

POSTMODERNISM AS A NEW MOVEMENT IN LITERATURE

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Abstract: *Postmodernism emerged in the second half of the twentieth century as a complex and multifaceted literary movement that challenged the fundamental assumptions of modernism and traditional narrative forms. It rejected grand narratives, absolute truths, and fixed meanings, instead embracing fragmentation, intertextuality, metafiction, irony, and ambiguity. This article explores postmodernism as a new movement in literature by analyzing its philosophical foundations, historical development, defining characteristics, and representative authors and texts. Through a critical review of major theoretical contributions and literary practices, the study examines how postmodern literature redefines the relationship between text, author, and reader. The article further discusses the cultural, social, and ideological implications of postmodernism and evaluates its influence on contemporary literary production. The findings suggest that postmodernism represents not merely a stylistic trend but a fundamental shift in literary consciousness, reflecting broader changes in knowledge, identity, and power in the postmodern era.*

Key words: *Postmodernism; modernism; metafiction; intertextuality; narrative fragmentation; literary theory; cultural discourse.*

INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism has become one of the most influential and debated movements in literary studies. Emerging primarily after World War II, postmodern literature developed as a reaction against the aesthetic principles and ideological assumptions of modernism. While modernism sought coherence, depth, and artistic autonomy, postmodernism questioned the very possibility of objective meaning and stable interpretation. Instead of presenting literature as a mirror of reality or a vehicle for universal truths, postmodern writers emphasized plurality, playfulness, and the constructed nature of narratives.

The rise of postmodernism cannot be separated from broader historical and cultural transformations. The collapse of colonial empires, the horrors of global warfare, the expansion of mass media, and the growing skepticism toward political and ideological systems all contributed to a climate of uncertainty. In this context, literature became a space for questioning authority, identity, and representation. Postmodern authors often blur the boundaries between fiction and reality, history and imagination, seriousness and parody.

This article aims to analyze postmodernism as a new movement in literature by addressing several key questions: What philosophical and cultural conditions gave rise to postmodernism? What are its defining literary features? How does postmodernism differ from modernism? Which authors and works best represent this movement? And finally, what is the significance of postmodernism for contemporary literature and literary criticism?

By examining theoretical frameworks and literary examples, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of postmodernism as both a literary practice and a cultural phenomenon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical foundation of postmodernism has been shaped by philosophers, cultural theorists, and literary critics. One of the most influential thinkers in this field is Jean-François Lyotard, whose work *The Postmodern Condition* defines postmodernism as “incredulity toward metanarratives” [Lyotard, 1979, p. 37]. According to Lyotard, postmodern societies no longer trust grand explanatory systems such as religion, Marxism, or Enlightenment rationalism.

Another key figure is Jean Baudrillard, who introduced the concept of simulacra and hyperreality. Baudrillard argues that in postmodern culture, representations no longer reflect reality but instead create their own reality [Baudrillard, 1981, p. 11]. This idea has had a profound impact on postmodern literature, where texts often reference other texts rather than external reality.

Jacques Derrida’s theory of deconstruction also plays a central role in postmodern literary criticism. Derrida challenges binary oppositions and fixed meanings, emphasizing the instability of language [Derrida, 1976, p. 158]. His ideas encouraged literary scholars to explore ambiguity, contradiction, and multiplicity in texts.

In the field of literary criticism, Linda Hutcheon has provided one of the most systematic analyses of postmodern fiction. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, she highlights key features such as parody, historiographic metafiction, and self-reflexivity [Hutcheon, 1988, p. 5]. Hutcheon argues that postmodernism does not reject history but reinterprets it through irony and narrative play.

Similarly, Fredric Jameson views postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism. According to Jameson, postmodern texts reflect the fragmentation and commodification of contemporary society [Jameson, 1991, p. 14]. His Marxist perspective emphasizes the socio-economic dimensions of postmodern culture.

Together, these theoretical contributions form the intellectual background against which postmodern literature can be analyzed and understood.

