are to escape from daily issues without any demand. America, its people and its literature are all in a search for new things and new ways that will work both for the current situation and for the future. America is trying not to lose its economic and political power at home and in the world. People are experiencing an existential crisis and want to adapt to the fast changes of the world and so they can survive. And literature is experimenting with new styles to re-establish the human spirituality and imagination with morality and sincerity to overcome the darkness created by the irony of postmodernism and the effects of technology. As postmodernism finds a path forward from modernism, post-postmodernism does the same thing with optimism and by valuing the truth and meaning that had been lost, forgotten or simply become illusory over the years. This is, of course, not possible without involving the illuminative artists and writers. Doyle says:

Serious contemporary writers must crack the shell of the populist egg to dispel the fairytale, but also examine the yolk to illuminate its mechanics and origins, in the hope of better understanding why such a fairy-tale is so appealing to so many in the first place Doyle (2018, p.9).

Bearing in mind the three late ideologies, Modernism, Postmodernism, and Post-postmodernism, the world, society, and literary writing have witnessed radical changes in all aspects but writers are gifted people who have the ability to define the current social situation of their age, they have great responsibility to put everything in the picture, and enlighten their readers. For Green, writers have responsibilities in this complex period.

Late postmodernism, for all the dark prognostications that accompany it, shows many signs — obscure, puzzling, and contradictory signs — of a transformation

now underway. And if writers of fiction can be fully and imaginatively responsive to such changes, it may turn out that the novel has something to say to us after all Green (2005, p.216).

The 'return to the real' and focus on characters and their emotions are the distinguishing aspects of post-postmodern American literature from its postmodern predecessor. The literature of David Foster Wallace and other contemporary authors 'values human connection, empathy, emotion, belief, and other directedness as correctives for the perceived narcissism, cynicism, solipsism, media saturation, and debilitating forms of cultural irony of the postmodern world' Clare (2019, p.1). Although there is disagreement among the critics regarding the nature and degree of difference between postmodernism and post-postmodernism, as David Foster Wallace thinks,

Contemporary American fiction has, since roughly 1989, increasingly valorized such seemingly naïve literary qualities as a return to mimetic verisimilitude, a display of historical awareness, and a preoccupation with the physical nature of the textual artifact as keys to the revitalisation of a constructive textual authenticity, one that reinvigorates the exchange between reader and literary text Savvas & Coffman (2019, p.196).

Within this cultural realm of postmodern consumer society which is mainly affected by media and TV, Wallace's novels are the representatives of the evolution of both the American Dream and the postmodern self. Because of the speed of technological progress, a man needs another identity and so does the novel. A post-postmodernist man uncovers himself. He is not held back by past restrictions. The repressed lost identities of modernism and postmodernism try to find their original identity in post-postmodernism. With his fragmented plotting style, ironies, derisions, reflections of technology and TV, cultural symbols, and with unrepresentables, Wallace, as Hassan (1986) says, extends the past in today's political and cultural sphere. Wallace shows that it is possible and not difficult for a writer to make people who belong to TV culture believe that they can still be represented in literature.

And literature can be a lot of things again in a future that seems sure to be festooned with spam messages, texts, and tweets so enigmatic as to make the

most difficult postmodern novels or avant-garde poeries seem recognizable and usable in new ways Nealon (2012, p.170).

As it used to be in the nineteenth century, a novel still has a role as a representative of a nation, a culture, and its people. In a literary field which is dominated by consumer mass culture and authoritative editorial control, Wallace with his marginalized plots and difficult books has found his own place in the American canon as stated in the introduction. His novels are evidence that literature presents the human essence and, as Green suggests (2005), novels are weapons against the TV culture. During the period in which citizenship is weakened, literature has an important role, 'fiction illuminates other lives' and 'makes possible cross-cultural recognition', and 'the novel symbolizes the contention of voices in an active public sphere, and shapes a citizen-subject who is responsive to cultural and political discussion' Green (2005, p.8). As expected from authors after the September 9/11 period (Cleave, 2005), and as Fish has suggested, people 'invoke the particular lived values that unite' them (Fish 2001). Wallace shows the realities of the ongoing system and the perception of self through fragments and also demonstrates that it is possible to reunite everything. He gives people hope and power to follow their national dream. Because postmodernism was different from previous trends, its effects were different on people living during this period. The effects changed the nature and perception of today's American Dream because of its different view. The negative effects of the American Dream on the individual becomes more evident with the texture of postmodernism. Returning to the early times of the American Dream, postmodernism is in fact not denied, because it generated awareness. They try to solve the problems that have arisen with post-postmodernism which is a lighter, respectful, and individual-oriented style.

2.2. David Foster Wallace: A National Author

Fiction is something with a 'deep function' and it is as if one is 'being wrapped in a chamois blanket and nested against a big, generous tit' Lipsky (2010, p.128) and 'if the book's about anything, it's about the question of why am I watching so much shit?

It's not about the shit; it's about me. Why am I doing it? And what is so American about what I'm doing?' says David Foster Wallace about his fiction *Lipsky* (2010, p. 68). As being a national literary figure, David Foster Wallace refers to America's unique national spirit in his writings and captures the attention of the critics and scholars with his distinctive style and perspective. David Foster Wallace (1962-2008) is considered as one of the leading figures of the postmodern hip ironic generation of writers. His interests in writing turned out to be detailed and complex works, such as the details of pains, obsessions, traumas, and addictions. He admits that he is writing disturbing stories unconsciously. In his books, he 'impales modern psychotherapy'. He lets his characters reveal the serious things about themselves *Burn* (2012, p. 9). Wallace is considered as 'the gifted offspring of "Pop Pynchon"' (LeClair 1996), a student of literary post-modernists like John Barth and Robert Coover (McInerney 1996).

David Foster Wallace lived and died in the internet age (Kelly 2010). He sets the scene of a future of the USA and its postmodern cultural conditions with the physical and the natural characteristics of America (Hering 2011). In his essay *E unibus pluram: Television and US fiction* (1990), Wallace says that human conditions are 'writers' food' Wallace (1997, p.21). He is more interested in emotional quality and human experiences, especially American, not the 'formulaic or traditional' fiction (A Brand New Interview with David Foster Wallace 2018). Wallace notices that there was something wrong with the ironic and skeptical atmosphere of postmodernism and this affects society negatively. As a contemporary writer, he questions the reasons and wants to overcome the uneasy feeling of the nihilist and the empty darkness that the period brings with it and places on the individual. Wallace realizes that literature has to move away from this darkness, which is full of irony and postmodern artifice, to reconnect with the reality, morality, and essentialism of the past with an honesty and sincerity that bring to mind transcendentalist ideas.

America, with its strong economy, is a great country to live in, but when he was younger, Wallace realized that most people felt sad, disconnected, or alienated due to foreign policy (A Brand New Interview with David Foster Wallace 2018). So, Wallace was in search to alter the negative effects of postmodern irony to escape from 'solipsism, existentialism and nihilism'. Wallace, as the new Emersonian man, uses

transcendentalist honesty. 'Transcendentalism is the philosophical skeleton of the new era in US narrative', and 'it is a way of returning to the roots of the American identity' (Bolaño 2017). Wallace wants a version of postmodern fiction to address reality with hyperreality, to break the limitations between the author and the viewers of art, and to make the readers, the consumers move. For him, there should be a bond between life and literature that's why he gives importance to 'historical avant-garde and postmodernism' Konstantinou & Cohen (2012, p.105). Wallace likes experimental fiction, classic realism and a kind of classical avant garde experimentalism 'because that was the one and only way that the author could convey the dimensions of experience that was the story's world'. Through his interviews, he propagates the idea that fictional voices reduce everything to a greater plausibility and finds other styles of fiction more 'mannered'. To hear somebody speaking lets readers feel the characters and make them guess the questions that develop 'an idea of the character and ideology of the interrogator, of the questioner' (A Brand New Interview with David Foster Wallace 2018). According to what Octavio Paz stated in *The dismemberment of Orpheus: toward a postmodern literature*, the author is 'a moment of convergence of different voices which flow into a text' (Hassan, 1982). In this respect, Wallace foreshadows some fundamental aspects of postmodernity. He introduces several ordinary people to the readers and gives evidence concerning their daily lives and the culture they live in. His novels emphasize the American reality. In general, he writes to reveal the mental life of America with something difficult but funny. Aside from fiction, in "Laughing with Kafka" (2011), Wallace finds commonalities among the short stories in which the necessary information is not given but is recaptured by readers. This 'exformation' creates instant feelings, pressure, or release the ones which are already deep inside the reader (Wallace 2011b). His books involve a series of short stories and individual perspectives to clarify the contemporary American mind. The attention of the reader suddenly falls back into focus on some other story with other personas. However, this is not destructive, it makes the reader focus on the real issue with a different point of view, and this strengthens the connection between the reader and the plot.

For Wallace, 'irony and ridicule are entertaining and effective, and that at the same time they are agents of a great despair and statis in U.S culture, and for aspiring fiction writers they pose especially terrible problems' Wallace (1997, p. 49). Wallace thinks

that the aloofness of postmodernism, placing irony between individuals and the world should be given up. Seriousness, sincerity, and thinking will be helpful to people to understand the world around them and this will be possible with post-postmodernism (Ahn, 2019). Freedom of self and subjectivity are the two important values in post-postmodernism which lead to authenticity, and authenticity has the following domains: decision making, resistance, acting naturally as one's self desires, liberty and fun. These are useful for the individuals that assist them during their choices and lives. In his writings, Wallace represents 'postmodern parochialism', identified with an irony and cynicism which he wants to get rid of and hopes for 'a post-postmodern aesthetic' Konstantinou (2013, p.68). Wallace cannot ignore the postmodern reality because postmodernism is the cultural logic of late capitalism and it is the 'oppressive reality' Konstantinou & Cohen (2012, p.88). In the postmodern period, irony is a kind of reality, and it is required to question the ongoing system. It releases the pressure on society but should be challenged by sincerity. Wallace uses the irony of postmodern literature against itself to have a 'post-postmodern' form of American fiction and he says, 'the next real literary "rebels" in this country might well emerge as some weird bunch of *anti*-rebels, born oglers who dare somehow to back away from ironic watching' Wallace (1997, p.81).

In the postmodern period, individuals are somehow repressed, society has a new and demanding order, and these cause various defects in their mental and physical beings. This generation, Wallace says in his interview with Stacey Schmeidel in 1999, is different from the previous ones because they are in an experiment in which they are exposed to media and marketing from their earlier ages (Wallace, 2012). In the book *Conversations with David Foster Wallace*, Wallace gives his opinions about the postmodernist condition of the period with an interesting analogy. For him the last years of the postmodern era are like throwing a party when your parents are away. In the beginning, the party is great without the parental authority but later the house becomes messy, and the owner wishes the parents were back and the revel is over. He says,

The postmodern founders' patricidal work was great, but patricide produces orphans, and no amount of revelry can make up for the fact that writers my age have been literary orphans throughout our formative years Burn (2012, p. 52).

He asks whether there is a need for authority and limits or not. However, *those* parents, the postmodern patricide will not ever come back. The new parents are his generation of writers Burn (2012, p. 52). Wallace's work is the 'endgame' of postmodernism. If contemporary culture presents a bewildering range of passive entertainments that foster a shallowness of self, then Wallace responds by making his novel 'resist passive consumption... by deliberately making demands on the reader with its vast size, encyclopedic knowledge, and elusive plot' Burn (2003, pp. 9-18). In the introduction part of the book *Fate, Time, and Language* James Ryerson quotes Mark Costello who considers Wallace as 'a social novelist, a novelist of noticed details, on a near-encyclopedic scale. Dave tackles the issue by massively overfilling his scenes and sentences to comic bursting' Cahn, & Eckert (2011, p.20). There are moments when reading Wallace is 'unbearable and 'emotionally and intellectually exhausting' because of his 'missing context, rhetorical complications, awful people, grotesque or absurd subject matter, childish scatological and annoyingly obscure language' Smith (2009, p.252-253). It is obvious that David Foster Wallace was uninterested in the consumption craze in literature since his prose is highly difficult to understand and analyze. His writings are pieces of art but challenging with the content of their texts, stories, psychological insights, endnotes, footnotes, and analogies for a tasteless capitalist society and for its bored and busy readers. Michael Pietsch, the Editor of the novel *The Pale King* refers to his novel as 'tornadic' or having a 'tornado feeling', 'pieces of a story coming at the reader in a high-speed swirl' Wallace (2011a, p.xii). He wants to make the readers aware of their social and cultural environment.

Daniel Kelly says it is hard for the individuals to think, internalize, and reconsider the options. That's why they are forced to choose what others select for them. The problem of choice creates dilemma which is the virtue of being alive and an impulse that they have to invest in and this situation consequently results in suspicion (Cahn & Eckert, M, 2015). Wallace finds it difficult to have an outside American culture in this period, but the 9/11 attacks bring consciousness to this limited sphere. He wants to find a style that makes the reader aware of the 'pop cultural effluvias' and make them feel dreadful Konstantinou (2013, p.82). For Marshall Boswell, Wallace 'opens the cage of irony by ironizing it, the same way he uses self-reflexivity to disclose the subtle deceptions at work in literary self-reflexivity' Boswell, (2003, p.207).

For Daniel Kelly, contemporary America is loading a lot of information, which is a distracting situation for the individual. There are too many options and too much information that people have to deal with. Wallace believes that contemporary America is not dealing with the 'impulse and the choices it forces' upon people very well so he explores why and how choosing the right thing is difficult. American culture cannot assist its people to deal with the current situation, and people do not think and talk about the issues together Cahn & Eckert (2015, p.117). There is no judging or prejudice, which is freedom, but there is such a huge disinterest among Americans that they do not even see or look each other in the eye. The new way of communication is like the pans which transmit heat to complete a process without touching the water. Human beings, like the same process, without touching each other's bodies, can still communicate. This separation code, called information, serves both kitchen devices and humanity (Baudrillard, 1989). For the postmodern way of human relations, Alain De Botton's (2005) talks about aristocratic societies and this example may reveal the perceptions of a contemporary individual. There was a sense of acceptance in all members of society. Although social inequality was greater than today's conditions, individuals were proud of and respectful of themselves and they considered the inequalities as visitation and unalterably natural. Botton (2005) thinks that people get jealous when there is sameness, however, if there are gaps among the individuals' opportunities among lower status people; they are not affected because they know that they can never achieve that status. Button uses Sir John Fortescue's idea that even angels sit on the different steps of the ladder; one is higher or lower than the other. This example shows how sharp the hierarchical structure was, but it created calmness and happiness in the minds of the subjects without question. Then, in the 18th and the 19th century, people started to become psychologically low-spirited even while there was great prosperity in every sense. With the American Revolution in 1776, the status shifted from age, aristocracy, and family to success and dynamic economic structure. So, equalitarian American society becomes wrathful, unhappy, and jealous because all its members have nearly the same countless opportunities and anticipating more and more because they still feel incompetent (Botton, 2005). The new generation is always in a competition and deals with the success, social, and economic situations of others. They seem not to follow the path of the American Dream with its basic principles which were mostly interested in the human spirit and which advised people to ignore

society and turn to their souls. Moreover, people are addicted to thinking. Wallace says that is the 'Analysis-Paralysis' kind of thinking. 'That 99% of compulsive thinkers' thinking is about themselves; that 99% of this self-directed thinking consists of imagining and then getting ready for things that are going to happen to them; and then, weirdly, that if they stop to think about it, that 100% of the things they spend 99% of their time and energy imagining and trying to prepare for all the contingencies and consequences of are never good.' People are not able to make a clear choice but need to decide upon one to continue and to survive' Wallace (1996, p.203). Readers also have more freedom of choice, which is a part of what America is all about. Americans are becoming aware how they depended on Deciders, but there is no alternative yet and now their choices seem to be the 'real measure of informed adulthood' (Wallace 2007). For Wallace, contemporary America could not handle the situation of the choices it offered to people. His works provide a new perspective on why choosing well is not easy for people, and how American culture fails to equip its citizens to handle the issues. He deals with contemporary human conditions but has doubts about his tools.

Wallace thinks that American culture is adolescent, hedonistic, and selfish, and it can easily become addicted to something Daniel Kelly says in David Foster Wallace as American Hedgehog (Cahn&Eckert, 2015). Therefore, the books have to be entertaining as well as awakening for the reader to compete with the entertainment and advertising which keep people so busy and mesmerized. Wallace compares entertainment to candies. If you eat too much, it causes health problems. On the other hand, food, which means books, meets the fundamental needs that entertainment and advertising miss. This generation still has a chance to survive because entertainment is mostly not good enough, and with their passive pleasures, thoughts are not active. Wallace points out that this is a cultural issue, a path of 'addictive continuum'. People lust after something to break away from. He questions being American and its reflection on this process. He wants to share this American thing to reveal the 'weird' and 'addictive' pulse Lipsky (2010, p. 62). Representations of lives through media have changed. Only with the help of experimental writing, can people find closeness to their selves, with another fictional character who shares the sameness with us. Pieces of other works, which Wallace calls *shitty*, ignore the readers or overlook them and sell a lot because they get attention due to the hype machine. A sold book does

not mean that it is read completely. Being hard and avant-garde as well as funny is what he wants to maintain in his writings. The book sells itself as long as it serves the entertainment culture, so it must have entertainment value too. This kind of stuff is closer to our nervous system in today's world, unlike the conventionally realistic ones of the Tolstoyan past. In this way Wallace thinks a piece of work forces the reader to work on it since readers have lost reading skills for fiction. Reading is for computers due to time, space, and historical limitations. So art will be in conversational forms in the brains (Lipsky, 2010). People are exposed to U.S. commercial culture, and its pleasures but are still hungry for something else, something that they cannot get from low art. The expectations from art and readers' needs of the last two decades have changed a lot. Wallace strongly puts forward his ideas and says that writers have to engage the individuals with serious art, and art should remind people that humans are magical. Fiction should be convincing. The role of good art is significant because despite the darkness, people are glowing and are alive in it (Burn, 2012). Wallace expresses that as long as there is nothing that forces people to grow up and if they continue entertaining passively, the country and the culture will collapse and fade. This will only be the fault of the individuals (Lipsky, 2010).

Wallace depicts in "Laughing with Kafka" (2011) the complexities of the modern life but the U.S psyche cannot get that humor because of its contemporary amusement codes that embrace 'recursive word-plays, lampoons, sexual entendre, Pynchonian slapsticks, Rothish satyriasis, Barthish metaparody, Woody-Allenish kvetching, and modern sitcoms' with its precocious children, profane grandparents, and insurgent coworkers for whom entertainment means reassurance, as do jokes (Wallace, 2011b). The comparison Wallace makes between low art and serious art in his interview with Larry McCaffery in 1993 is thought-provoking. Low art is designed to make money, and it promises one hundred percent effortless pleasure which is supposititious and matter-of-course especially for the young generation. On the other hand, with serious art, including fiction, is painful to get pleasure from. Due to the commercial-art-culture and its lazy experiences, today it is difficult to raise readers imagination to the level he thinks it does (Burn, 2012).

During the current situation, 'television has been ingeniously absorbing, homogenizing, and re-presenting the very same cynical postmodern aesthetic that was once the best alternative to the appeal of Low, over-easy, mass-market narrative'

Wallace (1997, p.52). TV is the ‘mirror’ that reflects the American normality. People watch TV because it is fun. Writers do not take TV seriously enough, but it is a powerful definer of the culture, and people ‘receive without giving’ and TV ‘enables dreams’ Wallace (1997, p.37-39). Being a kind of Low Art, TV becomes a way of life and takes its power from diversities. TV defines this culture in America. What is really postmodern about TV is, that culture hates it, but still watches it in extensively, and the reason for this hatred is again analyzed by TV itself. It has trained the viewers, even the ones belonging to the 60s, and has shown them a place to look at. The students protesting the Vietnam War were against it but they also liked to be seen on the TV, and the TV screen was the place where they saw the war. Nobody needs preconditions to watch TV; it allows us to dream or to escape from the issues of our daily lives. It does not demand anything special from us; it just gives (Wallace, 1997). Similarly, ‘the internet is almost the perfect distillation of the American capitalist ethos, a flood of seductive choices’, but neither technology nor entertainment helps people in their choices and people are only interested in the materialistic aspects not its ‘ethical, moral, or political questions’ (A Brand New Interview with David Foster Wallace 2018). In his novel *Infinite Jest*, Wallace presents the contemporary human condition while describing the situation of the protagonist Hal as follows.

We enter a spiritual puberty where we snap to the fact that the great transcendent horror is loneliness, excluded engagement in the self. Once we’ve hit this age, we will now give or take anything, wear any mask, to fit, be part-of, not be Alone, we young. The U.S. arts are our guide to inclusion. A how - to. We are shown how to fashion masks of ennui and jaded irony at a young age where the face is fictile enough to assume the shape of whatever it wears. And then it’s stuck there, the weary cynicism that saves us from gooey sentiment and unsophisticated naiveté Wallace (1996, p. 694).

Now, Americans have more common images than common beliefs. Pop-cultural references, brand names, celebrities, and TV programs are used in postmodern fiction because they are recognizable, and people feel a little bit guilty that they recognize them all. To be ironic, to talk over the U.S culture, and to be realistic, Low references are used in High literary fiction so that everything is less abstract. The post 1950 generation live with the TVs, not just look at them. Now, without TV there is

no memory. Both the U.S pop culture and U.S serious culture focus on the individual rather than the groups. There used to be commercials addressing to the groups such as ‘We’re the Pepsi Generation’, but after the 80s, due to the Vietnam War, Watergate, the rising of New Rights, the phrases like ‘express himself’, ‘assert his individuality’, ‘stand out from the crowd’, focusing on individualism started to be used to attract the lonely watcher. There are advertisements about the groups, but they are represented as something to be afraid of because they can ignore people in order to be noticed. TV is an authority that builds people’s world-views. It is ironic and self-referential. TV and fiction are historically connected (Wallace, 1997).

In the modern period, people are experiencing ‘*existential loneliness*’, and fiction helps to remove the barriers between the individuals so that they get to know each other better. During the reading process, as the readers meet others of similar consciousness, they feel the intimacy and feel human, as Wallace says, they become ‘*unalone*’ again. In this respect, Wallace follows Socrates, John Donne, Shakespeare, Schopenhauer, Descartes, Wittgenstein, James Joyce, Hemingway, Don DeLillo, Pynchon, Steinbeck, Stephen Crane, Melville, Fitzgerald, Lousie Glück who are some of the literary figures that, as Wallace believes, create intellectual, emotional, and spiritual conversations with their readers. Wallace wants his writings to talk to the readers who have been ignored and called stupid in recent years. He makes the character Rand ask, ‘Everybody’s got their sad story. You want to hear part of mine?’, in the novel *The Pale King* to show that he has concerns about reaching his audience Wallace (2011a, p.469). For Wallace, fiction makes it possible to feel less alone inside of each other through reading other characters’ pain (Burn, 2012). In a symposium about David Foster Wallace held in The University of Texas at Austin, the literary agent Bonnie Nadell says that the mid 80s were the years of minimalist fiction and Wallace’s works were difficult for readers to be comprehend. What he tries to do is to make readers realize ‘a sense of mindfulness’ about themselves and the world. As a cultural signifier, he wants to understand the world through basic shared universal principles. Wallace deals with the ordinaries of life which are boring for his great mind (David Foster Wallace Symposium 2012). In his interview with Stacey Schmeidel in 1919 in *A Brief Interview with a Five-draft Man*, Wallace mentions that after college, he realized that people were complex, and they all had similar inadequacies. As an aloof adolescent, he finds this situation very unifying. In his 2003 interview ‘To Try

Extra Hard to Exercise Patience, Politeness, and Imagination' by Dave Eggers, he says that writers need to have empathy and should try to imagine being like others (Wallace, 2012).

As an author of fiction and non-fiction, David Foster Wallace sees America as follows;

America is one big experiment in what happens when you're a wealthy, privileged culture that's pretty much lost religion or spirituality as a real informing presence. It's still a verbal presence — it's part of the etiquette that our leaders use, but it's not inside us anymore, which in one way makes us very liberal and moderate and we're not fanatics and we don't tend to go around blowing things up. But on the other hand, it's very difficult to think that the point of life is to double your salary so that you can go to the mall more often. Even when you're making fun and sneering at it, there's a real dark emptiness about it Burn (2012, p.100).

