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"**Postmodernism and Its Place in World Literature**"

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The given qualification paper is dedicated to the study of 20th Century American postmodernist literature and postmodernist literature in general. In the paper we try to give the general characteristics of the postmodernist literature by investigating different points of view about the peculiarities, predecessors, stylistic features of a new direction in the world literature which is called “postmodernism”.

First of all, let us explain what the postmodernism is. In literary studies, the stance of post-modern critics and writers is characterized by a rejection of the values of eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought, most particularly by a rejection of the notions of rationality and objectivity and of the understanding of the self as a rational, unitary entity. Post-modernism both grows out of and challenges modernism. These two intellectual movements, historically dominating roughly the first and second halves of the twentieth century, have in common their often playful use of irony, indeterminacy (or ambiguity), parody, and the exploration of language. Both also share a persistent challenging of realistic forms of representation.

Post-modern art and criticism, however, challenge modernism's adherence to an ideology of artistic autonomy, individual expression, and the elitist splitting off of art from mass culture and everyday life. The concern of post-modern art and criticism is to "decenter" and to unfix these rationalist, humanist assumptions about what is "natural" or essential.

The actuality of the investigation is in the lack of studies dedicated to the study of American postmodernism in literature and the development, peculiarities of postmodern literature itself. As we know modernism and postmodernism are new and puzzling directions of a modern literature and careful study of both directions is of great value. By the given research, we tried to determine and

reveal peculiarities of postmodern literature and American postmodernism to a certain extent.

The novelty of the qualification paper is that in order to investigate the features of postmodern literature and its development in America the emphasis was laid on the detailed analysis of two previously not studied novels by Thomas Pynchon and Joseph Heller.

The aim of the qualification paper is to classify the specific characteristics of postmodernist literature and its development in America.

In order to achieve above mentioned aim of the paper we have set the following **tasks**:

- To analyze predecessors of postmodernism in literature;
- To study the peculiarities and features of postmodernism in art;
- To compare modernism and postmodernism and realism in order to find common characteristics and differences;
- To analyze structural characteristics of "Catch-22" and "Gravity Rainbow" and make a suitable conclusions;
- To investigate style, themes and techniques used in postmodern literature;
- To analyze essential ways, style, and methods of Heller's and Pynchon description of events in the novel in order to create a postmodern novel.

The methods of investigation used in the given qualification paper are as follows: comparative method, semantic and structural methods, descriptive and translational methods.

The practical value of the research is that the material and the results of the given qualification paper can serve as a material for the theoretical courses of literature, American Literature studies, comparative literature, as well can be used for practical lessons in translation, home reading, conversational practice and current events.

The material includes:

a) Different types of books on American Literature;
b) Scholarly literature on the history of postmodernism, and criticism;
c) Books, reference books, almanacs, and periodicals on American authors of the XX century;
d) Electronic version of Pynchon's and Heller's novels "Catch-22" and "Gravity Rainbow".

The theoretical importance of the qualification paper is determined by the necessity of detailed and comprehensive analyses of postmodernism in literature in general and the role of postmodernism in the 20th Century American literature in particular.

The structure of the work. The present graduation paper consists of an introduction, the main part with 2 chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography part.

Chapter 1. Background of postmodern literature, its comparison with modernist literature.

2.1.1 Notable influences of other literature genres and trends on the formation of postmodern literature

The term Postmodern literature is used to describe certain characteristics of post-World War II literature. It is both a continuation of the experimentation championed by writers of the modernist period (relying heavily, for example, on fragmentation, paradox, questionable narrators, etc.) and a reaction against Enlightenment ideas implicit in Modernist literature.

Postmodern literature, like postmodernism as a whole, is hard to define and there is little agreement on the exact characteristics, scope, and importance of postmodern literature. However, unifying features often coincide with Jean-François Lyotard's concept of the "meta-narrative" and "little narrative," Jacques Derrida's concept of "play," and Jean Baudrillard's "simulacra." For example, instead of the modernist quest for meaning in a chaotic world, the postmodern author eschews, often playfully, the possibility of meaning, and the postmodern novel is often a parody of this quest.

