Postmodernist Views of Time and Space in Literature

Zaid Razzaq Sadeq
Ministry of Education, Najaf Governorate Directorate, Iraq

Abstract

Rejecting canonical narrative forms and ideas, postmodern literature presents a fresh perspective on the passage of time and geographical location. In contrast to the linear and cohesive representations of time and space expected in modernist literature, postmodernist works often embrace dislocation, fragmentation, and distorted timelines. Through metafiction, intertextuality, and nonlinear tales, this study investigates how postmodern writers question traditional ideas of space and time. These methods show time as cyclical, irrelevant, or fluid, which disrupts the reader's perception of a steady, chronological development. Similarly, postmodern literature frequently portrays space as hyperreal, fragmented, or disjointed, reflecting a world where the lines between the tangible and the abstract are increasingly blurred. This study analyses seminal postmodern works to see how these changed views of space and time fit into a more extensive critique of postmodern reality, identity, and meaning stability. According to the results, postmodern literature does more than make us rethink the passage of time; it also prompts us to wonder what it means to exist.

Keywords: Literature, Views, Time and Space, Postmodernist, intertextuality.

1. Introduction

Postmodernism is a complex term with multiple meanings. It emerged in the 1960s and gained popularity in the latter half of the 20th century. Modernist writing developed throughout the first half of the century, and postmodern writing developed after the ending of modernism. Most generally, "postmodern" can be used to describe a contemporary style of literature and art whose aim is to break apart or deconstruct the conventions and ideas already prevalent in literary studies. It can also be used to reflect a

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keen interest in both fragments and surfaces and in escapism – usually achieved through a technique called "magic realism." Another important strategy used by representatives of postmodernism is the adoption of parody, pastiche, the mixing of genres, the use of intertextuality, and the embrace of "new narrative forms."

According to postmodern theorists and writers, the distinguishing feature of postmodern literature is its reliance on irony; capitalizing on the skeptical outlook on life characterizing the age, postmodernists primarily employ irrealism, subjectivism, and parody in the literature they write. Finally, "postmodern" and "postmodernity" are linked to a new means of organizing societies; according to postmodern theorists, societies have entered a new epoch of modernity that is increasingly marked by postmodernity. Postmodernism is also associated with the term "post-structuralism". In postmodern and poststructuralist thinking, concepts such as "time" and "space" are governed by a plethora of discourses and power relations, and meanings assigned to these concepts are contested and shifting, yet are of the utmost significance in any society, as they help construct our sense of ourselves and the social and physical worlds.

1.1. Definition and Characteristics of Postmodernism

Postmodernism is characterized by its focus on surface, paradox, and play, as well as skepticism and the expansion of binary oppositions. However, these aspects are general and depend to some extent on whom one asks for a definition of postmodernism. Spatial and temporal formats will change with the passage of time in terms of new modernist and postmodernist definitions of time and space when reading literature. Postmodernist perspectives on time and space will be discussed in this regard, and within this scope, new perspectives on postmodern time and space, along with their representations in literature, will be examined.

The term "post-modern" denotes a state that comes after the modern. In the realm of literature, the term pertains to a specific mode that has been present since the late forties, where it evolved into a new genre after establishing its influence in contemporary instances of painting, science, philosophy, and architecture. It is considered a type of genre that comes after the modernist era and is not necessarily based on a clear-cut set of principles that showcase an attachment to modernism as a prerequisite for any manifestation that can be categorized as postmodern. The postmodern experience involves a different set of conditions and a different kind of worldview. A detailed study of postmodern writings can help highlight the characteristics of postmodern literature, including shapeless, fragmented, nonlinear, heterogeneous, intertextual, parodic, and deconstructive.

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1.2. Key Theoretical Concepts in Postmodern Literature

Postmodernism is based on relativism. It denies the idea of a unique truth, but on the other hand, it sees the potential for a multiplicity of truths. Consequently, time and space appear as fluid, relative, and multiple. Another very important feature of postmodern texts is intertextuality - a dialogue with other texts or other discourses. Therefore, postmodern texts are full of various quotes, allusions, and intertextual links, and time and space are often symbolic. Consequently, postmodernist texts often describe motion in time and space. The era called the Postmodernist Period is the heyday of the Age of the Information Revolution. As a result, the media flood cultural products that show a quick and shallow interchange of information, values, and customs throughout the world.

