

Word: A Post-Postmodern Redemption of the Meaning and the Word

by

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Two decades into the twenty first century, a significant change in literature, art, and culture in general, is afoot. Mary Holland, in her introduction to *Succeeding Postmodernism*, argues that there is a need to address the fact, “that literature emerging today is recognizably different from what we have come to define as ‘postmodern’” (11). The first step towards outlining and defining the term is to acknowledge that there is a change and rupture of the pattern that defined previous literary conventions. Stephen Burns, a contemporary literary theorist, notes this shift, and the end of Postmodernism, “From the very start of the 1990s both critics and writers seemed eager to draw a line under the postmodern era in the hope of defining a new imaginative space for fiction” (10). This need to define a new space comes from the recognition that the nature and the tone of literature and culture has vastly changed and departed from the twentieth and the early twenty-first century. Realism became reality, magic realism transformed to meta-fiction, irony intensified and the form of each medium- especially in literature- became the source of irony. After Postmodernism, literature took a leap in the direction of amplifying and executing the characteristics of Postmodernism and manifesting them to heighten the reader experience and make the reading experience more interactive. The formulation of textuality is like the greeting cards that pops open to unfold a 3-dimensional figure out of a one-dimensional plane of paper.

In this thesis, I wish to draw a theoretical frame-work that establishes this visceral characteristic of Post-Postmodern literature. In the literature that has come to be defined as Post-Postmodernism (more so contemporary literature), there is a sense of reclaiming the meaning of the modern word, much like embedded meaning in the adamic word. This contemporary literature is shaping a language that fills in what Althusser calls the arbitrary link between the

word and the meaning. Consciously or unconsciously, there has been an attempt to unfold the word in its own meaning and to form the word through the meaning, therefore diminishing any scope of ambiguity or disconnect. I wish to map this transition of the word from being logocentric in Derridean terms to being more visceral and material post the Postmodern age. To form the basis of this argument, I have chosen two contemporary novels: Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, focusing more on Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*. These texts are used to exemplify literature's attempts to embody the meaning of the word in the word itself. These texts exhibit the traits that scholars have come to identify as defining Post-Postmodernism. Critics have listed these traits that define the term but have often failed to demonstrate the affect these traits have on not just the readers but on the functionality of the text itself. This functionality includes the text's ability to interact with the universe in which it is read. While identifying literatures as Post-Postmodern based on features like meta-narrative, author-narrative, use of quantum physics etc. are intuitive and aid in defining the term, the application and implication of these characters is what shapes the understanding of the term.

Post-Postmodernism?

Critics have come to a general consensus on certain characteristics that may help define Post-Postmodernism. Before delving into this, it is imperative to note that while Postmodernism seems to have died a slow death, the characteristics of Postmodernism are traceable in Post-Postmodern literature as those of Modernism are seen in Postmodernism. These traits are the connecting link between a transitioning literature and age, that form a zeitgeist. According to Andrew Hoberek, one of the ways of determining the change is to note what he calls the "demise" of Postmodernism; he quotes Minsoo Kang who claims, "there's no surer sign of an intellectual idea's final demise than its total appropriation by mass culture" (233). Hoberek adds to this

proposition: “Mass culture itself had appropriated the aesthetics of postmodernism” (233). It is not just the appropriation by the mainstream but also the lack of resemblance, “the current state of fiction-in which postmodernism in the strong sense constitutes just one, no longer particularly privileged stylistic option among any-in fact resembles nothing so much as the state that followed the triumphant years of modernism” (Hoberek 234).

Once this change was established, there were attempts to define the term. Some scholars try to define the term by using factors like temporality or the formal qualities of the text. Hoberek quotes Irving Howe’s definition of postmodernism, “for Howe the postmodern remains a temporal rather than a formal category: he defines it with reference to an external condition” (235). Defining Post-Postmodernism only by this temporal factor is dubious because time is not the only factor that qualifies a definition of the term Post-Postmodernism, especially because it is a term that is transgenerational. We will need to broaden our parameters and make the defining borders porous in order to let newer forms and styles embody the term. More specifically, Post-Postmodernist fiction must both depart from the ways of Postmodernism and also have its own specific features that may be characteristic to the particular form. To further this premise, it stands true of Post-Postmodernism as it would for any school of philosophy that, “postmodernism retrospectively transformed our understanding of modernism; the same will be inevitably true of whatever succeeds postmodernism” (Hoberek 240). Stylistic and formalistic choices made by contemporary writers to employ techniques like meta-narrative, author-narrative, materiality, textuality etc. as an essential part of story-telling, helps to make this distinction.

Here as can be noticed, there is a conscious effort made not to limit the concept of or the definition of what constitutes Post-Postmodernism in terms of ‘age’. That is so because Post-

Postmodernism goes beyond temporality in terms of the devices that are employed. I will be elaborating this thought and its implications later in the paper. Holland notes, “it (Post-Postmodern literature) displays a new faith in language and certainty about the novel’s ability to engage in humanist pursuits that have been seen clearly since poststructuralism shattered both in the middle of the last century” (1-2). Characteristic to Post-Postmodernism is its vehement need to bridge the arbitrary gap between the meaning and the word, thus bringing back meaning to the word that Postmodernism had disregarded. In short, Post-Postmodernism is not nihilist or existentialist; if anything, it uses these concepts to undermine them. There is a sense of hope and forward movement and meaning, it gives a sense of regaining the lost ‘telos’.

One of the key factors to regaining this *telos* is the paradoxical humanistic approach that Post-Postmodern literature adapts. It brings Renaissance humanism back to literature that was lost to Modernism. It is a humanism after Postmodernism, which is more optimistic, has an emotional appeal and also connects the human back to society and makes them a part of it, unlike Postmodernism. Post-Postmodernism in this capacity uses language as a medium, a device to depict the human – this is at the heart of Post-Postmodernism. This also makes Post-Postmodernism phenomenological in nature. There are more cultural and social commentaries that effect the human in these texts compared to Postmodern or Modern texts. The anthropological perspective shift of the literature adds to the conceptualization of it, defying the anti-humanistic approach of Postmodernism. Mary Holland claims that, “More recently, arguments for a return to humanism have begun to assert themselves not so much as a counter arguments to a prevailing din of antihumanism but as unapologetic assertions of our inarguable need to work and think and write from the position of what matters, and, better, that there are things that do matter, things we can know and agree on” (5). It is noted that in the twentieth

century, various schools of Philosophy drifted away from a human-centric criticism to a wider approach of criticism with the advent of Post-colonial, Postmodern, and Feminist theories which focus on the sociological aspect of the structure of the system and systemic hegemony.

