



The Mosaic of Postmodern Aesthetic : Postwar Developments

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Abstract:

Around the end of the 19th century, i.e. 1870s, the word, postmodern was first used. After architecture, the influence of postmodernism spread in art, music, and literature. The word Postmodern is used as a key term in the present research work. It is quite difficult to mention the exact dates of the emergence of postmodernism. Hence, the year 1941 is used as a rough boundary-line for the postmodern beginning. Postwar developments in literature have a semblance to postmodernist literature. This brings to our notice that postmodernist literature does not refer only to everything written in the postmodern period. The postwar developments are also called 'Postmodern' because of the contributors such as Samuel Beckett, William Burroughs, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortazar, Gabriel Marquez who have a spark of the postmodern aesthetic in them. The writers of the group such as John Ashbery, Richard Brautigan, Gilbert Sorrentino, and William Burroughs are referred to as postmodernists. Cultural mixing causes to encounter contrary views such as traditions and customs, religions, castes, and creeds, etc. in the postmodern era. Everything seems to be mixed to create a hodgepodge. The invention of information technology opens new avenues of communication. Cultures have been fragmenting into hundreds and thousands of different little cultures. As a result of this, we are to view the world as a 'globalizing' (expanding) and 'glocalizing' (shrinking) place. The new postmodern practices liberate contemporary individuals from totalizing metanarratives and their authority and open the way for a plurality of perspectives and beings.

Key-Words: Postmodernism, post-modernity, hodgepodge, globalizing, glocalizing, metanarratives

Introduction:

Around the end of the 19th century, i.e. 1870s, the word, postmodern was first used. In the context of painting, John Watkins Chapman suggested, 'a postmodern style of painting' to get rid of French Impressionism. J.M. Thompson in his critical essay in 1914 used it to show flux in beliefs and attitudes in a religious context. Another scholar Rudolf Pannwitz got the idea of postmodernism from Friedrich Nietzsche's analysis of modernity and its end results of decadence and nihilism. He used the word in 1917 to show philosophically - oriented culture. He is contrary to Nietzsche as he includes his inclusion of nationalist and mythical elements in his use of postmodernism. Postmodernism became a new literary form in 1942 to H.R. Hays. Arnold J. Toynbee firstly used it in 1939 as a general theory for historical movement, and declared that 'our own postmodern age has been inaugurated by the general war of 1914-1918'. Postmodernism pushed the architecture movement forward in 1949 known as 'international style'. After architecture, the influence of postmodernism spread in art, music, and literature.





In short, the term post-modernity encompasses the developments of the 20th century. It had been taking place since the 1950s and 1960s and reached its zenith in 1968 (social revolution). Postmodernism, unlike post-modernity, refers to a movement and 'postmodernist' is a part of this movement.

The present research paper attempts to trace the postmodern mutations and their reflection on the literary works. The objectives of the paper are,

1. To figure out the nature of postmodernism.
2. To figure out the definitions and emergence of postmodernism.
3. To consider its reflections on the literary works.
4. To figure out the postwar literary development.

The hypotheses of the paper are viz., postmodernism leading to literary mutations and postmodern hodgepodge causes mingling and mixing.

For methodology, analysis, and data analysis I use theoretical, descriptive, and interpretative methods in the present research paper. This research employs a descriptive method which includes a process of gathering, analyzing, classifying the data for making adequate and accurate interpretation of collected data.

Information relevant to the study will be gathered from various reference materials such as books, journals, articles, and online sources related to the topic concerned. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Seventh Edition, has been followed during the accumulation of reference material and their assimilation into the body of the research paper.

Postmodernism Definition and Emergence:

The word Postmodern is used as a key term in the present research work. Hence, it is necessary to draw enough focus on this term. This would bring out its present nature and help to probe its affectations on literary works. The following conventional definitions of the term, Postmodernism, bring out its present nature

Encyclopedia Dictionary of Literary Terms

'A general (and sometimes controversial) term used to refer to changes, developments, and tendencies which have taken place (and are taking place) in literature, art, music, architecture, philosophy, etc. Since the 1940s and 1950s Postmodernism is different from modernism even a reaction against it. It is no easier to define them as many other-isms. Like them, it is amorphous by nature.' (Washer D.458)

Merriam Webster:

'Either of relating to or being an era after a modern one" or "to relating to or being any of various movements in reaction to modernism that are typically characterized by a return to traditional materials and forms (as in architecture) or by ironic self-reference and absurdity (as in literature)" or finally, "of relating to, or being a theory that involves a radical reappraisal of modern assumptions about culture, identity, history or language.' (Merriam Webster 2249)

The Emergence of Postmodernism:

It is quite difficult to mention the exact dates of the emergence of postmodernism. Hence, the year 1941 is used as a rough boundary-line for the postmodern beginning. The prefix 'post' indicating two implications: a reaction against modernism in the wake of World War II and the prefix 'post' implies 'a new era'.