What has happened to Americans? Wallace asks in his books. The system has things to do, but individuals have all the moralistic responsibility. Otherwise, the death of individuals and culture will be the end of the extension on this continuum (Lipsky, 2010). In his essay, '*Joseph Frank's Dostoyevsky*' (1996), David Foster Wallace also questions being American and writes:

'What is 'an American'? Do we have something important in common, as Americans, or is it just that we all happen to live inside the same boundaries and obey the same laws? How exactly is America different from other countries? Is there really something unique about it? What does that uniqueness entail? We talk a lot about our special rights and freedoms, but are there also special responsibilities that come with being American? If so, responsibilities to whom?' Wallace (2006a, p.268).

In his essay entitled *Certainly the End of Something or Other, One Would Sort of Have to Think* (1998), Wallace says, the adults of the sixties and seventies were afraid of the 'hypocritical conformity and repression of their own parents' generation', the young adults of the nineties are the children of the 'impassioned infidelities and divorces who have to see the brave new individualism and sexual freedom deteriorate into the joyless and anomic self-indulgence of the Me Generation'. The subforties of today have the

fear of ‘anomie, solipsism, and a peculiarly American loneliness’ Wallace (2006a, p.54). For Wallace in his interview with Lipsky, everything is individual and there is no culture, people are the culture, people are the country. The new unhappy and hungry generation will not have memories of sacrifices like wars or depression, which scares Wallace. In the 60s and 70s, individuals showed the hypocrisy of the unquestionable authority but did not leave anything to replace it. Now, it is the responsibility of this new generation to make up their morals and values. There is no belief in politics or religion. The good thing about pop culture is that it is full of stuff that does not demand anything from the individual. There is no challenge for either the intellectual or the empty viewer and the artist as nothing has to be artistic (Lipsky, 2010). In his essay, *Some Remarks on Kafka’s Funniness from Which Probably Not Enough Has Been Removed* (1999), Wallace thinks that people are taught that the self is something they *have* Wallace (2006a, p.64).

Nevertheless, as an American writer, Wallace is optimistic about the American people and his readers. America is a multicultural nation with various interests, but it does not mean that American people do not deal with serious art forms; they do, but a majority of course follows popular culture which is entirely normal for David Foster Wallace, and he thinks literature or other forms of art are still alive (Burn, 2012). The culture and the laughers would not or could not laugh ‘if a piece of morally passionate, passionately moral fiction was also ingenious and radiantly human fiction’ Wallace (2006a, p.274).

The new generation has a different world around from the previous generations. This new world and its characteristics are reflected in fiction. The fiction should be rich, challenging, emotional, intellectual, and enjoyable at the same time. Fiction needs to have distinguishing features that the other forms of entertainment and art do not have (Wallace, 2012). Wallace believes that after the millennium, realism is just an illusion. Small details are more real and authentic than the larger ones. He considers himself a realist and thinks that it is not the easiest time but it is the best time to be a writer (Burn, 2012) since there is a growing interest in the form of realism in American society. As Baudrillard (1989) thinks, Americans are familiar with the models of realities, and they become such models themselves. Similarly, Umberto Eco says,

Holography could prosper only in America, a country obsessed with realism, where, if a reconstruction is to be credible, it must be absolutely iconic, a perfect likeness, a “real” copy of the reality being represented’ Eco (1986, p.2).

In this respect, Wallace’s realism is the same realism that America is experiencing. Among all the ironies, paradoxes, images, and replicas, what he writes is very real. He presents the realities of the contemporary era and the essence of humanity to the individuals. Wallace catches the ordinary, basic, and minor details which are the realities of life. He finds fiction which focuses mostly on materialism boring although he uses the pop elements in his writings which he thinks are the textures of his world (Burn, 2012). Wallace finds these pop elements very ordinary because they belong to this modern period, being characteristic of the age. It used to be the same for the writings of a century ago which included natural elements. Those were the part of texture of that world (Wallace, 2012). Doing traditional work is getting difficult for him because even the best examples of postmodern fiction he thinks ‘exploded or destroyed the credibility of a lot of the sort of conventions and devices that classic realism uses’ and the classic American postmodernism known as ‘metafiction or high surrealistic fiction’ does not have enough utility. Postmodern fiction is destructive in order to clear away the hypocrisy of the period, and he accepts that he was influenced by it, but postmodernism is becoming exhausted and repetitive (A Brand New Interview with David Foster Wallace 2018).

Wallace is seen as ‘the standard-bearer of an emergent ‘New Sincerity’ in American fiction Savvas & Coffman (2019, p.199). David Foster Wallace brings forward successfully ‘unpopular tastes’ and ‘unappealing topics’ such as ‘the arcane, the cruel, the geeky, the awkward, the repulsive, the infuriatingly complex, and the insanely boring’, and his style is not only a literary one but is also ‘academic prose, statistical representation, dictionary entries, legal jargon, and bureaucratese’ which resists ‘easy consumption’. He resists popular culture through his challenging works which create skepticism towards popularity. Also, ‘from television and advertising to ‘real art-fiction’, however, is yet another polarity in Wallace’s work, one that ranges from deceit to sincerity’ Lütke & Pöhlmann (2016, p.61). Wallace deals with boredom and sadness which are hard issues to write about, but as Pietsch says in the Editor’s Note to the novel *The Pale King*, he wrote a novel about taxes in a very interesting way using his

‘extraordinary artistic daring.’ Wallace contributes to the American English Lexicon by using previously unknown words that he himself invented (Wallace, 2011a).

Correct language usage and good vocabulary is important for him and he thinks that TV has a negative impact on the language. American individuals consume ‘vulgar, prurient, dumb stuff’ for six hours a day Wallace (1997, p.37). However, David Foster Wallace believes that language should be delicate and masterful. He says sixty percent of vocabulary is ambiguous. Slang and vague words are very common because all means of oral and written communication develop quickly below the level of consciousness. It gets into the nervous system of people (Garner, 2013). For Editor Michael Pietsch, each child in America needs to get the pleasure of Wallace’s writings because most of the parts are some of the great examples of the English language, they are ‘beyond belief’ (David Foster Wallace Symposium 2012). After his death, Wallace, with his individual style, will maintain his place in American contemporary fiction because Wallace believes that he is an accessible writer and works on his writings to make them as simple as possible. His writings are for the readers who like reading and know that reading is an important and a disciplined act and needs to be worked on. Reading is not just for entertainment like those books in the American publishing which do not require much work while reading. These are like ‘motion pictures’ (A Brand New Interview with David Foster Wallace 2018). He depicts these feelings of Americans in his novels and writes about sad people. With his off the wall characters, Wallace’s texts provoke interpretations. Some of his characters are lost, and some others are distorted. Wallace brings his characters into existence in a real atmosphere of the very abstract and subjective nature of human being and in the very real harsh conditions of contemporary culture (Wallace, 2011b). Wallace deals with the current irony of America, a cultural tool that represents the hypocrisy of the period and the reason for the unhappiness. Wallace can turn the simplest topic into a mind-blowing and entertaining one.

For Dave Eggers (2006) Wallace is ‘normal, and regular, and ordinary, and this is his extraordinary, and irregular, and not-normal achievement, a thing that will outlast him and you and me, but will help future people understand us - how we felt, how we lived, what we gave to each other and why’ Wallace (1996, p. xi). Wallace is mostly known as a postmodern writer but post-postmodernist writers consider Wallace as their

common ancestor, and they are influenced by his hope for meaningfulness (Doyle 2018). However, Wallace describes his style and the literary group that he wants to be in as:

Using postmodern techniques, postmodern aesthetic but using that to discuss or represent very old traditional human verities that have to do with spirituality and emotion and community and ideas that the avant-garde would consider very old-fashioned so that there's a kind of melding, it's using postmodern formal techniques for very traditional ends, if there is group [...] that's the group I want to belong to (Wallace 2006b).

'Wallace's canonization is occurring in a time of widespread rejection of the negative in literary studies'. His 'unusually intense connections' show that literature still matters (McGurl 2014). In his essay *Some Remarks on Kafka's Funniness from Which Probably Not Enough Has Been Removed* (1999) he says, 'That, finally, the door opens... and it opens outward—we've been inside what we wanted all along' Wallace (2006a, p.65). As the spiritual principles of the American Dream are echoed in American literature so also in David Foster Wallace. Emerson (1841) encourages Americans to define their own path in life with their given human potential by saying an American,

must take himself for better or worse as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till Appelbaum (1993, p.20).

Similarly, Wallace suggests all individuals turn to themselves because it is a way of choosing, changing, or being free from the 'natural, hard-wired default-setting', he says Wallace (2009, p.6). It seems to be difficult to change the ongoing system since postmodernists are self-oriented individuals, but Rychlak also shares the same idea with Wallace that at least people should have a new understanding towards their own selves and realize their capacity to change their mental processing. Individuals may have views, but meanings are not shifted by the culture, they are shifted by the thinker. If they make good choices, realize the real human nature, its limits and capabilities and use their free will, this ongoing robotic mechanism will be disappeared (Rychlak, 2003). David Foster Wallace both shows the pain and the cure (Goudarzi,

2018). Paul Giles thinks that Wallace's fiction shows how globalization works both as a distant political theory and how effective it is on the hearts and minds of the national community (Giles 2007).

Modern times are difficult to live in for an individual who has just experienced postmodernism and become confused by its dazzling complexities. At this point, writers are the good advisors helping people to accurately see the world they live in. They should offer confrontation to those individuals who wish to escape from their current situations. Hence, giving all the attention to the seductive elements that people are exposed to in their everyday lives keeps them distant from their inner self. They do not give the necessary carefulness to themselves and their feeling and thoughts. Wallace's stories are weird and almost lacking in the ability to be discursive and his fiction is only possible through a detailed understanding of the cultural and social circumstances in which his works are meant to contribute. David Foster Wallace's fiction assesses the influence of both postmodern and post-postmodern frameworks. His fiction reflects the drivers of the changes produced within that period. In light of these ideas, David Foster Wallace is an important writer with his highly individual style and narrative. He appreciates fiction because during a period in which people experience existential loneliness, fiction itself is a conversation. He wants his fiction to make individuals feel less lonely. Wallace says: 'Fiction either moves mountains or it's boring; it moves mountains or it sits on its ass' Burn (2012, p.7).

All men seek happiness. This is without exception. . . . This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves. —

Blaise Pascal

3. THE NOVELS ‘*BRIEF INTERVIEWS WITH HIDEOUS MEN*’, ‘*THE PALE KING*’, AND ‘*THE BROOM OF THE SYSTEM*’.

This chapter is composed of an analysis of the novels *The Broom of the System* and *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* within the context of individual experiences in the postmodern period, and the novel *The Pale King* which sets out a view of consumerism society and its institutions. The formation of the social structures, the forces that drive them into being, and the outcomes and reflections of these formations on the individual are the issues critical to understanding today’s characters in literature. In the light of postmodernism and post-postmodernism, there will be a close criticism of society and of its subjects in the postmodern world.

The Americans, for their part, have no sense of simulation. They are themselves simulation in its most developed state, but they have no language in which to describe it, since they themselves are the model. As a result, they are the ideal material for an analysis of all the possible variants of the modern world Baudrillard (1989, p.27).

The characters in David Foster Wallace’s novels are in search of their self and their journey gives them the opportunity to understand the American Dream and its reality that the changing social, economic, and cultural dimensions of American society rest upon a postmodern line of thought within the framework of the American Dream is the basic purpose of this dissertation. In this chapter, the approaches taken by three novels of David Foster Wallace demonstrate the ongoing social transformation of

postmodern American society within the framework of the American Dream. The three novels provide the adequate base for transformation of the structural and the cultural dimensions of postmodern times.

The American Dream is an influential ideology that attracts people, while trapping them within terrible conditions. It is like apple pie and motherhood. All Americans no matter what their race, gender, religion, class or economic condition is think that they can have their own personal mini-states of nature in which to build a good future (Hochschild, 1996). In their mini-states, some of the individuals become abstracts, some lose their awareness or regain it back and some become suitable workers in their particular paths while following the Dream. In his novels, Wallace introduces the reader to anxious individuals of the period, their personal and financial struggles, as well as their urge to be liked by others. These people, with their abstract desires, become abstract beings in their own environments. However, although the characters keep themselves separate from others, whether abstract or concrete, an individual is an important part of a culture (Raclavsky 2017). This section will look at contemporary culture and how it causes psychological and mental problems, and the importance of being a responsible American citizen and a personally aware individual. Postmodernism will be understood through the lens of citizenship, the impact of self-awareness or self-abstraction in relation to time, boredom, and work.

Interpretation is the key point of the postmodernist approach. In an empirical world, abstract states of human beings, such as love, envy, intentionality, spirituality, and consciousness, cannot be visible. Unless someone steps into the interpretivism, a person will only understand the other person as an object, whereas understanding should be from subject to subject, to the interior of a self (Wilber, 2000). Today's human nature in the consumerism culture helps the readers to understand the postmodern atmosphere. The characteristics of the new identity models who try to survive in the postmodern condition will be observed. The perception of reality through these eyes of the new individual is the essence of this chapter. Since there are realities and unrealities in this era due to technology and media, characters are predominantly concerned with material gain, superficial appearance, and other traits of the postmodern condition. In this respect a postmodern novel represents the relations of social realities, and examines the unimportant, silenced, and marginalized

with their diverse voices and languages. Social diversity is celebrated as humanist universalities. The role of literature in the wake of international terror, national trauma, and technology, the effects of these facts on the self / being of the writer as an individual and his characters will be considered through the general themes of the writer David Foster Wallace and the personal expression techniques and styles he has used to clarify the protagonists' psychological, cultural and social status in an existending society.



3.1 Brief Interviews with Hideous Men

The novel *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* (1999) presents the placement of the individual in the postmodern condition. The short story collection *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* (1999) starts with a very brief story which reflects the human condition of the period as well as people's efforts and extreme desire to be liked and appreciated within their social circles. The story is reminiscent of the memes which are short texts with dense messages. In its brevity, the story summarizes human relations and the reasons with its message as a meme does. The first story *A Radically Condensed History of Postindustrial Life* is as follows.

When they were introduced, he made a witticism, hoping to be liked. She laughed extremely hard, hoping to be liked. Then each drove home alone, staring straight ahead, with the very same twist to their faces. The man who'd introduced them didn't much like either of them, though he acted as if he did, anxious as he was to preserve good relations at all times. One never knew, after all, now did one now did one now did one Wallace (1999, p.1)

The first story of the collection opens with the history of the postindustrial era, consequently the postmodern time with people's desire to be liked since for any kind of relationship likeability is important. People like materials, money, and status which American Dream represent as happiness. In order to achieve these prerequisites for upward mobility in every sense of the word, people want attention in fact, because they mostly feel lonely. The man, who introduces the other man and the woman to each other, admits that he does not like these two people but pretends to do so. His dissimulation is the common attitude of the period which is insincerity and dishonesty towards the individual. In the technologically advanced postindustrial life, to climb career ladders and survive, shows moral hypocrisy among people. All their behaviors are programmed to be liked because in the contemporary culture, social skills are important to maintaining better personal and professional relations which are significant for the upward mobility that the American Dream demands. This is what

Illouz (2007) calls 'emotional capitalism'. When people feel that they are considered by their communities to be successful in their business lives, this affects their social interactions, but in this way, there is no barrier left between their work and personal lives.

In the opening story, the reader meets with the individuals and their social masks through of which the exterior and the interior of the human soul contradicts. Wallace's technique in using the word 'history' and 'condensed' in the same title is ironic. It is not in fact 'history', it is just a piece of human experience that characterizes modern times. With Wallace's significant word choice, even the title shows the ironic and deceptive nature of the postmodern period. The attitude of people can be fake but individuals have their own real reasons, behind which is the ultimate need and desire to fulfill their lives with betterment and happiness. The question in interview number 30, 'Or does the real truth about this kind of thing always sound shallow, you know, everybody's real reasons?' Wallace (1999, p.12), shows that it is understood that people should not be judged by their life experiences and decisions. Individuals have different purposes in life and different reasons to pursue the American Dream. In a world of simulations, reality shakes up people. They do not want to hear or feel the truth in order to avoid any kind of trouble because it is difficult for people to share and form real interactions. With their fake attitudes, they are removed from their own reality. It is significant that Wallace starts his short story collection with a story that portrays the situation of individuals and their inner motives.

In this short story collection, readers come across several sick and tired characters who are unhappy due to the disillusioned atmosphere of postmodern times. They feel lost and lonely. Their situation leads to different kinds of emotional and psychological problems. In *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* (1999) it is mentioned that people undergo neurosis like panic attacks and display A.D.D. symptoms in the contemporary world. Some medicines and therapies are commonly used to counter or cure the contemporary sickness. They are found to be very effective in that they replaced the existential despair with 'an enormous sense of personal confidence and joie de vivre, a limitless capacity for vibrant interpersonal relations, and an almost mystical conviction of their elemental synecdochic union with the universe' Wallace (1999, p.131). People cannot cope with their problems on their own. They either have medicine or a therapist from whom they can get help for the sake of their

psychological health. *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* (1999) in this sense presents dangerous and pathetic characters. To begin with, a sick hideous man, subject 15, is a person who cannot control his anger to such an extent that he is forced to handcuff his own wrists. His son says that his father is ‘*not* a good man but who nevertheless tried diligently to be a good man’ Wallace (1999, p.8). Handcuffing is a metaphor of limitation and it puts barriers between his efforts and his desire to be liked. He cannot function in life properly and loses his human potential. The father figure wants to be likable but his situation keeps him in his own prison. His handcuffs maximize his anger.

Another father figure in the part, ‘On His Deathbed, Holding Your Hand, The Acclaimed New Young Off-Broadway Playwrights’s Father Begs A Boon’ also has a likeability problem. This problem causes extreme feelings to develop because he equates himself with his baby. After the birth of his child, the baby had all the mother’s attention. Since he is an adult, no one pays attention to him and this situation makes him feel lonely. A baby is born needy, sometimes lovable but sometimes stubborn or spoiled, but a baby does not need to do anything to be loved. In contrast, an adult needs a lot of things to be loved. He has to be successful and has to have a good career and salary, good appearance, nice character traits, money, and possessions such as a car or a house. Likeability is determined by many other factors in the adult world unlike in babyhood. He wants to be liked unconditionally even if he does something wrong but he has never uttered anything that would expose his weakness. He never said what he needed or what made him feel better. A lonely father who questions his presence in the family is a reflection of the feeling of loneliness among the members of consumerist society. The adult world of American society neglects people and does not tolerate anyone’s mistakes. The individuals are silent but feel alienated even from their families. Their desire to be liked either leads to silence, as is the case in this father figure or feeling anger as the man with handcuffs.

Apart from being silent and angry, desire for likeability may result in self-hatred. In the section *Suicide As a Sort Of Present*, there is a mother figure who hates herself although she is admired by others. She simply cannot realize her own value and she cannot cope with her ‘self’ because deep inside she is merciless towards her own being. Being a perfectionist, she has a negative impact on her personal life as she sees

everything as an exam for which she needs to gain full credit. Living in controlled life, she has high expectations of herself and her child. She is in a state of constant battle and it is obvious that she has no taste for life. Living with such a mother is also difficult and discouraging for a child. The mother takes everything 'personally' even her own child's good or bad attitudes. She feels like the child is her own reflection with all her deficiencies, so she tries hard to cover the imperfectness of the child all the time because she blames herself for all negativities. In her confusions, she distracts and abstracts herself and becomes a single being together with her child. In her abstraction, she devotes herself to another being completely and loses her ability to function as a single being or as a mother. Her identity is lost and transferred to her child's being. The mother is deleting herself from life as though she is melting into her child's body. The child is also affected by the mother's obsessive behavior. The child is not able to build up its identity due to constant parental interference. As the mother feels unlikable, the only thing she focuses on is her child. This obsessive mother thinks that the child will be her only success in life.

Wallace goes even further to make a character likeable and tests the boundaries. In *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, the men use 'sincerity' for their own selfish purposes Elderon (2014, p.509). Subject 20 talks about his love for a woman which is in fact not a real love. He met this woman for a one night stand but learnt that she had been raped. The thing that made him feel closer to her is that she did not struggle with her rapist just to stay alive. Her nonresistant attitude affected his decision and he thought that he was in love with her. He seems to be nice man at first because what his thoughts and feelings are very humane, but he does not react to the incident. His positive reaction was towards the naive attitude of the woman who accepted this terrible thing just to save her life. His feeling were not real because in the beginning he chose her just for her prettiness. His situation is ironic and funny because he cannot recognize or understand his own feelings as an adult. So, the characters are not likeable although they try to make the readers. Like them, for Himmelheber (2014) the man is hideous but his humanity should not be neglected. He tries to prove his distance from rape culture through his self-awareness (Himmelheber 2014).

Wallace not only writes about the conditions of adults, there are also weird children's characters in his writings. Wallace's *Depressed Person* is a child who has a family

life in which there is lack of parental attention and love and this has affected the child's deeply at the beginning of her life and beyond. She always has hesitations and feelings of shame, and regret that she cannot share with others. The very first line of the story starts with her horror at the combination of unceasing emotional pain and the impossibility of sharing it with anyone. The underlying reason for her unbearable condition is the unhealthy communication between her parents and their inability to sort things out and are apparently unaware of their false parenting. What is more disturbing is that they refuse to pay their daughter's medical expenses. The problem is expressed by the Depressed Person as;

The 'Blame Game' was too easy,... it was pathetic and contemptible... the endless blame and recrimination the two had exchanged over her... using the depressed person's own feelings and needs as ammunition, as if her valid feelings and needs were nothing more than a battlefield or theater of conflict, weapons which the parents felt they could deploy against each other Wallace (1999, p.16).

The American Dream is like an addictive escape from reality in which people try hard to achieve success and happiness. However, there is the contrasting response that people are alienated from their families and communities. In this case of a family, the parents of the Depressed Person are so interested in their personal issues, and trying to survive and compete in their adult world that they do not give the necessary attention to their child. This parental ignorance causes a psychologically ruined child. Individuals need a family to maintain healthy relationships and emotional support to feel complete. Like the American Dream, therapies also promise betterment. People start their Dream and their therapies with good intentions. However, once more people find themselves defeated because they realize how they are being trapped, isolated and how they are depended on the unreal demands of the system. They are not part of the social context anymore. Wallace with the Depressed Person shows a cultural condition that the individuals very often suffer from. To be less dependent, he shows the readers how individuals try to find a way out and how they reject their dependence. In their search for personal authenticity, what they find is sameness. They do not see something new at the end. In the *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, Wallace shows how the sharing of feeling can lead to a destructive narcissism. The Depressed Person trusted her therapist and tried to be open and honest

with her. Even if they behave honestly in their relationships, people do not necessarily 'see' what the other person sees. For example, the Depressed Person knows 'it was in fact the \$90 an hour which made the therapeutic relationship's simulacrum of friendship so ideally one-sided' Wallace (1999, p.127). As long as this money is provided, the therapist would listen to her and the Depressed Person could receive feedback. Also, the therapist was looking at the clock but hiding or disguising that she was checking it frequently Wallace (1999, p.125). So there is no a real caring attention of the therapist, all the work and sharing to make her feel whole again is related to money. The Depressed Person 'on a rational, intellectual, "head" level' was 'aware of all these realities and compensations' Wallace (1999, p.127). The Depressed Person buys the necessary intimacy and connection from others to adapt her social life. After stating her conditions in a very detailed, clear, and honest way, Wallace maybe wants to ask the readers if they are in the same situation and feel as trapped as the characters because he knows that many of them lose their social ties which were important constituents of their identity. In postmodern times, people develop self-hatred and self-pity and consequently they feel guilty and become narcissistic and needy beings who are easily manipulated. All behaviors such as self-hatred, guilt, narcissism, and self-pity are the psychological defenses of Depressed Person and many others who find a place for them in their psyche. These emotions are protective tools in case of close relations which they may experience during adulthood. The Depressed Person symbolizes the alienated and narcissist individuals of the period. Her condition is similar to most people and as many others, she tries to solve the issues but her efforts are useless. Although she wants to have communication with others, in the end, she realizes through her self-analysis that she could not manage to do it because she is trapped in her darkness. Like most individuals, the Depressed Person is very self-absorbed and narcissistic. For example, she shows no reaction when her therapist dies. Her attitude towards a person who is suffering from cancer is cold and she also recognizes her indifference because 'when she centered and looked deep within herself, she felt she could locate no real feelings for the therapist as an autonomously valid human being' and 'all her agonized pain and despair since the therapist's suicide had in fact been all and only for herself' Wallace (1999, p.24). Both the Depressed Person and the mother figure who hates herself and obsesses about her child are unhappy individuals. In the way they approach their hollow centers, they can be

considered as post-postmodern because they demonstrate a self-awareness which is exaggerated. In her awareness process, the Depressed Person starts to think how her therapist and friends feel about her.

