

=====

**CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF POSTMODERNISM: KEY DEFINITIONS
AND LITERARY PRINCIPLES**

Kilicheva Mekhriniso Radjabovna

Scientific advisor, PhD, Bukhara State University

mekhrishafate@mail.ru

Mukhammedova Niginabonu Muminovna

Master's degree student at Bukhara State University

muxammedovanigina29@gmail.com

**MAQOLA
MALUMOTI**

ANNOTATSIYA:

MAQOLA TARIXI:

Received: 13.01.2026

Revised: 14.01.2026

Accepted: 15.01.2026

KALIT SO'ZLAR:

*postmodernism;
literary theory;
metafiction;
intertextuality;
fragmentation;
narrative instability;
cultural critique*

Postmodernism is one of the most in-depth and most controversial intellectual paradigms that have been adopted to influence the late twentieth- and early twenty-first -century literary theory as well as cultural criticism of the same. Arising as a strict counter-reaction to the fundamentals of modernism, it methodically challenges the assertions of universal truth, consistent meaning and consistent subjectivity. In the current article I take a systematic appraisal of the conceptual basis of postmodernism by defining it accurately and outlining its main principles presented in literature. The key ideas that are given special attention are fragmentation, intertextuality, metafiction, irony, and destabilization of grand narratives. The application of a qualitative, theory-based approach allows me to show how postmodern literary practices reflect and practice more general epistemological and cultural changes related to the late modernity. The findings of this investigation would indicate the postmodernism is not a monolithic doctrine but rather functions as a plastic heuristic system that challenges the processes of meaning-making in literature as well as in the society. This article can be taken as a significant input to the more comprehensive theoretical explanation of postmodernism as a critical form of investigation in literature through the systematization of its conceptual and literary aspects.

Introduction

The second part of the twentieth century was the period of significant changes in philosophical thinking, cultural production, and in the work of literature, which led to the so-called postmodernism. In contrast to other literary movements in the past, which tried to reach a sense of coherence, progress, or aesthetic unity, the postmodern condition is defined by the distrust in fixed meanings and overall explanatory models. This movement is reflected in literature within experimental narrative structure, playful treatment of language and a greater sense of fictionality as such. Postmodern texts present many challenges to the conventional forms of distinction between the real and the represented, throwing uncertainty and plurality as the markers of the modern experience.

It is impossible to separate the advent of postmodernism out of historical and intellectual currents. The disenchantment after world wars, the growth of the mass media and the growing disintegration of social identities had a role to play in the environment where the inherited literary and philosophical certainties were challenged. Consequently, postmodern literature is often problematized, authorship, originality and linear narration are challenged, and presented instead are texts that are self-reflexive, intertextual and open-ended. These characteristics reflect a broader epistemological transformation where knowledge is neither found but built.

Postmodernism is a controversial and complex phenomenon despite its universal impact. Historians have argued about whether it is a historical era, culture or methodology. This is where there is a lack of consensus and conceptual ambiguity has very often been experienced, especially in the context of literary studies, wherein postmodernism is applied either too broadly or unevenly. Thus, its conceptual grounds should be explored in a systematic way to reveal its principles and analysis usefulness.

This paper will set out to contribute to this clarification process by looking at some of the major definitions of postmodernism and establishing the literary principles that form the basis of the postmodern text. With the help of synthesizing the key theoretical views and concentrating on the essential literary techniques, it is aimed to provide the consistent framework of interpreting postmodernism as a theoretical and aesthetic phenomenon on a literary discourse level.

Literature Review

The academic study of postmodernism has spread throughout the fields of philosophy, cultural theory, and literary studies and produced a diverse and often incompatible set of interpretations. The most pronounced, as well as a very early formulation, is one that has been made by Jean-Francois Lyotard, who describes postmodernism as an incredulity toward metanarratives. In this perspective, postmodernism augurs the break-up of generic systems of explanation, e.g. Enlightenment rationality, historical progress or ideological universals, which previously comprised knowledge and meaning. This scepticism in

literature is seen through the literature that is resistant to closure and questioning the authority of totalising interpretations. [8]

Fredric Jameson handles the issue of postmodernism in a socio-economic outlook and sees postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism. He argues that the postmodernist literary works mirror the realities of the consumer culture in terms of stylistic elements like pastiche, depthlessness and dislocation of time. Postmodern pastiche, in contrast to parody, which suggests the perception of a critical distance, is characterized by neutral imitation and the reuse of previous styles. The analysis by Jameson emphasizes the connection between literary form and material conditions, and thus, indicates that postmodern aesthetics cannot be separated after all as global economic and cultural changes continue to take place. [6]