Critics of Post-Postmodernism, like most, are often caught in the trend to define the term on the basis of when the literature is/was written, for example, the Modern age and the literature of this period defined as Modernist. Temporality in that sense becomes a huge part of what constitutes an understanding and defining of the term. This categorization may have been a more accurate method to define the literature of this period too, but it is clearly not applicable. Contemporary art and literature more often than not are categorized based on characteristic traits they exhibit and not when they are produced or consumed. As for Post-Postmodernism, the characteristics which generally define the concept are more prominent than the temporality in defining the term. Having said that, time does play a part in coining the term. This is true in saying that the 'Post' in Post-Postmodernism is crucial as it follows Postmodernism and marks a break in the trend that came to be known as Postmodernism. It can be said assertively that the temporality used to define the term ends here. The traits of literature take prominence, and I further explore this premise in this paper. In trying to define Post-Postmodernism, one of the obstacles – which is also the most interesting aspect of it – is that it is not rigid, not yet compartmentalized or restricted. It borrows, remakes and recycles the literary devices that have been dismissed along with generating new forms and devices.

While Postmodernism refutes the use of irony, Post-Postmodernism as a form of a response, revokes irony from the structural blind spots of Modernism. Nor does it refuse the arbitrary nature of the word and meaning relationship, instead it uses this difference as a means to solve the problem of arbitrariness. Interestingly, Post-Postmodernism uses the word to bridge

the gap between the word and meaning. “Literature today remains postmodern in its assumptions about the culture and world from which it arises, and remains Poststructural in its assumptions about the arbitrariness and problems of language, and yet still uses this postmodernism and poststructuralism to humanist ends” (Holland 17) because it uses its own device to defy itself, critics believe that, “we are seeing not the end of postmodernism, but its belated success” (Holland17). This gives rise to enquires that lead to questioning the characteristics of and what constitutes of Post-Postmodernism. There is no way of answering this question without a close reading of the texts by applying the devices that define Post-Postmodernism. The aspect that I want to look at specifically is rehumanizing as a characteristic of Post-Postmodernism by employing these devices. This means analyzing two specific aspects of *Telos*, namely ‘materiality’ and ‘word’, each of which will be talked about in depth.

Post-Postmodernism as a concept can be divided into various characteristics that it deploys to engage the reader. The advent of features like author-narrator (though not invented by Post-Postmodern writers) wherein the line that distinguishes the author and narrator are blurred, meta-fiction, materiality, quantum physics are few of the characteristics that may define the term. The materiality of these characteristics has a greater role in shaping the literature and more or less all the other features are linked to materiality. Mediation then becomes a key aspect of creating a narrative that translates through various sections. Mediation could be through a text, picture, video, memory or a dream or even technology. Post-Postmodernism makes the most of the advantage it has of the modern world especially that of technology; use of technology lets the author artistically reinvent the structure and textuality of the novel. One way or the other, materiality forms the basis of the narrative structure of the literature. Mediation and materiality are intertwined; in effect, materiality is executed via mediation. Books, audiences or multiple

narrators are not only the means of mediation in these texts but also, they transform and evolve through the text.

Materiality

The use of materiality makes the novel a fertile plane where authors are able to plant the material only later to use it as a mode to connect the narratives. The text's ability to reach out beyond the pages and the written word is remarkable. The book comes to life, the characters come to life, they become human (elaborately discussed in the following section on humanism). This defies the logocentric supremacy of the assumed meaning of the word. Materiality as a form of subversion is effective and radical. It adds value to the commodity that is a book, and, moreover, turns it into an object that lives and breathes with real life consequences. Materiality brings forth the textual nature of the book and turns it into an active agent that interacts with the readers. Post-Postmodern literature makes the experience of reading about reading a book heightened and vivid. It makes the reader aware of the conscious choice that the person is making toward the act of reading. Here Post-Postmodernism turns the books into literary ergonomical devices that aid the readers who become aware of the texture and the weight of the books that they are holding. The words of the book in this case transcend into the 'real' world, blurring the line between what is fiction and not fiction.

One of the reasons why critics are unable to mark a point of the death of Postmodernism and the beginning of Post-Postmodernism is because of the evidence of Postmodern devices found in Post-Postmodernist texts. As mentioned earlier, it effectively implements the tools that Postmodernism failed to execute diligently. For example, Postmodernism acknowledges the de-centering of structure and authority. It fails to implement the devices that it acknowledges, Post-Postmodernism effectively puts to use the tools that Postmodernism was bold to point out but too

shy to implement. Materiality is the Post-Postmodern answer to this poorly implemented decentralization of logos. This seeps into the 'real' world without a hierarchical form of authority. In fact, it horizontally disburses the power. It diffuses the centered and canonized authority of the author, narrator and to some extent that of the reader. There are three elements that help break down the understanding of materiality and its function in literature.

First is the idea that objects, instruments, equipment in literature and, in this case, novels, are crucial in forming the narrative. Heidegger's 'Thing theory' comes in handy here in establishing an understanding of this concept. According to Thing theory, a thing becomes an object when it loses its utility. In other words, the association of the socially and/or scientifically encoded object with a person makes it a thing. The anthropological interaction with the object gives it what Heidegger calls it an Existential Ontology (Stegmüller 133). The object interacts with human and changes the meaning and the course of events (most of the times). It is like a chain reaction that is triggered by a stimulus and this reaction has consequence. The point of all of this is to emphasize that the material holds the power to interact from the pages. To prove this theory, it is important to apply it on both the texts selected here as a sample to illustrate the point in question – *A Tale for the Time Being* and *Atonement*. *A Tale* is laden with things that develop strings to characters that give meaning to the thing and signify the importance of the human-non-human relation, thus bringing back Humanism to the center of Post-Postmodern studies via objects. This association of the material with the person calls upon Heidegger's *object*. These objects make up the materiality of the text. Object/ materiality/ instruments have a significant role to play in developing the story and the character arc in Post-Postmodern novels. These objects which have phenomenological significance become instrumental (pun not intended) in generating a life of a, or multiple, character/s.

