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## THE THEORY OF POSTMODERNISM IN THE INTERPRETATION OF LITERATURE

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### ABSTRACT

The ubiquitous and multifaceted term 'postmodernism' has received a great deal of attention from several fields of study. It has initiated and spread a multitude of trends in various domains like fine arts, philosophy, music, film, medicine, sociology, communications, technology, architecture, literature etc. In literature, the movement of postmodernism has its own remarkable significance by having its wide influence on several writers. It has undeniably enriched the domain and scope of literature.

In a nutshell, postmodern literature describes the trends in the Post World War II literature. The movement of postmodernism is a further response to modernism, especially by its refusal of some of its totalizing premises and effects, and its implicit or explicit distinction between the rich or high culture and the culture of common or middleclass people. With its set of ideas, it is an interesting outcome resulting from the disillusionment, feelings of despair and state of annihilation caused by the First and Second World Wars.

Postmodernism tends to refer to a cultural, intellectual or artistic state that lacks a clear single thought or veracity, organizing principle and central hierarchy. It embodies extreme complexity, challenging of convention, mixture of styles, fragmentation of authority, non-linear thinking, contradiction, temporal disorder, admixture of fiction with reality, and ambiguity. It experiments with language and diversified thoughts of the characters. Further, it welcomes innovation and change by emphasizing on reality and intertextuality or interconnectedness. It explores the culture and society by improving critical theories, interpreting the history and by studying law and culture. After the mid-1980s, it has been well received as an area of academic study as well as criticism. My paper aims at analyzing the ideas of postmodernism in connection with literature.

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The idea of 'postmodernism' has come into existence in 1949 as a reaction of dissatisfaction with modern architecture which later paved the way to the postmodern architecture movement. Initially, there is a little acceptance for the significance and application of postmodern literature, its

characteristics and its scope. In the due course of time, this term is quite connected to several movements including art, music, literature etc., It is also recognized as the revival of traditional elements and techniques.

Many philosophers, scientists and critics have used this term to refer to the aspects of contemporary culture, economics and society which are specially manifested in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The word 'postmodernism' refers to the aspects of the period of time since the 1950s. To give a whole definition regarding the exact origins and to know about the whereabouts of the rise and fall of postmodernism is rather a complicated task. Perhaps, the wide inclusion of this term might have led to the indefiniteness of this concept.

Postmodern literature like 'postmodernism' may not be satisfactorily defined in its scope and characteristics. It shares some similar and diverse features with its progenitor modernism. The thought of modernism and its salient features, possibly best provide the plausible understanding of postmodernism. Both modernism and postmodernism are the developments of the latter stages of capitalism.

In brief, the techniques of modernism and postmodernism in art and culture have their implications for reaction against realism which is the most widely approved and appreciated form of aesthetic experiences during the 19th century. The adherents of postmodernism often state that their ideals are resulted from the economic and social conditions. Owing to the effects of late capitalism and the advancement of broadcast media, the society has been pushed into a new historical period. However, many thinkers and writers opine that postmodernism is merely a period which includes divergent variety and extension of modernism.

The movement of modernism can be traced around the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries where there is an immense change in thinking, nuclear threat, threat to the geosphere, fast communication, greater diversity of cultures and mores, the impact of globalization, the advancement of technology, pluralism, lifestyle of the people and their divergent views with regard to the concept of reality.

Modernism in visual arts, music, literature and drama has mainly rejected the old Victorian standards of how art should be made and what it should mean. Modernism places a great deal of

importance on ideals such as rationality, objectivity, and progress and also on other ideas rooted in the thought of Enlightenment. The innovative victories in science such as Einstein's Theory of Relativity, Freud's Theory of Consciousness have brought a tremendous altercation in the then existing phenomenon.

In brief, modernism is an apt response to the accepted and long associated worldview of time and volatile conditions of the modern civilization. It prefers linear thinking in a cause and effect way. Theories like Curved Space and the Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle have helped to question the practicalities of modern thinking. In the twentieth century, these theories influenced the writers like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, George Eliot, Ezra Pound, Stevens, Marcel Proust, Stephane Mallarme, Franz Kafka, Rainer Maria Rilke and et al. They have introduced the techniques of Stream of Consciousness, existentialism, Dadaism, Surrealism and Futurism in their works.

