

An Analysis of Postmodern Cultural Traits within a Technologically Advanced Era

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Abstract

Postmodernism is a critical period that brought many literary and cultural changes in the contemporary scenario. In the context of the technological world, the socio-cultural characteristics of postmodernism are relevant and should be discussed in the intellectual realm. Chronologically it emerged after modernism and brought various theories and characteristics to the existing art and literature. The notion of 'postmodernism' is not only related to literature but is also associated with art, architecture, politics, economy, culture, history, religion, philosophy, and many more. Critics and theorists say that it continued modernism and influenced our contemporary period's epistemology. Hence it is essential to understand the theory and characteristics of postmodernism within a technologically advanced era. This research paper brings clarity and coherence to the existing norm of postmodernism. The cyber-world is an important area where the influence of postmodernism is quite visible. This paper deals with the socio-cultural traits of postmodernism in a technologically advanced world.

Key Words: Postmodernism, Fragmentation, Pluralism, Consumerism, Irony, Techno-culture, Hyperreality, Cyberliterature, Magical Realism, Cyber World, Cyberspace, Virtual Reality.

Introduction

Postmodernism refers to the reaction to modernism in the late twentieth century. Thus, it is only through the prism of modernity that one can understand postmodernism meaningfully. It is postmodernism's core belief that modernity has not triumphed. The postmodern movement is like modernism in many respects but differs from it in the way it views these trends. According to Modernism, human subjectivity and history tend to be fragmented, but that fragmentation is presented as a tragedy, a loss to be mourned and lamented. Unlike postmodernism, which mourns fragmentation, temporality, or incoherence, it celebrates them. Some characteristics of post-World War II literature make it distinctive, including fragmentation, irony, questionable narrators, etc. They are a reaction

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to Enlightenment ideas embedded within modern literature and can be seen as a reaction against them. It is sometimes complicated for critics to distinguish between modernism and postmodernism due to the similar characteristics of each. The characteristics of postmodernism should be compared with modernism to understand its significance better.

As with modernism, postmodernism holds that truth is relative and there is no absolute truth. As the mind tries to understand reality, postmodernism is not reflected in the human understanding of truth. Therefore, facts and falsities can be interchanged. The modernist concept places faith in Western civilization's ideas, values, beliefs, culture, and norms. In contrast, the postmodernist concept views Western ideas, beliefs, culture, and norms as only a tiny part of human experience and often rejects them. The distinguishing features of postmodernism brought many social, cultural, and personal changes and transformations to modern society. Compared to modernism, postmodernism brought drastic cultural and social changes.

Whereas modernism tried to transform (romantic) alienation into individual autonomy and creativity, the political avant-garde exploded the boundaries isolating the artist from society in order to use the unique gifts of the artist as a means of advancing radical social change. Paradoxically, the extreme individualists of avant-garde art worked in artistic movements that sought to align themselves with whatever social forces—scientific, technological, or political—that they believed augured emancipatory change (Best and Kellner 128).

On the other hand, a postmodernist view is believed to be more profound because it is based on a particular Western value system. In contrast, modernism is concerned with revealing the deeper truths of experience and life. Postmodernism prefers to dwell on the external image of objects and events and avoid drawing conclusions or suggesting underlying meanings related to their internality. Modernism seeks to discover the depth and meaning hidden beneath the surface of objects and events. A postmodern interpretation of human experience emphasizes its instability, internal contradictions, ambiguity, uncertainty, indeterminacy, incompleteness, fragmentation, discontinuity, and "tight" connection with a specific reality in contrast to modernism, which focuses on central themes and a unified vision in particular literature. As a result, it is characterized by a vision of a world that is uncertain, ambiguous, contradictory, fragmented, and incomplete. The postmodern writer constructs work in which the reader is responsible for making his connections, creating alternative meanings, and developing his interpretation, in contrast to modern authors who guide and control the reader's response.

Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc., pass into the text

and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text. Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation marks (Barthes).

The use of satire and humour in postmodern writing was not a new phenomenon, but it became a trademark of the style for many postmodern writers. The Cold War, World War II, and conspiracy theories disillusion postmodern writers. Combined indirectly, irony, playfulness, and black humour are brought to the forefront. It is interesting to note that many authors who were later referred to as postmodernists were initially referred to as black humourists. It is typical of postmodernists to handle serious issues with a playful and humorous approach. John Barth, Joseph Heller, William Gaddis, Kurt Vonnegut, Bruce Jay Friedman, and others are examples of this. "Parody has perhaps come to be a privileged mode of postmodern formal self-reflexivity because its paradoxical incorporation of the past into its very structures often points to these ideological contexts somewhat more, more didactically, than other forms" (Hutcheon 35).

Pastiche is a term that refers to the combining or gluing together of multiple elements as part of post-modern intertextuality. A growing number of postmodern authors have been combining elements of earlier genres and styles of literature to create a new narrative voice or comment on their contemporaries' writing to create a new narrative voice. For example, Thomas Pynchon uses detective fiction, science fiction, and war fiction, while William S. Burroughs uses elements from science fiction, detective fiction, and Westerns. Several historical and fictional characters, including Uncle Sam and Betty Crocker, are included in Robert Coover's 1977 book *The Public Burning*. It is also possible to refer to pastiche in terms of compositional techniques, such as those employed by Burroughs. "The dialogical mode of pastiche becomes a central concern of aesthetic production in the postmodern arts. Confronted with the vast archive of the artistic tradition, the postmodern writer, visual artist, architect, composer consciously acknowledges this past by demonstratively borrowing from it, particularly from the classical archive" (Hoesterey 498).

An intertextual relationship exists when other texts contribute to the interpretation of a text. It may occur when an author borrows from and transforms a previous text or when a reader references a text while reading another text. Throughout history, the concept of intertextuality, coined by poststructuralist Julia Kristeva in 1966, has been borrowed and transformed many times. According to William Irwin, it has almost as many meanings as the phrase "from loyalists to

users." Kristeva's original vision for those who use it as a stylish way of discussing allusion and affect." An essential component of postmodernism is the acknowledgment of past literary works. Postmodern fiction has been characterized by its intertextuality or the relationship between two or more texts within the interwoven history of literature. "Intertextuality posits both an uncentered historical enclosure and an abysmal decentred foundation for language and textuality; in so doing, it exposes all contextualization as limited and limiting, arbitrary and confining, self-serving and authoritarian, theological and political. However paradoxically formulated, intertextuality offers a liberating determinism" (Leitch 162). "Intertextuality is not ahistorical or de-historicizing; it does not wrest past art from its original historical context and reassemble it into the presentist spectacle. Instead, through a double process of installing and ironizing, parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from continuity and difference" (Hutcheon 93).

According to critics, this illustrates the lack of originality and reliance on clichés associated with postmodernism. In postmodern literature, intertextuality can occur as a reference, a parallel, an extended discussion, or a method of writing. Generally, this manifests itself in postmodern literature through references to fairy tales, such as those found in the works of Margaret Atwood and Donald Bartholomew, or popular genres, such as science fiction and detective fiction. Intertextuality was a factor that influenced postmodernists in the early 20th century, and Jorge Luis Borges's *Pierre Ménard, Author of Quixote* is an example of intertextuality in medieval romances as well.

"Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Dai and Huang 62). As a result of postmodernism, many authors have incorporated metafiction into their writing, which is essentially writing about writing, intending to make the reader aware of its fictional nature and sometimes the author's presence in writing. For example, a narrator may use this technique to maintain emotional distance or to allow dramatic shifts in the narrative. There is evidence that metafiction has existed as far back as Homer's *Odyssey* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* from the 14th century, even though it is primarily associated with modern and postmodern literature.

