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EXPLORING LITERARY INNOVATIONS: A CLASSIFICATION OF FRAGMENTED FORMS IN BELLES-LETTRES TEXT

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ABSTRACT

This article explores various aspects of fragmentation in contemporary literature, focusing on different forms of fragmented narratives and their impact on reader perception. The paper introduces three types of fragmented storytelling: weaving, bricolage, and mosaic. In the first part, weaving is examined, where fragments constitute individual narrative projects interwoven into a complex yet interconnected structure. The second category, bricolage, analyzes works composed of diverse fragments, creating a unique collage of literary elements. The third category, mosaic, investigates novels where each fragment represents a complete narrative. The article also emphasizes the blurred line between mosaic novels and collections of short stories, discussing the categorization of such mosaic works as full-fledged novels. This article reveals the complexity and versatility of employing fragmentation in literary fiction, offering readers a rich array of literary forms and strategies that allow works to play with traditional structures and evoke new, more engaging reader experiences.

KEYWORDS

Fragmentation, narrative fragmentation, literary fiction, weaving, bricolage, mosaic.

INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism, a cultural and intellectual movement that emerged in the mid-20th century, brought

profound changes to our perception and interpretation of the world. It challenged the grand

narratives and certainties of modernism, introducing a radical reevaluation of truth, representation, and culture. M. Meyer writes, “language is not a precise instrument but a power whose meanings are caught in an endless web of possibilities that cannot be untangled” [4, 2050]. This statement reflects a deconstructive perspective on language, suggesting that it is not a precise tool but a force whose meanings are entangled in an infinite web of possibilities that cannot be unraveled. Language is perceived as unstable, and its meanings depend on context and interpretation. One such unstable narrative technique is considered fragmentation.

In Merritt Moseley’s exploration of fragmentation, it is depicted that “the fragmentary fiction we are interested in is fiction that feels fragmented, broken, unfinished, incomplete, incoherent. It might also be useful to think of works that are themselves fragments, alongside works that are made up of fragments, and some texts can have both characteristics” [1, 3]. From this, it can be concluded that it is important to consider not only works that are inherently fragments but also those composed of fragments. Some texts may possess both characteristics: they can be standalone fragments and also consist of fragments pieced together.

Such a study of fragmented literature allows us to examine not only the narrative character but also its structure. Works that embody fragmentation are intended to evoke a sense of disjointedness in the reader and perhaps provide an active role in constructing and interpreting the text. This entire approach reflects a shift in the understanding of literature, where traditional structures and narrative methods are questioned in favor of more diverse and experimental approaches to creating literary works.

Thus, it can be said that Merritt Moseley’s exploration of fragmentation in artistic literature implies a nuanced understanding of this literary technique. The focus is on literature that not only depicts fragmentation but also evokes a sense of brokenness, incompleteness, or inadequacy. This characteristic reflects the essence of narratives intentionally created to challenge traditional structures and engage readers in a more participatory and reflective experience.

Moreover, Moseley introduces an interesting distinction between works that are inherently fragments and those created from fragments. The former implies a fundamental and inherent incompleteness at the core of the narrative, while the latter involves a conscious choice and arrangement of fragmented elements to form an overall narrative structure. This duality emphasizes the complexity of fragmentation as a literary device and its various manifestations in the field of artistic literature.

Recognizing that some texts can possess both characteristics - being inherently fragmented and created from fragments - adds another level of depth to the analysis. This acknowledgment underscores the flexibility of fragmentation as a narrative strategy, allowing authors to experiment with the form and structure of storytelling.

Moseley also highlights various forms of fragmentation within artistic literature, such as “the braid, the bricolage, and the mosaic” [1, 4]. The first type in Moseley’s categorization is “the braid,” encompassing narratives with a characteristic complex intertwining, reminiscent of a braided strand. He notes, “the fragments can be called the braid, as they function like discrete narrative projects presented interwoven rather than in strict sequence. These may

be, among other possibilities, different plot developments with different characters; or plot developments that illustrate the same characters in action at different times; or a story and the story of how it was discovered” [1, 9]. In this case, fragments, in this form of storytelling, resemble distinct narrative intentions presented interconnected rather than strictly sequential. These fragments may involve different plotlines with different characters developing in parallel. F.M. Khajieva in her book “Theoretical Aspects of the Language Learned (Interpretation of the Literary Text)” notes that “The braided structure allows for a rich and complex exploration of themes and characters, creating connections and resonances across the distinct storylines” [3, 176]. They can also represent different plot developments with the same characters acting in different times.