Modernism discards the old Victorian notions of art and its production, genre distinctions, and the boundaries between different forms of art. It emphasizes on discontinuous narratives, fragmentation sketches, pastiche, parody, bricolage, irony, playfulness, simultaneity, reflexivity, self-consciousness, ambiguity, rejection of the distinction between high and low culture, rejection of rigid genre distinctions, impressionism and subjectivity in writing, and the de-centered and dehumanized subject. Nevertheless, it has its own limitations as it has relied on vital concepts which are connected to the past.

Like modernism, postmodernism also shares most of these similar concerns. On the other hand, postmodernism differs from modernism in its view, attitude and approach. Unlike modernism which treats the fragmented presentation of human life or situations as disastrous and unfortunate, postmodernism fairly and realistically presents the seeming disorderly and meaningless world with the celebrated idea of fragmentation and incoherence. Postmodern writers tend to uphold the meaning from meaningless situations by providing an access to a wide range of applications, views and interpretations. They consider that all the views are

not contradictory ones but are an integral part of the complex web and structure of reality. They have a susceptibility to de-naturalize some of the dominant features of life which, they suppose, can be experienced as natural and common in the society.

Postmodern writers even acknowledge that all knowledge is fragmentary, constructed, imperfect, partial and incomplete. Since one can only make the most of one's reason by moving close to the entity of truth, it often prefers memory as an inextricable feature of reclamation of the past and fabrication of history. They have their trust in social as well as in human constructs rather than in representations of far-fetched realities which is undoubtedly a subversion of the realistic writer/reader relationship. Postmodern fiction often depicts the tendency of turning past events into facts through the filtering and interpreting of archival documents, and thus implying a new prominent perspective.

Despite the fact that the postmodernism in literature adopts many features of modernism, it stands apart from it in several ways. It does not adopt a fixed form and order or linear narrative, and moreover, it favours socio-cultural transformations, ethnic complexities, multiplicities, sporadic narratives, self-reflexivity and complex mixture of vivid narrative genres which include ambiguity, obscurity and a wide range of novelties. It conceptually challenges traditional, realistic beliefs and employs the techniques of parody where the literary form, style and language get into innovative dimensions. Non-linear thinking is the predominant characteristic of postmodernism. As Linda Hutcheon stated, it takes over the form of "self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement" (*The Politics of Postmodernism* 1).

The origin and development of postmodern period is vividly different in various countries. Around the 1870s, the term 'postmodernism' was first used in various fields. John Watkins Chapman uses the style of postmodernism in the field of painting. Later J. M. Thompson used this term to describe the changes in attitudes and beliefs in theology. In 1917, Rudolf Pannwitz used this term to describe the oriented culture in a philosophical

manner. From 1921 to 1925, the term was gradually applied to the description of new forms of art and music. In 1926, the term was used by B. I. Bell in his *Postmodernism & other Essays*.

In 1934, the word 'Postmodernism' was mentioned in a text by Federico de Onis. But his usage of this term has received a little attention from the readers as well as the critics. In 1942, H. R. Hays used it as a new literary form. In 1949 the term was used in the field of architecture. In 1954, the historian Arnold J. Toynbee used this term in his *Study of History*, Volume 8. But it did not move into the mainstream thought and criticism until 1959 with the publication of the article "What is Modernism" by Harry Levin. Later, the term was widely applied to various fields like philosophy, literature, history, law, industry, fine arts etc.,

Even though there has been much debate about the precise beginning and fall of postmodernism, the year 1941 which indicates the death of both the writers James Joyce, an Irish novelist and Virginia Woolf, a British novelist is often regarded as the beginning of the postmodernism. Another contributing factor is due to the devastating occurrences of Second World War i.e., the disrespect for human rights, the political and economical factors, the various events of atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Holocaust, the bombing of Dresden, the fire-bombing of Tokyo and Japanese American internment, a much favoured scope is provided for the identification of human rights. The post-war events, American Civil Right's Movement (1955-1968), the partition of India, development of computer awareness, the enhancement of science and technology, the impact of globalization, the increased communication network and the 1947 UN partition plan have widened the thought of postmodernism.

Some critics say that some publications and literary events stand for the beginning of postmodern literature. As per their views, postmodern literature is acknowledged and gained much focus with the first publication of John Hawkes' *The Cannibal* (1949), the first performance of *Waiting for Godot* in 1953, the first publication of Howl in 1956 and the publication of the novel

*Naked Lunch* in Paris in 1959 and in America in 1961 by William S. Burroughs. These novels include parody, pastiche, paradox, playfulness, fragmentary and non-central narrative.