The concept of 'temporal distortion' is a common technique in postmodern literature: fragmentation and non-linear narratives are essential characteristics of modern and postmodern literature. There are many ways in which time distortion is used in postmodern fiction, often for irony. There may be a time jump or references to cultures and histories that do not make sense in this literature.

'Techno Culture' is also very much crucial in postmodernism. As Frederick Jameson explains in his essay, postmodernism is the "Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" in which advertisements, videos, and product placement constantly bombard us. It is not uncommon for postmodern authors to quote advertisements in their works or to place their characters in situations where technology cannot be avoided. Techno-culture covers the "social reception and representation of technology in literature and popular culture from the Romantic era to the present." It includes "all media, including film, TV, and recent video animation and Web 'zines." The course focuses "mainly on American culture and how machines, computers, and the body have been imagined" (Wikipedia). 'Hyperreality' also plays a significant role. Jean Baudrillard in his Book *Simulacra and Simulation*, says that:

Hyperreality and simulation are deterrents of every principle and every objective, they turn against power the deterrent that it used so well for such a long time. Because in the end, throughout its history it was capital that first fed on the deconstruction of every referential, of every human objective, that shattered every ideal distinction between true and false, good and evil, in order to establish a radical law of equivalence and exchange, the iron law of its power (23).

'Paranoia' is another characteristic of postmodernism. Paranoia is considered as "a symptomatic condition of postmodernity" (Mandic 143). The belief that orders exist behind the world's chaos is another recurring postmodern theme of madness. According to the postmodernist, there is no order; thus, any attempt to achieve it is futile and absurd. Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* has long been regarded as the prototype of postmodern literature, for it presents a situation that may be a coincidence, a conspiracy, or even a cruel joke. 'Hyperreality' and 'techno-culture' are often mentioned together in this story. When Dwayne Hoover believes that everyone else is a robot and that he is the only human in the world, he becomes violent in Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions*. "We exist for ourselves, perhaps, and at times we even have a glimmer of who we are, but in the end we can never be sure, and as our lives go on, we become more and more opaque to ourselves, more and more aware of our own incoherence" (Auster 243).

Postmodernists use 'magical realism' to introduce elements of the fantastical or impossible into narratives that appear ordinary or natural. In magical realist novels, real-life dreams may occur, previously dead characters may return, plots can be complex and shift dramatically in time, and myths and fairy tales may be incorporated as part of the narrative. "Magical realism cannot be identified either with fantastic literature or with psychological literature, or with the surrealist or hermetic literature that [Julio] Ortega describes[...]

Magical realism is, more than anything else, an attitude toward reality that can be expressed in popular or cultured forms, in elaborate or rustic styles, in closed or open structures [...] In magical realism the writer confronts reality and tries to untangle it" (Zamora and Faris 121). It has been suggested by many critics that magical realism has its origins in the writings of Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel Garcia Márquez and that, in some ways, it is a Latin American genre. It is widely considered that Jorge Luis Borges' *Universal History of Infamy* is the first example of magic realism. Furthermore, Gabriel Garcia Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Salman Rushdie's *A Prophet in Exile*, and Elizabeth Graver's *Heartbreaker* are among the books.

According to the French postmodernist Jean Baudrillard, postmodernism presents a state that has evolved from the modern era and is radically different from it. The proliferation of media, communication networks, and information technology has resulted in new opportunities for imitation, according to Baudrillard. There is no discernible difference between these imitations and the real thing. Several imitations might be able to create a "reality" rather than a reality. Baudrillard defines postmodernism as a revolutionary era of interpretation considering this background. In the case of a valuable image that has been painted previously, a copy is made from the original image. Thousands of copies of postmodern CDs and electronic devices are available for purchase. All items are original or in a condition where the original cannot be located. By defining 'virtual reality' as artificially created reality, Baudrillard clarifies that computers create it. People's sense of privacy is being destroyed by media such as television and the Internet. Private life is gradually becoming identified with the showy nature of the outside world. It has become impossible to distinguish between vulgar and obscene, and everything has become a matter of habit and imitation. The act of covering up was regarded as obscene in the past.

