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UNDERSTANDING POSTMODERNISM THROUGH THE THEORIES OF LYOTARD AND BAUDRILLARD

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ABSTRACT

This article studies the profound transformations ushered in by postmodernism in the mid-20th century, focusing on its impact on culture, truth, representation, and the traditional understanding of knowledge. Contrary to the view of postmodernism as a linear progression from modernism, we explore the perspectives of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard, presenting it as a cyclical moment within the continuous innovation of high modernism. Lyotard redefines the role of postmodern artists and writers as akin to philosophers, liberated from pre-established norms and engaged in a perpetual quest for new rules within their works. Baudrillard's insights into the evolution of science fiction reflect a broader postmodern reevaluation of reality as fragmented and simulacral. Furthermore, we address the so-called crisis of representation identified by Lyotard, challenging the realistic epistemology that views knowledge and art as mirrors of an external reality. By examining fragmented narration in literature, we propose a more inclusive approach to representing the multifaceted nature of reality. This article contributes to the understanding of postmodernism, highlighting its significance in redefining cultural expressions and our approach to knowledge and representation.

KEYWORDS

Postmodernism, cultural transformation, truth and representation, crisis of representation, modernism and postmodernism, fragmented narration, philosophical changes.

INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism, a cultural and intellectual movement that emerged in the mid-20th century, ushered in a profound transformation in the way we perceive and interpret the world. It challenged the grand narratives and certainties of the modern era, introducing a radical reevaluation of truth, representation, and culture.

In the realm of culture, postmodernism shattered traditional conventions, leading to a landscape where reality itself became fragmented. No longer bound by a singular, overarching narrative, cultural expressions took on a decentralized and diverse form. Art, literature, and media embraced a kaleidoscopic array of perspectives, styles, and voices.

METHOD

According to Jean-Francois Lyotard, a French philosopher and sociologist known for his contributions to postmodern philosophy and his work on the nature of knowledge, language, and modern society: “rather, seeing postmodernism as a discontent with an disintegration of this or that high modernist style- a moment in the perpetual “revolution” and innovation of high modernism, to be succeeded by a fresh burst of formal invention - in a striking formula he has characterized postmodernism, not as that which follows modernism and its particular legitimation crisis, but rather as a cyclical moment that returns before the emergence of ever new modernisms in the stricter sense”. [3, 16] Here, the scholar implies that postmodernism is not a reaction to a dissatisfaction with specific high modernist styles but is rather discontent with the disintegration of those styles. It suggests that postmodernism is not a

rejection of modernism but a response to the breakdown or crisis within modernist practices.

The perspective presented offers an alternative interpretation of the relationship between modernism and postmodernism. It views postmodernism as a cyclical moment within the perpetual revolution and innovation of high modernism, challenging the traditional narrative of a linear succession from one movement to another. Instead, it suggests a more nuanced understanding of the continuous evolution and recurrence of certain stylistic and philosophical elements in the broader context of modernist developments.

The role of a postmodern artist or writer and how the philosophical changes associated with postmodernism redefine their position becomes another importance issue for discussion, so Lyotard implies: “A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work”. [3, 81] Postmodern writers, according to him, are positioned akin to philosophers. They depart from established rules that governed earlier styles, and their works cannot be judged using traditional categories. Instead, the creative process involves a search for rules and categories within the work itself. Postmodern artists operate without predetermined structures, experiencing a sense of creative independence. The works they produce possess the characteristics of events, emphasizing their uniqueness. There’s a paradoxical element in the timing of creation - the works always seem to come too

late for their creators, indicating an ongoing process of evolution and reinterpretation. The term “postmodern” is suggested to be understood in a way that reflects the paradox of the future anterior, implying a dynamic relationship between the past, present, and future in the postmodern context. In essence, the postmodern artist is characterized by a departure from established norms, a constant quest for new rules, and a creative process that defies traditional temporal constraints.