On the other hand, some critics opine that the thought of postmodernism has also been contributed by the critical theories along with the books, such as Jacques Derrida's 'Structure, Sign and Play', a lecture in 1966 and also by the Arab American Theorist, Ihab Hassan's usage of the term postmodernism in *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* in 1971, Jean-François Lyotard's short but influential work *The Postmodern Condition: A report on knowledge* in 1979 and Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979). During the 1970s, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, and Roland Barthes have greatly contributed for the development of postmodern theory.

With the publication of *Catch-22* written by Joseph Heller in 1961, the movement has reached its peak during the 60s and 70s. The short story collection entitled *Lost in the Funhouse* is written by an American writer, John Barth in 1968. It includes metafiction, and the stories are self-conscious and self-reflexive by their narrative pattern. The satirical novel and metafiction entitled *Slaughterhouse-Five, or The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* (1969) by Kurt Vonnegut is about World War II experiences. And the lengthy novel entitled *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) by an American writer Thomas Pynchon is about the design, production and dispatch of V-2 rockets by the German military, and their quest to disclose the secrets of a mysterious device named the "Schwarzgerät" which is to be installed in a rocket with the serial number '00000'. All these works have greatly strengthened the movement of postmodernism.

With the emergence of Realism represented by Raymond Carver, the movement of postmodernism has been weakened in the 1980's. Tom Wolfe, in one of his articles "Stalking the Billion-footed Beast" (1989), focuses on realism in the place of postmodernism in fiction. However, the postmodern techniques and themes are not entirely winded up. Even though some authors continued the technique of postmodernism, the works *White*

*Noise*, a novel by Don DeLillo in 1985 and *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie (1988) have been considered the final illustrious novels of postmodern period. Nevertheless, tracing the exact ending of postmodernism is a complicated task. After some time, the writers — such as David Foster Wallace, Giannina Braschi, Dave Eggers, Michael Chabon, Zadie Smith, Chuck Palahniuk, Jennifer Egan, Neil Gaiman, Richard Powers, Jonathan Lethem continued writing in postmodern technique.

The technique of postmodernism has influenced the French thought during the last 1960s and early 1970s. Due to the long disillusionment with conventional norms, change has been observed from Hegelian to Friedrich Nietzschean and Martin Heidegger thought. Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger have initiated the philosophical origins of the postmodern approach.

In 1930 Martin Heidegger discarded the theoretical concepts of "subjectivity" and "objectivity", Thomas Samuel Kuhn has popularized the term 'Paradigm Shift', W.V.O Quine has developed the theses of indeterminacy of translation and ontological relativity, and argued against the possibility of a priori knowledge. His argument is that one can never satisfactorily know what a word really "means". The words of Steven Best and Douglas Kellner suggest that Nietzsche

attacked philosophical conceptions of the subject, representation, causality, truth, value, and system, replacing...(them) with a perspectivist orientation for which there are no facts, only interpretations, and no objective truths, only the constructs of various individuals or groups (Best and Douglas Kellner 22).

Nietzsche supported art over reason and theory. He further says that "all language was metaphorical and ...the subject was only a product of language and thought" (Best and Douglas Kellner 22). Postmodernists have attacked the conventional social norms and developed an extensive range of views that consequently determine the aspects of progress, truth, reality and values. They encourage interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approaches which have questioned the idea of enlightenment, positive sociology, historical progress and social

movements. Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Baudrillard, Michael Foucault, Julia Kristeva and many other writers are the prominent writers of postmodern thought.