DISCUSSION

1. Postmodernism and Its Historical Context

Postmodernism developed in a world marked by disillusionment and skepticism. The devastation of World War II undermined faith in progress and rationality, while the Cold War intensified ideological conflicts. In literature, these historical conditions manifested as a rejection of linear narratives and heroic protagonists. Instead, postmodern texts often present fragmented plots, unreliable narrators, and marginalized perspectives.

Unlike modernism, which sought to find order within chaos, postmodernism embraces chaos itself. It accepts uncertainty as a fundamental condition of human existence. This shift reflects a broader epistemological change: knowledge is no longer seen as universal and objective but as local, provisional, and socially constructed.

2. Defining Features of Postmodern Literature

One of the most distinctive features of postmodern literature is metafiction, a technique that draws attention to the artificiality of the text. Authors such as John Barth and Italo Calvino frequently interrupt their narratives to comment on the act of storytelling itself [Barth, 1967, p. 72].

Intertextuality is another central characteristic. Postmodern texts openly borrow, reference, and rewrite earlier works, blurring the line between originality and imitation. This practice challenges traditional notions of authorship and originality.

Pastiche and parody are also widely used. Unlike parody in earlier literary periods, which often aimed to ridicule, postmodern parody can be both critical and celebratory. It acknowledges the impossibility of creating entirely new forms while playfully reworking existing ones [Hutcheon, 1988, p. 26].

Fragmentation in structure and narrative voice reflects the postmodern view of identity as unstable and multiple. Characters often lack psychological depth or consistent development, emphasizing surfaces rather than inner essence.

3. Postmodernism versus Modernism

While postmodernism is often described as a continuation of modernism, it represents a significant departure in terms of ideology and aesthetics. Modernist writers such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf experimented with form but maintained a belief in artistic seriousness and the possibility of meaning [Joyce, 1922, p. 41].

Postmodernism, by contrast, questions the authority of the author and the text. Meaning is not embedded in the work but produced through the interaction between text and reader. Irony replaces sincerity, and play replaces purpose.

4. Representative Authors and Works

Several authors are widely recognized as central figures in postmodern literature. Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* exemplifies narrative complexity, paranoia, and historical pastiche [Pynchon, 1973, p. 89]. The novel resists linear interpretation, forcing readers to navigate a dense network of references.

Don DeLillo explores themes of media saturation and consumer culture in works such as *White Noise* [DeLillo, 1985, p. 12]. His novels reflect Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, where images and simulations dominate experience.

Salman Rushdie combines magical realism with postmodern narrative strategies in *Midnight's Children*, blending personal and national history through fragmented storytelling [Rushdie, 1981, p. 44].

RESULTS

The analysis of postmodernism as a literary movement reveals several key findings:

1. Postmodernism represents a paradigm shift in literary thinking, moving away from universal truths toward pluralism and relativism.
2. Narrative techniques such as metafiction, intertextuality, and fragmentation function not merely as stylistic devices but as expressions of philosophical skepticism.
3. The role of the reader becomes central, as meaning is actively constructed rather than passively received.

4. Postmodern literature reflects broader cultural changes, including the influence of mass media, globalization, and late capitalism.

5. The movement's legacy continues to shape contemporary fiction, digital narratives, and experimental forms.

These results suggest that postmodernism cannot be reduced to a single definition or set of techniques. Instead, it should be understood as a dynamic and evolving mode of literary expression.

CONCLUSION

Postmodernism has fundamentally transformed the landscape of literature by challenging established conventions and redefining the nature of narrative, authorship, and meaning. As a new movement in literature, it emerged in response to historical, philosophical, and cultural shifts that undermined traditional systems of belief and representation.

Through its emphasis on irony, play, and multiplicity, postmodern literature reflects the complexities of contemporary life. It resists closure and certainty, inviting readers to participate in the creation of meaning. While critics have debated whether postmodernism represents a decline in artistic seriousness or a necessary adaptation to changing realities, its impact on literary theory and practice is undeniable.

Ultimately, postmodernism expands the possibilities of literature, offering new ways of understanding identity, history, and language in an increasingly fragmented world.

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