Wallace, by presenting the two generations' experiences, reveals how the postmodern capitalist system has changed people's manners, attitudes and ideas about themselves and about the Dream. The Dream is stable with its demands but the way people try to reach it has changed. Not the Dream but the period is responsible for this change. Subject 14 is a self-destructive man, who belongs to the new generation and shouts out 'Victory for the Forces of Democratic Freedom' although he admits that he has no interest in politics. He neither votes nor cares about being a democrat. He is not one of the 'America first' people he says Wallace (1999, p.7). Subject 42, on the other hand, 'a yesterday's hero' talks about his bathroom attendant father. Since 1969, this man stood at the same place for nine hours a day and on Saturdays he did a double shift. This was his only career, he was serving without any complaint about his boring job and he even took care of his work clothes, washed and ironed them on his own. He gave too much importance to his job. He was standing in the room where 'Men' was on the door as if he was not there and he was not real. Lots of men came in and went out during the day without acknowledging him standing there alone. His face had the same expression at home too, he brought his work home. People belonging to previous generation also had similar personal and professional life bonds which were again emotional. However, the perception of the individual was different. In stead of working and living just to be liked and admired by others, the old generation really devoted themselves to their professions, no matter what the title or the position was. They did not try to be liked but tried to like their jobs. Also, the emotional attachment they formed between their social and business lives was healthier. There was no complaint, no self-hatred, or anger and extreme efforts. They were calm and more content in life. They valued what they had, and did not expect much because consumerism was not so extensive and forceful as it later became. Being American was important and the old generation was more willing to work both for the sake of their well-being and for their country because their country provided them opportunities. The dedication of subject 42's father and the indifference of subject 14 display the distinction between the old and new generation which had

differing life experiences over time. The different periods and their living conditions changed the mind and attitudes of people.

In the contemporary times, this likeability problem has been emphasized more with the emerging technological innovations. The most important factor is the media and TV which create an illusion for them and people end up sacrificing their time, intellect, and reality for that illusion, and this makes them happier for a while. Subject 59 says that he watched American television a lot when he was a child and he preferred the TV series *Bewitched*. At a supernatural hand gesture of the protagonist Samantha, all the other characters are frozen. This power of ceasing the time is what TV is doing in the contemporary world. The watchers who are the 'living status' are hypnotized Wallace (1999, p.80). Only Samantha is free and in control, like media or political authorities. As Samantha who stops people with her hand motion, media and TV pause and dominate people. Media bewitches people with its manipulated broadcasts and watchers are fascinated by its numerous programs and continue to let TV rule them.

Subject 28, from Ypsilanti Michigan discusses women and their condition in the modern period with another character, as the follows:

E—: 'A paradox. Damned either way. The media perpetuates it.'

K—: 'You can imagine the load of internal stress all this dumps on their psyches.'

E—: 'Come a long way baby my ass.'

K—: 'That's why so many of them are nuts.'

E—: 'Out of their minds with internal stress.'

K—: 'It's not even really their fault.'

E—: 'Who wouldn't be nuts with that kind of mess of contradictions laid on them all the time in today's media culture?' Wallace (1999, p. 86).

They think that media influences the behavior of women subjects. In today's media culture, it is difficult to understand the environment and discover a way to identify the realities. The two subjects in K.G. No: 28 talk about the postmodern era and say;

today's postmodern era, in which supposedly everybody now knows everything about what's really going on underneath all the semiotic codes and cultural

conventions, and everybody supposedly knows what paradigms everybody is operating out of... since everything we do is now unprecedentedly conscious and informed Wallace (1999, p.87).

In his ironic description of individuals belonging to this postmodern period, Wallace shows the real situations of individuals. Although people are supposed to know all the seen and unseen things because of the advanced technology and its informative tools, they are not aware of the realities and cannot see them or do not even try to see them. Wallace's opinions about postmodernism and its important tool, irony, are clearly seen in *Tri-Stan: I Sold Sisse Nar To Ecko* as;

all this pop irony would put a happy-face mask on a nation's terrible shame faced hunger & need: translation, genuine information, would be allowed to lie, hidden & nourishing, inside the wooden belly of parodic camp Wallace (1999, p. 92).

Wallace also writes about consumerism which is the reason for people's fake happy-face masks and for the hunger of the nation. Wallace criticizes consumer society in a single line that presents the whole idea of the competitive world and the unconscious attitudes of people. The father character in *The Devil* is a Busy Man who wants to get rid of his old possessions and puts a notice in the town paper saying that the items are for free but few people come and get them. When he adds foolish prices, this time people compete with each other to get the \$5 or \$10 item before anyone else can. Consumers are 'tickled to death' to get a useless item for 'nothing'. The desire to possess is instinctive and cannot be stopped. 'Don't try and teach a pig to sing', is a good response from the father figure who realizes that people will never change because in the consumerism craze they are not able to. Giving money makes people feel superior to others. When their husbands waste money on useless things, the faces of the wives change positively because they bought those old materials before the others. Wasting money gives them a sense of pride. In interview number 3, Wallace also criticizes the coffee shops with their cheap 'shitty' products and where you cannot even sit. His criticism continues with the inflight phone charges that get higher with the regional taxes which is kind of a theft for him Wallace (1999, p. 25-26). In *Tri-Stan: I Sold Sisse Nar To Ecko*, Wallace talks about the media craze. The programming executive Agon M. Nar combines entertainment formulae that lets 'the muse of

Familiarity to appear cross-dressed as Innovation' Wallace (1999, p. 89). Just like postmodernism, media and TV does the same thing over and over again as if they had created something new. Both modern tools are getting boring and cannot produce innovative things to serve people. In 'trans-human entertainment', people are consciously blindfolded Wallace (1999, p.89). Also, in his private family life, Agon M. Nar had three daughters which are defined as 'three semi-independent vehicles', who 'grow & thrive like kudzu among the fluorescent basin's palms & malls & beaches & temples' Wallace (1999, p. 89). The definition of the girls is quite pathetic because they are being considered as objects not human beings. Moreover, the words 'vehicle', 'fluorescent basin', 'mall' are elements of the American Dream. The dreamers hope for a car, a glamorous home, and money to spend. Yet Another Example of the Porousness of Certain Borders (VI) presents a transcript of the end of two parent's marriage in which they are discussing how to share the possessions:

'All I'm saying is that truck out there's mine.'

'Then what about the boy.'

'For the truck you mean?'

'Look I get the doublewide you get the truck we flip for the boy' Wallace (1999, p.79).

Like the daughters of the programmer, this boy does not mean anything more to his parents than a truck. Subject 20 also sees a person as an object, 'she was like some kind of smooth blank perfect piece of pseudo-art you want to buy so you can take it home and sm-' Wallace (1999, p.112). It is seen how irony mocks people and their experiences as well as revealing the hidden realities. These incidents are the ironic side of the period. Paying for nothing or wasting money on useless things, people with their happy face masks on are unreal but bring the so-called happiness. That is the shame of the nation and the unrealistic aspect of the American Dream.

The condition of the American people is given by a pool image. The thirteen-year old boy wants to distance himself from the external world and his parents. On his birthday, he is standing on the diving board and thinking over his decision to be independent. This act of self-awareness is his first step into adulthood anxieties of a larger system which he will soon be a part of. The pool image captures perfectly the recognition

of life in *Forever Overhead*. 'The pool is a system of movement with its laps, splash fights, dives, corner tag, cannonballs, Sharks and Minnows, high fallings' Wallace (1999, p.4), as life is itself with its ups and downs. Individuals are sometimes at its corners and sometimes in the center. Each fall represents their efforts and experiences in life. Imagine diving into the sea, at first the color is white, symbolizing purity and hopefulness, with the excitement of people's actions. Then from the whiteness comes the blue and everything settles down, that is death coming after the entire struggle. As Wallace (1999) says, 'the ground wants you back' Wallace (1999, p.5). This vicious circle continues through infinity. This scene represents the attitude of the individuals who are following the American Dream with their hopes and the life process. This pure hope and excitement is also the first stage of the American Dream since people hope for a happy life and work for it with excitement and great efforts. It is cold and slippery although it has handrails to hold on to but they do not help the individual. People will come across dark areas on the diving board or around it which are descended from the previous generations. Their experiences, ideologies, deeds are all footprints left to this world. People might stop and think, agree or disagree but cannot live without this heredity and this past consciousness. All of them are part of 'the blind rhythm'. This circle and the consciousness is the American Dream since it is the heritage of the nation. In the part *Forever Overhead*, Wallace introduces us to a young boy who is celebrating his thirteenth birthday. At this age, people begin to recognize some important changes in their bodies and thinking system. It is the first step to adulthood which in fact is not like the childhood and brings with it a lot of chaos and many responsibilities. People are not very fond of their condition in adulthood. They are searching for love, status, and a meaning in life but in return they receive the disillusionment of the modern period. This self-contradictory period of human life is challenging for the person in terms of personal, social, and economical demands. They are always in competition and they rush to maintain their hopes and eliminate their fears. This boy belongs to the new generation and was born into a world which is dominated by consumerism. As an American boy, he has also grown up with the ideology of his nation which is driven by the American Dream. Just before entering his new period in life, Wallace reminds him of the dangers of this Dream; 'And dreams. For months there have been dreams like nothing before: moist and busy and distant, full of yielding curves, frantic pistons, warmth and a great falling; and you

have awakened' Wallace (1999, p. 3). Its warmth in the beginning might be followed by a fall after which he might be awakened as many adults in today's world have already experienced. He will see these dreams frequently but it is better for him to take his own responsibility before everything collapses and the dream shatters. The dreamy childhood is over for the boy. Now, he is going to experience real life with its ups and downs. Life does not care for people and only moves forward. It keeps going on and rolls each and every individual with it. If an individual wants to survive, the person has to move so fast to stay motionless in a postmodern period. In *Datum Centurio*, Wallace gives a detailed dictionary meaning of the word 'date' as;

the process of voluntarily submitting one's nucleotide configurations and other Procreativity Designators to an agency empowered by law to identify an optimal female neurogenetic complement for the purposes of Procreative Genital Interface Wallace (1999, p.47).

People have to work hard and serve willingly all through their lifetimes just to have betterment in life. In return, they stay expressionless and become bored which is against their nature. This contradiction causes a lot of mental and physical problems in the mind and body functions of individuals. In America, people come to experience prosperity and better living standards and then go on hoping to continue the rest of their lives. When they suffer in this harsh mechanism, they become psychologically and physically ruined and indifferent but they still hope for a future because the Dream has influenced them already.

In *Brief Interviews with the Hideous Men*, the interviews give insight into basic human needs and a kind of commentary on the self-awareness of the postmodern individuals. Wallace's narrative style in his novels responded to the twenty-first century literally and culturally. Most of the stories chart the failure of an individual. Although there is failure of communication, responses of the subjects emphasize real communication, comprehension, realization, and awareness through the interviews. This ability of expression leads to post-postmodern attitude which can be achieved by awareness. The third part of the *Adult World*, the term epiphany is used, and the awareness is defined in the psycho-development premises as;

a sudden, life-changing realization, often one that catalyzes a person's emotional maturation. The person, in one blinding flash, 'grows up,' 'comes

of age.’ ‘Put[s] away childish things.’ Releases illusions gone moist and rank from a grip of years’ duration. Becomes, for good or ill, a citizen of reality Wallace (1999, p.66).

In the same part of *Adult World* although it is said that, ‘In reality, genuine epiphanies are extremely rare’ Wallace (1999, p.66) there are still some characters who experience it pretty well. For instance, subject number 36 realizes that he learned how to forgive others and he accepts that he likes himself. He decides to get help after becoming aware of the problems from the violence in the community and counseling center. Another character in the *Yet Another Example of The Porousness of Certain Borders (XI)*, also had an epiphany. He realized that he was dreaming which was according to Adam Kelly an ‘unmediated quality of the dreamy state’ Kelly (2018, p.86) and he was sad to be blind and becomes aware of his situation and says;

I’m with somebody I know but don’t know how I know them, and now this person suddenly points out to me that I’m blind. As in literally blind, unsighted, etc. Or else it’s in the presence of this person that I suddenly realize I’m blind. What happens when I realize this is I get sad. It makes me incredibly sad that I’m blind Wallace (1999, p. 14).

Then he defines its importance. He is now able to see everything around him. He knows where he is and he is not one of the blind anymore. Furthermore, he understood how easy it was to lose the ability to see. In the part ‘*Octet*’, character X is also a father figure who yearns to be liked by others but he cannot be attentive enough to show his concerns either to his family or to his friends. He is in an awareness process in which he feels shame and regret for his ‘obvious selfishness’ which is the ‘evidence of some horrific defect in his human makeup, some kind of hideous central ice where his heart’s nodes of empathy and basic other-directedness are increasingly tormented by shame and self-doubt’ Wallace (1999, p.53). What he is experiencing is very much the same as the other individuals and it is very postmodern. His situation is getting worse and this intensification is very post-postmodern. The alienation brings discomfort and makes the individual tense and less functional. He cannot delete the boundaries of his inner struggle and outer world realities. He wants to connect with his surrounding and form good relationships with the people who are important to him and he is aware that he should do something to become less alone. However, he does not know which way

to go, what to choose and there is no one to show him how to act. Whereas, there are deciders outside to force people to choose from the enjoyable postmodern codes and spend money on the materials that would make a person happier for just a while. Those deciders never help people when they are in need of advice. Literature will be the correct area to push the right button and the honest authors of the post-postmodern idea will offer people a way out without wasting any time on ironies and worthless pleasures. People begin to experience their new realization period which is more optimistic and again full of hope. They can share their new experience with the interviewer freely. Subject K from Ypsilanti Michigan says, 'I'm talking about history being a set of conscious intentional human responses to a whole range of forces of which biology and evolution are a part' Wallace (1999, p.87). The past is important because it valued humans and their reactions. In the past those reactions were humane and real, not hypocritical as in today's self-contradictory environment. The hideous man K. from Ypsilanti Michigan thinks that most of the conflicts may not be resolved easily but the 'postmodern awareness' of the conflict might be solved Wallace (1999,p. 87). Postmodern awareness is repeating itself and does not help people anymore. It turned out to be a nihilist perception. It can be solved with the new point of views and approaches cultivated by optimism. Post-postmodernism can be a better tool in this respect. With their new awareness, people will probably define the American Dream one more time with their new vision. The Dream will be analyzed with its old values again as in the old days. In his essay *The Death of the Author* (1967), Barthes suggests a text oriented approach and it seems to be closely related to the postmodern idea of collapse of meaning and ignorance of the authorial intentions. In the past 'the Author is supposed to feed the book — that is, he pre-exists it, thinks, suffers, lives for it; he maintains with his work the same relation of antecedence a father maintains with his child'. On the contrary, the modern author

'is born simultaneously with his text; he is in no way supplied with a being which precedes or transcends his writing, he is in no way the subject of which his book is the predicate; there is no other time than that of the utterance, and every text is eternally written here and now. This is because (or: it follows that) to write can no longer designate an operation of recording, of observing, of representing, of "painting" (as the Classic writers put it)' Barthes (2001, pp.3-4).

At first, according to Wallace in his essay *Greatly Exaggerated* (1992), the difference between an writer, ‘the person whose choices and actions account for a text’s features’ and an author, ‘an entity whose intentions are taken to be responsible for a text’s meaning’, should be recognized Wallace (1997, p.139). What Wallace intends, is for the sake of the American society because he is mirroring the circumstances to the readers openly and should be taken into consideration for understanding the realities. For Derrida, Heidegger, Mallarmé, and Foucault, language is an environment not only a tool and ‘a writer does not wield language; he is subsumed in it’ Wallace (1997, p.140). In this environment, Wallace offers a clear vision of the postmodern period and tries to make people realize the negativities, troubles, and the reasons behind them. Barthes, Derrida, and Foucault also think that ‘writing is a better animal than speech because it is iterable; it is iterable because it is abstract; and it is abstract because it is a function not of presence but of absence: the reader’s absence when the writer’s writing, and the writer’s absent when the reader’s reading’ Wallace (1997, p.140). Wallace respects both the authors and the readers at the same level. They need each other, authors need readers to observe more and to write their own environment. Readers need authors to create their own meanings through the created environment by doing their own interpretations. Like Barthes (1967), Wallace’s focus is also on the reader. Truth is there in the written form but interpretation is left to the readers. For Wallace, there is a need for the author’s presence because it puts together the existing thoughts and experiences in the process of meaning making. Authors are honestly and sincerely telling their intentions or make their fictional characters tell their own experiences. Wallace depicts his work in detail and presents various possible interpretations while being present there. In the novel *Pale King*, he already announced that he was there by his chapter ‘Author is here’. In Author’s Foreword, Wallace keeps saying that what he write is true. He tries to convince the readers of his own sincerity as, ‘here is the real truth: What follows is substantially true and accurate. At least, it’s mainly true and accurate partial record of what I saw and heard’. Wallace (2011a, p.71). The issues that were covered in the novel do not have to be the truths of the author but what he writes are unique to the period and to society. As an author he is not dictating but associating the common problems with characters and presents them to the readers. With the title ‘Death is not the end’, Wallace warns the readers that the authors are still functioning and their role is still important. In this section, he talks about a fifty-six year old

American poet, a Nobel Laureate who is a significant 'poet two separate American generations have hailed as the voice of their generation' Wallace (1999, p.1). Wallace seems to be distancing himself from the postmodern idea that extracts the authors and alienates them from their societies. Wallace, as do the Classic writers; records, observes, and represents his society, as Barthes writes in *The Death of the Author* (1967) 'the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture' Barthes (2001, p.4).

To extend the idea of authorship, the part 'Octet' reveals Wallace's opinions about how to be a trustworthy author. 'Octet' is a story which deals with receiving 'empathy and community' with the readers. Its 'extreme metafictionality', 'the postmodern narratological modes', and 'the liberal extended footnotes', take over the 'ostensible main text', to show the difficulty of getting away from postmodern irony. The story also shows how difficult being sincere and how convincing other people of this sincerity are Savvas & Coffman (2019, p.199). His ideas in this part also display his own move from postmodernism to post-postmodernism. Due to technology and capitalism, being a fiction writer has become challenging in recent decades. At the beginning of his *Pop Quiz 9*, Wallace wants his readers to imagine that they are 'unfortunately, a fiction writer' after stating the situation in the quiz, he wants them to decide what kind of a writer they want to be and which way they want to follow. He presents the current postmodern situation as:

'the whole mise en scène is too cartoonish, such that it looks as if it's trying to be just grotesquely funny instead of both grotesquely funny and grotesquely serious at the same time, such that any real human urgency in the Quiz's scenario and palpations is obscured by what appears to be just more of the cynical, amusing-ourselves-to-death-type commercial comedy that's already sucked so much felt urgency out of contemporary life in the first place' Wallace (1999, p. 132).

Under the name of irony and within the amusement codes of contemporary disinterestedness, human beings are overlooked and their emotions are neglected. Humans and their values have been commodified in a materialistic system which directs people's attention to the cheap and worthless entertainment ways of postmodernism. However, when the unique aspects of human beings have been deleted, everyone will look the same with the same hopes, fears, and pains. Wallace

compares this case to a party scene, where people are talking about nothing because their distinguishing features were obliterated, so everyone is the same and the party starts to be very boring and turns out to be an 'entropic homeostasis of nakedly self-obsessed sameness' Wallace (1999, p.134). In *Tri-Stan: I Sold Sisse Nar To Ecko*, Wallace defined a new period in which 'History was dead. Linearity was a cul de sac. Novelty was old news. The national I was now about flux & eternal return. Difference in sameness' Wallace (1999, p. 92). Wallace shows how postmodernism is exhausted and has become boring because of its sameness. It does not serve society and literature as it did in the beginning. Postmodernism experimented with various styles but cannot continue to create much more any longer.

As modern people want to be liked by others and try to be likeable, authors as modern people have a passion to be liked by their readers. At this point, Wallace warns and advises authors that they should not think and write in a way just to be liked by the readers. He finds it 'lethal'. Instead of imagining themselves as one of the readers, which would be the 'same potentially disastrous-looking avant-gardy heuristic form just might itself give you a way out of the airless conundrum', the authors should 'empathize' with their reader Wallace (1999, p.57). If a writer does not want to be like a 'manipulative pseudopomo Bullshit Artist who's trying to salvage a fiasco by dropping back to a metadimension and commenting on the fiasco itself' Wallace (1999, p.58). Wallace thinks that a writer has to be 100% honest and has to address the readers directly and ask them explicitly. 'This thing I feel, I can't name it straight out but it seems important, do you feel it too?' Wallace (1999, p.57). If a writer is not completely naked and sincere, the writer will be in a 'pernicious conundrum.' A writer also needs to use the terms sincerely 'without tone-quotes or ironic undercutting or any kind of winking or nudging' Wallace (1999, p.134). Writers will become dangerous mysteries and will not be able to solve the puzzlement and the uncertainties of the period unless they try to defend the realities and show them directly to the readers. Readers want to see writers as someone who is,

'quivering in the mud of the trench with the rest of us, instead of a Writer, whom we imagine to be clean and dry and radiant of command presence and unwavering conviction as he coordinates the whole campaign from back at some gleaming abstract Olympian HQ' Wallace (1999, p. 59).

Wallace tries to find meanings for different situations of the postmodern period such as addiction, family relationships, friendship, authorship, and alienation in 'Octet'. He prepares pop quizzes with various cases to be answered. The answers are never heard in the story. They are left to the readers as Wallace wants his readers to work on the piece of art. At the end of each quiz, he has statements such as, 'Which one lived', 'Is she a good mother', 'Evaluate', 'So decide' Wallace (1999, p. 50-59). He leaves the readers on their own to consider the situations, empathize with the people, and find both moralistic and real answers. He says that an author needs to be very honest and be direct with his readers and ask them questions to gain their real opinions. By asking these questions he shows how honest he is. He also helps his reader to find the hidden meaning and the causes and results of the situations without being an authoritarian figure. He is sincerely asking their opinions.

'Urgent interhuman sameness' is the thing that an author needs Wallace (1999, p. 58). When the human beings and their values are reconsidered, the text, the author, and the fiction will regain the power that was lost in the last decades mostly because of TV and the media. Readers need to be represented and need writers to illuminate them. During the materialistic period which is full of choices, readers are also the individuals who cannot make up their minds to choose what is better for them. The presence of a trustworthy author will be there to observe the culture and present its weakness and strength to society directly. This kind of author will gain respect and maintain his or her presence in the literary field. In this way, the author's writings will be also important for people to evaluate the times they are living in and evaluate the American Dream one more time with a critical point of view and with a new perspective. Individuals will see the reasons and results of economic or political situations and they will be able to ask real and honest questions. They will add value to their success stories in life and remember their values. As authors, they will be respected in their communities and will have clear mind to choose well among the opportunities.

Wallace's call for an honest and sincere literature will also affect people's relationships. Pursuing their dream within an environment of dishonesty and duplicity has never helped people but pursuing the Dream by understanding its good and bad aspects will be beneficial and honest. They will be able to protect themselves from problems that might occur in future. Individuals will have their own responsibility, autonomy, and

will power to decide and make the right decisions. So, the Dream will lose its dominance and stop neglecting them as well as blaming them in case of any failure.

In *Devil is a Busy Man*, there is a man who did something nice to someone else but hides its details and does not want to talk about what and how he did it in order not to cause it to lose its value, which is the right attitude in these kinds of situations. Then, he states that the nice thing was about money and he tried to reveal that he was that person who did that nice thing. He finds his attitude so sly and he says,

‘I showed an unconscious and, seemingly, natural, automatic ability to both deceive myself and other people, which, on the “motivational level,” not only completely emptied the generous thing I tried to do of any true value, and caused me to fail, again, in my attempts to sincerely be what someone would classify as truly a “nice” or “good” person, but, despairingly, cast me in a light to myself which could only be classified as “dark,” “evil,” or “beyond hope of ever sincerely becoming good’ Wallace (1999, p. 71).