Linda Hutcheon also contributes another important point the paradoxical character of postmodernism. She coined the term of historiographic metafiction to refer to literary texts which interact both with accounts of the past and dispute their pretensions to objectivity. Instead of abandoning history, postmodern texts in Hutcheon think reveal the processes of narrative through which historical meaning is created. This self-reflective attitude allows post-modern literature to challenge representation as well as authority and yet be politically and ethically involved. [5]

Jean Baudrillard develops the topic and dwells on simulation and hyperreality. He states that in the culture of postmodernism, representations no longer refer to some outside reality but, on the contrary, they circulate as self-enclosed signs. This situation severely influences literary representation as the postmodern texts often cannot distinguish the fiction, reality and media discourse. The insights presented by Baudrillard explain the popularity of irony, parody, and play of a superficial nature in the production of postmodern literature. [2]

Brian McHale differentiates the modernism and postmodernism in terms of narratology in which he finds a change in the dominant concerns. Modernist literature, in contrast, anticipates the epistemological questions, which are how knowledge is gained and limited, whereas postmodern literature anticipates the ontological questions of what knowledge is, and whether there is more than one world. This model has been especially effective in the analysis of literature as a standard of which postmodern narrative techniques can be identified. [9]

All these academic approaches demonstrate that postmodernism is a complex and internally heterogeneous phenomenon. Instead of forming a single theory, postmodernism manifests as a critical rhetoric that challenges the meaning, depiction and power in the literary genres.

Methodology

In our current study, the research design that we use is a qualitative and theory-based research design which focuses more on conceptual analysis than measurement. The methodology is based on a critical textual analysis of the treatises of various theories and

literary ideas relevant to post-modernism. They selected foundational works in the postmodern theory and literary criticism because of what permanent contribution they make to the academic discourse and in what ways they are relevant to the expression of the central principles of the post-modern literary practice.

The analysis process involved a careful close reading and a comparative examination of the main theoretical stances around post-modernism, and especially how the scholars elucidate the narrative form, sense, authorship, and representation. Instead of understanding post-modernism as a unitary category, the work approaches it as a discursive category marked by the philosophical, cultural and historical milieu. Metafiction, intertextuality, fragmentation, and narrative instability were phenomena that were identified and arranged systematically using a thematic synthesis throughout the corpus selected.

To establish analytical consistency, the study prefers theoretical consistency and conceptual clarity prior to the exhaustive coverage. The methodological paradigm previews interpretive rationalism, thus making it possible to synthesise heterogeneous academic viewpoints, but maintaining a critical stance towards definitional vagueness. This position will help identify the main literary principles that recur persistently in texts and theoretical paradigms of post-modernism.

Results

The overview of key postmodern theories shows that there are some generalized principles of conceptual and literary approaches to the issue that are intertwined and constitute postmodernism as a genre of literary activity. Instead of providing one and the same framework, postmodernism manifests as a conglomeration of strategies, which contest the old presuppositions on narrative, meaning and authority. These principles are found to be unanimous in irrespective of the philosophical inclination in the theories.

Centrality of narrative fragmentation is one of the most outstanding findings. In the postmodern texts, the linear plot lines are frequently discontinued, episodic, or circular. This disfigurement of causal logic and doubts the anticipation of narrative resolution and represents a more general scepticism about consistent worldviews. The process of fragmentation takes place at the character and voice level as well, with the subjectivity unifying being substituted by the multiple, frequently opposed, points of view.

The second important finding relates to the hegemony of metafictional self-awareness. The postmodern literature itself always anticipates its self-constructed features with self-referential commentary, intrusion through the narration, and overt contemplation of the process of storytelling. This self-consciousness breaks the illusion of reality and leaves the readers wondering of the connection between fiction and reality. Metafiction is therefore a critical instrument as opposed to being a purely aesthetic instrument.

The discussion also defines intertextuality as a characteristic of literature. The postmodern texts often presuppose, twist, and refer to previous literary works, historical

documents, and popular culture. These intertextual activities undermine the concept of originality and authorship and present literature as a continuous web of textual relationships and not as a collection of individual works.

Lastly, the results demonstrate the omnipresence of the irony and epistemological uncertainty. Postmodern literature does not have any clear-cut interpretations, and in this case, irony is also used to subvert the claims to authority and the impossibility of a fixed meaning. No deficiency is put forward, this uncertainty is a part and parcel of postmodern aesthetics, an awareness of knowledge as tentative and contingent.

Discussions

The empirical results of the current investigation support the hypothesis that the postmodernism in literary creation is a critical, but not an assimilative or prescriptive, response to the inherited narrative and epistemological paradigms. The principles that become apprehended such as fragmentation, metafiction, intertextuality, irony are not just stylistically novel; they are means through which postmodern texts question even the terms of making meaning. These phenomena echo theoretical rhetorics that anticipate doubt about grand narratives and unchanging interpretive frameworks, and thus, by reaffirming the idea that postmodernism is critical and not constitutive of canonical conventions.