Jean Baudrillard, a French sociologist, cultural theorist, and philosopher, in his book “Simulacra and Simulation”, says that “in this way, science fiction would no longer be a romantic expansion with all the freedom and naivete that the charm of discovery gave it, but, quite the contrary, it would evolve implodingly in the very image of our current conception of the universe, attempting to revitalize, reactualize, requotidianize fragments of simulation, fragments of this universal simulation that have become for us the so-called real world. [2, 121] Baudrillard suggests that science fiction has a significant shift in its nature. Rather than being a romantic expansion with the charm of discovery, science fiction is described as evolving implodingly. This evolution aligns with the postmodern ethos discussed in the first passage, where creative processes are characterized by a continuous quest for new rules and the event-like nature of the resulting works.

In the context of science fiction, the imploding evolution implies a movement inward, a reevaluation of fragments of simulation. These fragments, representing elements of the universal simulation that is our perceived reality, are not explored in a traditional, expansive manner. Instead, there’s an attempt to revitalize, reactualize, and requotidianize

these fragments. This aligns with the postmodern idea of breaking away from established norms and seeking to create something new, unique, and relevant to the current understanding of the world.

RESULTS

So, both Lyotard and Baudrillard reflect a postmodern sensibility characterized by a departure from established norms, a continuous process of creation and reinterpretation, and a focus on revitalizing and reimagining elements within the creative process, whether it's in the realm of literature and art or in the evolution of science fiction.

With the coming of postmodernism, the crisis in the traditional understanding of knowledge representation, particularly in the context of a realistic epistemology arose. According to Lyotard, it is “referring to the so-called crisis of representation, in which an essentially realistic epistemology, which conceives of representation as the reproduction, for subjectivity, of an objectivity that lies outside it projects a mirror theory of knowledge and art, whose fundamental evaluative categories are those of adequacy, accuracy, and Truth itself”.[3, 8-9]

The scholar discusses a significant problem in how we traditionally understand and represent knowledge. This issue is connected to a way of thinking about knowledge that is deeply rooted in realism. Realism here means the belief that there's an objective reality out there, separate from our personal experiences.

In this traditional understanding, representing knowledge is seen as trying to make a mirror image of this external reality. It's like we're trying to reproduce or copy what's out there, making our understanding mirror the actual reality.

In general, Lyotard introduces the idea that knowledge and art are often thought of as mirrors. This metaphor implies that the goal is to create a reflection that is accurate and true to the real world, just like a mirror reflects an image.

Thus, one the ways to more accurately reflect the complexity and diversity of the real world be fragmented narration in literature. Instead of presenting a singular, cohesive narrative, fragmentation allows for the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences, contributing to a more nuanced and truthful representation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration of postmodernism through the critical lenses of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard offers a compelling reevaluation of this cultural and intellectual movement's core tenets and impacts. By challenging the linear narrative of progression from modernism to postmodernism, we uncover a richer, more cyclical dynamic where innovation and revolution within cultural expressions continuously unfold. Postmodernism, as articulated by Lyotard, positions artists and writers in a philosophical realm, freed from the constraints of pre-established norms and engaged in an endless quest for new rules that emerge from within their creative works. This liberation allows for a diverse and decentralized cultural landscape that embraces a multiplicity of voices and perspectives.

Baudrillard's perspective on the evolution of science fiction further illuminates postmodernism's impact, showcasing a shift towards an implosive exploration of reality that challenges traditional narratives and embraces the fragments of a simulacral world. This

reflects a broader postmodern critique of representation and knowledge, questioning the adequacy of realism's mirror theory and proposing instead a fragmented narration that better captures the complexity of the human experience.

Through this analysis, we see postmodernism not merely as a successor to modernism but as a crucial, cyclical moment within the perpetual flux of cultural innovation. It offers a framework for understanding the fragmented nature of contemporary culture and the continuous reimagining of reality. The insights of Lyotard and Baudrillard serve as vital navigational tools in this endeavor, highlighting the importance of questioning established norms and embracing the creative and intellectual freedom that defines the postmodern condition. Ultimately, postmodernism emerges not only as a critique of modernist certainties but as a celebration of the endless possibilities for redefining truth, representation, and culture in an ever-evolving world.

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