Some feminist writers Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous and Toril Moi have borrowed ideas from Nietzschean and Lacanian thought in their elaboration of giving phallogocentric social structures and offered their comprehensive interpretation of various thoughts. As some of the critics opined, postmodernism

begins with far from equilibrium conditions as being the more "natural" state, and places a premium on flux, non-linear change, chance, spontaneity, intensity, indeterminacy, irony, and orderly disorder. No permanent stable order is possible or even desirable. No centre or foundation exists. Godel's theorem dictates that the search for an overall, all-encompassing totalizing theory is an illusory exercise (Milovanovic 22)

In view of these, the aspects of fragmentation, deconstruction and disorder have become the invariable characteristics of postmodern technique. It is an acknowledged fact that the movement of postmodernism has been evolved over the years. Postmodernist writers opine that the early novels and short story collections serve as an inspiration for their experiments with theme, narration and structure. The works *Don Quixote*, which is also known as *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*, a Spanish novel by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *1001 Arabian Nights*, a collection of West and South Asian stories and folk tales written in Arabic during the Islamic Golden Age, *The Decameron*, which is subtitled as *Prince Galehaut*, a collection of novellas by the 14th-century Italian author Giovanni Boccaccio, *Candide*, a French satire published in 1759 by Voltaire show the initial traces of postmodernism. In English literature, Laurence Sterne's novel titled *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759) which includes parody and narrative experimentation has remarkably influenced the thought of postmodernism.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lord Byron's satire *Don Juan*, Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, the playful experiments of Lewis Carroll and the works of Isidore Ducasse, Arthur Rimbaud and Oscar Wilde present the attack on the techniques of parody, playfulness and experimentation. Playwrights like the Swedish dramatist named August Strindberg, the Italian dramatist named Luigi Pirandello, the German playwright and theorist named Bertolt Brecht and the French novelist named Octave Mirbeau have remarkable influence on the thought of postmodernism.

The literary developments in the post-war period such as Dadaism, Surrealism, Theatre of Absurd, The Beat Generation and Magical Realism have influenced the postmodern period and have many similarities with the postmodern literature. Samuel Beckett, William S. Burroughs, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar and Gabriel Garcia Marquez have substantially contributed for the development of postmodernism.

In the early twentieth century, authors, composers, architects, and other intellectuals rebelled against the strictures of older forms and ways of doing things. The thought of postmodernism has been supported by several movements and people such as Dada movement in 1920 which brings out an argument that the focal point on the framing of objects and discourse is more important than the work itself. The writers, who are associated with the movement of Dadaism celebrated chance, parody, playfulness over reason, and challenged the authority of the artist.

The technique of Dadaism has influenced postmodern literature with the development of collage which uses elements from advertisement or illustrations from various famous novels. Surrealism emerging from Dadaism has made the writers continue experimentations with chance, parody, playfulness and the impact of the subconscious mind. André Breton, the founder of Surrealism, stated that the description and analysis of dreams play a major role in the creation of literature.

The experiments of the surrealist writers named René Magritte have been exemplarily used by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Michel

Foucault has used examples from Jorge Luis Borges who has an important direct influence on many fiction writers of postmodernism. Although Michel Foucault started writing in the 1920s, his experiments with metafiction and magic realism significantly bring out the technique of postmodernism.

The salient features of postmodernism often correspond to the idea of Jean-Francois Lyotard's concept of the 'meta-narrative' and 'little narrative', Jacques Derrida's concept of play and Jean Baudrillard's simulacra. Postmodern writers present chance over dexterity and they also prioritize metafiction to undermine the author's univocal control. The distinction between the high and low culture is also attacked by the postmodern writers.

To deal with the manifold subjects that include cultural, social, political, moral aspects and anew genres, postmodern writers have adopted the techniques of parody, admixture of genres, irony along with black humour, pastiche and metafiction. The term metafiction presents the relationship between fiction and reality. Postmodern authors employ metafiction to undermine the writer's authority. "Pastiche, along with other metafictional strategies, has been seen as one element in the wider phenomenon of post-modernism" (Noted in Woodcock 10). Postmodern writers question the distinctions between high and low culture through the use of pastiche. Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, Salman Rushdie, Italo Calvino, Donald Barthelme, William Burroughs, Don DeLillo, Umberto Eco are some of the famous postmodern writers.

One of the leading characteristics of postmodernism is that postmodern writers consider the world as a complex and indecisive entity. Authenticity and reality are not permanently fixed or certain. They believe that the world is not an absolute reality but it is a representation or an imitation of reality. Hence, they view all truth as a relative aspect to one's perception and interpretation i.e no theory or fact is ultimate.

Many postmodern authors opine that the aspects of the text often weaken its authority and its inner contradictions obliterate the limitations on

which the text is relied. Thus, the application of postmodern ideas of criticism or theory brings out the term 'Deconstruction' which undermines the frame of reference and assumptions that highlight the text. Jacques Derrida, the originator of this term says that the existence of deconstruction states that there is no intrinsic essence to a text.