Although people have good intentions, they are used to the hypocritical and deceptive nature of the period. Like a protective shield, they consciously behave malevolently and they know that what they do is something wrong. However, they have made no attempt to be well-intentioned and honest. Similarly, Subject #2 from Capitola California admits that he ‘can’t quite seem to push all the way through and actually make the commitment to do a truly serious, future-tense, committed thing with them’ Wallace (1999, p. 34). People are aware of the fact that their relationships are not normal and the reason is their own hesitations and narcissist impulses. For Subject 20 from New Haven, the contemporary life styles have, ‘just-a-cute-pet-bunny *fluffiness* about them that makes it so exceedingly hard to take them seriously or not to end up feeling as if you’re exploiting them in some way’ Wallace (1999, p.111). This is what consumerism and the media create for people, a warm and inviting atmosphere in which the individual will feel comfortable and release stress. This attitude of the last few decades is depicted as; ‘Fluffiness or daffiness or intellectual flaccidity or a somehow smug-seeming naiveté. Choose which ever offends you least’ Wallace (1999, p. 111). People who want to follow these trends just to be accepted and respected in society are not making good choices. If their choices suit them, they should not expect much from life. Making the right decision is an important step in life for Wallace. He says, do not get upset ‘but if

I'm really to explain this to you as requested then I have no choice but to be brutally candid' Wallace (1999, p.111). The main purpose of Wallace as a contemporary author is to be honest at all times. People may not be ready to hear the realities because they are content in their naive condition because it covers everything and forms a dreamy scene and spirit in which people forget about their troubles, and still continue to hope and pursue the American Dream. Unfortunately, the people who are not able choose what is good for them are also unable to realize that they are being used by popular culture. These people,

become the distillate of everything about the culture they deride and define themselves as opposing, the narcissism, the materialism and complacency and unexamined conformity—nor the irony that the blithe teleology of this quote impending New Age is exactly the same cultural permission-slip that Manifest Destiny was, or the Reich or the dialectic of the proletariat or the Cultural Revolution—all the same. And it never even occurs to them their certainty that they are different is what makes them the same Wallace (1999, p.111-112).

People belonging to popular culture think that they are resisting the ongoing situation of the period but in fact they reflect this period and become one of its individuals with their narcissism and consumer craze. They cannot realize the irony of technology and how influential it is on their decisions and acts. They want to be different and they think they are but even this belief that they are different is the same for each and every individual.

Zadith reminds the American writer Henry James' opinion from a century ago that be 'finely aware so as to become richly responsible'. With his tortuous sentences James wants readers to be aware in order to break the rhythm that ignores thinking and Zadith thinks that Wallace follows the same tradition with his sentences. *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* investigates the Jamesian notion that 'fine awareness leads a priori to responsibility' and implies that too much self-awareness results in being less responsible. Awareness is the distinction of Wallace. For him awareness should be more in an 'outward direction, away from the self' Smith (2009, p.246).

The *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* provides a critique of American cultural norms. The hideousness of the interviews is not the 'guile' or the 'sincerity', it is the 'humor and humanity' and readers are 'lured by the inherent seductiveness of allying with a

bully' Himmelheber (2014, p.522). Readers come across several contemporary characters and their social and psychological problems that are put into words by using the first person narrative. These people being interviewed shows the situation of individuals in the postmodern period. Each of them has different reasons behind but no future plans for a solution. Most characters have exaggerated and weird life stories and they express their real stories as if they are alone or talking in front of a mirror. No one cuts them off and the interviewer listens to them silently without judging. The interviewer gives them the opportunity to say a lot about themselves but neither the characters nor the readers, of course, can understand the real thoughts and point of view of the interviewer because the interviewer is inaudible. In this sense, the interviewer resembles America. America also provides opportunities and is very welcoming to people but keeps its silence and never offers solutions to the issues that people suffer from.

In terms of literature, post-postmodernism assists the characters of the novel to state their points in a very detailed way. Readers hear people talking very honestly and sincerely. Their realities are obvious, their problems are clear, and their desires are nearly the same. They want to be heard. David Foster Wallace starts with his ironic postmodern style and frames the placing of the characters with his short weird stories to extract their hidden self thoughts. The realities of postmodern people are shared in an exaggerated post-postmodern way and draw the attention of the readers. If the life stories were not reflected in this abstract and overstated way, they would not get that much attention. The stories are the representations of an ironic depiction of contemporary life. The characters are also ironic because of their self-centeredness and it is not easy for the readers to empathize with them due to their psychosis. In fact, it is also difficult to believe them but the trustworthy narrative of Wallace makes the argument convincing.

3.2. *The Pale King*

Culture is important to form identity and Americanization is a kind of cultural process. To have an identity and for a sense of belonging, people need citizenship with its 'rights and obligations' Akinwumi (2006, p.251). Nationality and belonging to a nation are important for people to feel they are citizens. Citizenship is important to feel a person is an individual (Ghosh, 2013). In the unfinished novel *The Pale King* (2011), there is a lack of social cohesion and civic duty due to taxation, civic and monetary values, U.S. currency, and the images of money. The novel is set in the mid 1980s in 'an era of business deregulations' and 'the death of civics'. The novel represents the conflict in the IRS (Internal Revenue Service), an institution that displays the history of money and the '*troubled nation*' Godden & Szalay (2014, p.1274-1275). It is troubled by its own political and socioeconomic regulations. *The Pale King* is central to understanding the formulations of post-war American identity and its relation to citizenship.

Success is very important for people because it is associated with 'virtue' but the meaning of success has changed and competitive conditions measure success. Hard work and virtue bring more losers than winners. So those who cannot benefit from this competitive environment become abstract and lose their self-portrait (Hochschild, 1996). Through dint of hard work, individual identity starts to distance itself from the idea of the productive citizen. Within this economic system and unequal social relations, citizens fail and become inadequate to polish their inner self. The mental outlook "time is money", welfare, the media, divorce, downsizing, social mobility, economic pressure, inadequate education and the global economy' were the common problems of the individual which led to the loss of community spirit Hayes (1998, p.15). The corporate share is needed to stimulate community service. To help individuals, a tax system should support organizations with a suitable incentive for the purpose of binding the salaries of those at the high and at the lower levels. Both the corporations and the community should benefit from the gains from

automation and innovational labor. However, with the growth of desktop computers and telecommunications, unemployment increased. People were not able to afford health care or pay tax penalties. There was a huge tax burden on individuals from the corporations in the late 1990s (Hayes, 1998).

The American system consists of 'internal improvements, tariff protection, and the bank and land legislation'. The corporation emerged as the apparatus 'by which the common wealth is guided, promoted and supervised'. At first, American corporations were quasi-public agencies serving public needs. They were even sometimes considered as public. For capitalists, public initiative was important for capital gain, industry, and development. Yet, this need declines as the private sector provided its own capital and there was an increase in the number of corporations which led to a change in their nature. Corporations were no longer for public anymore. Thus, American corporations as agents of the state were now free from the state Schlesinger (1999, pp. 223-225).

The early American colonies were accustomed to governmental interference in their economic matters because it was the seventeenth century and they had to survive with their limited resources. However, the American Revolution took place in the eighteenth century due to the restraints of the British mercantilists and it promised them their own mercantilist regime opportunity via the political philosophy of 'civic republicanism with its subordination of individual interests to the public good'. For republicanism, virtue and common wealth were important, but they were also scared of the inordinate self-interest which could result in social decay Schlesinger (1999, p.220). Instead of being a beneficial system, unfortunately, taxes became a troubled life style item as stated in the novel *The Pale King* (2011), by Mr. Glendenning Jr., the Director of the Midwest Regional Examination Center,

If you know the position a person takes on taxes, you can determine [his] whole philosophy. The tax code, once you get to know it, embodies all the essence of [human] life: greed, politics, power, goodness, charity Wallace (2011a, p. 84).

The unfinished novel *The Pale King* has civic and economic issues and deals with civic values as well as civic duties. Wallace's fictional IRS (International Revenue Service) workers concretize the changing nature of money during the events of the financial crisis among the people and the corporations. The International Revenue Service is the

biggest law enforcement agency of the nation, and defends the Americans and makes the nation great with the motto 'Alicui tamen faciendum est', meaning a difficult and complex job to be done and it is done by the IRS workers for you echoing the foremost American slogan 'E pluribus unum', meaning out of many, one. Service has two significant meanings. One is the economical service which is performed by the taxation system and its returns; and the other is the civic service that employees are performing as individuals and serving the system. The present part concerns itself with ideas of American citizenship in a domestic content in the new century. Part §14 in *The Pale King* involves interviews with IRS workers talking about their job, giving their opinions and details about the Service, its history, its challenges, and the changes that were being made. Not the names but the identification numbers of the employees are given in the excerpts. These interviews are done 'to humanize, demystify the Service, help citizens understand how hard and important' the job is and employers are not 'hostile or machine' Wallace (2011a, pp.102-104). The way employers are interviewed is the post-postmodern clue of the novel. As in the *Brief Interview with Hideous Men*, in *The Pale King*, Wallace again uses the same narrative technique to let his characters express themselves. However, this chance is ironic again because they were made to believe that they were businessmen and businesswomen guarding the civic virtue that was their duty as citizens. During the IRS trainings, the employees were asked whether they were cops, civic virtue judges or sadistic bureaucrats that make tax payers (TP's) suffer or not. The answer was 'Nooo'. Another task of the employers was to process information correctly that is to distinguish the necessary information from the unnecessary one with the given criteria. Time is important for them and while evaluating the files, Service wants its employer to spend time only on the promising revenues. For human examiners, intuition and creativity are the two important advantages while deciding on which files to eliminate. Thus, they are restricted in the use of their fundamental human potentials and only serve for the sake of the Service. Regulations and reproduction will be done by machines rather than administrations. In *The Postmodern Condition* Lyotard (1984) points out that these machines need to store the information and he reports that postmodern knowledge is not only 'a tool of the authorities', it also refines the sensitivity to differences and reinforces the ability to tolerate the incommensurable' Lyotard (1984, xxv). According to Lyotard, knowledge and power are closely related and the ruling class decides what

the knowledge is and it becomes the authority, 'the decision-maker' of today's world as they have the right to access the information Lyotard (1984, p.14). Although the examiners are trained, they have no power over their tasks. Like machines, they only keep information and become tools of the system. The IRS as the setting of *The Pale King* symbolizes the bureaucratic world and how it serves the ruling class. In §10 bureaucracy is depicted as 'the only known parasite larger than the organism on which it subsists.' That is the bureaucracy is larger than the thing on which it feeds. With its 'joint rods, pulleys, gears, and levers', it works like a machine and the ones who run the bureaucracy are part of this open system Wallace (2011a, pp.88). In §44, it is said what the truth is - the bureaucracy is the world and if a person wants to achieve success, that person has to 'do good, make a difference, and serve' as well as 'deal with boredom'. The bureaucracy follows the same path as the ideology of the American Dream in terms of achieving success.

People also have to be '*unborable*' in this modern life, this is how Wallace uses the word Wallace (2011a, pp. 439-440). In the interview by Steve Paulson, in *Some Kind of Terrible Burden* in 2004, Wallace says that he finds boredom an important reality of the period. Children and adults both experience this boredom in their daily and professional lives but think that it is an ordinary act of life that they all have to experience (Wallace, 2012). Boredom is a part of the culture and as for Wallace it is one of the codes of the essence of human life from which modern people cannot detach themselves. By being proficient enough and serving the system, the citizens become numb and insensible. In *The Pale King*, the repetitive and boring work patterns of the employees are presented in part §25 at the IRS center. Wallace devotes three double-column pages chapter to show the repetitive work patterns of the workers at the IRS. They are constantly turning pages of the documents.

'Irrelevant' Chris Fogle turns a page. Howard Cardwell turns a page. Ken Wax turns a page. Matt Redgate turns a page. 'Groovy' Bruce Channing attaches a form to a file. Ann Williams turns a page. Anand Singh turns two pages at once by mistake and turns one back which makes a slightly different sound. David Cusk turns a page. Sandra Pounder turns a page. Robert Atkins turns two separate pages of two separate files at the same time' Wallace (2011a, p.312-315).

Without any interaction, they are working assiduously and the only thing they do is turn the page they are analyzing and continue to work in silence. In part §33, an IRS employee resembles a mushroom because both are kept in dark and are fed 'horseshit'. In part §26 there are two ghosts that visit some of the examiners from time to time. One of them is Blumquist who had been found dead late in his office. The other one is Garrity, an inspector who examines decorative mirrors for any possible flaws. For eighteen years, he had very little time, twenty seconds to check each mirror, and in the end he hanged himself. Boredom is not simply a social problem that needs to be overcome, it is a symptom of a deeper crisis in human nature and American culture. Lane Dean Jr.'s struggle with his postmodern boredom of his job at the IRS was depicted in an extreme post-postmodern sense that it was the 'boredom beyond any boredom he'd ever felt.' His existential crisis was so high that he had a feeling of 'a great type of hole and emptiness falling through him' Wallace (2011a, p.379-380). He compares his heart beating to the slow rate of the second hand of the clock. The second hand is aware that its job is just to go around inside a circle many times and nothing much more. In §23 a man's dream depicts the common atmosphere of the IRS office and the attitude of the people clearly. He saw 'foreshortened faces, hopelessness of adulthood, the complex regret, people the most 'alive', looked on in an 'objectless way' or looked like 'blank faces on coins'. He admits that this dream was his psyche which made him think of boredom. When he awakens he realizes that no time has passed even though it was a long dream for him. In the IRS office, if a worker looks at the time, it is a waste of time. If a worker drinks coffee, it might spill on the files. For these reasons neither wearing a watch nor drinking coffee is allowed in the office. They are doing their 'endless small tasks' with their 'avid faces and mindless energy'. Wallace, as all other ordinary Americans, hated and feared bureaucracy. For him they are 'large, grinding, impersonal machines'. He personified bureaucracy as an expressionless person who only does his task by obeying some regulations and rules without communication or listening to any person who tries to interact with Wallace (2011a, pp. 255-262). Postmodern Americans are bored and anxious. The narrator of chapter §23 tells how bored and anxious he was as a child as 'boredom is not what I knew it as—what I knew was that I worried a lot'. He says, on 'wet distended Sunday afternoons' he 'felt the sort of soaring, ceilingless tedium that transcends tedium and becomes worry'. He does not

remember the things that he worried about but he remembers the feeling, and ‘it was an anxiety whose lack of a proper object is what made it horrible, free-floating’, he says. He continues, at school other students were the same, they ‘locked tight inside themselves and an institutional tedium they couldn’t name but had already lost their hearts to’ Wallace (2011a, p. 255-257). Boredom and anxiety function socially culturally and politically in capitalism. Boredom is the modern problem and this theme of boredom resonates with anxiety. In the twenty-first century, boring working condition is the common problem, and boredom in the workplace is one of the themes of *The Pale King* (2011).

In contrast to boredom, attention giving is important because in an informative period with endless flow of data, this is what Wallace wants individuals to do and value. In this way, people can solve the problem of their existential boredom and nihilism. To continue, the culture needs attentive individual. There are characters in the novel who understand the value of paying attention at different points of their lives through different experiences. Drinion and his ability to pay attention is the post-postmodern shift and hope of the period. This way of concentration is a choice and paves the way to awareness and optimism. It is said that ‘Drinion is happy. Ability to pay attention. It turns out that bliss—a second-by-second joy + gratitude at the gift of being alive, conscious —lies on the other side of crushing, crushing boredom’ Wallace (2011a, p. 548). David Cusk, a boy with a sweating problem learns about ‘the terrible power of attention and what you pay attention to’ Wallace (2011a, p.93). Fogle also realizes the importance of attention and says what helped him at the Service was ‘something to do with paying attention and the ability to choose what I paid attention to, and to be aware of that choice, the fact that it’s a choice’ Wallace (2011a, p.189). This power of being interested in, and being in relation to the world gives individuals the ability to require better judgement skills and the ability to make better choices. American citizens must attend to their civic duties and maintaining their freedoms by paying active attention to economic and political policies. Wilber (2001) in his book *No Boundary*, defines the period as ‘today is the ‘age of anxiety’, of ‘future shock’, of epidemic frustration and alienation of boredom in the midst of wealth and meaninglessness in the midst of plenty’ Wilber (2001, p.23). In short, with the rise of a global economy and the computerized society of the postmodern period, the subject becomes a consumer or a worker. Wallace defines the cultural unconscious

nihilist climate in which all individuals live, experience, and bore together. The subjects with little control over their lives feel like they have lost their ability to create and function. This is the major cause of the anxiety, the fragmentation, and the abstraction of the individual. In return, the idea of citizenship has changed due to these factors.

Today, people are like directional receivers, receiving commands and applying them accordingly without questioning. They do not live their own lives. They are experiencing their lives as if they were robots (Firestone, 1970). As a result of this new evolution, the real human beings lose their humanistic attitude; they only serve the system. Citizens have lost their solidity and become abstract. Wallace mentions in his interview with Dave Eggers (2003), that the significant developments in science, art, psychology, and in social areas are too abstract and complex for ordinary citizens to actualize them in their daily lives (Wallace, 2012). In the contemporary manager-worker relationship, workers become the consumed and management is consuming its workforce. The work itself consumes the workers (Hicks, 2009). As people work too much and bore themselves to reach the American Dream, in the novels of Wallace, people have unusual dreams at night. Lane Dean Jr's dream of a stick which keeps breaking but never gets smaller is the position of the American Dream in the society. No matter how frequently it disappoints the individuals, it never fades or disappears. To pursue happiness as American citizens, one of the dreams of individuals was career promotion. In *The Pale King* employees are classified by their identity numbers. For example, in §28 GS-9s want to become GS-11s. GS-11s want to become Auditors; Auditors want to become Supervisors, so on so forth. Like a computer game, employees want to proceed one level higher because this means success and happiness. The American Dream suggests to people that they have to sustain their good work and serve if they desire any achievement. For the Service mentality, surviving is simple: 'Output or Kaput; Supply or Die. Revenue or Au Revoir' Wallace (2011a, p. 348). There was no other choice for citizens. In the new socioeconomic formation 'soft work' is performed in which the economy is maintained by 'software, soft bodies, and soft management techniques'. On the contrary, there is 'hardware' which is the industrial machinery, hard bodies, and the management of command – and – control. 'Soft work collapses the boundaries between worker and consumer, rationality and emotion, publicity and privacy, the

real and unreal, the American and “un-American,” and the managerial and magical’ Hicks (2009, p. 3).

According to Hochschild (1996) for citizens, the American Dream means being in a higher position than the one where he or she began, from childhood, from a previous country, other races or gender, or be better than someone or something that the person is against. Success is competitive and someone’s success implies another’s failure (Hochschild, 1996). When IRS employee Claude Sylvanshine came to Peoria, at the airport first he was impressed because the landscape was ‘so remarkably flat that it was as if the earth here had been stamped on with some cosmic boot, visibility in all directions limited only by the horizon, which was the same general color and texture as the sky and created the specular impression of being in the center of some huge and stagnant body of water, an oceanic impression.’ But then he ‘propelled back in on himself and felt again the edge of the shadow of the wing of Total Terror and Disqualification pass over him’ Wallace (2011a, p.26). This scene represents the arrival of individuals in America and their first impression which is warm and embracing. The oceanic impression is the American Dream with its promises and vast opportunities. Sylvanshine represents the realities and the disillusionment of the Dream and its effects on people. In *The Pale King*, part §2 describes the character Claude Sylvanshine who is an IRS employee and his main aim is to pass the CPA exams to have better opportunities. He also wants to pass this exam for another reason. His roommate Reynolds has advanced to GS-11 before him and Sylvanshine, being a ‘miserable and pathetic GS-9’, feels inferior to him. He was so much under stress that he repeats the word ‘illiterate’ many times unconsciously. This word shows how he considers and compares him to the other employees. Sylvanshine wants to achieve his goal so studies hard as the American Dream demands from individuals in the competitive environment. People blame themselves and this creates psychological and mental burdens for them as they who already have several other responsibilities. People want to achieve and consume to overcome their obstacles and to forget their problems. In §49 it is stated that in the IRS institution, if an employee wants to have a higher position, there are two options to achieve it. One way is showing ‘competence, loyalty, reasonable initiative, interhuman skills’ and the other way is having a noticeable ‘idea or innovation’ Wallace (2011a, p.530). Dr. Lehr as a successful example is the one who got promoted because of his innovative idea which requires

the SS numbers to be included by the taxpayers. In §31 one of the IRS employees, Shinn, hears birds singing and this is naturally a nice thing to happen but he thinks that among the birds these pretty songs might be codes warning the other birds off, and meaning ‘Get away’, ‘This branch is mine!’, ‘This tree is mine! I’ll kill you! Kill, kill!’ These sounds may be for self-protection Wallace (2011a, p.374). The birds are likened to the IRS employees. No matter how hard they work and how difficult their work tasks are, they still want to get a promotion and be in another’s position. In their deep silence they might have self-protective impulses and they still follow their dream in today’s harsh conditions. During the 1970s, Schulman writes,

Americans developed a deeper, more thorough suspicion of the instruments of public life and a more profound disillusionment with the corruption and inefficiency of public institutions. The ideal of social solidarity, the conception of a national community with duties and obligations to one’s fellow citizens, elicited greater skepticism Schulman (2001, p. xv).

Many workers, for whom the American Dream is still valid, are currently disillusioned with the American Dream and they start to reconsider the current pessimism regarding it. In the new economic landscape, people realize the erosion in the quality of business life such as job loss or threats to jobs and are more pessimistic about the American Dream. New employment is often repetitive and employees, after some time, become familiar with their work places and find the change less threatening so there will be no big social changes. The awareness of the individual toward political issues is also observable in part §19. Glendenning worries that the sixties represented the ‘apex’ of the ‘twentieth century’, during when the American ‘utopia’ which had lasted for ‘two hundred years actually worked’ and that which was ‘literally a miracle’ is now broken. For him, if the government and the leaders are ‘weak’, it is because the citizens are also weak and responsible for the situation because of their selfishness. Being ‘citizens, businessmen, and consumers’, he thinks that people ‘expect the government and the law function’ as their ‘conscience’ Wallace (2011a, 135-136). Boswell says,

political rebellions and concurrent expansion of rights and opportunities of the 1960s and the insidious way that corporations co-opted this rebellious impulse for the purposes of marketing, as in the same way like the TV that ‘successfully

seized upon and atrophied the hypocrisy –exploding power of postmodern self-reflexivity Boswell (2012, p.471).

In §19 there is a discussion about US business-minded social criticism by the three IRS employees who were stuck in an elevator. They compare the old spirit of citizens in the sixties to the new one. Today people consciously vote for the politicians and still choose to live in America. However, it is the sense of community which is getting weaker. If they are all in the same boat, each of them has responsibilities in that boat. Employees are aware of the fact that during the sixties, people gained consciousness and questioned authority as they experienced race problems, feministic issues, and Vietnam. Their real duty was to ‘themselves’. On the other hand, as people in the sixties protested the war, they, in a way, paved the way towards ‘selfish individualism’ in that they want to eat all the food of the boat they are sharing. These three IRS employees also reference Jefferson, Madison, Adams, Franklin, and Founding Fathers who built a utopic society with their civic sense which means that they cared not only about themselves but for the nation and its citizens. In today’s spirit, citizens care only for themselves and for the corporations of the system. The others are neglected which goes against the civil sense and citizenship of the past. Taking responsibility, questioning authority, and experiencing social as well as political events would awaken again modern people and help them recognize the values that were rooted in their past. This is the attitude post-postmodernism desires. In *The Pale King* (2011), the IRS workers in part §19 say that the idea of citizenship has changed through the years. For the citizens the government and its law are their ‘conscience or superego’. Americans do not consider themselves as citizens and they do not feel the civic responsibility as a part of the larger system. In §19, it is said that, ‘Voting’ll be unhip: Americans now vote with their wallets. Government’s only cultural role will be as the tyrannical parent we both hate and need’ Wallace (2011a, p.149). Character Fogle in §22 as a non-voting American citizen. He was not interested in news or issues such as ‘Male chauvinist pig, women’s lib, or stagflation’ as were other people who were disorganized and inattentive towards their outer circuit. When it is a matter of rights and privileges they become citizens, even ‘beneficiaries’ who try to get a share of the American Pie as ‘eaters’ but not as ‘makers’ of it Wallace (2011a, p.138). People ‘want and have’ instead of ‘think and make’. Corporations and advertising are good at making that pie

seductive for the citizens. Laying moral and civic obligations on these institutions has been debated since they were just profit machines and they changed the “ideologies” into “fashion” and “attitude”. Human beings should not blame these institutions or take on their attitudes, people have their own obligations. The IRS employees still have a connection with their past and can refer to ideas belonging to the history of their nation and they remember De Tocqueville for whom, it was the nature of the citizens to be a leaf on a tree that they now do not believe in. Today’s citizens are not on the tree but on the ground blowing by the wind yet each time a gust blows, the citizen says, ‘Now I choose to blow this way; this is my decision’ Wallace (2011a, p.144). There is a deep fear in American citizens, everything is rotting away and as time passes they are passing away too. The Substitute teacher character in the novel reflects the new ideological scene of the nation by saying that all accountants wear hats because they are the cowboys of today ‘riding the American range’ as ‘the pie has been made - the contest is now in the slicing’. ‘Gentlemen, you aspire to hold the knife’s angle and depth of cut’ Wallace (2011a, pp. 234-235). Cowboys and pie are American images. Being American has always been important for the citizens since the beginning of modern American history. Accountants feel proud of their American citizenship. These men function for the sake of the country but with values of the new period. Selfish individualism, appreciation of loneliness, and deserting the civic values and togetherness is echoed in the words of the character Substitute who educates the IRS workers and get them ready to serve the tax institution. For the Substitute, the accounting business is ‘heroic’, it is ‘the moral equivalent of war.’