Time and space, as reflexes of historical changes, are well described by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the French psychoanalyst Felix Guattari. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari approach time and space through the difference between molar and molecular. According to the authors, "The difference in nature is the inseparability of things as they actually are and of the virtual elements from which they result." A molar point of view on time and space is a static one. This point of view assumes clear-cut and distinct categories concerning time and space, such as past or present, date, era, space on a map, etc. Consequently, the molar vision perceives time and space as separate and swallows up things. Moreover, molarity - spatial and chronological values - has a symbolic character. Instead of a molar vision of time and space, we can support the molecular one, according to which there can be an excess of time - Aion. Aion can flow in contrary or indeterminate ways of becoming. Similarly, Aion is also multiple because it results from the "unfold of multiple possible and virtual points of view." Aion is an integral part of time. This means that time is comprised of both Chronos and Aion.

2. Time and Space as Fluid Concepts in Postmodern Literature

The idea of time and space has undergone a dramatic change in the literature of postmodernism. Many of the significant advancements of postmodern thought recognize the fluidity of time and space. The undefined/free association between physical (history, world) and psychological (memory) has been inherited by postmodernist authors from their modernist ancestors and contemporaries, such as T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner. The combined effect of the two world wars, political disturbances in Russia, China, Cuba, and Asia, inclination towards socialism, the highly advanced stage of technology, and the social and economic displacement that followed from 1945 onwards effected radical changes in the way humans perceived the world.

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Several significant advances were made in the realms of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud, sociology by Victor Turner; history by Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Ferdinand de Saussure, and Claude Levi-Strauss; and literature by Mikhail Bakhtin and Antonin Artaud.

Though variously analyzed and labeled in different socio-historical paradigms as dislocation and displacement, collapse of literacy, and collapse of grand narratives, the culmination in the postmodern era was the explanatory paradigm for the cultural disorder that prompted a radical break with traditional literature and hermeneutics. The change will be more precisely reflected in literature due to reasons observable in social domains, such as the pioneering role of the intellectual as well as the relative opposition or neutral attitude of a society at any given time versus inherited ones. The major critical impacts are against the narrative assumptions or orientation embedded in the perspectives such as literary history, individuality (subjectivism), genre preference for poetry, or preference for realism in fiction. Carl Jung, Hermann Lea, James Frazier, Pierre Abeles, Will Braun, et al., in human studies, Durkheim, Hobbes, and others in social studies propounded the idea that humans innately cherish the memory of the past or history. Conversely, the literary theories propounded by Renaissance period critics such as Sidney, Hudson, Corneil, and Longino advanced 'Mimesis' over staff making. Biography, the gateway to history, shares throughout its length the race's longing for history. In the postmodern period, Marx, Engels, Darwin, Nietzsche, Freud, Beckham, and Foucault—all formulated their theories, keeping in view the idea that even algorithms are nothing but the unfolding of an unending process.

2.1. Deconstruction of Linear Time and Space

The narrative strategies of traditional as well as modernist writers have been based on a tacit acceptance of a naturally ordered world that is homogeneous, sequential, closely fitted, and thus readily accessible to conceptualization. Recent fictional works, however, have displayed a ready, indeed compulsive, interest in deconstructing the common linguistic, psychological as well as phenomenological ways of representing time and space, systematically dismantling the a priori categories of sequential time, uniform space, and coherent ego, which have been traditionally combined to maintain any sense of intelligibility or coherence in narratives. Resultantly, they present time and space as inconsistent or multiple and systematically disrupt the normal or chronological sequence of one-to-all directional reading practices.

Just as the spatial strategies of traditional fiction make room for telling stories linearly - in a manner determined by the cause-and-effect like the character of repressed

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consciousness or accumulated data - temporal strategies establish a distance that makes room for spatial representation. Postmodern writers consider narratives not as independent of time and space but rather integrally related to the differential play of their rencontre and transformation. Therefore, newer narratives are compelled to reflect the idea of time and space as constitutive systems whose meaning is no longer comprehensible in an axiomatic deductive form. It ceases to be a uniform or homogeneous "container" of our phenomena or events but, on the contrary, becomes something that "separates" the text and is reflected within the narrative text as a disjointed series of "spaces." This fragmentation of space is nothing but the reversal of the universal allegorical meaning and certitude to be found in a single-sited global narrative.