From the very onset of the narrative in *A Tale* there are hints that the interaction of the things and people is going to be significant. Ruth finds a freezer-bag on the beach and brings it to her house. The freezer-bag represents to her the tsunami that had hit Japan. The possibility of the debris reaching the shore meant that there was going to be more stuff that was going to get washed up the beach. All of this is important because of who Ruth is, and her relationship with her mother and their Japanese ancestry. After the discovery of the bag, her husband Oliver finds the diary in the freezer-bag. The diary which is just an object, becomes Heidegger's *thing* when Ruth associates herself to it. The value of the object transforms and her interaction with the diary give it an ontological validation. Nao, whose diary Ruth is reading, writes for an intended reader and she keeps asking her reader, "are you still there?" When Ruth first begins to read the diary, she riffles through the pages and every page on the diary has words on them, every single one of them. Later when Ruth flips through the diary after having read Haruki #1's diary, to her surprise she finds the pages empty. After Ruth decides to place Haruki #1's secret French diary in the box on Nao's family altar, she finds that the pages of the diary were filled in all the way to the last page. This interaction between the human and the object exemplifies the Thing theory. *House of Leaves* by Danielewski is another such example where the house changes its form based on the humans and their interaction with the house.

Similarly, the significance of a regular diary disguised in a hollowed-out Proust novel, found in a Hello kitty lunch box changes for Ruth. Ruth gets possessive about the diary and, in turn of Nao; when other people want to take a look at the diary and read it. She shows reluctance, "Muriel picked up the diary. She inspected the spine and then the cover...watching Muriel handle the book, Ruth felt her uneasiness grow... (Ruth slipped) the diary below the table and out of sight" (Ozeki 33-34). The object that was a diary here just became Heidegger's thing

which is Nao's diary and by extension her life. In the footnotes, Ruth describes to the reader, how the diary feels in her hand. Here this works at many levels: first, that Ruth is aware of the diary she is reading; secondly, she is aware that the diary is the part of the book that she is intending others will read; and finally, the readers of the novel are made aware of the book that they are reading. Nao writes, "first I need to explain about this book that you are holding" (Ozeki 19). At this point, Ruth makes a footnote. "A stout, compact, tome, perhaps a crown octave, measuring approx. $5 \times 7^{1/2}$ inches" (Ozeki 19). She adds, "Cover is warm, made of reddish cloth" (Ozeki 20).

Among other objects, diaries seem to be a trope that Ozeki uses in her novel. Haruki #1's diary influences Nao the same way Nao's diary influences Ruth. Nao learns a great deal about Haruki #1's life from his diary: his love for philosophy, French and poetry. Ruth, as Nao did from Haruki's diary, learns about the owner of the diary. She learns that Nao liked her life in Sunnyvale; that she identified herself as an American, and much more. The diaries act like a stand-in for the people the diaries were owned or kept by. Haruki#1's diary is literally the *thing* that changed Nao's narrative not only in terms of her story arc but her life as it was. It gave an identity and something to look up to. In turn Nao's diary became Ruth's life; she felt deeply for Nao so much so that she forgot that what she was reading was in the past and that her effort to help Nao wouldn't change what already had happened. After Ruth received the email from Leistiko confirming that he did know someone with the name of Haruki and that he had a daughter and when all the facts matched up, Ruth felt an urgent need to help Nao and her father who were suicidal at the point where she was reading Nao's diary. According to Ruth, she was reading the diary at a pace that Ruth thought Nao would have written based on changing handwriting. The point at which Ruth was reading the diary, Nao was about to kill herself

because she had figured out that her father was going to kill himself and that after Jiko's death, there was nothing for her to live for. Based on Leistiko's letter, Ruth discovered that Nao did not know that her father was fired from his job because he took a moral stand. Realizing this, Ruth felt that she need to let Nao know that her father was not the coward she thought him to be. She tells this to Oliver and "Oliver was looking at her strangely."

"What?" she said. "You're giving me a look. What's wrong?"

"You told him it was a matter of some urgency?"

"Of course. The girl is suicidal. So is her father. The whole diary is a cry for help." (Ozeki 312)

What Ruth did not realize is that the incidents mentioned in the diary were not happening right then but only that she is reading it in the present time. When it dawns on her, she says, "Nothing, ... 'I... of course, you're right. Stupid. I just...forgot.' she could feel her cheeks burning, and a tingling sensation inside her nose, like she was going to sneeze, or cry." (Ozeki 313). The diary had started to weigh on Ruth and to blur the line between present and the past; between herself and Nao.

The non-linearity of time ironically shapes the linear reality of the novel that the reader reads. Nao confronts the fact that she is possibly writing her diary for nobody; she writes, "I know this is stupid. I know you don't exist and no one is ever going to read this... the fact is you are another lie. You're just another stupid story I made up out of thin air" (Ozeki 341) only to be read by Ruth, therefore validating Nao's writing. The sense of time makes up the materiality of Nao's diary. When Nao acknowledges "this is what now feels like." (Ozeki 341), and Ruth reads it out to Oliver, he says, "she caught up with herself" (Ozeki 343). The personification of words makes it into a thing which otherwise is taken for an obvious presence. This recognition of the

function of the word on the pages materializes not just in the diary that Ruth is holding in her hand but also in the book that the reader is holding in their hand. The reminder of the missing words through words, though ironic, is highly effective. The last time something “falling out” was referred to was a human, to someone dying. Nao had said that when people die, it is like they fall out of time. When Ruth finds the pages blank at the end of the diary, Oliver is worried that they as people might stop to exist because Nao, who was writing to them has stopped writing. He says, ““maybe we don’t exist anymore. We just fell off our page.”” (Ozeki 344). This interestingly is the reverse of the earlier scenario where Ruth was validating the ontological existence of Nao via the diary. The interchangeable nature of the word and the humans falling out is visceral.

This echoes the incident that Nao describes when she is sitting in the café and does not know what to write or where to begin while writing all of this all along. Nao makes her intended reader feel her through her diary, she says that she will throw away her diary once she is done with it, she will leave it somewhere, “It feels like I’m reaching forward through time to touch you, and now that you have found it, you’re reaching back to touch me!” (Ozeki 26). By writing her present she writes the future of her reader and therefore she uses the materiality of her diary and turns it into an instrument through which people can feel each other across time and space.