To attend fully to the interests of the client and to balance those interests against the high ethical standards of FASB and extant law-yea, to serve those who care not for service but only for results-this is heroism Wallace (2011a, pp. 230-233).

Substitute thinks that real heroism happens in the absence of any audience, applause, admiration, ovation, or entertainment. People are disinterested. People are alone during the real heroism. It is ‘a quiet, precise, judicious exercise of probity and care’ and that was the world. The old spirit of caring ‘themselves’ is diminished. ‘Childhood’s end. The first of many deaths. Hesitation is natural. Doubt is natural’, says the Substitute Wallace (2011a, pp. 230-233). On the contrary, according to

Poggioli (1968), alienation is 'pathetic and tragic' and no longer 'heroic and dionysian' anymore Hassan (1982, p. 12).

This situation creates silence in art with 'omissions and ambiguity' and the language of silence brings 'autodestruction and self-transcendence' together Hassan (1982, p. 12). Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre consider it to be subjectivity. George Steiner (1967) says, '...until the seventeenth century, the sphere of language encompassed nearly the whole of experience and reality; today, it comprises a narrower domain...' The world of words has shrunk Hassan (1982, p.17). The system in the IRS forced all members to be engaged in a nearly identical state of silence and boredom. Wallace quotes Kierkegaard, 'Strange that boredom, in itself so staid and solid, should have such power to set in motion' Wallace (2011a, p.387). Values like 'efficiency, probity, insight, wisdom' are not the qualities of the bureaucracy anymore in an 'environment that precludes everything vital and human'. It is like 'to breathe... without air' Wallace (2011a, p. 439-440). However, when 'our presence is noted, our name is registered, our views are listened to, our failings are treated with indulgence and our needs are ministered to. And under such care, we flourish' (Botton, 2005). In their amnesic state, people are careless and they only think and work for the sake of the Service under the name of business life. Substitute compares the past with its old spirit members who were the doers, the makers and shows how the idealism has changed as,

Yesterday's hero pushed back at bounds and frontier – he penetrated, tamed, hewed, shaped, made, brought things into being. Yesterday's society's heroes generated facts. For this is what society is - agglomeration of facts Wallace (2011a, p.234).

Fogle's father is one of yesterday's heroes. In §22 Fogle gives details about his father who belongs to the old spirit and works hard for his nation. His father was a cost system supervisor. He read a lot and worked like a robot or a slave and died at the age of forty-nine and had experienced the Depression. He was tamed, made, and left behind. Fogle thinks that his father found his job boring and his books were his escape. His father blamed the adults of the nation for raising such a younger generation and said 'This thing America hath wrought' Wallace (2011a, p.170). For Fogle's father, money and capitalism were equal to freedom. Only the social contract and taxes

bind you, not the buying or selling. Mr. Glendenning shares the same idea and says, 'Real freedom is freedom to obey the law' Wallace (2011a, p.195). Fogle questions his father's thinking practice as well. In their generation he thinks, they had certain rules to follow such as going to work every day without questioning whether they liked their job or not. This vision of thinking, asking yourself questions like 'Do I like my job? Is this really what I want to spend my life doing?' was also a generation gap for him Wallace (2011a, p.193). Both the generations that Fogle and his father belong to; use 'whatever' as a response but with different meaning. The first generation says of their 'lot' in life that they were contented and happier and the latter generation is known for its directedness and carelessness. The new generation also has its 'lots' which do not create happiness. These 'lots' are the opportunities they have but from which they cannot choose and use them for their own benefit. They are lost among a lot of things and their lives and work become meaningless.

Effacement. Sacrifice. Service. To give oneself to the care of others' money – this is effacement, perdurance, sacrifice, honor, doughtiness, valor... Routine, repetition, tedium, monotony, ephemeracy, inconsequence, abstraction, disorder, boredom, angst, ennui – these are the true hero's enemies, and make no mistake, they are fearsome indeed. For they are real Wallace (2011a, p.233).

In this period, institutions require people who obey the rules and respect authority so as to maintain a smoothly functioning system. Today there are two types of employees. The conformists, which are preferred by the Service and the rebellious ones. An IRS employee tells a story about a chained dog to reveal the situation of IRS workers within the system. Due to its dignity the dog is not interested in the "outside" of the constrained area of the yard, as through it was his choice to stay there. This is a good analogy for the IRS workers because they are as chained up as the dog yet not aware of their confinement and continue hardworking for financial and social prosperity. §4 is the part that displays both the disinterestedness of human beings towards others and how hard individuals work and devote themselves to serve the institutions they work for. The scene starts with a newspaper excerpt from the November 17, 1980 issue of the Peoria Journal Star that announces the death of an IRS employee, Frederick Blumquist, age 53, while working in his office and who remained there for four days after his death without being noticed by his twenty-five

colleagues around him. People did not notice him there because they were used to his long working hours. The irony here is that Blumquist was working on the tax affairs of medical partnerships when he had a heart attack. Employees are devoted to other people's money instead caring for the individual as evinced by the character Fogle's statement, 'the entire process was about numbers and money rather than anything like justice, responsibility, and the prevention of further wrongful, public, and totally undignified and pointless deaths' reveals both the criterion of the Service and the economy as well as the social perception of the era Wallace (2011a, p.207). In §27, Personnel aide says that the personnel margin is their new Bible. It shows the amount of salaries, benefits, and housing grants or other costs of the employees which are more important than human beings and their well-beings Wallace (2011a, p. 334). Wallace (2011) tells us that 1985 was a significant year for American taxation and for the Service. There were problems among the traditional or conservative officials who 'find tax and its administration as an arena of social justice and civic virtue' and the 'pragmatic' ones who support 'the market model, efficiency, and a maximum return on the investment of the Service's annual budget' Wallace (2011a, pp. 84-85). For Baudrillard (1989) the new generation is the new software. Happiness or success are not newly discovered strengths for American society as it had already experienced and escaped from the nostalgia, conscience and subconscious of them. This newly emerged generation only focuses on themselves and technical performance. Passion, profit, or prestige does not affect them since business life has turned out to be a kind of showbiz. What the indifferent individuals are experiencing is amnesia in a new adaptation period. So everything is 'clean and perfect' Baudrillard (1989, p.106). Most Americans in *The Pale King* do not know about the details and the conflicts going on within the Service although the changes affect the citizens and their tax obligations. The dullness of the subject of tax policy administration is the main reason of this lack of awareness. The IRS, being a government agency, uses dullness as a 'shield' to protect itself in case of a public riot or political force Wallace (2011a, p.85). Dullness is also a shield for people not only in their workplaces but also in social life. Even in a serious event, people keep their silence and calmness. The reactions are either mild or there are none. In §43, there is news about an explosion of a parked vehicle in front of a District office. It is said that it was a terrorist attack. An opposing view from one of the workers,

Gene Rosebury, is that it was not terrorism; it was simply a reaction of people who wanted to show that they refused to pay their taxes. Another worker, Meredith Rand, says it does not mean that it was terrorism just because she was afraid in a very calm way Wallace (2011a, p. 434). As long as no one pays attention, people will not get interested. There is a contradiction of information, dullness, and irrelevant complexity within the Service. People stay in their amnesic state in a place full of information. For Wallace this silence is dreadful, this 'information society' is not all about information. There is something beyond it. Dullness is painful because it does not create stimulation to disturb others Wallace (2011a, p.87). However, it is easy and controllable to maintain the power of the authority and the system. The IRS workers always deal with taxes and accounting in the same way as mathematicians and cashiers. It is possible for them to go mad and in fact they are already exhibiting various kinds of mental and physical symptoms, some of which are abstractions such as serious withdrawal and isolation from ordinary life. Most people do not use their human faculties at work and focus mainly on their career or future and think about them. In terms of civic participation, the citizenship of the individuals is now an abstract symbolic attachment.

In the part AUTHOR'S FOREWORD, Wallace hints that he is going to write about the abstraction of his characters by saying, 'Author here. Meaning the real author, the living human holding the pencil, not some abstract narrative persona' Wallace (2011a, p. 68). Apart from being the writer of the novel, Wallace is also one of the IRS employees in the book who experiences the level of abstraction. The character David Foster Wallace was confused with a more senior employee David Francis Wallace in the IRS and removed from its database. He disappears in the documents that the employees are dealing with. At first, two employees were considered as one person so the other became abstract. David Foster Wallace melts into David Francis Wallace and in the computer system of the institution, he 'becomes a creature of the system'. The current system swallows the employees. The IRS old guard was a self-righteous 'civil servant' Wallace (2011a, p. 548). Paying tax was a virtue for them. The IRS new guard, on the otherhand, is considered to be good at business since by disregarding the virtues, the only aim of the IRS guard is now to maximize revenue. Francis Wallace represents the older enthusiastic spirit and Foster Wallace as a member of the new system dissolves in the previously respected wisdom which is

‘unreal’ and abstract now. In §14, the IRS and its members are praised and encouraged by the following definition;

IRS is the largest law enforcement agency in the nation. But it is more. In the body politic of the United States of America, many have likened your IRS to the nation’s beating heart, receiving and distributing the resources which allow your federal government to operate effectively in the service and defense of all Americans. ...The lifeblood of this heart: the men and women of today’s IRS Wallace (2011a, p.103).

The employees of the IRS are parts of the mechanism that facilitate the circulation of money like the blood veins in the heart. They function as an instrument and are not considered human beings. They are not tangible bodies but abstract elements of the system. The IRS employers work in their offices filling out the revenue sheets. The employees in the IRS have numerical identities such as G9 or G10. This differentiation indicates that for the Service, the workers are abstract. The workers forget about themselves and keep recording the taxes and payments in silence. They work like parts of a machine and lose their physical nature. They also distance themselves from the task they perform while their only aim and desire is to serve the Service with the hope of getting a promotion and to better their lives.

Like IRS workers filling in the sheets, part §36 in the novel presents a six year old boy with an unusual desire. He touches his body parts and records these parts on a sheet. He wants to reach and press his lips to each inch of his body. He tries hard, by stretching further to touch different parts of his body, but he had some health problems. His doctor also advised him to do stretching for his bodily health and to avoid boredom. In this way, his problems would disappear and his body and mind would be in balance. The doctor also showed him a 3-D model of the human spine which seemed ‘dark, stunted, necrotic, and sad.’ The parts of the body that he had reached and pressed his lips to were tagged on a four-sided chart and then the ink is cleaned off so that the body part only ‘existed’ on the recorded sheet, it is as if the boy is trying to abstract himself from reality. Like the small boy who erases himself from reality, IRS workers are in the process of reducing their human nature without realizing the adverse effects either on their body and mind or even on their souls. Nevertheless, it is their decision and will to choose such a life and to suffer within its circumstances. Among all the opportunities, they prefer to choose this way of life just

to have their career continue and be able to earn enough money to afford their needs. They start to lose their human sensitivity even towards pain, although for people who are experiencing critical health problems, it is a common fallacy that they feel extreme pain, in fact intense pain is not felt if a person is seriously ill or injured. This is the situation of the workers of the IRS. They are not stimulated by the physical and mental problems because they are in such a suffocating position in life that they do not even feel the symptoms and the pain is 'wholly subjective and inaccessible' Wallace (2011a, pp. 398- 404).

Everything was 'fuzzy and abstract for' the character Fogle who was not motivated in his position in life. People feel so 'unreal' that they sometimes have to remind themselves that they are alive as does Fogle in §22 sitting in a room and talking to himself in detail. 'I am in this room right now...I am seated upright in a dark-green easy chair with a cigarette burn on the right armrest. ...The track I am listening to is "The Big Ship"...' Wallace (2011a, p. 184). He worked in various areas but all of them were boring and meaningless. He was the child of divorced parents. He found the situation quite normal as in 1970s America there were numerous such cases and while the children were passive rebels, they were financially dependent on their families. He finds those times, himself, and the Service where he works abstract. Drinion, being an expressionless character is another example of an abstract individual. He is being described as 'Mr. X' for 'Mr. Excitement' who 'is there but in an unusual way; he becomes part of the table's environment, like the air or ambient light'. He admits this by saying, 'I don't think I'm really anything,' 'I don't think so', and he says no one gives him enough attention for it to reach his inside. In Drinion's expressionless face people cannot read anything. He knows that he is an abstract being, for others like a 'corpse', because it is as if 'no part of him touched his clothes on the inside; they just hung on him.' Although he is very silent, rarely speaks, and frequently pauses, he gives his attention to the ones who speak. He is aware of what is going on around him but he abstracts and isolates himself. While paying attention to others, he avoids paying attention to himself Wallace (2011a, p. 450). Similarly, another character who needs attention is Meredith Rand. In §46, as a beautiful woman, Meredith Rand is aware that people give attention to her only because of her physical appearance. She knows that her beauty is powerful but it is more like a prison for her since no one wants to see the "inside" of the beautiful people. As

she wants to be seen and cared about by others she periodically cuts different parts of her body to let her inside out, thus ‘exteriorizing the interior’ Wallace (2011a, p. 508). However, she does not trust the treatment she gets in the hospital. Doctors treat her like a machine and try to understand her condition as a mechanic would. She is aware of the force of appearance and reality, surface, and depth distinctions. In order to be seen she abstracts herself by giving pain to her body because there is a conflict between her inner self and outer performance. In part § 46, Meredith Rand says that one of the negativities of being in a psychological hospital is that,

you gradually start to feel like you have permission to say whatever you’re thinking. You feel like it’s OK...at first feels kind of liberating and good there’s this feeling like no more smiley masks, no more pretending, which feels good, except it gets kind of seductive and dangerous, and actually it can make people worse Wallace (2011a, p.479).

With this note of Meredith’s, the selfishness and hypocrisy of society and the irony that are found in every institution of the country are observable. There is no trust, not even in the hospitals, like in the *Brief Interviews of the Hideous Men*, Depressed People could not trust her therapist. People need expression and sharing but as long as the trust is maintained, the post-postmodern way of life will not actualize its optimistic attitude regarding freedom of speech and better social relations.

The American Dream consists of three essential features; individualism, equal opportunity and success. In the ideology of the American Dream the abstract individual is the one who works hard and overcomes ‘insurmountable odds’ Ghosh (2013, p.8). In *The Pale King*, as an example of the ‘abstract individual’ is the father of the boy who was trying to reach all inches of his body, is also a ‘tortured adult’ Wallace (2011a, p. 406). It means that he still works very hard to improve his living standards because he believes in personal achievement. On his bathroom mirror, some maxims have been written. ‘NO BIRD SOARS TOO HIGH, IF HE SOARS WITH HIS OWN WINGS’, from Blake, ‘IF WE ABDICATE OUR INITIATIVE, WE BECOME PASSIVE-RECEPTIVE VICTIMS OF ON-COMING CIRCUMSTANCES’ from Beecher Foundation, ‘DARE TO ACHIEVE!’ from Napoleon Hill, ‘THE COWARD FLEES EVEN WHEN NO MAN PURSUETH’, from the Bible and ‘WHATEVER YOU CAN DO OR DREAM, YOU CAN BEGIN

IT. BOLDNESS HAS GENIUS, POWER, AND MAGIC IN IT. BEGIN IT NOW!' from Goethe Wallace (2011a, pp. 406-407). These quotations show that people still have dreams and need motivation to maintain the inner desire to achieve their goals in life.

For Ken Wilber, the body is now considered as a property that is now 'mine' not 'me'. The psychic and somatic realms are isolated and this destroys the unity of the personality. The body is responsible for involuntary actions such as heart beat, digestion, hair growth, and blood circulation. On the other hand, the ego is responsible for voluntary actions such as moving and eating which are more recognizable. However, the two halves belong to a single organism 'the body', the total being. When humans feel separated within themselves, the ego thinks it is enchained, feels pain, and suffers and makes to withdraw from the source that causes it which is the body. It is believed that pleasure and happiness cannot be intrinsically in the present and people reach these with the help of outside sources. Sentient human beings hinder their lives by embracing the boundaries that they create themselves. All the so-called identities try to answer the questions: 'Who am I? , What is my real self? and What is my fundamental identity?' People try to reveal their identities with 'this' and nonidentities with 'that'. They draw their boundary lines between self and the not-self. When a person does not expand their self-identity to meet the universe, the complex identity crisis will occur Wilber (2001, p. 4-5). The bodiless doll in §8 is a metaphor for the issues of abstraction and loss of self-identity and an extended version of the boy who tries to remove his body from his soul by touching each inch of his body and recording that point on a piece of paper. The body of the doll has been lost and the body and the head are unaware of each other. They were separated and could not form a single being anymore. Another boy in part §13 has a sweating problem which he at first overlooks. He was 'unself-conscious' about the problem. After realizing his body as an object among other bodies he becomes concrete and conscious. He has fears and he considers himself to be like 'someone in the rain outside a window looking in, but also creepy and disgusting... his true self trying to literally leak out.' Wallace (2011a, pp. 94-101). He abstracts himself from the rest of the environment. He wants to be seen but on the other hand he has secrets to hide from other bodies. He watches himself in front of the mirror waiting for a sweat attack, to see how he is seen outside by the others. However, the mirror was like the mirror in

an endless funhouse. He remembers Franklin Roosevelt's speech, 'The only thing we have to fear is fear itself,' but this does not help him either Wallace (2011a, pp. 97-101). Although he recognizes his problem, he cannot reveal his true self due to his lack of confidence which is rooted in his fears. He is aware of his problem but tries to overlook it by blaming the season and the heat. Then, he considers himself as an 'object-for-others' among others. He has concerns about having sweat attacks all of a sudden but represses the truth. At this point, he has a conscious awareness about his problem. He tries to overcome the situation by not caring but he cannot help himself. In front of the mirror he still objectifies himself as an abstract object. Physically he is there but mentally he is still only abstractly in his environment, like the disconnection of the head from the body of the doll.

The Pale King shows postmodern concerns with its context and reaches the post-postmodern hope with its literary style which forms a relationship between its textuality, context, authorship, and readers. Wallace says,

whether consciously or not, there's always a kind of unspoken contract between a book's author and its reader; and the terms of this contract always depend on certain codes and gestures that the author deploys in order to signal the reader what kind of books it is, i.e., whether it's made up vs. true. And these codes are important, because the subliminal contract for nonfiction is very different from the one for fiction Wallace (2011a, p.75).

Wallace presents his sincerity and honesty while showing the realities of the postmodern period, and presenting its ironies within the cultural codes the author and the readers share. The difference between postmodernism and post-postmodernism is described in the novel in part 22 by Fogle; his classes at school were 'fuzzy and abstract' and they were 'open to interpretation and then those interpretations were open to still more interpretations' Wallace (2011a, p.157). The postmodern years are not so clear for the individual and what post-postmodernism does is to make the vision clearer by providing meaning. Characters have deep ironical reactions and this is the intensifying effect of post-postmodernism. Fogle emphasizes the term "awareness" too much after using the drug Obetrol and becomes hyperaware. Cusk observes himself in front of the mirror as though someone else is watching him. By cutting herself, Meredith also wants 'to leak out' to be seen by her blood. The boy's goal is to

touch his lips to every part of his body and can be read as a reaction to the lack of love and intimacy in his family. He shows himself the necessary affection that he cannot get from his parents. Wallace is very much there and make his presence felt by the readers in the part 'Author is here'. He implies a kind of presence. He both values the readers with his sincere style and the authors by maintaining their presence. The postmodern likeability desire continuous through its post-postmodern efforts. In part § 22, the character Fogle who considers himself a nihilist, starts his own inward journey. Fogle's life is changed by a serious of insights. Characters were attempting to turn into new beings. Fogle says, 'during that whole pathetic, directionless period, I think that deep down I knew that there was more to my life and to myself than just the ordinary psychological impulses for pleasure and vanity that I let drive me' Wallace (2011a, p.189). He states that he found himself, got rid of his childish side, and is now attempting to find his direction in life. Fogle thinks that awareness and thinking are two different practices. He thinks about his own life and his next steps consciously but that was not enough for him. Moreover, he finds major deep thinking as the opposite of awareness and he cannot reach to any conclusion in this way. For him 'accidental thinking' results in better conclusions Wallace (2011a, p.193). He gives St. Paul, Martin Luther, and President Reagan as examples, because for him their lives changed by accident. That is why the death of his father one year before was a major trigger for his quick radical and self-awareness and growth. His father was killed in an accident and it was a 'life-changing' event both for him and his mother. The 'vivid, concrete details' of the accident also made his life vivid. After that, he suddenly realized being a 'human being' Wallace (2011a, p. 216). He compares this awakening to 'something you think you see at the outer periphery of your vision but then can't see when you try to look directly at it. Or like a fragment of memory which you're not sure whether it was real or part of a dream. His new experience is 'vague and diffuse' Wallace (2011a, p. 187). He realizes that he was deeper than he thinks and he understands that he does not recognize himself as a human being either. In the same part §22, Fogle says that his work at the IRS has changed him and his brain. He calls himself a 'lost soul' of which he is not very fond of. His sudden awareness and realization, he says was 'indistinct, dramatic and compelling' Wallace (2011a, p. 226). He started to get to know himself during the five years he spent in the Service. The relation between Fogle and his father was not a close and intimate one. Family

members did not know each other very well and Fogle was well aware of it, and he says,

there was probably much more to him than I was aware of, and I don't remember even realizing how little I knew about him, really, until after he was gone and it was too late. I expect that this sort of regret is typical, as well Wallace (2011a, p.174).

Fogle thought that his father did not like him and he tried 'a dry, sophisticated wittiness' to manage this situation within himself. Parents naturally like their kids but 'liking' and 'enjoying' them are not the same thing Wallace (2011a, p. 211). For Fogle it is a difficult situation for a father and his father must feel guilty. People in the same situation as Fogle experience the same repetitive human emotions in some part of their lives. This feeling of aloofness and regret are very common and becomes ordinary for them. The death of his father leads him to find new purpose. He remembers himself as being like a dead or sleeping person but then he says that he was 'aware of the awareness'. 'What became so intense was my awareness of my own part in it, that I could pay real attention to it' Wallace (2011a, p. 184-185). Fogle, as a nihilist, (which he calls himself) represents the American individual in late capitalist American culture. Like Fogle, most characters have the same realization experience in Wallace's novels. It is beneficial because when the individuals are self-aware, then they will never stop questioning the motives of either themselves or others. As Rychlak (2003) says, Americans are trying to deconstruct common views and create diversity, clarity, and honesty. Individuals have a higher level of awareness and critical thinking that drives them to examine what is going on as opposed to political benefits and one-sidedness Rychlak (2003).

The Pale King is a portrait of bureaucracy in American life in the times of internal struggle and soul-searching and under the pressure of the Service. As a setting for his novel, Wallace chose the IRS Regional Examination Center in Peoria, Illinois, dating in 1985, where his characters are battling the 'terrorizing demons of ordinary life' (Wallace, 2011a, p. xi). In his inward journey, his job in the Service helps Fogle to find direction in his life. He had the material gain, he was among many other colleagues, and starts to understand his own being, which is positive enough for a previously lost person. However, this situation could easily be changed if he does not

give due attention and follow the right path for his future. To experience awareness, like millions of Americans, Fogle and the workers in the IRS are obliged to reconsider their careers, social status, and future because the corporate attitude has changed. There is no guarantee that one's job is safe forever. In the novel, Fogle has awareness experiences in different incidents. Listening to music is one of them. In this awareness experience, he realizes that music is something you either listen to closely or feel the emotions it creates and become aware, or it is merely a noise. The realization and the actualization process depend on the listener.

This song is making me feel both warm and safe.... and also at the same time feeling sad; there's an emptiness at the center of the warmth like the way an empty church or classroom with a lot of windows through which can only see rain on the street is sad, as though right at the center of this safe, enclosed feeling is the seed of emptiness' Wallace (2011a, p. 185).

The music resembles the American Dream in its safety and sadness. The US citizens use the Dream as an escape or a relief but then they recognize its cold and demanding side in which they feel sad and aloof. In this paradoxical nature of the American Dream, in its 'seed of emptiness', people find their own seeds of emptiness. Citizens work and consume to overcome their depressing life and in this limited circle they have illusionary fulfillments. At work or in their social practices, people are in a constant game of competition and comparison. This is how they pursue *their* Dream.