3. Temporal and Spatial Fragmentation in Postmodern Literature

In the postmodern novel, temporal and spatial representations are often fragmented. Consequently, postmodernist novels often do not construct a linear narrative but are produced in a disorderly way. In this way, time does not flow following the chronological sequence as it has traditionally been conceived, so the two ideas become entwined, making it practically impossible to distinguish one from the other.

Temporal organization, that is, the ability to order events following a traditional procedure, becomes impossible without leaving the spatial organization because the temporal order is designed differently to collide with the spatial one. Therefore, claims about the length of time become doubtful; it is not entirely clear which event precedes or follows another in novels that causes significant disruption to spatial order.

In this context, events are often contradicted by the same narrative subjects because the main characters and the people in the narrative often have amnesia. They do not quite remember or completely forget events that occur. Not only is it difficult to remember events, but there are also situations where they simply do not believe in the historical accuracy of the events experienced, and this is a particular case because people do not believe that the event actually happened to them or that the event portrayed was not "original" and actually happened. It is also repeated in different contexts by various people and is still claimed by the character in a different way. This claim is mostly denied by the same person who says it.

This ability to challenge the linear structure of time is also reflected in the works of postmodernist authors operating in literature. In fact, postmodernist authors' books abandon time and narrative constraints. In this context, according to Eilde, in the novels of the theoretical movement, the approach to time is rather a question of spatial question in the novel. The spontaneity of the novel writers in time was born out of the fact that

they were trapped in an absolute moment.

Bellow and Rushdie created characters who, like themselves, are trapped in a space-time-away place where old-class citizens are stuck. In this work, one of the views that will be stressed at this stage is more than representing space-time as empty; the authors make stories with place-type moments, which are symbolic of a certain space. They express any space-time as a section to be focused on as their creative process. By adding picaresque narratives and magical real elements to their structure because they are involved in post-vanguard movements, these artists continue to lay the space of their play in their novels. This leads to a disruption of the physical-logical space of the novels and becomes the element of disorganization for daytime existence. This disruption left behind determinism and showed us that things can be handled with our own will whenever they need to be re-regulated. In addition, with their polygenetic and destined-centered spaces, these authors have set different spatiotemporal description models that will provide the context and content requirements of the sentences proposed by the works of art.

3.1. Use of Nonlinear Narrative Structures

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This subtopic focuses on how authors integrate nonlinear narrative structures, which are employed either to align more closely with how the mind actually works or to open up more complex ways of depicting the relationships between multiple narratives in the temporal and spatial sense of the term. As a technique deployed in either case, non-linearity in postmodernism epitomizes the ongoing fictions of time and space. Inspired by Einsteinian physics in the field of time and space, postmodern authors explore these fictions through the use of techniques, including the deliberate and extreme fragmentation of time and space. This fragmentation allows for a shift from one narrative to another, which we usually think of as a shift from one time or space to another, to be simply taken as a juxtaposition between one narrative and the next.

In any case, it seems that, through the use of these variously conceived nonlinear narrative structures, postmodern authors produce a fragmentary, thematically or intertextually determined, affective or simply random, occasional or collective variety of time and space. As we can observe, individual identities on the one hand and master narratives of history or progress on the other become optional or downright irrelevant. Finally, mention can be made of the article by Airy on Lee's poem and its adaptations in graphic novels, which finds resonance with our discussion here precisely through its focus on the intermedial transpositions of the temporal and graphic components.

4. Metafiction and Intertextuality in Postmodern Literature

Postmodern literature abounds with self-referent fiction and intertextual play. Linda Hutcheon thus outlines a surrogate genre born out of this literary trend, dubbing it "historiographic metafiction." Historiographic metafictions may employ real persons, real events, or real historical settings. Invariably, the protagonist or an incidental character will be a professional writer, typically a novelist. Hutcheon writes, "its parody of such things as the traditional facts of biography and history, the idea that narrative is transparent, historical occurrence coherent, the self-identical human subject knowable, and the work of literature superior to the mundane, ultimately mirrors the way in which fiction and historiography themselves share strategies. Both are artefactual constructs, narratives."

