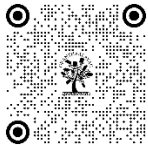


PARADOXICAL POSTMODERN ELEMENTS IN THE SELECT TEXTS OF ALEJO CARPENTIER, MARLON JAMES AND GABRIEL GARCIS MARQUEZ

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ABSTRACT

'Paradox' refers to a proposition with contradictory features, ambiguous, mystical, irrational and inconsistent qualities that juxtaposition together. The essence of Caribbean literature encapsulate black humour, paradox, decentralisation and rebellion against economic capitalism dealing with a wide range of themes that concerns Caribbean historical experience of slave labour, migration, ethnicity, resistance and language. Caribbean literature emerged from the territories of the Caribbean region and is used interchangeably with West Indies Literature despite having different origins, and refer to slightly different groups of people. The West Indian refers to those settlers in the Caribbean islands of "European origin and of people of African origin brought to the area as slaves; Caribbean, on the other hand, refers to the people and culture of the Caribbean. The emergence of West Indies Literature began as V.S Naipaul, George Lamming, Samuel Selvon etc published in the UK. The literature, culture is shaped by the diversity of people in race, language, colonialism, slavery and so forth signifying an evolution towards postmodernism- a broad movement that was popularized in the mid to late twentieth Century, marking its departure from modernism. Jean Francois Lyotard (1984 24) on postmodernism illustrates skepticism on universalizing theories, "I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives" emphasising on local narratives as an approach to understand political and social transformation. Foucault (1984 34-38) also dismisses modernism's precursor, The Enlightenment theory, which characterizes his postmodernity. Postmodern theory rejects totalizing and universalizing truth and knowledge, the myth of enlightenment as the path to progress. Post modernisms' objection to objectivity has created a conundrum and multiperspective point of view in various scopes of literature, architecture, science and ethics etc. The authors selected for this study are Alejo Carpentier (December 26,1904-April 24, 1980), Gabriel Marquez (March 6,1927-April17, 2014), and Marlon James (November 24, 1970-), established writers of Caribbean origin. Carpentier is a Cuban novelist Essayist that greatly influenced Latin American Literature. He explored the Latin American history and culture, and was among the first to use magical realism- the most famous example of Afro-Cuban influence is the novel *The Kingdom of This World*. Gabriel Garcia Marquez is a Colombian novelist, one of the most significant authors especially in Spanish Language. He is known for popularising Magic Realism and was conferred the prestigious Nobel Prize in literature in 1982. Marlon James is the first Jamaican author to receive the Man Booker Prize for the novel *A Brief History of Seven Kingdoms* published in 2015. He is also a recipient of the 2010 Dayton Literary Peace Prize and Minnesota Book award for his novel *The Book of Night Women*.

1. INTRODUCTION

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decentralisation and rebellion against economic capitalism dealing with a wide range of themes that concerns Caribbean historical experience of slave labour, migration, ethnicity, resistance and language. Caribbean literature emerged from the territories of the Caribbean region and is used interchangeably with West Indies Literature despite having different origins, and refer to slightly different groups of people. The West Indian refers to those settlers in the Caribbean islands of "European origin and of people of African origin brought to the area as slaves; Caribbean, on the other hand, refers to the people and culture of the Caribbean. The emergence of West Indies Literature began as V.S Naipaul, George Lamming, Samuel Selvon etc published in the UK. The literature, culture is shaped by the diversity of people in race, language, colonialism, slavery and so forth signifying an evolution towards postmodernism- a broad movement that was popularized in the mid to late twentieth Century, marking its departure from modernism. Jean Francois Lyotard (1984 24) on postmodernism illustrates skepticism on universalizing theories, "I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives" emphasising on local narratives as an approach to understand political and social transformation. Foucault (1984 34-38) also dismisses modernism's precursor, The Enlightenment theory, which characterizes his postmodernity. Postmodern theory rejects totalizing and universalizing truth and knowledge, the myth of enlightenment as the path to progress. Post modernisms' objection to objectivity has created a conundrum and multiperspective point of view in various scopes of literature, architecture, science and ethics etc. The authors selected for this study are Alejo Carpentier (December 26,1904-April 24, 1980), Gabriel Marquez (March 6,1927-April17, 2014), and Marlon James (November 24, 1970-), established writers of Caribbean origin. Carpentier is a Cuban novelist