For Wallace 'A Democratic Spirit' involves 'rigor, humility, a sedulous respect for the convictions of others, self-honesty, religious faith and emotional maturity' all of which are difficult to have and cultivate Wallace (2006a, p.72). However, in *The Pale King*, it is said that the underlying problem of citizens is that most Americans are not aware of either the changes that took place after the 1980s, or the effects or impacts these had on their lives. Everything is so obvious but the reason why the citizens are not aware of the 'conflicts, changes, and stakes is that the whole subject of tax policy and administration is dull. Massively, spectacularly dull.' This dullness is good for the government and its institutions to make people follow their policies and serve themselves without any reaction because dullness does not stimulate people and trigger the feelings necessary in order to be able to understand and resist. Although it seems that 'today's so-called 'information society' is just about information', the

institutions are not informative enough and people are not willingly trying to form an awareness of their environment Wallace (2011a, p.85-87). They numb themselves in the new period. They play 'dead' like Toni, the girl in §45 who imitates this state and keeps her eyes open and slows her breathing as if she does not want to see the reality. When her mother was killed in front of her eyes, neither Toni nor the killer reacted because the murderer was convinced that Toni was dead. However, Toni was just holding her eyes open at that time. With her eyes, Toni has barriers between herself and the physical world. Her staring into the world is her way of communicating with the outer world. She is very focused and aware. What the US citizens do is to put their human abilities into the hands of an institution intentionally. In *The Pale King*, in part §19, there is a business-minded social criticism. Citizens put themselves under the control of the government and which in return takes away the autonomy of the individuals. People vote for them, choosing them to decide instead of themselves. Individuals are aware of the fact that the governmental decisions affect them directly, creating barriers while they are pursuing the dream. The individuals are seduced by the governmental institutions but do nothing. As reflected in the novel *The Pale King*:

We cannot stop it... there will be some sort of disaster — depression, hyperinflation— and then it'll be showtime: We'll either wake up and retake our freedom or we'll fall apart utterly. Like Rome—conquerer of its own people Wallace (2011a, p. 133).

People have to understand that the promise of upward mobility of the American Dream cannot be maintain through institutions with their harsh and egoistic policies. The only solution is to be aware of the ongoing system and react against it in order not to get lost and disappear within the system. Individuals need to pay attention to their environment and get rid of their dullness, otherwise they will never retrieve their autonomous nature, and will lose their human faculties and become abstracted in American social life. In fact, American citizens are aware of all the social and economic happenings around them and the psychological ones within their own being. They share the same experiences and feelings as they belong to the same cultural and spiritual background. They know their own mistakes as well. They realize the power of the mechanism that surrounds them and they serve it. This awareness of people is reflected in *The Pale King* part §19 as the following,

I'm talking about the individual US citizen's deep fear, the same basic fear that you and I have and that everybody has except nobody ever talks about it except existentialists in convoluted French prose. Or Pascal. Our smallness, our insignificance and morality, yours and mine, the things that we all spend all our time not thinking about directly, that we are tiny and at the mercy of large forces and that time is always passing and that every day we've lost one more day that will never come back and our childhoods are over and our adolescence and the vigor of youth and soon our adulthood, that everything we see around us all the time is decaying and passing, it's all passing away, and so are we, so am I Wallace (2011a, p.145).

US citizens admit that they have lost enough time and that things are not getting better. They have started to feel more responsible and take some action for the sake of their own lives to reach their dreams. Postmodern American individuals know that the system imposes on them consciously and in return people consciously obey the rules by consuming. This seems to be the only solution to get away from the problems they face. There is no other choice to pursue the American Dream except from experiencing so-called happiness through consumption. They know the situation that they have to live in but feel deprived, and they cannot connect to their inner powerful spirit in order to wake. Their realization is given in *The Pale King* in §19 as;

That everything is on fire, slow fire, and we're all less than a million breaths away from an oblivion more total than we can even bring ourselves to even try to imagine, in fact, probably that's why the manic US obsession with production, produce, produce, impact the world, contribute, shape things, to help distract us from how little and totally insignificant and temporary we are Wallace, (2011a, pp.145-146).

They are slowly dying but they can also slowly come to life again. Overall, they choose a physical or mental escape to limit themselves, to slow down their falling process. In this way, they think they will be able to avoid more terrible happenings. In part §24, Wallace focuses on this meaningfulness of life, work, or even the form of art. If these three are not relevant to reality and provide the truth, they will not serve for people who will not be able to humanize again and instead stay motionless like machines. Characters suffer from the same difficulty verifying reality.

A 100 percent accurate, comprehensive list of the exact size and shape of every blade of grass in my front lawn is ‘true’, but it is not a truth that anyone will have any interest in. What renders the truth meaningful, worthwhile,&c. is its relevance, which in turn requires extraordinary discernment and sensitivity to context, questions of value, and overall point – otherwise we might as well all just be computers downloading raw data to one another Wallace (2011a, p. 261).

Michaelson, part §22 asks three important questions about moral responsibilities and the work people do. The first question is ‘Do workers have a moral obligation to seek meaningful work?’, the second question is, ‘Do employers have an obligation to provide meaningful work?’, and the last question is ‘What makes work (in general, or accounting in particular) meaningful?’ Michaelson (2015, pp.52). Michaelson answers these questions and says that not seeking meaningful work is a moral failure and he gives the wasted life of Fogle before he takes his job seriously as an example. He also thinks that the ‘repetitive tedium’ is tragic as long as boredom is considered ‘a necessary byproduct of productivity’. What’s more, ‘the monetization of meaning is also tragic because of the idea ‘what gets measured, gets done’ Michaelson (2015, p. 62). The employees are nervous and dissatisfied with their positions and incomes at the workplace and their freedom is limited although their work is supposed to lead them to happiness and material ease. An institutional belief system means committing to the rules. Employees do their tasks but with suspicion.

In *The Pale King*, characters begin with their “neurosis”, “obsession”, and sincerity but those narratives are altered by what Wallace calls an “expressive” orientation to a “communicative” orientation Elderon (2014, pp.508-509). Meredith Rand and Chris Fogle, developed their self through the art of narrative which ‘allows these characters to enlarge their ideas of what is possible, to speak their way into new ways of being in the world’ Elderon (2014, p. 519). In *The Pale King*, Wallace writes ‘every red-blooded American in today’s (then) late-Vietnam and Watergate era felt desolate and disillusioned and unmotivated and directionless and lost Wallace (2011a, p. 215). In the novel, through an inquiry into the tax system, bureaucratic heroism, and civic responsibility, it can be understood that civic function has to be reconsidered in America because there is a decline in civic engagement and increase in civil selfishness as classical values lost their meaning. The suspicion towards public institutions, the

decline in civic-mindedness, and the growth of privatization that these historians describe are key concerns for Wallace throughout *The Pale King* West (2018, p. 225). Individuals are living in their unconscious adult worlds but all people need is simple awareness. Wallace says that '*paying attention to what's going on inside me is important*'. That's why 'people who can adjust their natural default-setting this way are often described as being "well adjusted" Wallace (2009, p.7). In *The Pale King* Wallace suggests awareness is such a powerful choice that it works even under the harsh conditions of the postmodern period because 'What we now need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war'; a statement of Fogel's class Wallace (2011a, p.222). What individuals are experiencing in this era is the equivalent of war. The circumstances are so harsh for them, maybe not physically, but mentally they are quite drastic. In part §2, it is said that, 'there was always something disappointing about clouds when you were inside them; they ceased to be clouds at all. It just got really foggy' Wallace (2011a, p16). This expression about the clouds reminds people of the disappointment that the American Dream generates among people. Since people are surrounded by it from their birth and it is within their cultural codes, not realizing it at first, but the Dream stops being a sweet dream especially when a person cannot get satisfaction from its promises. They know that there something is going wrong while pursuing it, but they cannot name it. Although it is a widely recognized theme, it is obvious that success in achieving the American Dream is not within everyone's grasp in the existing social and political, and economic scenes. On the surface, it is the story of the business life of the IRS staff. But at a deeper level, the novel can be read as an initiation into a way of living, where the employees present their feelings and concerns of the period. In the end, they understand that their survival depends on their awareness and realizing their potentialities. *The Pale King* is the 'ironic portrait and parody of a modern workplace'. In terms of work and accounting, it is a new classic, 'destined to endure in the slowly growing canon of literature' Michaelson (2015, pp.54-62).

3.3. Broom of the System

The postmodern condition has affected human lives radically and has become a source for the writings of David Foster Wallace. He said in *This is Water*, his 2005 commencement speech to the graduating class at Kenyon College that,

The world as you experience it is right there in front of you, or behind you, to the left or right of you, on your TV, or your monitor, or whatever. Other people's thoughts and feelings have to be communicated to you somehow, but your own are so immediate, urgent, real — you get the idea' Wallace (2009, p.6).

Everything is real and presented everywhere. The thing is people have to know the best way to look in the right direction by becoming self-aware. However, according to Ken Wilber, people feel trapped within persona which is a false self-image. This feeling of enclosure happens when people deny their own joy and sorrow, tendencies, and desires. When the person resists and becomes the projected shadow, the persona stands opposite to its own shadow. The things that individuals hate are in fact an aspect of their own selves that they refuse to admit. This projection falsifies the reality outside and the feeling within. For personal growth people need to find their symptoms and shadows, and this will lead to an acceptable self-image (Wilber, 2001).

In the unstable postmodern world in which everything is floating and changing rapidly, people find their own way without reference to the past and its elements. New identities are formed within the playfulness of the period. This knowledge is decentered, and so is the subject. There is a new understanding of “culture” and “cultural”. This affects the social forms, relations, and eventually identity itself helped by the media and new cultural practices. The consumer is more autonomous and actively involved in production while disregarding high culture producers and their aesthetics (Edwards & Usher 1994). The postmodern constructivist discovery has its own contradictions in claiming that the truth of others is relative, only ‘mine’ is the absolute truth. For this extreme form of postmodern nihilism, there are no universal truths. Within its infinite mirrors, the postmodern nihilists see only their narcissist egos. Consequently, the self evolves, changes, and produces different

maps at different stages of its own personal growth history. It is constructed by cultures as nothing is pre-given (Wilber, 1996).

For Ryerson (2011) in the introduction to *Fate, Time, and Language* by Wallace, *The Broom of the System* is the fictionalized 'self-obsessed bildungsroman' and its protagonist Lenore is the Wallace whose anxieties are trapped in his mind Cahn, SM & Eckert, M (2011, p.12). *The Broom of the System* is a story about a telephone operator, Lenore Beadsman, her lost grandmother, her father with his food company and a nursing home, her one-legged brother Antichrist, her obsessed and impotent boyfriend Rick, and a pet cockatiel. Apart from being a telephone operator, she must have a capacity, deeply rooted in her femininity, to take part in life. Lenore decides to find her own unique answers to her identity quest and questions her femininity. She has her own purposes in society and in life. She has to think about her future after feeling the emptiness of her life. She needs to find her own image because she is just a function in life. Her functionality is useful for herself to build up a future. Very little was asked of Lenore. So she decides to turn to herself and pay attention to her inner voice to form her own identity. What path Lenore follows as an American woman during her interrogative and questioning, is related to her new and future life. This is the essential issue. While developing her awareness Lenore breaks the chains.

Lenore's discovery is like an act of cultural recollection moving through both physical and mental space. It seems that her boyfriend Rick and her grandmother are the central authorities on Lenore but by the end, she can perform well enough to make her own decisions. She lives in a rich diversity of literature, such as the language and theories of her grandmother, stories of Rick, and analogies which all lead to meaningful human experiences through human suffering. All these stories are mirror-images, both for Lenore and Rick. Basically, Grandma Lenore controls Lenore's personal life and Rick controls her romantic life. Narration and language connect these three people. This is the opportunity for Lenore to narrate her own life. Through the end of the novel, the relationships change. Lenore forms a relation with another man, Lang, and Rick has a relation with another woman, Mindy. Lang was not as pushy as Rick and let Lenore become herself. According to Mayo, Lang, in contrast, 'establishes a more egalitarian relationship between the teller and the recipient of a story, and thereby offers Lenore a "nourishing, redemptive" image of the "suffering"

of loneliness' Mayo (2019, p.7). Lenore feels secure with Lang in comparison to impotent Rick. 'A story can't make you pale, or sick, Rick' Lenore says in 16.1990 /c/ because Rick's assertive power over her starts to fade. Lenore survives thanks to her indirect discourse and brings out her interior outside when the forced manner is gone Wallace (2010, p.337). This is evidence of her power gain. Part 19.1990 shows how Lenore feels better and relieved, and becomes an individual when she is with Lang. She even cries in front of Lang, and this was the first time she had cried in front of others. Lenore's unbalanced relationship with Rick is now balanced with Lang and this is a part of her own becoming.

In the 21st century, the feeling of non-functionality or uselessness of an individual is like the symptom of a disease. In his novel, David Foster Wallace shows how individuals begin to lose their solidity and become abstract people through a process of the mechanism (Godden & Szalay 2014). In this sense, the New World Order affects mostly the individual, and the protagonist Lenore is one of those individuals with a feeling of helplessness and the loss of individual efficacy and control. At the beginning of the novel, Lenore was in great confusion and thought that she was not "real"; she was "abstract" and was being told by others. Lenore could not use language which was an ordinary means of communication enabling human beings to express their mental and psychological states to another being. In the end, she realizes her own self and becomes an actual portrait of an American woman. At the end of the novel, the functionality of the other people in her life diminishes as Lenore's own functionality starts to make sense to her. This is a slow but a straight forward process. Lenore does not have written or recounted stories of her own but her own life story is powerful. That is why it is now uncontrollable by the other characters. While struggling through her transition, Lenore was calm, silent, and patient. Her conflicts assist her to develop her identity. Her silence freed her from her prison. Rick, Grandmother Lenore, Dr. Jay, and Lenore's father all function together for Lenore to help her during her self-actualization process. Lenore is a character who is an aimless individual at the beginning of the novel. Different experiences and her connections with people help her overcome this identity problem and lead to self-awareness. Subjectivity takes its place in Lenore's life after her grandmother gets lost. The physical disappearance and abstraction of her grandmother result in the physical actuation of Lenore as a female individual. Lenore had difficulties in living out her

autonomy at first. Then her grandmother left her and she in turn decided to leave Rick to pursue her American Dream. Like Fogle, Lenore who figures out her self-awareness still can survive and catch the opportunities of the American Dream in the new era via her post-postmodernist attempts. Wallace fosters the concepts of identity and its discovery process for fulfillment through his protagonist Lenore by having her become a form, from formlessness, within an U.S-centric charting.

As an independent woman she is able to form her American image of a woman who survived in this 'promised land' while she is pursuing the Dream. Lenore has to work as a telephone operator to maintain her life although her father has his own business. Lenore, in order to be self-sufficient, works in an ordinary job in which, at least, she is on her own, earns her own income, and experiences her existence without a family, father, or managerial pressure that would be all-controlling of her life. Although she has her freedom, she is a silenced woman. 9.1990 /a/ is a part in which only Lenore's father talks. He asks questions frequently and readers get answers through either his responses or his questions. Her father asks Lenore, 'How is your job? How much money do you have?' Wallace (2010, p.147). Without getting an answer he keeps asking and revealing the educational, and career life details of Lenore to the reader as;

Further thoughts about on the issue we discussed at length the last time I saw you? No? No further thoughts? Planless, still? Distinguished graduate of Oberlin? Most highly educated receptionist and telephone operator in Cleveland history? "The aimlessness". A mindless job, punching numbers and making connections for other people Wallace (2010, p.147).

Like the IRS employers in the novel *The Pale King*, Lenore has a repetitive and boring work pattern and without any hesitation she keeps running round the same circle and it serves to maintain her career and life as an American woman. Representing the male control, her father critiques her marriage and relationships as follows; 'Still no romantic involvement? No?' Finally, as he cannot get any response, he simply concludes with, 'If you do not say anything, I will automatically assume you have money.' He blames her as, 'Aimless and irresponsibility simply take on new forms as time goes by'. 'I see. No real point in discussing it then' Wallace (2010,

p.147). Her father chastises her for being aimless with a good college degree while working at a senseless job.

In postmodern literature, there are two kinds of silence, one is the negative echo of language, 'autodestructive, demonic, nihilist, the second is the positive stillness, that is self-transcendent, sacramental, and plenary' Hassan (1982, p.248). In the short talk between Lenore and her father, although he is talking directly to Lenore, she is never heard. The silence seems to be her decision. Her silence is her own self-control. Lenore rejects her own contextualization as a resistance response. Lenore was not seeking for approval or economic support from a man. However, this does not create any emotional oppression for her. According to the American Dream, education helps a person to rise socially but in Lenore's situation a college degree had little or no impact on her success. She cannot climb up the economic ladder, even though her parental income keeps her at least on the lower rungs. Her loss of control and identity crisis are examples of her downward slide. In the novel, LaVache, who is the brother of the protagonist Lenore, compares this situation to a board game called *Chutes and Ladders*. In the game, players are not dependent on each other. They can take their own actions and all of them start from square zero. They use six-sided die and they proceed either by sliding down the chutes or climbing up the ladders. If the size of the board, die, chutes and ladders change, most likely, the score of the game will also change. In the game, there is an expected number of rolls of the dice for a player to complete but if the side number of the dice increases, then the roll number will decrease. Another factor, additional ladders or chutes could also affect the end of the game. This time the roll number will decrease if a ladder is added but the roll number will increase if a chute is added. This new game with its new landscape and rules, changes the score of the game. Thirdly, if a player does not need to start from square zero as is usually expected, that person will have different moves from the other players (Hochman 2014).

This game is a reflection of the way individuals experience the American Dream. In real life, people also start from a zero beginning, are born and advance through ups and downs. The ladders and chutes of one's life and their sizes are all different. Each person does not experiences exactly the same difficulties. These differences could come about through circumstances, right or wrong decisions, fate, time, parents,

environment, or luck. The broader analysis of this game which Wallace chooses significantly, displays the postmodern human positioning in life. The board game *Chutes and Ladders* reflects the social, economic, and personal landscape. Throughout the game, there are a lot of factors that affect the movements of the players. In this life-like game, players experience inequalities or opportunities as they would in real life. In the survival race of this postmodern generation, the social classes, family background, luck, fate, timing, decisions, gender, education, nationality, skin color, and economics highly affect success. These factors measure the individuals' positions on the ladders or chutes and their rise and fall. If an individual is lucky enough, if the dice are on their side, then they climb to the highest square in the game. People have their own unique highs and lows in life and in the game. For the luckiest ones, there are no chutes in their own game. Circumstances affect one's capacity to move up and every individual hope for achieving upward movement. Both in life and in the game, there are structural changes such as chutes and ladders that people must deal with. Economic upward mobility on the income ladder is an essential condition for the American Dream and individuals are free to take risks to achieve it. Some circumstances increase downward movement; some of them increase the chance of upward movement. The one who is sliding down or climbing up depends on the people's perception. LaVache recalls a Christmas memory of a drawing given by his Grandma Lenore. In the picture, there is a man climbing up a hill with one leg higher than the other representing progress. However, according to Grandma's Wittgenstein ideas, the whole picture could give the opposite sense; either meaning the man is sliding back or going up. People have instant psychological perceptions to conclude and decide. For LaVache, things 'mean whatever you want them to mean. Whatever you want to use them for'. The root of the word '*function*', he says comes from Latin '*func*' which means 'foul-smelling' caused by 'persistent overuse' Wallace (2010, p.246). By not using their human potential individuals cannot keep up with the basic principles of the American Dream. It is no longer obvious who is above or below on the economic and social ladders of the system. People are being used by the system and they think that this is the way to achieve their goals in order to taste the promised happiness. However, people have become useless to do too much work to function excessively.

The novel starts with the self-negation of the protagonist, Lenore. In part 1, 1981, unlike the girls who find themselves pretty and do not care whether their bathrobes are fastened or not there are ‘...girls like Lenore, who don’t think they’re too pretty, tend not to wear makeup, and run track, and wear black Converse sneakers, and keep their bathrobes pretty well fastened at all times’ Wallace (2010, p.4). Lenore’s brother LaVache in 11. 1990 /i/ displays the self-denying nature of Lenore by saying that she does not consider herself “real” which he deduces from her general attitude and Lenore resists by saying, ‘*Who says I don’t think of myself as real?*’ Wallace (2010, p.249). However, she cannot decide upon any differences between the real stories and life.

Jay: Why is a story more up-front than a life?

Lenore: It just seems more honest, somehow.

Jay: Honest meaning closer to the truth?

Lenore: The truth is that there’s no difference between a life and a story? But life pretends to be something more? But it really isn’t more? Wallace (2010, p. 120).

After the dialogue between Jay and Lenore in which they keep discussing whether telling reflects reality or not, Lenore wants to have a shower all of a sudden and Rick thinks that Lenore takes at most eight showers a day. The psychologist Jay considers this hygiene anxiety as an identity anxiety. The pure self gets dirty, become insecure, and confused by others, people lose contact with their own ‘selves’. The hygiene anxiety is the craving to disclose the inside in order to overcome the fear of the outside moving in. Lenore cannot identify, neither can she define nor feel the difference between stories and real life. Lenore’s confusion shows what is written or what is being told is enough for her to believe. There is no need to look for ‘extra-linguistic efficiency’. Lenore gives a fat woman character as an example ‘who was convinced her life was real, then she is. Except what she doesn’t know is that her life isn’t hers. It’s there for a reason’. She was there for an other’s reason without noticing that it is not her own life and she is being used as all women were once used and ‘if she thinks she’s real and not being used, it’s only because the system that educates her and uses her makes her by definition feel real and non-educated and non-used’ The situation of this woman exemplifies the general circumstances of women who experience social oppression and male dominance. But whose reason should

people rely on then, Jay asks, 'she owes her existence to whoever tells?' Wallace (2010, pp.121-122). Lenore answers turning to her Grandma Lenore's ideas that telling is a unique system with a controlling power that embraces everyone in the reading process by creating, limiting, and defining. According to her grandmother, life is words and they are able to kill and create everything.

According to the picture theory Tractatus, the relation between language and the world is referential, nothing more than mimesis which divides people from the external world. So individuals are trapped with their language and cannot meet the outer world. When they think the language is mimetic, they experience a terrible loneliness as well as solipsism (Smith, 2009). Lenore is not content with revealing her emotions and is incapable of expressing herself. She cannot easily get someone into her own zone or her own membrane. For Lenore, it feels like her boyfriend Rick is pinning her to a board. His begging makes her feel depressed. Unlike Rick, Lenore avoids indirect explanations. This silence is a way of self-protection. She asks in part 6, 1990 /b/, 'Could you possibly just wait, for about nine-tenths of a second, while I decide how to tell you? "It's just that the thing I have to tell is, a, unbelievably weird, and I don't even really understand it....'" Wallace (2010, pp.83-84). It is even difficult for her to identify herself and she does not have a powerful discourse regarding the subject matter. In part 11, 1990 /i/ LaVache also says, 'It is my clinical opinion that you, in a perfectly natural defensive reaction to your circumstances, have decided you're not real – of course with Grandma's help' Wallace (2010, p.249). Her Grandma Lenore and her language conflicts are the reasons for Lenore being abstract. As her grandmother, who values language, is influential in Lenore's life, Lenore tries to identify herself with the language but she is unable to proceed beyond the sentences. She lacks direct access to immediate reality because she is trapped by the words. In part 5, 1990 /c/, Lenore's boyfriend, Rick, finds Grandma Lenore difficult, and selfish, someone who indoctrinates Lenore, which he finds harmful. Grandma Lenore's obsession with words is given by Rick's humorous example that if a car is broken, it is a language problem for her. Grandma is a powerful female character and is obsessed with functionality. LaVache thinks that Lenore considers herself unreal as a defensive protection by examining her attitude and Grandma Lenore has a role in Lenore's way of thinking. She makes Lenore think that she is real if she is talked about like a character rather than a person.

In part 8, 1990 /a/ Lenore talks with Dr. Jay and gives some clues about her perception of life. For her, there is no context because there must be things to combine to form a context. Jay understands that the things in her life are not fixed or 'well-hung'. Jay adds she has a life that is not lived but told. Lenore continues by saying, 'living is the telling'. For her, words matter because Grandma told her that 'words can kill and create. Everything'. 'If there is nothing to say about me but what can be said about me', Lenore says Wallace (2010, pp.118-120). The disappearance of grandma is not easy for Lenore and neither the family members nor her boyfriend can understand her deeper feelings about her loss.

Well, now, just imagine how you'd feel if your great-grandmother... were just all the sudden missing, altogether, and was for all you knew lying flat as a wet Saltine on some highway with a tire track in her forehead and her walker now a sort of large trivet, and you'll have an idea of how Lenore Beadsman felt when she was informed that her great-grandmother was missing Wallace (2010, p.31).