Ruth is able to change and even possibly save Nao and her father’s life because she left Haruki #1’s secret French diary in the box. The use of other objects also results in the same affect. Haruki #1’s letters are another example of the textuality that changes the course of the story of the characters and they have a greater effect on the story line. Haruki #1’s watch was the key to helping Ruth get a break through in finding Nao. The inscription ‘sky solider’ was invaluable to Ruth, she wore the watch and it had become a part of her. The letters then become

the thing that elevates its value and the meaning it holds. Nao learns to associate Jiko and Haruki #1 and her father with things that they were attached to. Jiko's juzu beads became the thing that Nao associated Jiko with. Interestingly, she was more intrigued to learn that the beads belonged to Haruki #1. Haruki #1's letters are another example of the materiality that changes the course of the story of the characters and has a greater effect on the story line. Readers can feel the dampness of the letter as Ruth does just like when she felt it when Nao picked it up from behind Haruki's photo. Another of Haruki's possessions that Nao was attached to was his sky soldier watch. It was the same watch that Ruth was attached to and moreover the inscription on the watch that said "sky soldier" that drove her to looking for Kamikaze pilots of World War II. She used the internet to look up Jiko and her works, Nao or her video that her classmates had posted, she tried looking for Haruki #2 as well. It was during these searches that she almost got hold of Jiko's work that vanished before she could read it. Materiality makes the reader aware of the presence of the thing, hence this 'falling out' of the article can be a result of the Mu-Mu software that was developed by Nao's father. This software deletes all the evidence of someone's being on the internet and therefore they drop out of there, making it impossible to find them. The interaction of humans with the material has a relative influence on the materiality of the text itself. While looking for Haruki on the internet, Ruth frantically types *Harryki*, which in her hurry she mistyped, "the forefinger of her left hand holding the *r* down too long, and her right figure overreaching the *u* and striking the *y* instead, but before she could correct her mistakes, her pinkie hit ENTER" (Ozeki 86). The reader twitches with the description of every finger movement. This exemplifies the singularity of each letter in each word and the tapping of keys on the computer and the 'real' world consequence of it. This makes the readers feel, not just the keys on a keyboard, but also the letters that form and create a word.

As noted earlier, technology, especially computers, is an integral part of the narrative. Nao's father was a software engineer before he gotten laid off and then her life changes forever. The computer was her link to California that she so fondly held on to. It was by sending Kayla emails that she was able to relive her California life- though only temporarily. It was through the computer that Haruki #2 was able to watch and re-watch the 9/11 footage. It was the same instrument that he used to bid on Nao's underwear and lose all that he had. The computer/internet then became the source through which Ruth was able to connect to the professor in UCLA and find out the moral dilemma that led to Haruki #2's suicidal tendencies. It was knowledge which Ruth had because of the secret French diary, that she was able to change/save the lives of Nao and her father. Technology fiddled with time and reality which is possibly why Ruth lost Jiko's article when she was searching the internet. Later Haruki #1 is said to have developed a software that erases people's information from the internet altogether. It is like not existing if you are not mediated. Considering the pivotal role that mediation plays in the Post-Postmodern novels, and taking internet or technology as a medium then, not existing on the medium is equivalent to not existing at all. This futuristic aspect of Post-Postmodern novels leads to an entirely different and a vast area of studies related to the figure of the cyborg, artificial intelligence and its morality.

A similar emphasis on the materiality of objects can be noted Ian McEwan's *Atonement*. The Meissen vase in *Atonement* has a more significant role than just being a symbol of memory of the dead brother in the War. As Brian Finney notes, it, (implies) connection between the specific incident of its breaking and a number of wider fractures in the narrative and the world it depicts. At the most intimate level the vase suggests the fragility of Cecilia's virginity, which is about to be abruptly destroyed by a struggle between

herself and Robbie. The vase next enters Briony's first attempt at fiction, "Two Figures by a Fountain," and become associated with her innocent interpretation of the events leading to its breaking. Briony's testimony both in court and in her first narrative draft is as fragile as the mended vase. (77)

It is important that it is Briony who witnesses when and where the vase breaks. She sees it as a struggle that Cecilia puts up against Robbie- from this, as we know, Briony cooks up a narrative literally and figuratively that has drastic consequences on the lives of the characters. Similarly, the letter becomes instrumental in the hands of Briony who reads the letter that Robbie had meant for Cecilia. The letter then becomes the testimony of Robbie's intentions and paints a very peculiar image of him in Briony's head. The association of these objects in the subjective phenomenological environment of Briony, changes their meaning and hence interacts with her consciousness to change the implication of its purpose that was meant in the first place. To an extent, it is true even of Cecilia, that is, the letter that Robbie sent across to her with Briony, or the vase has an entirely different significance to them if and when they interact with her. It attains its own meaning and purpose.

The letter that Robbie and Cecilia apparently exchanged during the War gains an entirely different perspective when the readers discover that those letters were in fact written by Briony. That in fact Robbie probably never forgave or forgot what Briony had done interferes with Briony's consciences. Hence, the association of any particular object with a person changes its function and significance. This ontological shift in the meaning and the animation of the significance of the meaning of an object is a major aspect of Post-Postmodern literature.

As a note of caution, it is quite easy to mix the object with symbolism. There is a very thin line of affect that guards the objects in the Post-Postmodern novel and that stops the objects

from turning into mere symbol. To reiterate, it is the interaction of the object with the human that changes the meaning and the significance of the object. If the object were only a symbol, it would have the same meaning if it were to function independently of human interaction. If the vase were only a symbol, it would symbolize Cecilia's uncle or his participation in the war. In a Post-Postmodern context, the vase is more than a symbol. It has the functional quality of changing its meaning when it is seen by Briony. It shapes the narrative and hence becomes a plane where Briony is able to exercise her personhood. This centering of a person, this humanist approach is what appeals to Post-Postmodernism.

Textuality

While materiality can be understood as a thing and its interaction with a person that makes the reader aware of the 'thingification' in a narrative, textuality draws attention to the patterns and form of the narrative. Textuality makes the readers feel the words on the page and the intensions of the rhythm, rhyme, pause and other literary devices. Although textuality is not a Post-Postmodern invention, the reason why it characterizes Post-Postmodern novels is because this textuality brings humanism under the spot-light. The purpose of this textuality is to use the text to make the reader aware of their act of reading. Moreover, it also uses the structure and form of the narrative and long lost and disdained narrative techniques to shape the human. If there is a center to this discourse, then it is humanism and empathy. Empathy, like irony and formalism is revived in Post-Postmodern novels. This empathy is most certainly derived from humanism which in turn germinates from the text itself. While textuality is a kind of materiality, it draws the visceral nature of the text from the form of writing. It takes the readers back to the structure, style and the format that Postmodernism dismisses. It uses these devices to subvert the authority of the written word and make the words breathe and speak for themselves. While it

invokes Russian Formalism, it does not stop there. It effectively utilizes the form and adds functionality to the use of the form. Formalism is suggestive of the form and Post-Postmodernism is the tactful use of this form.