This distrust of totalizing mechanisms extends even to the author; thus postmodern writers often celebrate chance over craft and employ metafiction to undermine the author's "univocal" control (the control of only one voice). The distinction between high and low culture is also attacked with the employment of pastiche, the combination of multiple cultural elements including subjects and genres not previously deemed fit for literature. A list of postmodern authors often varies; the following are some names of authors often so classified, most of them belonging to the generation born in the interwar period: William Burroughs (1914-1997), Alexander Trocchi (1925-1984), Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007), John Barth

(b. 1930), Donald Barthelme (1931-1989), E. L. Doctorow (b. 1931), Robert Coover (1932), Jerzy Kosinski (1933-1991) Don DeLillo (b. 1936), Thomas Pynchon (b. 1937), Ishmael Reed (1938), Kathy Acker (1947-1997), Paul Auster (b. 1947)[1], Orhan Pamuk (b. 1952).

Postmodernist writers often point to early novels and story collections as inspiration for their experiments with narrative and structure: *Don Quixote*, *1001 Arabian Nights*, *The Decameron*, and *Candide*, among many others. In the English language, Laurence Sterne's 1759 novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, with its heavy emphasis on parody and narrative experimentation, is often cited as an early influence on postmodernism. There were many 19th century examples of attacks on Enlightenment concepts, parody, and playfulness in literature, including Lord Byron's satire, especially *Don Juan*; Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*; Alfred Jarry's ribald *Ubu* parodies and his invention of 'Pataphysics; Lewis Carrol's playful experiments with signification; the work of Isidore Ducasse, Arthur Rimbaud, Oscar Wilde. Playwrights who worked in the late 19th and early 20th century whose thought and work would serve as an influence on the aesthetic of postmodernism include Swedish dramatist August Strindberg, the Italian author Luigi Pirandello, and the German playwright and theorist Bertolt Brecht. In the 1910s, artists associated with Dadaism celebrated chance, parody, playfulness, and attacked the central role of the artist. Tristan Tzara claimed in "How to Make a Dadaist Poem" that to create a Dadaist poem one had only to put random words in a hat and pull them out one by one. Another way Dadaism influenced postmodern literature was in the development of collage, specifically collages using elements from advertisement or illustrations from popular novels (the collages of Max Ernst, for example). Artists associated with Surrealism, which developed from Dadaism, continued experimentations with chance and parody while celebrating the flow of the subconscious. André Breton,

[1] Lewis, Barry. "Postmodernism and Literature." *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* NY: Routledge, 2002, p. 123. http://www.questia.com/postmodern-research.html

the founder of Surrealism, suggested that automatism and the description of dreams should play a greater role in the creation of literature. He used automatism to create his novel *Nadja* and used photographs to replace description as a parody of the overly-descriptive novelists he often criticized. Surrealist René Magritte's experiments with signification are used as examples by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Foucault also uses examples from Jorge Luis Borges, an important direct influence on many postmodernist fiction writers. He is occasionally listed as a postmodernist, although he started writing in the 1920s. The influence of his experiments with metafiction and magical realism was not fully realized in the Anglo-American world until the postmodern period.[1]

[1] Postmodern American Fiction: An Anthology, Chapter 6: Technoculture, p. 510

2.1.2 Modernist literature and its comparison with postmodern literature

The postmodernism both grows from and subverts a modernism. These two intellectual movements, historically dominating approximately over the first and the second half twentieth century, have together often playful use self-referentiality, irony, uncertainty (or an ambiguity), a parody, and language research. Both also divide constant contest of realistic forms of representation.

Postmodern art and criticism, however, challenge modernism's adherence to an ideology of artistic autonomy, individual expression, and the elitist splitting off of art from mass culture and everyday life. The concern of post-modern art and criticism is to "decenter" and to unfix these rationalist, humanist assumptions about what is "natural" or essential.

As the notion of an autonomous individuality is "decentered," both humanist and capitalist notions of selfhood and subjectivity are called into question.