Lifestyles and ways of thinking continue to be transformed by media images. Based on Baudrillard's explanation, this transformation has resulted in significant laziness, helplessness, and passivity in society. Baudrillard explains this phenomenon as the spread of passivity through electronic culture. In this era, television is the primary medium of communication and media. There has been a strong influence created by television among the masses. A television set is one of the most used electronic devices in most people's homes. The participants gave examples of how various channels on television present sexual and violent incidents, stories, and other programs that mislead the public. Television has the peculiarity of only showing what can be seen by the viewer. Channels can be changed at any time if necessary. The spread of computers and the internet brought another revolutionary advance in news broadcasting, presentation, and art

presentation. Furthermore, it is possible to create websites and express yourself through them in addition to finding facts on the internet. Compared to broadcast television, sexuality and wireless internet provide viewers with more excellent value. The Internet is one of the most innovative teaching mediums available today. In postmodernism, this is known as the medium of textual creation. Texts published on websites on the Internet are referred to as cyber literature. To the listener, computers provide an immersive virtual reality experience. It is a device that displays whatever language and visuals you want on a screen. Additionally, voice presence can be enabled if necessary. Mathematical, scientific, and general knowledge questions are displayed on the same screen. There is an evident presence of sex and violence. Through the Internet, a vast world can be viewed on-demand with the movement of a fingertip. On the Internet, we are introduced to a vast world that we have never known before. We refer to this vast world as Cyberspace. Postmodernism is characterized by the proliferation of electronic media and the virtual reality created by these media. Creating cyber-texts innovatively and realistically is possible, which has not been possible before. We refer to this as virtual reality. E-mail, chat rooms, and the intragroup that facilitates sharing news online are all under surveillance. Baudrillard in his book *Symbolic Exchange and Death* depicts that "Every image, every media message and also every surrounding functional object is a test. That is to say, in all the rigour of the term, it triggers response mechanisms in accordance with stereotypes or analytic models. The object today is no longer 'functional' in the traditional sense of the term; it doesn't serve you, it tests you" (62).

Virtual reality refers to the presentation of the unreal on a computer screen in a way that creates a sense of reality. William Gibson, a Canadian science historian, coined the term cyberspace for the first time in 1967. The name of this unique place is Unthinkable Complexity. The term 'matrix' is also used by Gibson to describe cyberspace. The three-dimensional world of facts is accessible once one enters this matrix. Undoubtedly, the Internet is also an imaginary world in which we live. The concept of the world has been overturned. The internet serves as a means of connecting the entire world. Here, the world has been transformed and shrunk from previous conceptualizations in every sense in the extensive work of shrinking the globe into a web. The postmodern environment is one of these transformative environments; within this environment, cyber literature continues to grow and spread.

Cyberliterature represents a new form of textual innovation. Compared to the previous text work, this text is up-to-date and relevant to the current situation. The unique environment created by virtual reality and the new environment created by information

technology characterizes cyber literature. Online culture plays a vital role in the creation of cyber literature. A translation can also be provided through the Internet in conjunction with creating a work of literature. It may be necessary to obtain the author's comments, and the work being created may be transformed or made in any manner desirable. It has been stated earlier that postmodernism is an age of speed. Postmodernism refers to the phenomenon in which events themselves become stories, poems, and novels. There is a strong desire to express the latest most innovatively. The listener can interpret a current event as a story or a lesson to be learned. As a result of presenting the work to the reader before the actual news about the event, the previous literary concept itself will change through such textual works.