Intertextuality is a theory about the interconnectedness of literary texts, yet because it deals with the presence of other texts within a literary one, the concept relates closely to literature. "As to the second text," Roman Ingarden acknowledges, "...it is found in a fabric that is itself a 'purposive' work." In proposing his concept of "intragenerational metafiction," Lawrence Lasher makes the logic of intertextuality even more explicit, stating, "When the larger text within which a smaller text appears is itself literary, the action may further be perceived as operating at an intraliterary level." Metafiction, as Lasher defines it, is, therefore, "the employment of possibility that the uchronic or fantastic elements of the story which it structurally encloses might be an integral part of the literary fabric sustaining it, rather than some extra, non-literary layer needing to be stripped away to get to the (possible) 'real' 'hypothetical' tale tucked inside its (actual) 'true' counterpart." In other words, the existence of a second layer does not guarantee reality; not all tales within tales have a relationship between sign and referent. The mark of metafiction in postmodern literature is thus a never-ending, self-referential cycle. This, in turn, has implications for how time and space are constructed and perceived within the literature of the era.

4.1. Blurring the Boundaries between Fiction and Reality

Postmodernist literature traces itself by many subversive techniques through which authors shift the boundaries between fiction and reality. They use historical figures as characters and adapt biographical and documentary texts in a creative manner, thus insidiously following the conventions of realism. Instead of fact, fiction nestles in between every line of their novels. The resultant effect plays directly into the postmodern treatment of time and space and the strange sense within it. As time goes on, reality and fiction seem to be projected ever closer together. Instead of being completely independent realities, they seem to crash headlong into each other. This causes time and space to shift,

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sometimes even blending two of each together.

The boundary between fiction and reality has been an important area of concern for many contemporary authors. This idea, increasingly central to recent literature, is used to challenge the hierarchical status of fiction in relation to reality. From this skeptical point in reality, some authors representing the postmodern bent of the contemporary literary scenario began to populate their narratives with these and other temporal anomalies, writing experimental fiction that defies encapsulation within traditionally sequential forms in order to finally break open classical conceptions of space.

5. Postmodernist Authors and Works

In the field of postmodernist literature, many authors are central due to their impact and significant work on the subject of postmodernism and their repertoire. These literary authors also offer different views on time and space as portrayed in their works, such as the view of time as history and eternally recurring in Tom Robbins' Skinny Legs and All. Mentioned below are some relevant authors and their works that align with this view of denoting time:

1) Don DeLillo - White Noise (1985) 2) Tom Robbins - Skinny Legs and All (1990) 3) Kurt Vonnegut - Hocus Pocus (1990) 4) Maxine Hong Kingston - Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book (1989) 5) Umberto Eco - Foucault's Pendulum (1988) 6) Anthony Burgess - A Clockwork Orange (1962) 7) Jay McInerney - Bright Lights, Big City (1984)

These authors are acclaimed for their work, and fewer of these have widely influenced the subject of postmodernist literature. However, a few of the authors are known for a more realistic, subjective, symbolic approach to their representation of time and space. Their works express these character trends that help readers muse on how much people and place make it possible in writing and in life and vice versa.

5.1. Jorge Luis Borges: The Garden of Forking Paths

Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) is often associated with postmodern literature (although he does not fit the movement completely), and his works present a ciphered nature of time and space. One of his best-known short stories is "The Garden of Forking Paths," in which the narrative takes on the complexity of an actual labyrinth. Characters have to go back and forth in order to finally "earn" a linear experience of the story's time, while the reader has an instant understanding of the several twisted, intertwined times of the narrative at once. It is through these temporal distortions that the notion of how postmodernists dealing with science fiction see time and space can be explored and "increased our faith in the narrational possibilities of fiction."