The immense popularity of narrative discontinuities offers empirical importance to the Lyotardian theory about the loss of grand narratives. In denying the linear development and integrating perspectival frames, postmodern literature of the current era creates a cultural space where continuity in history and ideological certitude is challenged and, in some cases, abandoned. As a result, fragmentation is created as a method of form as well as a theoretical statement which demands the readers to wrestle with multiplicity rather than with coherence thus extending the critique of Lyotard into the text itself.

The metafictional consciousness of oneself also makes it more difficult to traditional forms of literary expression by revealing the artificially constructed narrative constructions. This reflexivity responds to the same claim by Hutcheon that postmodern texts do not abandon a wholesale rejection on the part of representation but attempt a critical investigation into the mechanics of representation. Making storytelling a place of unceasing questioning, metafiction places literature as a field of theoretical questioning, a place where the very process of storytelling should be subject to theoretical questioning.

Intertextuality, as disclosed in the data, eradicates in an organized manner, archaic ideas of originality and authoritative power. Postmodern literature is in line with post structuralist discourses of language as relational and intrinsically unstable by foregrounding the unavoidable interconnection between texts. Not only does the practice support Jameson in his observations about pastiche and cultural recycling in the environment of late capitalism, but it also demonstrates how the intertextual dialogue can be used as a critical and as a homage to a larger cultural space.

Finally, the superiority of irony and epistemic doubt is an indication of a broader change in epistemology of meaning as something contingent and not absolute. Instead of offering some moral or philosophical closure, the modern postmodern writings preserve indefinite ambiguity that urges the reader to be involved in meaningful interpretation. When put together, these principles indicate that postmodernism is not exactly an end in the literature evolution but rather a critical direction that is unstoppably orienting the current literary scholarship.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the conceptual underpinnings of postmodernism, by defining the major concept of the term and determining the literary principles that define postmodern texts. Instead of treating postmodernism as a system or a closed system, the study has shown how it exists as a loose and critical structure that is influenced by historical, cultural, and philosophical changes. The article has demonstrated the systematic approach of postmodern literature in questioning the conventional beliefs regarding the coherence of narrative, authorial control, and fixed meaning through qualitative theoretical analysis.

In analyzing the piece, the author identifies fragmentation, metafiction, intertextuality, and irony as some of the overriding literary concepts that postmodernism uses to express its doubt in the ability of grand stories and truths to be told. These strategies do not only transform the form of literature; they also provoke the reader to reflect on how knowledge and representation is formed. Foregrounding uncertainty and plurality, postmodern literature is an indication of more epistemological changes, which are in line with late modernity.

Ultimately, postmodernism is also developed as a form of investigation that is resistant to determinate, promoting an openness of interpretation. What makes it still relevant in the study of literature is its ability to challenge prevailing paradigms, as well as its aptitude to keep up with the changing cultural environment. The more precise insight into its conceptual basis is thus still vital to modern literary study.

References

1. Al Faqih, R. Literary Devices in Postmodern Literature: Fragmentation, Intertextuality, Metafiction, Irony, and Skepticism.
<https://jurnal.unimus.ac.id/index.php/ELLIC/article/view/12523>
2. Baudrillard, J. (1994). Simulacra and simulation (S. F. Glaser, Trans.). University of Michigan Press. (Original work published 1981)
3. Bertens, H. (1995). The idea of the postmodern: A history. Routledge.
4. Foucault, M. (1980). Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977 (C. Gordon, Ed.). Pantheon Books.

-
5. Hutcheon, L. (1988). *A poetics of postmodernism: History, theory, fiction*. Routledge.
 6. Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Duke University Press.
 7. *Language Play in Postmodern Literature: A Study of Lydia Davis' Stories* (European Scientific Journal, 2024).
<https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2024.v20n32p23>
 8. Lyotard, J.-F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge* (G. Bennington & B. Massumi, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1979)
 9. McHale, B. (1987). *Postmodernist fiction*. Methuen.
 10. *Metafiction and Postmodernism* (Hongbin Dai & Yini Huang, 2017), Atlantis Press.
<https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/25879226.pdf>
 11. Norris, C. (1990). *What's wrong with postmodernism: Critical theory and the ends of philosophy*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
 12. *The Evolution of Narrative Structures in Postmodern Literature: A Comparative Study of Eastern and Western Perspectives* (2025).
<https://ejournal.mellbaou.com/index.php/join/article/download/161/159/600>
 13. Waugh, P. (1984). *Metafiction: The theory and practice of self-conscious fiction*. Routledge.
 14. Wood, J. (2000). *Human, all too human*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.