Every literary period is modern in its own way. The ancient Greeks of 5th century BC Athens thought they were modern. The Romantics in their day thought they were modern. The writers of Realism saw themselves as modern in rejecting the Romantics. We just don't have a good term right now for the literary era in which we live. By default, we call most literary works written after World War I "modern." It is difficult to look at our own times and see what literary era we are living in and come up with a good name for it. "Modern" is the best that we can do for now.[1]

Some of the cultural and historical great events of the modern era include

- two devastating almost-global wars: World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1941-1945)

[1] http://vc.ws.edu/engl2265/unit4/Modernism/all.htm

- huge changes in industry and technology as compared to the 19th century
- the rise in power and influence of international corporations
- interconnectedness across the globe: cultural exchanges, transportation, communication, mass (or popular) culture from the West (with "West" being considered Europe and North America)

- the "Westernization" of many formerly traditional societies and nations and a resulting change in their values (often their the detriment of the formerly traditional society and nation). These "modern" values include a belief in the desirability of industrialization, individual political rights, democracy, mass literacy and education, private ownership of the means of production, the scientific method, public institutions like those in the West, middle class Western value systems, a disbelief in—or at least a questioning of—the existence of God, and (sometimes) the emancipation of women.[1]

The literature of the modern period has it roots in the literature of Europe and grows out of a reaction to Realism and Naturalism. As a reaction against Realism and Naturalism, some critics see in Modernism at least four "isms" or literary movements that make up the literature of the Modern era: impressionism, expressionism, surrealism, and nihilism.

1. Whereas Realism attempted to portray external objects and events as the common or middle class man sees them in everyday life, *impressionism* tries to portray the psychological impressions these objects and events make on characters, emphasizing the role of individual perception and exploring the nature of the conscious and unconscious mind.
2. Whereas Realism tried to focus on these external objects and events, *expressionism* tried to express the inner vision, the inner emotion, or the

[1] http://vc.ws.edu/engl2265/unit4/Modernism/all.htm

inner spiritual reality that seem more important than the external realities of objects and events.

3. Whereas Realism focused on external objects and events as they are (verisimilitude), *surrealism* tried to liberate the subconscious, to see connections overlooked by the logical mind, to deny the supreme authority of rationality and so portray objects and events as they *seem* rather than as they *are*.
4. Whereas Realism tried to show the supreme importance of rationalness and reason, *absurdism* tried to duplicate in literature the absurd conditions of contemporary life: nameless millions dying in wars, commonplace horrors such as the Holocaust, a world in which "God is dead" cast mankind afloat in a chartless and unknowable world void of a spiritual center, the ultimate absurd circumstances in which contemporary humankind found itself.

And now let us speak about the characteristic of modern literature.

Some of the characteristics of Modernism are that those pieces of literature we call Modern often

- uses images ("word pictures") and symbols as typical and frequent literary techniques
- uses colloquial language rather than formal language
- uses language in a very self-conscious way, seeing language as a technique for crafting the piece of literature just as an artist crafts a piece of art like a sculpture or a painting
- uses language as a special medium that influences what that piece of literature can do or can be
- saw the piece of literature as an object crafted by an artist using particular techniques, crafts, skills (recall how the Romantics thought the piece of literature was a work of genius that somehow appears full-blown from the

imagination of the genius). Form, style, and technique thus become as important--if not more so--than content or substance.

- Often, the intention of writers in the Modern period is to change the way readers see the world and to change our understanding of what language is and does.

Postmodern is the term used to suggest contemporary literature of the last half of the 20th century. It differs from Modernism is several ways:

1. Whereas Modernism places faith in the ideas, values, beliefs, culture, and norms of the West, Postmodernism rejects Western values and beliefs as only a small part of the human experience and often rejects such ideas, beliefs, culture, and norms.
2. Whereas Modernism attempts to reveal profound truths of experience and life, Postmodernism is suspicious of being "profound" because such ideas are based on one particular Western value systems.
3. Whereas Modernism attempts to find depth and interior meaning beneath the surface of objects and events, Postmodernism prefers to dwell on the exterior image and avoids drawing conclusions or suggesting underlying meanings associated with the interior of objects and events.
4. Whereas Modernism focused on central themes and a united vision in a particular piece of literature, Postmodernism sees human experience as unstable, internally contradictory, ambiguous, inconclusive, indeterminate, unfinished, fragmented, discontinuous, "jagged," with no one specific reality possible. Therefore, it focuses on a vision of a contradictory, fragmented, ambiguous, indeterminate, unfinished, "jagged" world.
5. Whereas Modern authors guide and control the reader's response to their work, the Postmodern writer creates an "open" work in which the reader

must supply his own connections, work out alternative meanings, and provide his own (unguided) interpretation. [1]