Sellers notes that “braids—story lines interwoven to create the whole piece—add depth, energy, layers, tension, and insight to your writing” [4, 416]. This method of text creation allows the author to use fragmentation not just as a way to present different elements but also as a means of constructing a complex and interconnected structure where the reader can feel that multiple plot threads or story elements are interwoven, forming a cohesive work of art.

An example of the braiding form could be a narrative with multiple timelines or points of view that ultimately converge, creating a complex and interconnected storytelling, as seen in David Mitchell’s “Cloud Atlas.” Another example is William Faulkner’s novel “The Sound and the Fury,” in which the narrative unfolds through the perspectives of various characters and time periods. The interwoven threads of each story create a complex braid where the reader must piece

together the fragmented timeline and points of view to understand the complete narrative. Additionally, Kurt Vonnegut’s “Slaughterhouse-Five” uses a braiding structure through nonlinear storytelling. The protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, experiences moments from different periods of his life without a strict chronological order, creating a narrative braid that reflects the character's perception of time.

Secondly, Moseley uses the term “bricolage” to describe narratives created from diverse and seemingly unrelated elements. The author also writes, “The second category in my taxonomy of fragmentation fiction is the bricolage, which applies to novels made up of fragments of very disparate materials” [1, 11]. In other words, bricolage is a literary work in which fragments representing various, seemingly unrelated elements are used. These elements can differ in style, theme, genre, or other parameters. They are brought together in the structure of the work, creating a unique character and reading experience.

Therefore, bricolage in literature is an artistic work created from various, often unexpected and characteristically dissimilar fragments, giving the text a sense of mosaic and diversity.

A notable example of the bricolage form is Julio Cortázar’s novel “Hopscotch,” where readers can choose different paths through the chapters, creating a unique reading experience with diverse and interconnected fragments. Additionally, the novel “84, Charing Cross Road” by Helene Hanff is a bricolage of letters exchanged between the author and a bookseller from London. The use of letters as fragments creates a unique collage of personal exchanges, demonstrating the bricolage form within

an epistolary structure. In Italo Calvino's "If on a winter's night a traveler," the narrative structure is a bricolage of various stories. The novel switches between the main narrative and fragments of different novels that the characters are reading. This creative composition of contrasting elements illustrates the form of bricolage.

In the last category, the mosaic, narratives consist of various but interconnected parts. Moseley describes this type as "a novel composed of fragments each of which is a narrative effectively complete in itself. Clearly, the dividing line between the mosaic novel and the collection of short stories is a blurred one, and the right of such mosaic novels to be considered novels at all is sometimes challenged" [1, 13]. A mosaic novel is a work composed of fragments, each of which represents a narrative effectively complete on its own. Each fragment is a kind of separate, self-contained story that contributes to the overall narrative. It is important to note that mosaic novels represent a unique form of literary experiment, where the fragments, although independent, interact with each other to create a more extensive narrative, and their status as novels can be a subject of discussion.

A classic example is T.S. Eliot's poem "The Waste Land," where fragments of different voices, cultures, and historical references are carefully arranged to form a unified and meaningful whole, representing a mosaic of human experiences. Similarly, Julio Cortázar's short story "Blow-Up" (later adapted into a film by Michelangelo Antonioni) can be seen as a mosaic. The narrative consists of seemingly unrelated fragments, with each element contributing to the overall understanding of a mysterious event. The story invites readers to piece together the fragments into a coherent interpretation. Additionally, William

Faulkner's "As I Lay Dying" can be considered a mosaic of perspectives. The novel presents the viewpoints of several characters from the Bundren family, with each chapter acting as a separate fragment. Together, these fragments create a mosaic of individual experiences surrounding a common event.

By providing these examples, Moseley's categories come to life, illustrating how different authors use fragmentation in various ways to create unique and captivating literary works. The forms of braiding, bricolage, and mosaic offer readers and writers a rich palette of options to explore the complexities of fragmented literature.

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