Briony in *Atonement* makes the reader aware of the textuality of the book. The book opens with the emphasis on Briony's obsession with the play that she has written. She is someone who is capable of creating fiction and stories and the narrator does not shy away from bringing that into focus. The narrator indicates the process of writing, ironically by picking out each aspect of what constitutes writing by hinting at the Aristotelian characteristics of art as imitation; Briony, "...wrote her first story-a foolish affair imitative of half a dozen folktales" (McEwan 6). She is said to feel embarrassment at, "writing out the *she said*, the *and thens*, [which] made her wince" (McEwan 6).

Eleven-year-old Briony's attempt at writing a play evokes an inert sense of various forms of literature. Finney remarks that it is not the revelation at the end of the novel that the narrator is in fact the author-Briony herself but the incorporation of these various forms into the narrative is what makes the book a metafiction, he says,

to draw attention to the narrative process is not an act of self-indulgence on the part of the metafictional novelist, ...in the first place, when novelists force us to understand the constructed nature of their character, they invite us simultaneously to reflect on the way subjectivity is similarly constructed in the non-fictional world we inhabit (Finney 76).

Talking about young Briony's affliction to keep secrets even when there were none to keep, the narrator says, "None of this was particularly an affliction; or rather, it appeared so only in retrospect, once a solution had been found" (McEwan 5). The word 'retrospect' is the key in the

quote as it refers to writing as a meditated and a mediated act. This echoes older Briony's recollection and meditation of her failed attempts at changing the ending of her story. She writes, "I should have written a different kind of book. But, my work was done. There would be no further drafts" (McEwan 340). Briony effects a kind of de-centering; it may not be the same as the kind in *A Tale*, but nonetheless, it functions the same way. Briony's story has an intent audience, then there is older Briony who has a larger audience and then ultimately, there is us the 'real' world audience. Each layer makes us aware of the material that the text is.

While textuality is about being aware of the form and genre, there is a microcosm of textuality that makes reading visceral. Here the pacing and the rhythm of the sentence take priority over the meaning of the word thus transcending the actual meaning to imply the affect of the words on the pages. Towards the end of the novel when older Briony is in the cab with an acute headache and claustrophobia, she insists that the driver turns on music when they are about to reach the destination and, "so the thumping twangy bass noise resumed, and over it, a light baritone chanting in Caribbean patois to the rhythms of a nursery rhyme, or a playground skipping rope jingle" (McEwan 342). This sentence illustrates textuality by creating a frame of music and then describing music with rhythm and pace. The pace represents the journey that is about to come to a rushed end. This is not just an end to the story of Briony's book but also Briony's life and therefore the end of the book that the reader is reading. The pace replicates her urgent need to get out of the cab and head towards an end. This frame mirrors the structure of the novel- the novel is a novel about writing one while writing it.

A Tale is more experimental in terms of using different font, styles, paragraph breaks and the way it transgresses the limitation of genres as compared to *Atonement*. *A Tale* has an interesting approach to time and pace. Ruth decides to read Nao's diary at a pace she might have

written it, “Nao had written her diary in real time, living her days, moment by moment... (so that) she could more closely replicate Nao’s experience” (Ozeki 38). Time is a major constituent of this narrative and the function of time through textuality is the highlight of the novel. When Ruth was riffling through the diary, she analyzes the handwriting and she finds herself curious to know if the “handwriting continued all the way to the end” (Ozeki 31) but before the readers know the answer to this question, the narrator adds Ruth’s thoughts, “how many diaries and journals had she herself started and then abandoned? How many aborted novels languished in folders on her hard drive?” (Ozeki 31). What the narrator here achieves is to stretch time and make the reader slow down and heighten their curiosity to find out if Nao’s diary was filled up all way to the last page. The narrator holds the readers’ attention before revealing that, “the girl had run out of paper before she ran out of words” (Ozeki 31).

Time is given a texture by emphasizing the ‘nowness’ of the act of reading. All the aspects of time be it Nao’s, Haruki’s, Ruth’s or the readers’ who are reading the actual book are made aware of the presence of it being in their time. Nao is “being” in her diary by calling herself and her reader “a time being.” She appeals to her reader’s present by asking “who are you and what are you doing?” (Ozeki 1). The non-linear narrative that travels between Nao and Ruth’s lives also reveals that the narrative is travelling through the juxtaposition of the past and the present. Ruth most often times fails to recognize that Nao’s experience is in the past and that she is reading about it in the present. Nao herself mentions that, “right now I am sitting in a French maid café in Akiba Electricity Town, listening to a sad chanson that is playing sometime in your past, which is also my present” (Ozeki 1). Words in this context are able to make the abstract idea of time tactile. Ruth herself understands the sensory feeling of time when she tries to contemplate what Nao must be feeling at present. She tries to picture Nao and concludes that,

“it was hard to get a sense from the diary of the texture of time passing” (Ozeki 64). Their intertwined narrative weaves a fabric of narrative that connects the existence of people in different time and space dimensions through words in the text. Like a lot of Modern and Postmodern novels, *A Tale* too incorporates the weighing effect on the readers. When Nao is forced to go to Jiko’s place during summer she reluctantly agrees to do so, and her disinterest and effort is reflected in her journey that she takes to reach Jiko’s temple. She hates to let her father carry her Hello Kitty bag, as she is already embarrassed by the way he looks and does not want to attract attention to him. The weight of her reluctance and the bag can be equally felt when she says,

“...so I followed him across the road, dragging my wheelie bag over to the first step and up with a bump behind me.

Ku...lunk.

The bag was heavy, filled with all the books I was supposed to study over the summer holidays. *Ku...lunk.* Ancient Japanese history. *Ku...lunk.* Japanese current affairs. *Ku...lunk.* Japanese morality and ethics. *Ku...lunk. Ku...lunk.* I was already sweating and about to give up, but dad was ahead and waiting for me, staring eagerly up at the steps.” (Ozeki 158)

The isolation of the word “*Ku...lunk*” the first time depicts the first step that she would have dragged her bag on. There is a pause after this first step where she is trying to list the books that are making the bag so heavy to carry and, with each step, she is recollecting each book. The onomatopoeic nature of this paragraph on the page stands out as Nao makes an effort with every step to reach the top of the temple. Ironically, not only does Nao learn the ancient history of Japan but also of herself and her family. She learns that the rate of suicide among Japanese men

was at its highest; she learns to question morality and ethics; and learns that her father's decision to leave Sunnyvale was an ethical choice. The affect is reflected in the following sentence, when she is about to give up on her life just before she reaches the temple. Similarly, the revelation that her father is not a loser is what saves her life. He was "staring at her" and encouraging her to catch up to him and his decision. Each time there is a "*Ku...lunk*", it makes the reader feel the trudge that Nao is feeling in her effort to push through with all that weight. While most novels of the earlier age do exhibit similar onomatopoeic and sensory features, what is distinctive of Post-Postmodern novels is the fact that the effect of these features transcends the text, viscerally connecting the character/s of the text to the readers in the real world. It gets validated by the human experience on both planes of existing and reading.