Many postmodern authors and philosophers advocate that deconstruction is an occurrence within the text itself. He used deconstruction as a technique to bring out multiple interpretations of the texts. He says that every text is a complex and ambiguous entity in its nature, so its complete interpretation is quite impossible. This thought is quite relevant to postmodern technique. Jacques Derrida who coined the term 'Post-structuralism' opines that the idea of postmodernism is associated with poststructuralism in view of its rejection of bourgeois and elitist culture. Sometimes the term poststructuralism is often used interchangeably with postmodernism.

Postmodernists strongly appraise that change is the common practicality of all fields. In consideration with the changed circumstances and experiences, the mostly acknowledged facts can be interpreted from different points of view. As a result the historical events and myths are restudied with innovative and divergent sketches. The 'Deconstruction' theory has provided a platform where the modern thinking and established historical facts can be restudied and reinterpreted for the identification of their faulty and weak points. In view of that, the grand or classical narratives are re-observed to find out their greater qualities and their inconsistencies. Thus, Derrida has re-studied the fundamentals of writing and their influences.

Postmodernism is a mode of expression where writers ignore the aspects such as the works should have a clear theme or standard plots. They may or may not incorporate the features like unified plot, developed characters and decisive climax. Lack of structural element and the lack of three unities are the evident features of postmodernism. They prefer to present the story as the work requires and permits the readers to have their own comprehension. Their works include the themes of search for identity, meaning and veracity.

Postmodern writers assess and reject the grand narratives. It favours mini-narratives which limit to minor-scale observations and temporary aspects rather than universality and absolute truth or reason. Jean Baudrillard suggests that in postmodern society there are no originals, only copies. He calls them 'simulacra'. The advent of technologies helped to the thought of postmodernism to prioritize the idea that knowledge is functional, distributed and organized differently.

Even though it is intricate to explain the term postmodernism as it extensively covers varied disciplines, some of its central characteristics have made this technique quite popular as it explores different forms of genres. The varieties of art Bricolage and Pastiche are relevant examples to this. Another feature is postmodernism focuses on fragmentation, discontinuity, ambiguity and a de-structured or de-centered humanity.

Postmodernists view that disorder and fragmentation are not unconstructive qualities, and further they are acceptable and meaningful dimensions of reality. Postmodernists acknowledge the possibility of ambiguity. They regard the things which will exhibit two different meanings at the same time not as contradictory but as an integral part of the complex structure of reality.

The movement of postmodernism is an aesthetic, literary, political or social philosophy. It focuses on eclecticism. Postmodern writers often re-conceptualize the society, history and the self as cultural constructs. They explore the marginalized aspects of life and the marginalized elements of society. They use irony and black humour when they deal with the serious subjects and further they depict the histories ironically and humorously.

Postmodern writers question the accuracy and credibility of the historical facts. They review the past events from a contemporary perspective and they study the influence of past events on the present situation. They often opine that the past events are depicted one-sided and biased. Hutcheon states that "we now get the histories (in the plural) of the losers as well as the winners, of the regional (and colonial) as well as the centrist, of the unsung many as well as the much sung few, and ... of

women as well as men." (*A poetics of postmodernism: history, theory, fiction*. 66). Postmodern writers do not believe in a single truth or reality. They further suggest that the essence of truth or reality depends on the contexts of time and place.

Linda Hutcheon brings out a new perspective in the postmodern theory by coining the term "historiographic metafiction" which is essentially a postmodern technique as it presents the works that fictionalize actual historical events and situations. The writers' works such as Michael Ondaatje (*Running in the family, In the Skin of a Lion, The English Patient, Coming Through Slaughter*) Salman Rushdie (*Shame, Midnight's Children* which are about the rewriting of the history of Pakistan and India in the early and mid-twentieth century) Gabriel García Márquez (*The General in His Labyrinth* is about Simón Bolívar), Julian Barnes (*Flaubert's Parrot* is about Gustave Flaubert) E.L. Doctorow (*Ragtime* presents historical figures such as Harry Houdini, Henry Ford, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, Booker T. Washington, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung), Rabih Alameddine (*Koolhaas: The Art of War* refers to the Lebanese Civil War and various real life political figures) John Fowels (*The French Lieutenant's Woman* deals with the Victorian period), Roland Barthes (*The Death of the Author* argues against the conventional practices of literary criticism which connects the text with the life of the author and further supports the thought that the text and its author are unconnected) etc., are the distinguished examples of historiographic metafiction as they rely on textual play, parody and historical re-conceptualization. It presents the incidents that are associated with history as being discursive, situational and textual. Hutcheon analyses the works of historiographic metafiction which are "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages" (*A Poetics of Postmodernism: history, theory, fiction* 5).