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Alejo Carpentier's historical fiction *The Kingdom of This World* gives a fragmented narrative of Haiti; the past, present and after the Haiti revolution through various perspectives. Carpentier portrays the slave trade system, violence, confusion, cultural differences and the revolt of the slave labour against plantation capitalism, with a kaleidoscopic hue of magic realism attributes to the supernatural forces that become a normal reality. The novel, *The Lost Steps* published in 1953 illustrates an unnamed narrator in a distorted timeline. The author presents the narrator's inclination towards the dreamy primitive world as opposed to the modern world where the cultural hybridity causes conflict in the emotional and rationale of the unnamed character.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez in his novel *Leaf Storm* published in 1955 depicts a shift of narration from three generation perspectives; a stream of consciousness is portrayed through a distorted timeline. It explores tradition, culture, hybridization and the plurality of human behaviours. The novel *Of Love and Other Demons* published in 1994 is a fragmented narrative wherein it explores the boundaries between scientific reasoning and compliance to religious beliefs. The characters in the novel presents an irony just like the title presents a duality; of the ambiguous line between the real and the fiction, the facts and the supernatural juxtaposition and creates a fantasy in the novel. The novel *John Crow's Devil* by Marlon James was published in 2005 and is set in the mid twentieth century in Jamaica. The prologue is ironically titled "The End". On the contrary, the main character is called the 'Rum Preacher.' The novel illustrates the power struggle between people-not the stereotypical good vs bad, but the battle between the lesser evil, incorporating magic realism and witchcraft which is depicted in the form of black vultures called as John crows that plagues the entire town. Moreover, doves- a symbol of peace, ironically, pokes a man's eye out. Marlon's novel, *The Book of Night Women* published in 2009 is a historical novel that illustrates the harsh realities of slave labour on women. The novel depicts violence, cruelty and the slave's rebellion against the plantation owners but fails miserably. Marlon integrates the Obeah-folk magic and religious practices through the characters.

The authors in their respective works navigate through the dual nature of human behaviour, beliefs and their thoughts which is depicted through the characters and their interaction with the society. The characters exhibit duality and by no means of restraint on moral and ethical grounds. The slaves want to be free from their master's control over them but on the other hand, they themselves want to have control and power as the colonisers had over them depicting a sense of irony in itself. The authors draw a boundary between the colonised and the colonisers through a façade of rational and moral actions yet with no context of illustrating a solution on either world. These novels delineate the

contradictory and duality of human behavior, beliefs and fabulation that forms an integral part of their works. It also exhibits the historical, cultural and social norms representing the diverse postmodern undercurrents in the novels. At the same time, these works represent the importance of the interaction process, cultural consciousness and reflection of the self through multiple perspectives which are all important tenets of postmodern novels. The trajectory of Caribbean literature are thus presented through the postmodern lens. The emergence of Caribbean literature illustrates a wave of Caribbean authors' in voicing out their history, culture, social norms in all its diversities.

Caribbean literature by postmodern authors portrays different perspectives where the local context taken into account makes the whole fiction work as a complete narrative.

The practice of folk magic and witchcraft in the community portrayed in the novels of Caribbean literature constitute an important aspect of their culture and tradition.

The determination, endurance, and fighting the accepted social norms of modernity is reflected in the slave community which is depicted through multiple perspectives with a distorted timeline.

Postmodern Caribbean novels do not varnish the slave labour rebellion against plantation capitalism with positive outcome, but portray a realistic representation with all its cruel violence and confusion.

These novels explore the concept of human nature as a constitution of paradox and duality in them resulting in a confused and conflicting identity.

DeLoughrey, Gosson and Handley in their book *Introduction to Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture* illustrate that addressing the historical and racial violence of the Caribbean is an important aspect that illustrates the slave society, the assertion of their beliefs and their struggle against plantation capitalism. *A History of Literature in the Caribbean* Cross Cultural Studies edited by James Arnold furnish us with a general outlook on the history and the construction of racial discrimination in the Caribbean, the emergence of literature in various creoles, Caribbean literature in critical theories of modernism and postmodernism.

In Christopher Butler's *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction* enlighten us that post modernism has given an opportunity to the voice of the local and regional for globalization. It seeks to free humans from constraints, question totality with scepticism. Edward Baugh's *Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature* addresses the notion of nature and identity with regard to Caribbean culture-race, class, language, the challenges, diaspora and history which frames an important theme to West Indies Literature.

Thus, paradox and contradictions is an aspect of interest as it is a passage for authors to converse with the world around him. The inculcation of imagination into reality becomes a necessity to study the loss of history, ethnicity and so on. The social relevance of these texts are undeniable as they seek to explore the theory of postmodernism applicable in the select novels. Postmodernism is an on-going and ever changing process with no absolute truth and grand narratives that gave an opportunity for the rise of local voice and multi perspective point of view. Postmodernism concurrently endeavour to make sense of the quagmire of postmodern literature through a close contextual reading of the select texts, which deals with paradoxes, conflicts and multi-faceted viewpoint that are part and parcel of postmodern literature. Elements of quest for identity, historical and social interaction of the slave labour society, hyperreality, the distortion of time and multi perspectives are all evident in these novels. The present analysis represents the dual aspect of characters which is brought out by solitude and rejection from society. It explores magic realism that coexists with reality, conflicting cultural identity through multiple perspectives, irony, and representation of otherness in the select works. The human interaction, Irony, the barbaric violence and revolt, elements of magical realism are all presented through the revolt and consciousness of the self in the select texts.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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