The structure of the novel allows the flexibility of time. Nao gives up on her life and assumes that her father is also dead and then there is a drastic pause in her narrative that is filled in by the information that Ruth attains from the professor. Meanwhile, the last time the readers hear from Nao is that she is waiting at the bus stop for the first bus in the morning to go to Jiko before she dies. The readers are left with an image of Nao waiting and we hear nothing of Haruki #2. We are as unaware as Nao is about Haruki #2's fate: whether he followed through with his plan to commit suicide and if he was successful this time. This affect of time on the reader defines a Post-Postmodern kind of textuality.

The wider umbrella of this narrative may be in the form of a novel but it does not limit itself as a novel in process; it adapts from various genres to create a whole narrative. Each form is emphatic of its profound connection to the human creating and reading it. The creator of the genre is at the center of the narrative. Nao's sections which are her diary entries are in the form of a first-person narrative. She writes her life into being in her diary. Then the epistolary tone of

Haruki #1's narrative gives the testimony of the life that he leads and believes and the ideologies he kept. When we take a step back, these narratives influence Ruth's narrative. Her sections are in third person. Ruth's insecurities and concerns are added as narrative description. On the other hand, Ruth annotates Nao's narrative, which is outside of Nao's narrative, and readers are convinced of the mediation of Nao's story via Ruth. The text becomes a kind of tiered cake: the smallest layer at the top of the cake is Nao's narrative, followed by the larger layer of Ruth's interaction, including Ruth's annotation. This is followed by a larger layer that is Ruth's narrative and this is followed by the base of the cake which is the largest layer. This layer includes all the top layers together and it is for the consumption of the readers of the text. Interestingly, the author of this book Ruth Ozeki is obviously like her character Ruth; she is a writer who has a husband called Oliver just like her character's husband. This information may not add to the story in the text, but it certainly does make the readers question the metaphysical nature of such a layered narrative. *A Tale* breaks the mold of form by making the readers uncomfortable with a lack of consistency. It makes use of various literary apparatuses to complete the narrative. Jiko's text messages are an element that link the narratives. This is true of Haruki #1's letters and diary. Here Ozeki draws attention to the tonal shift in the language that each genre entails. Nao's diary is more informal in its construction and language. She adds smileys at the end of her sentences, writes in Japanese (which is then translated by Ruth), adds her emails to the diary and talks about writing a blog. Similarly, Haruki #1 keeps a diary and also writes letters. Ruth follows a similar pattern; she may not be keeping a diary but Nao's inability to write a book about Jiko's book reflects Ruth's own inability to write her new book. She also writes letters in the form of emails to Leistiko. Each time there is a shift in the genre, there is a change in the font, and a break in the structure of the pages.

A closer reading of the syntax in the novel reveals a peculiar dynamic of the involvement of the readers with the text. For instance, at one point, the third-person narrator tells us that Nao asks Jiko her age. When Jiko replies she does so in Japanese and the text on the printed book is in Japanese. Interestingly, these Japanese sentences are translated by Ruth for the readers to understand (showing her acknowledgement of her readers' presence to her readers). The translation is not a part of the main text of the page but like all of Ruth's interventions, it is in footnotes. Ruth notes that it is, "Totally impossible to translate, but the nuance is something like: *I have been caused to live by the deep condition of the universe to which I am humbly and deeply grateful*. P. Arai calls it the "gratitude tense", and says the beauty of this grammatical construction is that "there is no finger pointing to a source." She also says, "It is impossible to feel angry when using this tense" (Ozeki 17). This draws the readers' attention to the importance of the grammatical structure of the sentences in the text. The constraint that this grammatical structure puts on the sentence brings out the texture of the language that often times stays hidden under the playful use of words. The inability of one language to incorporate the nuances of another language asks of the readers to fill in the gaps and make sense of the sentence. The reader's engagement with the text is at the essence of textuality.

While Postmodernism condoned irony, Post-Postmodernism recognized and revived irony. Like some literary devices, irony is one of the elements of the text that Post-Postmodernism embraces from Modernism and appropriates it to fit the temperament of the text. In Nao's case, she writes that she, "waited for words to come. I waited and waited, and sipped some more coffee, and waited some more. Nothing, I'm pretty chatty" (Ozeki 21). Ironically, she is writing all of this. She is literally writing her present into its being. Even when she says that she is unable to write, the act of not being able to write manifests itself through words and

writing. It is ironic that she says she can't write while writing all of it down. The mix of irony and textuality is the combination that Post-Postmodernism aspires to achieve while keeping the person in the center of all the action. This scene literally makes the readers visualize Nao sitting on the table and struggling through the pages and pages of nothing.

Unpredictable genre is not the only way Ozeki disrupts the rhythm of reading. Ozeki makes Ruth interfere with Nao's narrative by adding footnotes and appendices. Every instance there is a superscript in the body of the text, it leads the reader to either understand the cultural context better or more interestingly, leads them to appendices where Ruth elaborates on concepts like, "Zen Moments", "Quantum Mechanics", or "Schrödinger's Cat". The physical act of flipping through pages to make sense of the narrative is very Post-Postmodern. Not only does it make the reader take notice that Ruth is actively involved in Nao's narrative but also that we as readers of the book are also actively involved in reading Nao's and Ruth's narrative. The progress of Nao's narrative is connected to Ruth's like the links in a chain. They are connected, intertwined and complete each other. Like the structure of the book, the lines are intertwined into each other's section. For example, in Ruth's section on page twenty-nine, when she is reading to Oliver,

"Do you feel special yet?"

The girl's question lingered.

'It is an interesting thought' Oliver said, still tinkering with the watch.

'Do you?'

"Do I what?'

'She says she's writing for you. So do you feel special?'