Both modern and postmodern literature represent a break from 19th century realism. In character development, both modern and postmodern literature explore subjectivism, turning from external reality to examine inner states of consciousness, in many cases drawing on modernist examples in the *stream of consciousness* styles of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, or explorative poems like The Waste Land by T. S. Eliot. In addition, both modern and postmodern literature explore fragmentariness in narrative- and character-construction. *The Waste Land* is often cited as a means of distinguishing modern and postmodern literature. The poem is fragmentary and employs pastiche like much postmodern literature, but the speaker in *The Waste Land* says, "these fragments I have shored against my ruins". Modernist literature sees fragmentation and extreme subjectivity as an existential crisis, or Freudian internal conflict, a problem that must be solved, and the artist is often cited as the one to solve it. Postmodernists, however, often demonstrate that this chaos is insurmountable; the artist is impotent, and the only recourse against "ruin" is to play within the chaos. Playfulness is present in many modernist works (Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* or Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, for example) and they may seem very similar to postmodern works, but with postmodernism playfulness becomes central and the actual achievement of order and meaning becomes unlikely.[2]

[1] http://vc.ws.edu/engl2265/unit4/Modernism/all.htm
[2] McHale, Brian (1987) Postmodernist Fiction. London: Routledge. http://www.answers.com

2.1.3 Post-war developments of postmodern literature in America and its transition figures

As with all stylistic eras, no definite dates exist for the rise and fall of postmodernism's popularity. 1941, the year in which Irish novelist James Joyce and English novelist Virginia Woolf both died, is sometimes used as a rough boundary for postmodernism's start.

The prefix "post," however, does not necessarily imply a new era. Rather, it could also indicate a reaction against modernism in the wake of the Second World War (with its disrespect for human rights, just confirmed in the Geneva Convention, through the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Holocaust, the bombing of Dresden, the fire-bombing of Tokyo, and Japanese American internment). It could also imply a reaction to significant post-war events: the beginning of the Cold War, the civil rights movement in the United States, postcolonialism (Postcolonial literature), and the rise of the personal computer (Cyberpunk fiction and Hypertext fiction).[1]

Some further argue that the beginning of postmodern literature could be marked by significant publications or literary events. For example, some mark the beginning of postmodernism with the first performance of *Waiting for Godot* in 1953, the first publication of *Howl* in 1956 or of *Naked Lunch* in 1959. For others the beginning is marked by moments in critical theory: Jacques Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play" lecture in 1966 or as late as Ihab Hassan's usage in *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* in 1971. Brian McHale details his main thesis on this shift, although many postmodern works have developed out of modernism,

[1] Cyberpunk and the Dilemmas of Postmodern Narrative: The Example of William Gibson. http://www.jstor.org/view/00107484/ap040101/04a00040/0

modernism is characterised by an epistemological dominant while postmodernism works are primarily concerned with questions of ontology.[1]

Though postmodernist literature does not refer to everything written in the postmodern period, several post-war developments in literature (such as the Theatre of the Absurd, the Beat Generation, and Magical Realism) have significant similarities. These developments are occasionally collectively labeled "postmodern"; more commonly, some key figures (Samuel Beckett, William S. Burroughs, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar and Gabriel García Márquez) are cited as significant contributors to the postmodern aesthetic.