Her grandmother affects her emotions, perception, and life just with words, and only by talking to her. Lenore who is under the influence of her grandma says that the existence of her life is what is being told about it.

For linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, any written or spoken word (signifier or signified) is meaningful within its own relations in the linguistic structure of the overall network (Wilber, 2000). In part 21 in 1990, as Reverend Sykes says, working together is better and stronger than individual work because, while working together, language serves as a tool for social practices; it is not just a system of references anymore. It has a power to unite people. The cockatiel Ugolino the Significant talks on behalf of the language. The cockatiel says that it cannot get the meaning of the word 'partnership'. Does it represent an image or a collective act? In which way does Reverend uses it? The word partnership for Reverend is a miracle that brings the 'inside out'. Reliability of words in a linguistic perspective is represented by the new condition of Lenore's bird Vlad which all of a sudden starts to talk. In 7.1990 /b/ readers understand the relationship between Candy and Clint through the bird Vlad who remembers their dialogue and repeats every detail of their conversation. However, Lenore thinks that someone gave to Vlad LSD which is a drug that changes the

perception of reality in part 8, 1990 /a/. When it is taken, it produces deformed images and sounds. So the reader cannot be sure whether Vlad gives the true story about Clint and Candy or not. Words are not kept only in the mind and left at a mental stage. Now their usage has an aim. People and their thoughts are inside out so their reality has changed. According to its usage, a word like 'a broom' has different purposes now. Ugolino says 'use me' and for Reverend to get satisfaction people need to be used and become one of the workers who are 'locked and nourished' Wallace (2010, pp.465-466). His game promises to stop loneliness. Within the society, people overcome loneliness by being participants but this time they are again trapped, together with the others. Individual imprisonment turns out to be a social one. In this respect, as people's reality changed, the reality of the American Dream has also changed. It is either 'using' people or 'being used' by the Americans. It is sometimes advantageous to trust in the reliability of the Dream as a word when it gives hope to individuals. However, when everything starts to fade or fail, the word loses its trustworthiness. When the number of individuals who lose their hopes increases, in the social order the Dream loses its value and its principles are questioned.

Lenore's Grandma represents the old human nature that has been lost in contemporary American society. When she disappeared, the only thing Grandma Lenore left were her memories. The old woman belonged to the generation who form the culture with revolutionary resistance. The members of that generation were the first Americans to dance, smoke, have short hair, and earn money, as women. With the past consciousness and memories, it is difficult for elderly people to settle into the new radically changed order. Her disappearance at the simplest level is an act of subjective decision. Lenore's father talks about the linguistic views of Grandma Lenore and the reason for her escape in part 9, 1990 /c/. He shares one of his memories from the past about the grandmother and the usefulness of language. She demands an answer from him to a question related to a broom. The bristles or the handle, which one is 'more elemental, more fundamental', was the question. When her son chose the bristles as it was were possible to sweep without a handle, 'Aha, that's because you want to sweep with the broom, isn't it? It's because of what you want the broom for, isn't it?' she said angrily. However, if someone wants to break a window, then the handle becomes important. The sequence, 'meaning as

fundamentalness, fundamentalness as use, meaning as use', is what Grandmother Lenore follows Wallace (2010, pp.149-150). Her idea of usefulness depends on the circumstances in which the broom is used. As a student of Wittgenstein it is inevitable for the grandmother to think otherwise. Breaking a window and sweeping are the examples of two different uses of the broom. Since usefulness is highly important for her, she leaves the nursing home where she feels very unhappy and useless. She could neither be the bristles nor the handle. Patients of the nursing home have difficulty in naming objects and the grandmother has significant influence, with her linguistic fashion, on them too. The objects could be understood by their functions. For example, the word 'door' is identified as what people use to go from one room to another, or an abstract thing, 'water', is identified as a drink without color. Through their functions, people with Alzheimer's learn words again. Meanwhile, Grandma Lenore realizes something which is a problem for her. Words have functions, but the patients and the grandmother whom father calls 'the whole pseudo-Wittgensteinian mafia', have no function anymore Wallace (2010, p.151). This leads to loss of identity and consequently to their escape. Grandma Lenore wants to function in life. Lenore and her brother LaVache in part 11.1990 /i/ talk about the possibilities of Grandma Lenore's loss. LaVache who is also called Antichrist, suggests that she went somewhere alone to die because she does not want to show her weakness, her dysfunction or, more simply that she is already dead. Another possibility is she is not actually missing but maybe Lenore herself is missing or their father is lost in his 'industrial void'. Sometimes people need to interpret the situation differently to see the reality. LaVache says, 'Don't just look at it; think about how to look at it. Maybe it... means the opposite of what you think it does, of the way it... looks' Wallace (2010, p.247). The sudden disappearance of Grandma Lenore is a kind of physical abstraction due to dysfunction. When she stopped using her human essence and to produce, she chose to withdraw. The individual cannot take responsibility or behave autonomously without referring to the conventions of society. This situation overall develops a loss of identity. The self is ruined. The grandmother chooses to disappear to slow down her complete failure because her linguistic perception could not confront the reality of the new order.

In *The Broom of the System*, Wallace brings his characters into existence in such a real atmosphere of the very abstract and subjective nature of a human being and the

very real harsh conditions of contemporary culture. At first Lenore's understanding of the world is conditioned by her grandmother and then by her boyfriend Rick. Rick is also influential on Lenore linguistically. Rick is language based and telling is vital for him. If he misses something, he gets crazy and uncomfortable and he admits it in part 6, 1990 /b/ 'I insist that you tell me... The thought of things about you, troubling you, that I don't know about, makes my blood run from my eyes, on the inside' Wallace (2010, pp.83-84). Rick tells stories to Lenore as a way of offering an analogue for both her and his situation. When she confronts the brutality of reality through Rick's stories, she starts to discover her own identity. In the first story told by Rick, Wallace portrays obsessive community members through a male individual suffering from a disease called second-order vanity. He is too concerned about his mental abilities, talents, and physical appearance, and this obsession results in him becoming detached from the girlfriend whom he loves. In part 2 1990 this man 'only gets out of bed when she's off at work...stand in front of the full-length mirror in their bathroom, for hours, gazing at himself in horror, and gently sponging the gray flakes off his increasingly twisted body' Wallace (2010, p.25). These lines show how the love of self is overlooked. The body becomes a disgusting object. The girl, in return, also keeps her distance from him as a means of self-preservation. The man has fears regarding his vanity and rejects treatments that would reveal his disfiguring disease and his weakness. The desire to be admired by others and a great effort to hide the insecure urges create a narcissistic personal disorder. Rick's self-disgust is reflected in this story because he is unable to accept and identify himself. On the contrary, Rick is distancing himself from his desire to reach Lenore. However, Lenore does not get his messages; she is instead seduced by another man, Lang, in the end of the novel. Gradually, a person who is suffering from this disorder starts to become dysfunctional in very much the same way as someone suffering from leprosy. This type of obsession takes a great toll on people in the contemporary era. Just like the leprosy bacteria which reproduces slowly and gradually but goes on to infect cells throughout the body, materialism and the consumerist craze poison change the natural cellular system, firstly of the individual and then society at large. One of the symptoms of leprosy is numbness and loss of sensation. Another symptom of the disease is eye damage which distorts sight and vision, and stops people seeing properly and realizing what is going on as it changes the perception of the

reality around them. Visual impairment, combined with reduced sensation, enables outside powers to easily intervene in your life, and by presenting you with falsehoods and illusions which you in your stricken state find easy to believe. The most visible symptom of leprosy is facial disfigurement; self-expression is finished and with the damage to the skin, the physical environment or society itself is ruined emblematically. It cannot be just a coincidence that Wallace chooses this disease in his novel. He is very much aware of the pathogens of the current system. In nature, an absence of function means death. Contemporary societies have different features than they had in the previous periods in which human beings had tails, body-hair, prehensile toes, and more intense senses. People no longer need them because these features cannot function in today's world. Everything has changed, not only perception and psychology but even the physical aspects of humans through years. Like the man in the story who keeps his distance from his girlfriend, Rick can also not get closer to Lenore because Rick is impotent. This is his abstraction form because he cannot function as a man. He tries to express himself to Lenore just through his stories. His unfortunate situation creates physical and emotional burdens in his relationship with Lenore. Both Rick and Lenore see a therapist but for different reasons. Lenore gets help for her 'disorientation, identity-confusion, and lack of control feeling' Wallace (2010, p.61). Rick on the other hand, even Dr. Jay's interpretations about his sexual dreams upset Rick, still visits his therapists just to get information about Lenore. Rick is an abstract character and tries to become concrete via Lenore. Rick is lost and becomes abstract because of his deep connections to Lenore. In terms of Rick, he cannot figure out his awareness. Lenore was like his American Dream. In part 5.1990 /a/, Rick idealizes Lenore by saying, 'And her eyes. I cannot say what color Lenore Beadsman's eyes are; I cannot look at them; they are the sun to me' Wallace (2010, p.59). Despite the fact that he is the main one who talks and tells, he cannot express or reveal himself emotionally without his stories. He has second order vanity and frequently has weird dreams at nights and in part 8.1990 /h/, he shares the details of his dream with Dr. Jay. According to Dr. Jay's interpretations, Rick's broken 'Inside' is represented by the broken air conditioner. There is too much heat, the 'Outside' is coming in. Sweat makes him dirty and the 'Other' crusts the 'Self' Wallace (2010, p.138). Throughout the novel the therapist Dr. Jay philosophizes about human relations. For him the progress,

desires, and attractions of human beings come from outside effects and he explains this with the membrane theory. He says, 'a flabby membrane is unhealthily permeable, let the Self out to soil the Other-set and the Other-set in to soil the Self' Wallace (2010, p.330). It affects his membrane and Rick feels worried. Rick wants Jay to help him with his impotency problem. Jay's response is significant to reveal Rick's inner desire. He says that with his penis, Rick wants to insert his insides into inside of another. This is represented by the mouse in his dream which finds a way into everything. Dr. Jay continues by saying that Rick is not only his penis, he is more than that as an individual. Rick wants to communicate but also denies that desire to interact with Lenore. His desire destroys the language and his relationship with Lenore. Rick through his weird stories gives away his hidden desires. In the novel, Rick is trapped behind his own membrane. He cannot permeate another membrane so he desires to bring that other person into him. Dr. Jay tries to awaken Rick but instead of searching for his own soul and focusing on his own problems, Rick wants to talk only about Lenore. Rick thinks that his love is enough for both. The possessive character Rick shows the importance of the word 'love' by saying that it is a performative word which makes things real, and so should be expressed explicitly. However for Dr. Jay, Rick cannot actually confronts Lenore's needs because although their networks might have come closer at some point, as in the membrane theory they are, in fact, too distinct from each other. They hit each other and split into different directions. They are not truly and spiritually meant for each other. In part 3.1990 /g/, Rick cannot do his paper work because he is in obsessional brooding when Lenore is not there. He frequently calls, changes his accent or makes outside calls and in part 5.1990 /a/, he admits that he is 'grossly, pathetically, fiercely and completely' in love with Lenore Wallace (2010, p.58). He also cannot believe that his life has turned out to be like this after his divorce. For Rick, Lenore's eyes are the sun. Rick wants to own Lenore who does not even own herself. Rick becomes a whole with Lenore and says, 'Telling stories that are not my own is at this point what I do, after all. With Lenore I am completely and entirely myself' Wallace (2010, p.74). Rick controls the language of the novel. Whenever he wants to talk about himself or tries to show his emotional desire for Lenore, he tells a story in which he is actively involved as the story teller, and Lenore stays passive as the listener. He wants Lenore although he knows that she is unsatisfied in their relationship. He

still tries to maintain her love by exercising. Nevertheless, at the end of the story, when Mindy and Rick are alone in the bedroom in part 21, Mindy confesses that she does not care about the 'context' of Rick and his stories. Rick cannot manipulate Mindy with his language. His linguistic power over both women, Mindy and Lenore, does not work anymore. He might be the man of his Lenore, his words and language, his stories or his own but there is not even a quotation mark to close his statement in 21.1990. /d/ as following, 'I'm a man of my' Wallace (2010, p.467) Being a storyteller, Rick cannot finish his words and this is the sign that Rick could not end his abstraction level and become aware. Rick's last sentence is even incomplete. Mayo says, 'Rick's deformity is often used for comedy, it is also an overt symbol of the novel's concern with the drive to eliminate the emotional pain of solipsistic loneliness via interpersonal connection and romance' Mayo (2019, p.4).

The over-weight character Norman Bombardini is also another incomplete character, one who cannot stop eating and consuming can be interpreted both as a system and as an individual. Bombardini is the large mechanism itself; growing immensely, taking everything inside without any hesitation or concern for the other individuals. Bombardini is the infinite, boundless, overall network. As his huge body like the material world outside is continuously enlarging, his heart that holds the pure emotions of humanity is getting smaller like the contemporary consciousness. As an individual, on the other hand, Bombardini may have his own defense mechanism, enlarging it by eating, that has its boundaries for a personal disclosure and abstraction. In part 6.1990 /a/ Bombardini says he ate time and it does not exist anymore. Baudrillard assumes that an overweight person thinks that he does not have anything and continues eating to ignore his 'fullness' which is a 'homeopathic solution by extermination' Baudrillard (1989, p.38). Bombardini completes his 'lacks' by literally eating.

The Broom of the System (2010) includes another story which tells of sick connections of people and animals because of love. The male character in the story is a man with a love-intensity problem and due to this love-urge, he loses everything. He can easily fall in love, no matter who the other person is. The character has no criteria and he seems to be too extroverted with his possibility to be able to love anyone. On the other hand, the female character of the story is the introvert Thermos woman, who

is pathologically shy and an abstract being. She has a scarf around her neck to hide her unusual secret, a tree toad. She needs to be in the shade or make several little holes in her clothes for the toad to breathe. Her attention is focusing completely on the tree toad and she overlooks her own being.

The tree toad is the mechanism of nonconnection and alienation, the symbol and cause of the Thermos woman's isolation yet it also becomes clear after a while that she is emotionally attached to the tree toad in a very big way, and cares more for it and gives it more attention than she gives herself, there in the privacy of her apartment Wallace (2010, p.188).

This dependence on the toad prevents all other connection with the outer world. She cannot interfere with anyone or the physical world. Each member of her family has one of these unique animal-types within their bodies. They are connected to these creatures but not to anyone outside the family. These animals keep the individuals in their internal worlds, cut their bonds to the external, and lead them into sadness, confusion, and depression. When the extrovert male and the introvert female characters meet, they are unaware of the fact that their lives will change first in a better, then in a terrible way. For the man, to like a woman is more emotional and caring than to love a woman. For both characters, it was a real connection to someone for the first time. Also, after revealing her secret to the man, she wants to connect to the world strongly but she has a great confusion inside of her. She was standing in front of the subway, and so ready to connect to the world that she killed herself. This was the only way to get rid of the tree toad. Spiritually, she is reconnected to the outside now. After her death, the man loses his real connection and goes on to form new but weird connections with men, women, and even children. At the end of the story, no one can find the real connection. Overall, men, women, animals, and life have great connections. If one is missing, the other loses its balance. Animals are frequently used in literature as symbols. In various places, a toad or a frog as a spiritual animal symbolizes spiritual cleansing, awakening, fertility, metamorphosis, prosperity, and even as a prince-to-be. However, when the tree toad is uncovered and seen by another human being, the life of the Thermos woman changes completely. The positive representations of the frog image in ancient cultures worldwide turns out to have a negative connotation - uncleanness in the sight of God - as mentioned in the book of Revelation 16.13. 'And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come

out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.’ Thermos woman is an example of an absence of a self. She got completely lost and became abstract by death.

According to Ken Wilber (2001), modern people have lost their contact with their ‘mystical insight’ and they are oblivious to its importance in the ‘practical reality’. Wilber (2001, p.63). The modern, educated Westerners have lost their direct and social contact in fact repressed it with the transcendence, which has taken away the happiness of today’s contemporary civilization. They separate their ‘self’ from the environment as they fear death because death means no future and they do not want to live without a future. Fear of death causes an ‘intense sensation of time’ and they all live in ‘expectations and unfulfillment’ that’s why they plan for the future all the time, limiting the present time with laments of the past and future hopes. However, the old ‘True Individuals’ had no fear since they were aware of being one with the infinite by transcending the body and mind’ eternally. The present situation should protect people from death so the present should be linked either with the past or the future Wilber (2001, pp.77-80).

People either work or live under the harsh conditions of capitalism and the corporations or go to large cities to search for new ways of earning their living. Some of them on the other hand, leave the big city with the hope of experiencing happiness that would relieve them. The postmodern cities and communities are affected radically in this period and in *The Broom of the System*, Wallace uses East Corinth to give a detailed description of modern cities with their road-networks, highway extensions, settlements, and factories, industrial parks, and mammoths. It creates a sci-fi movie scene with space craft flying over. In East Corinth people and the company owners paint their properties in realistic colors. By this new layer, they try to fulfill a sense of space and form and try to fit in and interact within the city. With a new realistic level, they want to be more visible in the paleness of the city because they are living in created, presented, and artificial surroundings where they are struggling to exist. The governors are bewildered by the investments and developments involving employment, inflation, pollution, and industry. There is softness but no hewing anymore in the state. America has become an industrial park or a mall, unlike its historical background which used to be wilderness, a wasteland.

This contradiction affects the way people live and react. Now they have become complacent and have started to forget their past, as the governor says. Their new plan is to create a desert, The Great Ohio Desert, with white sands and fishing lakes for people to fish again. The initials of the new design signify the name of GOD, the first creator. For Baudrillard (1989), a city as an arbitrary construction represents the diversity between the center and the margin. Deserts are the 'ecstatic critique of culture, an ecstatic form of disappearance' Baudrillard (1989, p.6). Baudrillard states the reasons why creating a desert out of a city would be a great idea in his book *America*. Deserts are alluring because they are still natural and the cities are mobile deserts without depths, desire, origin, or reference. There is a great meaningless neutrality in which aesthetics of bodies, language, and speech, and consequently social relations and psychology have faded away. This is a challenge to nature, culture, meaning, and depth. The dryness and barrenness is celebrated in which disaffection finds its pattern. The American deserts and cities are without history, oases, monuments, centre, intimacy or collectivity but infinite highways with purposeless cars in the hyperreal, technological, soft-mobile period. Deserts have power. If the culture is a desert, everything shines equally but loses its shadow (Baudrillard, 1989). Like Baudrillard, Wallace shares the close representation of the desert. The desert, known as a natural and authentic place, becomes the place of an unnatural and unreal substitution to control the feelings of people. A lot of people have moved to big cities because they are pursuing their dreams. Even if they do the opposite and leave the big city life, they still can not find what they expected. There is another love story in *The Broom of the System*, in part 7, 1990 /c/ a. In this story, the characters choose to do the opposite of what the American Dream promises. There is a handsome man with a temper problem who cannot control his emotions, and a kind woman who suffers from loneliness. They fall in love during a group therapy session. The new love helps them heal. The anger of the man and the melancholy of the woman calm down. As their psychologist recommended, they quit their jobs and start to live outside the city alone in private cabins, unlike the American Dream which demands people own a house. Their new job is significant. They write novels 'about the triumph of strong pure human emotions over the evil group pressures of contemporary collective society' Wallace (2010, p.107). Their two kids had a neurological disorder. As the time goes by, both the man and the

woman start to show the same old symptoms again. Because of the woman's sleeping problem, the younger sibling died as she unconsciously fell asleep on the baby. When the father heard of the incident, he became furious which was his problem from the beginning and hit his son involuntarily. The child fell and hit the gear of the car which then accelerates. They had a terrible accident as they were going to the hospital which is in a distant place with collective mind of the community. The car fell on one of the cabins in which people have been living since they had left the community, and it exploded. The flames around symbolize the anger of the man and the burning car symbolizes the fading of their Dream because the car is an element of the American Dream. When the family moved to the remote place for better living standards, they ended up being isolated and consequently developing mental problems. Americans moved to cities first to become house owners and then for safety, privacy, and freedom. Ironically, this family experience shows the new lifestyle and its consequences. People prefer loneliness and want to have private lives but loneliness causes alienation. When the man and the woman share love, their personal healing process starts. However, when they isolate themselves, the problems, as Wallace writes, which are 'tiny cracks in a beautiful sculpture' come to light again Wallace (2010, p.107). As a result, even if people do not pursue the Dream and try physical abstraction from the cities, they cannot get satisfaction and experience happiness.

Abstraction happens not only within the self but also in social levels and spreads to communities. For instance, individuals in America experience the absence of intimacy. American people work more than they used to and have no true relation with their social environment, especially with their families. Therefore, the breakdown of the family unit and the relations among the family members in American families are also affected negatively by the disorientation and despair of the individual. In *The Broom of the System* (2010) they distribute 'lifelike' masks with FAMILY MEMBER written on each family member before watching TV. They experience an identification process by wearing these masks which create feelings of security, warmth, and belonging among them Wallace (2010, p.166). Similarly, Lenore has never felt as close to her family as she did after her grandmother got lost. She feels more secure after having some meaningful communication with her brother LaVache.

In the new period, everything is televised so problems cannot be ignored. To exemplify, in the novel *The Broom of the System* part 21. 1990 /a/ even the religious elements are televised. The character, Reverend Sykes, tries to unite everyone by using the same old sayings like people are partners with God, the Lord is inside of us, people create a faith circle all together. However, he makes his speech through the TV screen and invites people to touch the screen which he calls the ‘electronic soil’ and place their hands on his head. He promises that people will feel the union with Jesus Christ and within this union they will not be alone Wallace (2010, p. 466). Like in Facebook or Twitter, people come closer to find a remedy for their pains. It is not clear whether they can find the cure but at least by giving effort, instead of being lonely, they become active. As Wallace says, language did not emerge because the hairy ancestors were sitting and doing nothing. Language came into existence to serve some purposes Wallace (2006, p.90). As long as people use language, and share and form meaningful connections, they will benefit from the optimism that post-postmodernism offers and people will feel the satisfaction of hoping again.

In the book *Fate, Time, and Language*, for James Ryerson *The Broom of the System* is considered as Wallace’s ‘most philosophically intriguing’ text and shows his ‘literary-philosophical’ goals. In *The Broom of the System*, Wallace tries to celebrate literature and philosophy Cahn, SM & Eckert, M (2011, p.11). In his remarkable 2005 commencement speech at Kenyon College, David Foster Wallace emphasizes the importance of awareness. Awareness is a significant kind of freedom that is not heard or talked over in the ‘world of winning and achieving and displaying.’ For him, awareness is real, essential, and in fact is hidden around us Wallace (2009, p.13). When people start to use their basic given faculties, they will perform better in life and maintain a linear upward movement to achieve their dreams. Wallace’s characters experience physical and mental abstraction in society or within themselves. This results in hesitation and avoidance in life. Their abstraction experience holds them back from acting. The characters in the beginning start their journeys as lonely and lost characters. For example, Grandma Lenore and Rick are quasi Lenore’s decision-makers. Without them, Lenore cannot identify herself but later in her journey, she starts to perform her own identity and actualize herself and gets rid of the authorities and their dominance in her life. Lenore’s relationship with Lang is her own choice and she was able to regain her ability to be a person again rather than a character in

Rick's discourse. Also, Rick is physically absent for Lenore, through impotence, but exists most vividly in his stories. Rick shares and identifies his personal crisis through his weird stories. His usage of exaggerated stories for communication are post-postmodernist because in the post-postmodernist novel it is important to share in order to be identified with other people in order to be forming an identity. For Rick, his stories are safer because in this way he does not need to reveal himself directly. Rick cannot have the post-postmodern attitude. The way Rick uses his narratives is self-explanatory but the way he deletes or hides himself from the context does not take him further. The abstract description of the characters is the depiction of the alienation of the individual in mass society.

In the book *This is Water* Wallace says, 'it is unimaginably hard to do this, to stay conscious and alive in the adult world day in day out. If you think too much about water, you can forget how to swim' Wallace (2009, p.14). Inner individual templates and beliefs are not like height or shoe-size but like a language that the culture shapes. As in our consciousness state which operates automatically, a person puts the self in the center of the world. Individuals usually rely on the automatic interpretations which are rooted in their default settings. Wallace believes that there are always other possibilities and choices. Each of us worships something but what to worship is the decision which never brings happiness. The trick he says;

is keeping the truth up front in daily consciousness....And the so-called real world will not discourage you from operating on your default settings, because the so-called real world of men and money and power hums merrily along in a pool of fear and anger and frustration and craving and worship of self. Our own present culture has harnessed these forces in ways that have yielded extraordinary wealth and comfort and personal freedom... The alternative is unconsciousness, the default setting, the rat race, the constant gnawing sense of having had, and lost, some infinite thing. The capital-T Truth is about life BEFORE death Wallace (2009, pp.12-14).