'That's ridiculous,' Ruth said.'" (Ozeki 35)

The italics used here are from Nao's diary in Ruth's narrative. This is a physical, materialist proof that the narratives are one and connected to each other. It is a textual representation of the similarity that Ruth and Nao share. It also reflects how each of their narratives is affecting the other. It is as if they are having a concurrent dialogue with each other and is an extension of repartee between them. It also reflects that after a certain point, Ruth fails to separate Nao from herself. She is able to identify herself with Nao so much so that Nao's words become a part of Ruth's consciousness and this is achieved through the textuality of the text. An extension of the same nature can be seen when Ruth reads "*I am reaching through time to touch you*" and then she feels that diary, "The diary once again feels warm in her hands" (Ozeki 37). The humanness of the diary transfers to Ruth through the words that she reads in the diary. These words weigh the books down not just in Ruth's hands but in the hands of the readers who are reading in the world in which Ozeki's novel is being read. Similarly, when Ruth finishes the reading Nao's diary, "by morning, when she reached for the it again, the book was cold to her touch" (Ozeki 393), this echoes Nao's feeling when she touched Jiko after she dies, "when I touched her fingers, they were stiff and icy cold" (Ozeki 364). Here there is a direct association to a person and the words. The focus in all of these textual experiences is the person. It gives subjectivity to the readers of Nao's diary and the novel itself in forefront. It highlights the personhood of the readers.

Interestingly, readers follow the pace of Ruth's narrative which is written in third person as opposed to Nao's which is a first-person narrative. This implies that the readers' pace of knowing Nao's narrative is in unison with that of Ruth. While she seems to have the advantage of holding and finishing reading the book, it is structured to make the readers read it with Ruth.

This break makes the readers withdraw from the comfort of a known pattern of how to read a novel and pay attention to the textual nature of the written word.

Word- a Post-Postmodern redemption:

Derrida in *Of Grammatology* theorizes the phonetics of the written word and philosophy of the logic used in the logocentric structure of the meaning of the word. He makes a claim that the writing process of the word undoes the history of the phonetic word, “*the concept of writing* in a word where the phoneticization of writing must dissimulate its own history as it is produced” (Derrida 3). He thus implies that the word phonetically differs from the written word therefore twice removing it from the meaning of the word. Once, by naming the subject in question and then by a de-phoneticization of the once removed word. The signifier is distanced and removed from the meaning of the signified: the sign is two different things together-the signified and the signifier. This signifier then is a hollow case that holds no meaning of the signified in it. In Post-postmodernism, Derrida’s notion that the signifier is arbitrary to the signified and that the word is only a label that does not hold any meaning, is being challenged. The Post-postmodern understanding of the dynamic of the signifier and the signified is redemptive. It redeems the sign from being arbitrary and shallow and introduces material and textual meaning to the word. Post-Postmodern writers are looking at the sign as an amalgamation of both the signifier and the signifier-as the same, they are homogeneous. The meaning is embedded in the word; unlike Derrida or Althusser's idea that the words are assigned meaning arbitrarily. Postmodernism addresses the lack of a centered language system that fails to communicate the meaning of the word. What it falls short of doing is to tactically use this decentered language and turn it into a discourse of its own. With Barthes’s and Derrida’s claims of the death of the logos, Postmodern literature stopped experimenting with language or more precisely, as critics of Post-

Postmodernism claim, it just became mainstream. This completely defeated the purpose of a decentered discourse.

Post-Postmodernism on the other hand, turns around the absence of a center to break the rigidity of the previous genre conventions. Like Postmodernism, it addresses the notion that there is a decentered language. Post-Postmodernism then takes a leap with this understanding of a decentered logos and creates a discourse that accommodates a system that is flawed-which makes complete sense for the present climate of diverse, unorthodox language functions. With a decentered logos, there is an acknowledgement and understanding of the arbitrariness of the signifier and the signified. However, there was a call for a return to the adamic language where the meaning and the word were essentially the same.

I believe that the writers of Post-Postmodern novels answered this call to fill in the gap of meaning and redeem the meaninglessness of the word by embodying the meaning in the word. It is like the word is a mold that fits right into the shape that meaning is. The words become meaningful (in a Post-Postmodern sense) because they are onomatopoeic: they have alliteration, a better sense of rhythm, pace and structure. It is interesting to note that these formalist devices - which Postmodernism dismissed- resurrect the meaning that was lost from the word. At this point the signifier and the signified become the same. The representative quality of the word is enhanced to make more sense of the meaning of the word. The word embodies the meaning so much so that it is a stand-in for not only an object that it is signifying but more importantly, it embodies the person. It is able to have a rounded meaning that is capable of encompassing the wholeness of a person. The word, which is ideally a symbolic representation of meaning, becomes the meaning itself. The word gains power to diminish the hollowness of the label and infuse it with a meaning that has always been missing. While creatively able to achieve this feat,

what furthers this concept is the embodiment of the object by the word, which can be explicitly found in Post-Postmodern texts. Materiality, then, in the Post-Postmodern texts play a huge role in redeeming this lost meaning of the word. It is through materiality that the words are made tactile and visceral. Having said that, it is via materiality that the word comes to life but it also becomes life itself and the signified and the signifier become the same.

Atonement is an example of one such dynamic where the word stands in for the person. Briony recreates Robbie, Cecelia, their pasts and regenerates them as people which helps her heal. She creates them as she created Arabella. She recreates them through words that then help her forgive herself. Her book, which she says, “will not be able to publish in my lifetime” (McEwan 341), is her embodiment. It does not exist until her body exists- the book then becomes her. It is her testimony that she should have given in court all those years ago. It will speak for her and be her account of her witnessing, it is *she* in words. The power that these words have will change the narrative of Robbie and Cecelia and everybody involved in the incident where Lola was molested, and Robbie was wrongly accused by the ‘words’ of Briony- the key word here being ‘words.’ Importantly, these words will have consequences in real life.

More prominently, *A Tale*, is able to give a clearer sense of embodiment of meaning. It is worth noting that both the novels are about writing, creating self through writing. Writing not only defines the characters but creates them. Nao is writing herself into being in her diary. She writes, “Nao is me, Naoko Yasutani, which is my full name...I have tucked my shoulder-length hair behind my right ear, which is pierced with five holes...” (Ozeki 4). Nao is writing a visual image of who she is and how she looks. It is like she is physically creating herself like a sculpture from clay. Each word that describes her weaves into one whole character and breathes life into her. The person becomes the word and more specifically the word creates the person.