The new postmodern age has forced us to define the trinity of new imagination, new creativity, and new expression in new ways. There is a common fear that the spread of the online revolution will result in the extinction of the former literary sector, the print literature. According to those concerned, the physical writing process and severe literature will become irrelevant. The film's release caused many people to believe that drama was doomed. Several people have argued that the spread of cinema will lead to the disappearance of literature. Based on this story, Frans Truffaut made a film. Despite the rapid growth of the Internet, Steven Birkett predicted that cyberspace would eliminate writing and printing literature. Birkett discovered that the circuit and the screen were opposed to individuality. There is no reason to believe that cyber literature will make print literature obsolete, like cinema will not make drama irrelevant. Depending on the period, each has its relevance. Cybertexts are a relatively new technology. A limited number of elements related to literary writing and its marketing will be discussed. Electronic presence is expected to change not only the nature of literature but also the nature of imagination and expression. Literature can be found on the Internet in a wide variety of forms. With the help of a keyboard, it is copied into the Internet's memory rather than written on paper. On this screen, copying and editing documents on paper is elementary. With cyber literature, the translation of written literature is eliminated. However, the differences in the medium of presentation, print, and cyber literature are considered literature.

The art and presence of cybersex are other characteristics of the cyber revolution. This is because the artistic value of sex films has been accepted in principle, and access to them has been granted. Do not assume that all sex images on the internet are artistic. Several pictures can be considered artistic expressions. Similarly, some believers do not believe that sex pictures have artistic value and consider them idols. The presentation of life in literature can be more aesthetic than life.

Additionally, one of the reasons for this artistic development is that it can be presented more aesthetically with the help of technology than the real thing. In postmodernism, the artistic presentation of sexuality is considered a high art form. The postmodern movement does not believe that sex should be hidden. As a result, the cyber world has opened a new window of opportunity for the viewer to experience the art revolution. Human bodies can produce a wide variety of expressions and languages. This study of body language is part of a more extensive study of the characteristics of the movement of the human body regarding communication. In the 1960s, severe scientific research began on the infinite possibilities that could be communicated through body movements. Body movements are a perfect vehicle for communicating the visual arts. Artistry is required to reveal what is hidden. Then it becomes enjoyable. The use of precise lighting, the selection of only essential scenes, precise movements, and the expression of emotion make the sex pictures a work of art. The cybersex experience reveals a surreal world of visual diversity and nudity.

When discussions regarding postmodernism first began, the current situation developed out of the conditions that existed at the time. Currently, postmodernism is used to describe this state of the art. The term "postmodernism" has been defined in many ways by many theorists. It is important to note that these definitions were created at a specific time. Science will contribute to transforming our way of life and how we use machines. In the future, a state will be advanced or transformed compared to what it is today. Consequently, in the absence of a new term to express and interpret that condition, the meaning of postmodernism will be transformed into a term that refers to the most recent period in history. All sectors of society have not fully embraced several conditions regarded as postmodern. While transforming, postmodernity has expanded its reach and accelerated its pace of living. Nowadays, computer viruses are one of the most widely used weapons of war and competition between nations and movements. There is a high level of computerization in all sectors and programs today.

In the future, we will begin a war of attrition using viruses capable of disabling the enemy's communications and data collection systems. This will end today's war of attrition, which kills people and destroys their culture over time. Therefore, the production of computer viruses and the development of antivirus software capable of destroying them and the industry will grow. E-mail is the most common method of transmitting viruses to computers. Eventually, computers will permeate all spheres of society and become an indispensable part of our everyday lives, even for the most basic tasks. Viruses are the result of attacks on computers currently. During the following decades of

postmodernism, it is possible to observe the impact of computers in all fields. It is sometimes the work of talented theorists to give new nomenclature to this period and refine its theoretical definitions. Over time, artistic expression is bound to change. The future of text creation will be transformed considering this transformation. Therefore, an analytical study of postmodernism is very relevant at present. Literary scholars and critics always go to the depth of postmodernism to trace its various features and characteristics. This paper gives in-depth knowledge regarding postmodernism and its salient literary features.

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