In *The Broom of the System*, Grandma Lenore states that which part of the broom individuals choose to be is the essential decision during their survival process. They can either be the bristle or the broom. They can either use or be used. While analyzing the human conditions throughout the three novels, it is observed that

people mainly prefer to be the broom part. They have made attempts to survive and reach their dreams. After they experience their abstraction, first, they have their realization process and later they go through the awareness process which people find very nurturing and understand its value after they have lose it once and then regain it.



4. CONCLUSION

‘I wanted to do something real American, about what it’s like to live in America around the millennium.... There’s something particularly sad about it... It manifests itself as a kind of lostness,’ Wallace says in his interview with Laura Miller in ‘Something Real American’ in 1996 (Wallace, 2012). The uncertainty of the period and personal sadness make it very hard for people to find a real difference between “real” and “unreal”. ‘Worry’ becomes the perceived reality in a market-driven America. Wallace exemplified and articulated the attitudes and anxieties of the postmodern American generation in the deepest and literal sense. As a contemporary writer, he accesses many people; instead of hiding, he reveals their inner motives and make them confront the realities. With David Foster Wallace’s signs, some clues about individuals and their identity crises in developed societies are reread. Using the postmodern tool irony, Wallace questions all grounds to provide deeper understanding. His stories are an experiment in anxiety, absurdity, depression, melancholy, survival, sadness, and madness. The new and different social systems have brought present day anxieties, and Wallace’s characters illustrate the destruction of the self. Both the body has deteriorated as has the soul. Wallace shows the consequences of the ongoing system and the cultural code of America for the near future. The author simply depicts the collective consciousness of the modern individual. Wallace, in his writings, gives a deep sense of the contemporary American scene with its intellectual, cultural, political, and personal aspects.

To begin with, Wallace’s writings are examined with the questions: what is significant about Wallace’s writing? Why does his writing experience arrest readers? David Foster Wallace has a sincere relationship with his readers. He creates the direct grapple within the reader with his difficult moral questions through the climax of his fictional characters. Wallace’s signs reach the reader as they share common codes. That is why

there is a literary connection between Wallace - the producer and the reader – as consumer. In Wallace’s prose, readers become more conscious of the depth of the reading process. For the sake of the American Dream, people have lost their connectedness, and human emotions, such as love and care, during their escape from the self. For this reason, Wallace warns people about the dangers of the lack of moral values and self-emptying and shows a way towards caring both for ourselves and for others. He warns people to be more attentive, aware, and responsible. His books’ sincere treatment of lostness and hopelessness leads to a healthful becoming of self. In a period in which people experience loneliness, Wallace has a great impact on and even healing power for his readers without being an authoritarian figure. He grasps their attention by presenting and analyzing common but hidden universal human traits not by imposing on them. Reading Wallace’s work is a becoming process for readers. This process starts with the author and is transmitted to the reader by fictional characters without losing subjectivity. In the process of reading a Wallace novel there is an indirect strong bond between the author and the reader. The author presents his works, and the readers internalize them.

Wallace as a writer presents the human essence by providing an insight to make both his characters and readers think hard about themselves and over the difficult issues. The characters are aiming for a betterment of their own position. The individual gives a perspective of individuality in postmodernism. Wallace uses the weirdest individuals of a society to show the well-hidden emotions of a human being. His characters exhibit the sheer absurdity of human behavior which mimics the society they live in. The narcissist, the depressed, the psychopath, the lonely, the abstract, the unaware, almost all the marginalized individuals of a society have voices in the novels of David Foster Wallace. His novels emphasize the importance of the autonomy of an individual and the importance of choice. Wallace’s all three books, that have already been evaluated in chapter 3, call attention to the human condition and out of their fragmentation, wholeness is created. He values the qualities of human beings and the capacities of spirits, not any special technical talents. In the becoming process, the self is always struggling with the outside world. Most of the characters are suffering from the same sort of fundamental defect which is either physical abstraction or social isolation and ‘lack of being’ is emphasized in the stories. This lack of being results in self-awareness in most of the characters’ lives. The fragmented narratives of the books,

especially *The Broom of the System* with its disconnected stories and the *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* with its interviews, emphasize the lack of personal intimacy due to their narcissism, insecurities, or hideousness. In Wallace's stories, characters reveal themselves in order to get involved with their communities, and readers also encounter a familiarity with these characters while reading their stories. This aspect helps readers to get over their loneliness.

In the culture of irony, Wallace creates an empathetic mindfulness. Readers come across with various problems through different characters and relate subjectivity of the fiction to their own lives. Readers, through Wallace's fiction, experience both reality and the reality of the self by the human figures presented in the texts. The subjective phenomena of a fictional character depicted deeply by the author reveals another subjective issue of a real person. Through their self-perception, the readers along with the characters of the book, improve themselves and become subjects again. The lonely individuals recognize their experiences or emotions through other fictional characters who cannot pretend to be unaffected by the harsh aspects of contemporary truths. Wallace's writing provides a detailed assessment of the state of American fiction and culture. He questions humanity and its purpose in the twenty-first century and tries to find responses with unexpected and absurd stories. Wallace presents a non-linear structure in his books with his large number of characters and their multiple viewpoints. The novels have recursive structures with narratives and sub-narratives. In the works of David Foster Wallace, human relations are examined by his deep observation through first person narratives, transcripts, counseling sessions, questions, and direct and indirect dialogues. His life questioning is a kind of back-to-basic philosophical question. Wallace's works display a critical approach to this world.

The postmodern people experience the present with its fragments and its consequences. What Wallace does in his writings is, he examines the individual and the world around very deeply to present the new self and the new world order. Wallace's novels emphasize the role of a literature that still provides meaning, and his fiction has a nurturing nature which is tough but caring. It is tough to understand or comprehend, but it tries to suggest solutions for people's loneliness and sadness. Wallace has the skepticism of the efficacy of irony, and he develops an interest in the authenticity of sincerity. Wallace mostly writes about negative feelings of human beings such as

depression, boredom, loneliness, and their struggle within themselves and the world around them. His characters are products of their environment. Each novel provides a different perspective as to how people respond to today's contradictions because the novels take us into the voices of many others. The self-reflective attitudes of the characters in his books provide the reader an understanding of their own self-awareness. Wallace wants to move the readers and achieves his goal by presenting the postmodern uncertainties and the move to optimistic post-postmodernism with his writings and arrests the attention of contemporary readers.

Secondly, the constant influence of culture and the American Dream on citizens of America rely on the two basic questions: how does the cultural landscape affect the individual? Is the American Dream influential in their motives or not? Contemporary culture affects individuals' behavior. It is clearly seen in the three novels of David Foster Wallace that contemporary Western societies are different from the previous times. However, Wallace creates a shared cultural field in his novels. All his works provide the flood of information that people need to characterize the current age. There is a great deal of chaos both in the society and in the inner world of the characters in his novels. People do not know how and where to look. As a result, they get lost. Individuals should know where to aim, and invest their impulses in the correct place, and form their identities to survive. Wallace dramatizes the transition from childhood to adulthood in a culture that depends on entertainment which is used to distract people from the pain of being human and from their survival attempts. Wallace brings the old and the new American spirit together. This new combination is a need for the individuals to both get pleasure in life and to endure the ongoing system. The incomplete postmodern subjects have to go back and reunite with their spiritual power again. They experience different stages while understanding the realities. They sometimes get lost, or become abstract at first. All the absences are representations of withdrawal from life in order to slow down the process for the ultimate ending. Being able to achieve happiness is emphasized by the cultural constraints which drive them into anxiety, self-doubt, and failure. The characters, no matter how lost they get or however much they lack direction and become abstract, still try to reinvent themselves. People withdraw to be completed in order to retrieve again their forgotten abilities. They have ties with the old conventional spirit and the American Dream at the same time. What they do is a kind of self-correction before they restart their path in life to reach their dream and gain worthiness again.

Individuals of today have infinite principles denied from the infinite universe of past and future.

The current reality has brought about variations in the postmodern era regarding the pursuit of happiness. American Dream lost its sense and its pursuit of happiness is now based on the new entertainment forms which are offered as the basic freedom for Americans. The allure of entertainment makes them blind to make good choices and people think that this way of life is their only choice. Although the American Dream presents unlimited opportunities, it signifies nothing but instead creates anxious and bored individuals, so people are seeking comfort and guidance from institutions, not from the Dream. However, as they are dehumanized by the institutions, Americans are not good at making sense of their national identity because there is a common mistrust of the Dream and suspicion about its promises. None of the characters tells a happy story that belongs to their individual American experience. Wallace knows that contemporary Americans have no memories related to the positive side of the Dream. His fictional characters do not talk about issues such as belonging, security, success, or the happiness that the Dream promises. Nevertheless, whether being the main protagonist or the peripheral, each character turns to optimism and at least tries to regain human power, either by forming connections, observing, or rejecting their self-centered manner. Although these characters belong to the period of postmodernism and live beyond nihilism and ironical distance, they can re-form their seriousness and regain their human power by creating their own narrative.

Throughout its history, America has always been a land of opportunities and in the 21st century it is still an opportunity. However, reading the Dream has changed its direction. In the twenty-first century, American experience is still pursuing the American Dream which endures with its faith and optimism in the American consciousness. The Dream, however, needs to be redefined as it is now more accessible to diversity. Although the American Dream is not a new term, it also creates its own skepticism. The skeptical perception of any events in terms of reality or truth is a new cultural condition. Wallace's novels focus on the perception of contemporary individuals towards the idea of the American Dream. There are stories of people who were born into the American Dream and deriving lessons from their mistakes, tried to reach it, or strived for the remaining, and either failed to do it within the existing world

order, or their effort was incomplete. With a new attitude they dream again. The characters do not deal with the power that comes with wealth, instead they are struggling for realization in order to have personal power and a stable social environment. With Emerson's *Self-Reliance*, the idea of self-making had a major role in American culture and Wallace's novels also show that human beings still have power to sustain their optimism even after their personal traumas. The American Dream shifts from external reality to exploration of inner states of awareness of the postmodern protagonists in Wallace's writings. The ones who realize that their selves are fragmented, experience the awareness level. Others, however, who are incapable of surviving, cannot be integrated into their communities. They get detached and even die in the weirdest ways. Wallace's protagonists sometimes try to escape from the impact of the existing system and become silent. Some others try to understand the conditions of contemporary life and the modern subject. Living in the landscape of political chaos and existential confusion, American Dreamers are not the prisoners of a nation anymore.

Wallace emphasizes a new way of seeing and creates a visual history of postmodern America. This new American way of seeing represents the dreams and failures of the ordinary people with their diverse experiences. American people are willing to risk their lives for a pure abstract goal, the American Dream. American Dream has always been a dominant theme in American literature and defines the new country with its culture and citizens and still serves the national literature. People feel the need to fulfill their hopes and quests in different ways. People need inspiration to pursue their happiness in their own personal dreams and throughout the twenty-first century, human beings still pursue their dream to have an ideal life. The American Dream has materialistic, personal, and spiritual pursue. Individuals are experiencing the conflicts between the necessities of the age and their actual needs. Yet the system does not satisfy them nor make them happy, and this leads to them having split lives. The order of the system oppresses each individual and leads them to have fragmented lives. Even though social and business lives keep people distracted from reality, human emotions and desires are still controlled by the American Dream. Wallace's Americans define their own American Dream in different ways as relevant to their own experiences. All the conflicts related to the economy, politics, social, and personal issues have redefined American Dream. Wallace's books provide the reader a nuanced account of political and cultural twenty-first century identity. Wallace's characters frame the new American identity. In

his novels, readers get deeper into the stories and mental states of the characters of the novels. Wallace's characters have various personal, economic, and social reasons as well as deficiencies to choose being abstract. Since they cannot fit into the new mechanism and reach their Dream, they experience contradictions. They either have sick connections, or feel self-disgust and self-hatred. Individuals become aimless while they are on the path to achieve their dream or when they cannot reach it and have failures either of economic liquidity or social disconnection. When there is a confrontation between the old values reality and the new order reality, individuals become dysfunctional. As they do not function in life, they are not complete human beings. This is not because they are dumb or empty, but the dominant cultural norms have had an impact on their living standards and perception. People with shared cultural codes do not feel fully human as long as they cannot fully succeed to reach their American Dream. Wallace depicts ordinary middle class American people and their common experiences such as the fear of unemployment or the threat of a weakening of the social bond due to financial struggles. Meanwhile, their main focus is on maintaining their sanity and they are still trying to be a part of their community as American citizens.

Thirdly, the novels consist of scenes of human experiences, human memories, human consciousness, and mind which are illustrated in the preceding chapters and answer the question: what impact do the postmodernism and post-postmodernism have upon individuals' beliefs about the American Dream and the availability of opportunity in the United States? Postmodernist literature and the postmodernist period can both be respectably analyzed with the Wallace-ian style, language, concepts, and themes. American civic and business life experience has created abstract individuals within the alienation effects of present day America. In response to this environment, some of Wallace's characters extend beyond themselves, develop awareness, and establish their own inner forces for continuity in life. What Wallace does in his writings is a call for a resolution to make people gain the old spirit of patriotism and become American citizens again. Due to economic and social issues, there is less community spirit now. Civic values and duties are being underappreciated. Citizens have been pacified, and they are no longer productive. In this amnesia, Wallace's contribution to social and personal American life will bring about the realization that is necessary to develop people's responsibilities and capabilities to maintain a fuller and a happier American

experience. In *The Pale King*, the lack of intimacy is emphasized by the heavy and harsh conditions of corporate work life. *The Pale King* is a novel of shared values of the Dream with a new unifying consciousness. The novel suggests that civic unity can be regained again. Although IRS workers seem to attain the necessary material gain to maintain the lives that the American Dream demands, looking at the past time they see what they have lost in their quest for betterment. Because of its differences, pluralities, and multiplicities, postmodern society has a new notion of 'citizenship' and the post-modern individual is in a state of gradual disappearance of confidence which leads to individual abstraction. However, as postmodern thought quickly reached into the realms of social life, the postmodern individual understands that being self-aware is the only solution. The idea of citizenship works together with the identity crisis and membership. Characters create themselves from inside out. Nobody judges anyone else but do question their own stories to understand their own existential attitude and struggle. The narratives of his books portray distinct versions of both postmodernism and post-postmodernism. Fogle, the protagonist in *The Pale King* begins to take life and its negative aspects more seriously. Lenore, another protagonist in *The Broom of the System*, at first fails to transcend language to grasp the meaning of life but then tries to overcome her predetermined fate and gradually finds her own purpose in life. Some of the characters are unable to actualize themselves so they cannot experience the post-postmodernist move and stay in their postmodernism as alienated and fragmented beings. With his fragmented and one way stories, Rick in *The Broom of the System* is a postmodern figure who tries hard to get Lenore, but his dream of getting her back never actualizes. Lenore was considered a possession, however she was not attainable for him. In *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, most characters experience epiphanies and they are very contented for their realization ability. The Depressed Person is one of them with her exaggerated awareness. However, she suddenly realized that her connection with others was not honest. With the experiences of his characters, Wallace presents the idea of awakening. Then, by 'doing' people will regain their 'being', and quality will receive its respect, so there will be an improvement within society. Wallace's characters, who for a long time, live in a state of being both subjects and objects, represent the fragmentation and discontinuity of postmodernism and its physical and psychological effects. His characters can capitulate to postmodernist forms because of their disrupted identities and marginal status but then

with the post-postmodern approach, they self-consciously reveal their own “hows” and “whys”. With his characters, Wallace expresses subjectivity and individualism which are one of the major features of both postmodernism and the American Dream.

Wallace’s work uses the postmodern attitude and discourse. The novels turn into bildungsroman in which characters find the self-reflection that marks postmodern writing. David Foster Wallace presents his readers with a new form of literary realism and aesthetic sensibility in contemporary American literature by compelling them to face the realities responsibly and seriously. Wallace successfully highlights the general skepticism, nihilism, ironic detachment and meaninglessness of the period and displays emotional, purposeful, and constructive criticism of literature, social, economic, and political issues. As mentioned in previous sections of this dissertation, for Fokkema (1984), postmodernism is the reflection of the sensibility of the individual, and there is no separation of truth from fiction, past and present, relevant and irrelevant. Wallace’s writings represent the sensibility of the individual as well as embracing all the diversities and voices with no differentiation. There is a transformation in the society, consequently in the self and in the perception of the American Dream due to social, cultural, political, and technological changes in the postmodern era by the postmodern idea and in this respect, according to Hayes (1998), the depth of the self has disappeared. People are under the control of technology, media and government but for a meaningful life, people have to realize their responsibilities. As society deals with technology more, their attitude and social beings are affected and this leads to problems in their personal being and relationships with their environment. The truth is that as Hochschild (1996) thinks the American Dream does not help people understand and become aware of what is going on around them. There is a new economic and social repositioning in America. Nevertheless, for Feldman (2000) the self can still change its construction period, and Hassan (1986) believes in the expansion of the past into the present. Hassan deals with rediscovering the relationship between the spiritual impulse and the daily lives of people (Cioffi 1999). At the turn of the millennium, Wallace’s fiction embraces all these critical ideas and turns its direction to human. Wallace knows that literature has to move the lonely and sad self forward to find the lost essentialism. Providing a deep social insight, Wallace tells the stories about human beings who are trying to experience self-creation. Culturally constructed individuals re-create themselves spiritually. People still have the capacity to understand and

criticize the cultural codes and even change them. In Wallace's novels, through everyday conversations, social and business interactions, and through therapy sessions, characters try to make sense of their lives and they construct their identities with self-interpretations. The individuals in fact are linguistically sufficient to face reality. In all dialogues, there is an attempt at communication or representation.

Wallace's narrative seems to be full of fragmentation, but in the end, all the stories and interviews are in harmony providing a general background, a common setting, and necessary details about the characters and their world. Looking back into the self is the ultimate need in this period so as to tolerate the goings-on and to stand in good condition. Wallace's works show the negative aspects of the postmodern way of living and calls attention to awareness which is the proposed solution. Wallace, in his fiction, attempts to discuss the nexus between the human spirit and the reality codes of the culture of the postmodern period. He brings the spirituality of the past American grain and the postmodern way of life closer because the Dream is valid with its old principles. The issues dealt with in his writings are working together to create a more vivid experience and voice for this generation. Still, this generation has enough time, energy, and fortitude to get a better understanding of how to be a citizen, how to be whole again through their human potential of self-awareness.

Science is revolutionary in the 21st century. The revolution of science was as much of a shock as removing your gloves and finding a lobster claw instead of your fingers (Wilber,2001). The writings of David Foster Wallace are the literary correspondence to this metaphor with its shocking plots and sudden revelations. The novels do not end but repeat as does the mechanical chain of life in which individuals are trying to find a purpose through their circles of life. The cultural context of the novels determine the perception of the characters and Wallace's writings provoke the reader with their hideous characters and their attitudes. The texts of David Foster Wallace reflect the recent past and help to consider where the future may lead. As being extraordinary examples of postmodern fiction, his three novels that are examined in this dissertation present social relations with their distinguished silenced and marginalized characters. David Foster Wallace sees what is around him and keeps it in his mind so as to make meaning out of it or pose the right questions in his novels. In the last decades, there has been the loss of a shared sense of community to see the realities. So people

need to reunite again. In a shorter time with more individuals, Wallace provides various experiences and brings many voices into his writings and tests the boundaries in his novels. Wallace is critiquing the value system of the American Dream, the postmodern period, the post-postmodern turn, and the individuals.

Contrary to the American Dream in which people create and transform their dreams into realities, in the postmodern world, realities have turned into dreams. Now, in the land of opportunity, not the American Dream, but literature with its post-postmodern attitude, provides hope. To maintain his desire, he starts with postmodernism and then makes a transition to post-postmodernism to reconnect to the community and address the individuals of the capitalist system through a suspension of irony. With sincerity, empathy, and realism, Wallace challenges irony. He was aware of the unique ability of fiction to provide access to other's consciousness. In this way, readers focus their attention on similarities not the differences and this leads them to identification and empathy. His fiction is a serious attempt at literature and sincere in its concern for the readers. There is a link between postmodernism and the intensified effects of post-postmodernism. Wallace's characters are examples of the intensification of the self-consciousness of postmodern characters. Wallace depicts the postmodern human condition and with the post-postmodern movement, he shows the transition of the characters. His characters are presented as hollow and they have a sense of emptiness as they were real portraits of fragmented postmodernists in the beginning. Then, Wallace represents post-postmodernism in its desire to express the experiences of individuals because they had difficulties in establishing their identities during the postmodern times. Wallace elevates the importance of subjects with his close examination and effort. He tries to make sense of the new pressures and difficulties. He examines the notion of society in his novels. He tries to draw his readers' attention away from the screen to books and creates a new kinds of connection. Wallace's novels awaken the belief in possibilities of fiction. Authorship and selfhood is valued again. The signs and images of technoculture engage with the social and personal consciousness generating a new relation between subject and culture. In his novels, he attempts to deconstruct man's social anxieties and tries to offer solutions by portraying common problems such as boredom, loneliness, and self-centeredness. Some stories are incomplete without further development. On one hand, there is a realistic evaluation of subjectivity through various characters, and on the other, there is vast

formless postmodernism with its contradictions. The psychological revelations of characters are related to the postmodern narrative. Through his fiction, he depicts today's culture with its codes and values. He has his own narrative style, language, and unique word choice. Dazzling complexities, and the narrative ingenuity of his work are reflections of his artistic style. His precise but dense prose is both alluring and difficult and his writings are defined as meta-fiction, post-humanist, post-modern or post-postmodern by different critics. Postmodernism is a frame for understanding aspects of contemporary American culture throughout this dissertation and post-postmodernism has allowed a positive picture of Wallace's reading of the US culture and citizens.

The twenty-first century with its social, intellectual, and political patterns leads to different relations and responsibilities. The contribution of individuals is highly important to develop the culture, it enriches its quality. At the turn of the twentieth century social status, materialism, and financial gain were the issues associated with the American Dream. Excessive materialism meant happiness. Society altered the original principles and values were misguided by the dream. During the evolution of a society and its culture, the American Dream is shaped and redefined and in this process Wallace's novels critiques and reflects the details of the individuals and their value system. His books provide the flood of information to characterize our age. The only way to survive in this period of postmodern times is to rise above our dreams by cultivating ourselves, our intellectual capacity, and self-worth.

Wallace is baking a bigger American pie for each and every individual. Wallace offers a critique of a society and its consequences on the American experience. Through regret, redemption, alienation, anxiety, boredom, inner emptiness, confusion and loss, while reading David Foster Wallace people will have the contemporary experience of a reawakening from doubt and misdirection. They will have a deeper vision in contemporary America and find the optimism of the human spirit. The American Dream may change again in the future. This change will only be made possible by the correct tendency choice, and the attitude of individuals. Like the American Dream, the national author David Foster Wallace has a binding power for the society. Being a model to mirror the contemporary self, Wallace's fiction has a unifying function. Some sort of spiritual starvation is observable in his novels so American literature deserves the sincerity of its readers. American society is reunited in the works of Wallace.

To conclude, through this research, it has been found out that, Wallace's grasp of American politics, economy, and entertainment culture have made his novels touchstones for the contemporary generation. The literature of David Foster Wallace artfully captures and depicts the American identity and American Dream in the postmodern period and shows how a people and a nation regain their optimism through a post-postmodern attitude. As being one of the latest representatives of the new stage in contemporary American literature, David Foster Wallace is presenting his concerns about postmodernism and through the new sensibility created by the post-postmodernism, he is renewing an interest in American Dream among his readers. As a postmodern writer, he questions the general skepticism of the period and the positioning of the individuals within the system. Also, being considered as one of the post-postmodern writers, he cares for his readers and provides hope and psychological depth for them to maintain a contented and fulfilled life as the American Dream offers. Through Wallace's fiction, it is possible to see that although the Dream has been challenged by the excessive materialism and the corruption of the fundamental values, individuals are still trying to actualize their own dreams in the last decades. As a culturally and politically aware writer, Wallace has the hope of a re-emergence of sincerity in contemporary American society. That is why Wallace does not humiliate or criticize anything about the American Dream. He reacts to its irony and disillusion with his own irony and his own way. Wallace, through his sincerity, suggests a new form of honesty as a possible solution after the age of irony. Wallace makes his readers to reconsider their already established myth, the American Dream one more time in broader cultural contexts of his books, and he reminds his readers their spiritual guide and its morally enhancing function. No matter how postmodernism and post-postmodernism influence people, the American Dream is going to be rooted in the lives of Americans as it is an inspirational experience for them.

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