The work of Jarry, the Surrealists, Antonin Artaud, Luigi Pirandello and so on also influenced the work of playwrights from the Theatre of the Absurd. The term "Theatre of the Absurd" was coined by Martin Esslin to describe a tendency in theatre in the 1950s; he related it to Albert Camus's concept of the absurd. The plays of the Theatre of the Absurd parallel postmodern fiction in many ways. For example, *The Bald Soprano* by Eugène Ionesco is essentially a series of clichés taken from a language textbook. One of the most important figures to be categorized as both Absurdist and Postmodern is Samuel Beckett. The work of Samuel Beckett is often seen as marking the shift from modernism to postmodernism in literature. He had close ties with modernism because of his friendship with James Joyce; however, his work helped shape the development of literature away from modernism. Joyce, one of the exemplars of modernism, celebrated the possibility of language; Beckett had a revelation in 1945 that, in order to escape the shadow of Joyce, he must focus on the poverty of language and man as a failure. His later work, likewise, featured characters stuck in inescapable situations attempting impotently to communicate whose only recourse is to play, to make the best of what they have. As Hans-Peter Wagner says, "Mostly concerned with what he saw as impossibilities in fiction (identity of characters; reliable consciousness; the reliability of language itself; and the rubrication of literature in

[1] McHale, Brian (1987) Postmodernist Fiction. London: Routledg. http://www.answers.com

genres) Beckett's experiments with narrative form and with the disintegration of narration and character in fiction and drama won him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. His works published after 1969 are mostly meta-literary attempts that must be read in light of his own theories and previous works and the attempt to deconstruct literary forms and genres.[...] Beckett's last text published during his lifetime, *Stirrings Still* (1988), breaks down the barriers between drama, fiction, and poetry, with texts of the collection being almost entirely composed of echoes and reiterations of his previous work [...] He was definitely one of the fathers of the postmodern movement in fiction which has continued undermining the ideas of logical coherence in narration, formal plot, regular time sequence, and psychologically explained characters."[1]

"The Beat Generation" is a name coined by Jack Kerouac for the disaffected youth of America during the materialistic 1950s; Kerouac developed ideas of automatism into what he called "spontaneous prose" to create a maximalistic, multi-novel epic called the Duluoz Legend in the mold of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. "Beat Generation" is often used more broadly to refer to several groups of post-war American writers from the Black Mountain poets, the New York School, the San Francisco Renaissance, and so on. These writers have occasionally also been referred to as the "Postmoderns" (see especially references by Charles Olson and the Grove anthologies edited by Donald Allen). Though this is now a less common usage of "postmodern", references to these writers as "postmodernists" still appear and many writers associated with this group (John Ashbery, Richard Brautigan, Gilbert Sorrentino, and so on) appear often on lists of postmodern writers. One writer associated with the Beat Generation who appears most often on lists of postmodern writers is William S. Burroughs. Burroughs published *Naked Lunch* in Paris in 1959 and in America in 1961; this is considered by some the first truly postmodern novel because it is fragmentary, with no central

[1] Lewis, Barry. "Postmodernism and Literature." *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* NY: Routledge, 2002. http://www.questia.com/online-libary/00987/klm/f.u.c.k/text.html

narrative arc; it employs pastiche to fold in elements from popular genres such as detective fiction and science fiction; it's full of parody, paradox, and playfulness; and, according to some accounts, friends Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg edited the book guided by chance. He is also noted, along with Brion Gysin, for the creation of the "cut-up" technique, a technique (similar to Tzara's "Dadaist Poem") in which words and phrases are cut from a newspaper or other publication and rearranged to form a new message. This is the technique he used to create novels such as *Nova Express* and *The Ticket That Exploded*.

Magical Realism is a technique popular among Latin American writers (and can also be considered its own genre) in which supernatural elements are treated as mundane (a famous example being the practical-minded and ultimately dismissive treatment of an apparently angelic figure in Gabriel García Márquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings"). Though the technique has its roots in traditional storytelling, it was a center piece of the Latin American "boom", a movement coterminous with postmodernism. Some of the major figures of the "Boom" and practitioners of Magical Realism (Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortázar etc.) are sometimes listed as postmodernists. This labeling, however, is not without its problems. In Spanish-speaking Latin America, *modernismo* and *posmodernismo* refer to early twentieth-century literary movements that have no direct relationship to *modernism* and *postmodernism* in English. Finding it anachronistic, Octavio Paz has argued that postmodernism is an imported grand récit that is incompatible with the cultural production of Latin America.