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It is quite difficult to mention the exact dates of the emergence of postmodernism. Hence, the year 1941 is used as a rough boundary-line for the postmodern beginning. The prefix 'post' indicating two implications:

I. Reaction against modernism in the wake of World War II;

With its disrespect of human rights, just convinced in the Geneva convention, through the atomic bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1942) and the Holocaust created by it.

Postmodern also implies a reaction to significant post-war events; viz, the civil rights movement in the United States, the beginning of the Cold War, postcolonialism, rise of the personal computer (Cyberpunk fiction and Hypertext fiction).

II. The prefix 'post' implies 'a new era'.

According to some experts beginning of postmodern literature is marked either with publications or literary events. For instance, John Hawkes', *The Cannibal* (1949), the first performance of *Waiting for Godot* (1953). The beginning of postmodernism is also marked with the help of such critical theories as, Jaques Derrida's, 'Structure, Sign and Play' (1966) or as late as in 1971 Ihab Hassan's usage of the word postmodernism in his critical essay, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*. There is no doubt that many postmodern works have developed out of modernism. Modernism is related to epistemology – theory of knowledge, while postmodernism is concerned with questions of ontology.

The Mosaic of Postmodern Aesthetic; Postwar Developments:

Postwar developments in literature have a semblance to postmodernist literature, for instance, the Theater of the Absurd, Magic Realism, and Beat Generation. This brings to our notice that postmodernist literature does not refer only to everything written in the postmodern period. The postwar developments are also called 'Postmodern' because of the contributors such as Samuel Beckett, William Burroughs, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortazar, Gabriel Marquez who have a spark of the postmodern aesthetic in them. The plays of the Theatre of the Absurd are parallel to postmodern fiction, for instance, Eugene Ionesco's *Bald Soprano* presents a series of clichés taken from a language textbook. Samuel Beckett is an absurdist as well as postmodernist *littérateur*. His works mark the shift from modernism to postmodernism. He celebrated the possibility of language (a trait of modernism) with James Joyce. He also revealed the poverty of language and man as a failure (postmodern trait) in his works. He experimented with narrative forms (i.e. disintegration of narration) and character. His works after 1969 tried to deconstruct literary forms and genres. His *Stirrings Still* (1988) breaks down the boundaries between drama, fiction, and poetry. He proved an important figure in the postmodern movement in fiction. He undermined the ideas of logical coherence in narration, formal plot, regular time sequence, and psychologically explained characters.

The writers of the group such as John Ashbery, Richard Brautigan, Gilbert Sorrentino, and William Burroughs are referred to as postmodernists. William Burroughs published the first truly postmodern novel, *Naked Lunch in Paris* (Paris 1959, America 1961). The novel is fragmentary with no central narrative. It makes use of pastiche. It is two-fold in elements from popular genres, viz., detective and science fiction, full of parody and playfulness. It proves to be the complete hodgepodge! His other novels, *Nova Express*, and *The Ticket that Exploded* consist of the 'cut-up' technique where the author cut off words and phrases from newspapers, etc. and



rearranges them to give new messages. The technique is similar to Tzara's Dadaist

poetry. The technique is also used by Burrough's fellow author Brion Gysin.

A small group of critics has put forth a range of theories that aim to describe culture and society in the alleged aftermath of postmodernism.

An Era of Hodgepodge; Mingling and Mixing:

Cultural mixing causes to encounter contrary views such as traditions and customs, religions, castes, and creeds, etc. in the postmodern era. Everything seems to be mixed to create a hodgepodge. This hodgepodge further leads the world to interconnect the people despite differences among them. Every creed and concept is undergoing a drastic change. Even the concept of God is not an exception to this change. The invention of information technology opens new avenues of communication. Cultures have been fragmenting into hundreds and thousands of different little cultures. As a result of this, we are to view the world as a 'globalizing' (expanding) and 'localizing' (shrinking) place. Every postmodernist is trying to gauge the demarcation line of our rapidly changing postmodern world. Almost everything including cultures, races, and identities is altering in this changing postmodern world. The postmodern critic is diving deep down into the new domains of literature and emerging with gems of new experience. He realizes the mingling of messages and cultures. Hence, he creates a work of art consisting of the reflection of postmodern experiences.

Conclusion:

The new postmodern practices liberate contemporary individuals from totalizing metanarratives and their authority and open the way for a plurality of perspectives and beings. For postmodernists, contemporary practices decentre the subjectivity and authority to clear the way of new opportunities to experience multiple discourses and identities and play with language games. Most of the postmodernists celebrate the fragmentation on and polysemy of communications and the ability of audiences to actively create and play with meanings.

The present study has interdisciplinary relevance. It involves areas of study like literature, criticism, philosophy, psychoanalysis, architecture, cybernetics, anthropology, mythology, history, geography, social science, and technology.

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