As Linda Hutcheon explains further 'Historiographic metafiction shows fiction to be historically conditioned and history to be

discursively structured, and in the process manages to broaden the debate about the ideological implications of the Foucauldian conjunction of power and knowledge – for readers and for history itself as a discipline' (*A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* 120.)

Postmodern writers also advocate the thought that a narrative need not be complete and perfect, and further it may be an open-ended and infinite narrative. Linda Hutcheon writes in *The Politics of Postmodernism* that the concept of a narrative's "end" suggests both teleology and closure" and that postmodernists consider this view "a mode of "totalising" representation" (62).

Postmodern writers have used another technique called 'revisionism' which is a re-telling of the story with possible interpretations in its theme and also about the characters of the text. Further, the technique of postmodernism examines and interrogates the existing philosophies, strategies and world views. As Hutcheon brings out the point as "postmodernism establishes, differentiates, and then disperses stable narrative voices (and bodies) that use memory to try to make sense of the past. It both installs and then subverts traditional concepts of subjectivity" (*A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* 18.)

The term 'postmodernism' is frequently used in criticism and literature. Even though postmodernism continues the experimentation of modernism in some ways, it discards the supposed order of the universe as well as the imposed order of the human beings. Postmodernism reflects the fragmentation of thoughts and experiences with a vivid concern. Even though the thought of postmodernism has been criticized by the linguist, Noam Chomsky as an insignificant technique since it is not adding anything significant to analytical or empirical knowledge, it has not confined to the works that are written in the postmodern period.

Modernist fiction is based on knowledge: knowledge about self and how that knowledge can be communicated with others. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon states that "[P]ostmodernism has called into question the messianic faith of modernism, the faith that

technical innovation and purity of form can assure social order" (12).

Postmodern writers allow multiple contexts, such as religious, social, political etc. They question the presentation of reality within the set socio-cultural contexts. The thought of postmodernism sets the relationship between the individual and his context with the belief that individual is part of context and the analysis of context has its impact on cultural, national, personal identity of the individuals. Fictional works may create different possible or improbable contexts. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon asserts that "a study of representation becomes ... an exploration of the way in which narratives and images structure how we see ourselves and how we construct our notions of self, in the present and in the past" (7).

A literary work should include not only the account of the past but also the relevance of the present. The thought of postmodernism asserts that every text may be related with some other past texts. However the representation and relevance of the past as depicted by the postmodern writers is challenged by other representations that 'foreground[s] the postmodern epistemological questioning of the nature of historical knowledge" (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* 71).

The concept of postmodernism has been widened to include the discussions of social, economic, political and other aspects of contemporary life. It reflects a set of social and historical attitudes. Sometimes the expectations and predictions of the readers may contradict with the author's. In the contexts of these, the postmodern writers, at times, may break the established practices by leaving certain aspects, the order of events and the note of conclusion to the discretion of the reader. They give importance for precision both in language and presentation. They explore innovative strategies and discard fixed notions of reality.

Frederic Jameson explains his idea of postmodernism and its basic principles in his 1983 essay "Postmodernism and Consumer Society". He discusses pastiche and schizophrenia in connection



with late capitalism. Pastiche deals with the loss of personal identity. And schizophrenia is the clash of narratives which results from the combination of the past and future into the present.

William Gass' *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country*, Jerzy Kosinski's *Steps*, Robert Coover's *Universal Baseball Association and Pricksongs and Descants*, John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Peter Handke's *The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Steve Katz's *The Exaggerations of Peter Prince*, the short story collections of Donald Barthelme such as *City Life*, *Unspeakable Practices* and *Unnatural Acts*, the novel of Donald Barthelme's *Snow White*, Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America*, Tom Robbins' *Another Roadside Attraction*, Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Ada* and Joseph McElroy's *A Smuggler's Bible* etc., are the remarkable works of the theory of postmodernism.

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