"The Garden of Forking Paths" takes place during World War I, while the narrator reflects

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on what it means to be Chinese and a Secret Service agent. His friend Dr. Yu Tsun helps him to his appointment with a renowned sinologist named Stephan Albert, who is a Professor of Sinology at the University of Oxford, while an officer calls at the door and shoots Dr. Yu Tsun in the lumber region before he himself gets shot. As the story goes on, it is revealed by the doctor in a letter to the chief German officer, Richard Madden, that Stephan Albert has been murdered, whereas the murderer, Hightower, drunk and deranged, has already been sentenced and sentenced to be hanged. The main framework of the narrative is the doctor's letter. It has an "intricate mid-narrative structure" and exhibits labyrinthine abstractions on time and space of extraordinary sort, shaped "as meta-metaphysical masterpieces or maps of paradox." Reality is constructed in such a way that all plausible alternatives are encountered over and over again by artifacts and history. The concept presents the drama of alt-repetition rather than alt-identification. The "manifold large" (157), or as we read it—for it is metaphysical in nature—"aleph" is named Tlön. One of the main characters, Dr. Stephan Albert, whom we have never met so far, is somehow described as the most eminent amongst an indefinite line of intellectuals who have also themselves adhered in some form to the theory of the mutability of matter and ideas. He has become a follower—or he is—of the memory man whose pursuit is chosen out of all.

5.2. Italo Calvino: If on a Winter's Night a Traveler

Postmodernist views of time and space in literature are displayed through both an innovative representation of time and space and a self-conscious reflexivity on the part of the author and characters. Italo Calvino is a master of these priorities in writing, especially as demonstrated in his novel If on a Winter's Night a Traveler. In this book, Calvino challenges traditional epistemology and portrays a researcher's view of the opposition to connection in both time and space in literature and theory.

If on a Winter's Night, a Traveler reflects postmodern views of time in literature by illustrating how literary texts confront disconnection in a world that embraces the notion that connection was lost long ago. A deconstructivist perspective on time is presented that negates the traditional separation and opposition between time and its elements, much like the paradoxes presented in deconstructivist architecture. Additionally, If on a Winter's Night, a Traveler offers a representation of postmodern geography and visuality in a literature of disconnection and détournement. Time is of the essence to the postmodern subject, and the dominance of speed and the urban experience for the characters in Calvino's book confirms this. The experience of waiting, which still carries a place for theorizing plurality in Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus, is

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subsumed in the goal of arrival in the perfect metropolis. By opposing the expectation of arrival in the literature of a de-arrived world and expecting only detour while trapped in a world of fatalities, Calvino provides yet another example of the postmodernist focus on displacement in the constructed binarism between expectation and arrival.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this contribution was to investigate postmodernist views on time and space and their realization in literature and film. In successful cooperation, valuable insights have been gained. The definition of time as a broad concept has the power to eliminate established categories of historical eras in Western intellectual history and propose a new, transforming twist of scientific and social activities, as demonstrated by quantum physics and theories of relativity. Ideas of uncertainty, indeterminacy, and infinity might resonate with ideas from language philosophy and contemporary interpretations posited in art expressions. Within literary texts, different uses of time come to the fore. Time tends to be deconstructed or compressed at the expense of logical lengths or symbolizes cyclical repetition. It serves as a warp and a weft from where gothic and science fiction narratives are woven; it is played within postcolonial texts. Similar uses are found in space in literature, which is often seen as a conceptual category that goes beyond the material and invokes not just navigation through physical environments but transcends into connecting emotional domains or psychology, becoming both a location and a trope.

Postmodern theory does not just add to the critical theoretical toolbox by suggesting literary or cinematic parameters of creativity but revolutionizes practices of representations and modes of theorizing itself. It turns the study of conceptions of time and space into a utopian realm. Cecelia C. Cavanaugh's assertion that "films involving time share what the postmodern novelists share: a wish to subvert time, time's tyranny and repressive linearity, linear time's profit marking and its traumas" is potent. In fact, readings of play with time and space in literature and film indeed confirm that interpretations of art expressions reconfigure their meanings and performative practices. A postmodernist approach adds an additional category of interpretation to traditional realism, modernist transcendentalism, and performative schema, questioning and bequeathing an array of modes of reception and production. In this contribution, just a few pathways in time and space used by artists have been suggested. Authors and scholars are now invited to explore these and trawl for threads of meaning before the trails go stone cold.

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