The reader is central, too. When Ruth examines the diary, “Ruth stared at the page. The purple words were mostly in English, with some Japanese characters scattered here and there, but her eye wasn’t really taking in their meaning as much as a *felt* sense, murky and emotion, of the writer’s presence” (Ozeki 12). Further, Ruth notices the “adolescent purple handwriting that sprawled across the page. It felt like a desecration, ...Print is predictable and impersonal, conveying information” (Ozeki 11-12). These lines are creating the writer of this diary through words both metaphorical and literal. Metaphorically they ascribe the predictability and impersonality of the writer. Literally, these words are constructing the image of the writer to the reader. Ruth has an instant connection with the words in the books and hence the person that the words in the book is creating. She notes, “handwriting, by contrast, resists the eye, reveals its meaning slowly, and is as intimate as skin” (Ozeki 12). This establishes Ruth’s immediate and intimate connection with Nao. She further feels the inscription in the diary and molds the writer into being. She looks closely, “at the letters. They were round and a little bit sloppy (as she now imagined the girl must be, too)” (Ozeki 12). The words literally look like her. She sees the words on the pages as people, “sometimes at the end of a line, they crowded each other a little, like people jostling to get onto an elevator or into a subway car” (Ozeki 12); the animation of words right at the beginning of the novel hints at the part words are going to play in shaping not just the stories but the textuality of the novel itself. There is a direct association of the words on the pages to the person who wrote them, to the extent that the words on the pages *become* the person. Ruth is able to feel Nao through the words that she has written in her diary. When Ruth first brought the freezer-bag from the beach home, Oliver started to unwrap the plastic covering around it “...he continue(d) his forensic unpeeling” (Ozeki 9). Oliver’s action mirrored Ruth’s exploration of Nao’s story as she unpeeled each layer of her story that was like the sheets of

words that were covering the inside of who Nao was. This unpeeling and revealing of the layers also replicate the layers that the diary is in a material sense. It is inside a hollowed-out book of Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Inside Proust's seminal modernist novel about time and memory, Ruth finds layers of stories: of Jiko, Haruki #1, Haruki #2 and of Nao herself. The layering was like a protective shield, the freezer bag protected the box, the box inside the layers of freezer bag protected the diary. The box functions as the symbolic word that encapsulates the diary, which itself is a symbol of meaning. This mirrors that unpeeling that Ruth later does throughout the book where she unpeels layer by layer the arbitrary gap between the word and the meaning- to the point that the word becomes the thing.

The major running theme in the novel is to directly associate people to words. To Nao's question of how to find lost words Jiko replies with a poem that roughly translates as, "*For the time being/Words scatter.../Are they fallen leaves?*" (Ozeki 24). Here Jiko relates the words to be "fallen" and scattered like dry leaves and these words are themselves "time beings" - Nao had early on mentioned that people were "time beings." She writes, "the big old tree is a time being...I started to think about how words and stories are time beings" (Ozeki 24). The diary, with all the words and letters in it is a collection of logos and if Nao is the result of them then it only make sense to see that the diary is Nao and Nao is the diary; she writes, "what if you just think I'm a jerk and toss me into the garbage" (Ozeki 26-27), here the whole diary stands in for Nao, the synecdochical nature of this sentence forces one to take into consideration that Nao is her diary.

When Ruth places Haruki #1's secret French diary in the box of Nao's family, she brings him back to life. Here the diary represents him, and it speaks of him and for him. It is through this diary she finds out that Haruki #1 who she compares her father to had committed suicide and

flown his airplane into the sea. The verbal elements substitute the person and make the words subjective- it creates a reality. Nao starts to cry after she sees how staghorn beetle was killed in the fight in the market. Later Oliver reminds Ruth that she cried because it dawns on her that the person who had bid on her bloody panties was someone called “C.imperator” which was short for “*Cyclommantus imperator*” (Ozeki 294). This was the same beetle that had won Haruki #2 the third position in the origami bug wars. The label of a person means more than just a name or a signifier. Nao learns that the box on the family altar which was Haruki #1’s relic was empty and had nothing inside except for a piece of paper that said “*ikotsu*” (Ozeki 248) which meant “remains”. The box in this case represented the body and the paper with “remains” was the person and, in that sense, the box was the word that encapsulated the meaning of the word written on the paper kept inside the box. This is a striking example of how words not only substitute the person but also embody them.

The word takes a step forward from embodying personhood to embodying the meaning of the word itself. It bridges the long-standing gap between the signifier and the signified and in fact functions more than just a place holder. This is one of the defining factors of Post-Postmodern novels. The word and the meaning come to an organic symmetry of implying exactly what is meant to be. Nao compares herself to a samurai who is left with nobody to fight for, like someone with no purpose in life. She writes, “the way ronin is (Japanese characters) with the character for wave and the character for person, which is pretty much how I feel, like a little wave person floating around on the stormy sea of life.” (Ozeki 42). The representational quality of the word embodies the meaning of being lost, being in turmoil, of having no purpose or aim. Nao tries to feel and hold time and she imagines time as a slippery fish that would slip out our hand if your try to hold it. In the main body of the text, ‘now’ is written in the shape of a

fish which visualizes the words and makes it surreal. Nao exclaims, “the word *now* always felt especially strange and unreal to me because it was me, at least the sound of it was. Nao was *now* and had this whole other meaning” (Ozeki 98), this makes her synonymous to the word, the fish and the concept of the time. Similarly, Ruth has a dream where she is led by a crow,

The word appears on the horizon, black against the unbearable light, and as it comes closer, it starts to turn and spiral, elongating its *C* to create a spine, rounding its *O* into a sleek belly, rotating its *R* to form a forehead and a wide-open beak. It stretches wide its *Wings*, flaps them once, twice, tries, and then, fully feathered, it starts to fly. (Ozeki 349)

The word takes a form and embodies the meaning of the form while still retaining meaning and keeping the quality of the characters of the label that the word is.

Humanism of Post-Postmodernism:

If we understand humanism as anthropocentric, intending to “dignify and ennoble man” (Cuddon 601), then Post-Postmodernism stands true to this definition of humanism. It is not unusual to associate Post-Postmodernism with transhumanism and new-humanism but at the core, it is about being human. All the features like materiality and types of materiality, author-narrative, the concept of embodying the word, all lead to humanism. It is important to bring to light the humanist factor of Post-Postmodernism as it is humanism that it strives for. The key to this humanism, along with empathy, is knowing the power of the written word and the meaning that it entails in and on the text. It demands close reading and a return to the text in order to root through the layers and various understandings of the word: not just its meaning but also its embodiment. The words then become the people. When Ruth expresses her concern about the

blank pages in the Nao's diary and that how she had stopped writing, Oliver notes, "if she stops writing to us, then maybe we stop being, too" (Ozeki 344). He equates writing to existence. This is similar to when Nao doesn't hear her father reply to 'tadaima', "which means 'just now,' and it's what you say, when you come in the door to your home. Just now. Here I am. Dad hadn't answered, because, just then, he wasn't" (Ozeki 280). This is when Nao had found Haruki #2 unconscious on the bathroom floor trying to kill himself. The implication here being, no words, no person. The existence of a person is then tied to the words; therefore, existence embodies the word – making it a humanist discourse.

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