Along with Beckett and Borges, a commonly cited transitional figure is Vladimir Nabokov; like Beckett and Borges, Nabokov started publishing before the beginning of postmodernity (1926 in Russian, 1941 in English). Though his most famous novel, *Lolita* (1955), could be considered a modernist or a postmodernist novel, his later work (specifically *Pale Fire* in 1962 and *Ada or*

Ardor: A Family Chronicle in 1969) are more clearly postmodern, see Brian McHale.[1]

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Postmodernism in literature is not an organized movement with leaders or central figures; therefore, it is more difficult to say if it has ended or when it will end (compared to, say, declaring the end of modernism with the death of Joyce or Woolf). Arguably postmodernism peaked in the 60s and 70s with the publication of *Catch-22* in 1961, *Lost in the Funhouse* in 1968, *Slaughterhouse Five* in 1969, *Gravity's Rainbow* in 1973, and many others. Some declared the death of postmodernism in the 80's with a new surge of realism represented and inspired by Raymond Carver. Tom Wolfe in his 1989 article "Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast" called for a new emphasis on realism in fiction to replace postmodernism.[9] With this new emphasis on realism in mind, some declared *White Noise* in 1985 or *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 to be the last great novels of the postmodern era.

A new generation of writers -- such as David Foster Wallace, Dave Eggers, Michael Chabon, Zadie Smith, Chuck Palahniuk, Neil Gaiman, Jonathan Lethem -- and publications such as *McSweeney's*, *The Believer*, and the fiction pages of *The New Yorker*, herald either a new chapter of postmodernism or something else entirely -- post-postmodernism. Amazon.com described the Mark Z. Danielewski 2000 novel *House of Leaves* as "post-postmodern."

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[1] McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1987 and "Constructing Postmodernism" New York: Routledge, 1992). http://www.questia.com/online-libary/00987/klm/f.u.c.k/text.html

2.1.4 Stylistic techniques used, and common themes described in postmodern literature

All of these themes and techniques are often used together. For example, metafiction and pastiche are often used for irony. These are not used by all postmodernists, nor is this an exclusive list of features.

Irony, playfulness, black humor

Linda Hutcheon claimed postmodern fiction as a whole could be characterized by the ironic quote marks, that much of it can be taken as tongue-in-cheek. This irony, along with black humor and the general concept of "play" (related to Derrida's concept or the ideas advocated by Roland Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text*) are among the most recognizable aspects of postmodernism. Though the idea of employing these in literature did not start with the postmodernists (the modernists were often playful and ironic), they became central features in many postmodern works. In fact, several novelists later to be labeled postmodern were first collectively labeled black humorists: John Barth, Joseph Heller, William Gaddis, Kurt Vonnegut, Bruce Jay Friedman, etc. It's common for postmodernists to treat serious subjects in a playful and humorous way: for example, the way Heller, Vonnegut, and Pynchon address the events of World War II. A good example of postmodern irony and black humor is found in the stories of Donald Barthelme; "The School", for example, is about the ironic death of plants, animals, and people connected to the children in one class, but the inexplicable repetition of death is treated only as a joke and the narrator remains emotionally distant throughout. The central concept of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* is the irony of the now-idiomatic "catch 22", and the narrative is structured around a long series of similar ironies. Thomas Pynchon in particular provides prime examples of playfulness, often including silly wordplay, within a serious context. *The Crying of Lot 49*, for example, contains characters named Mike Fallopian and Stanley Koteks

and a radio station called KCUF, while the novel as a whole has a serious subject and a complex structure.[1]

Intertextuality

Since postmodernism represents a decentered concept of the universe in which individual works are not isolated creations, much of the focus in the study of postmodern literature is on intertextuality: the relationship between one text (a novel for example) and another or one text within the interwoven fabric of literary history. Critics point to this as an indication of postmodernism's lack of originality and reliance on clichés. Intertextuality in postmodern literature can be a reference or parallel to another literary work, an extended discussion of a work, or the adoption of a style. In postmodern literature this commonly manifests as references to fairy tales – as in works by Margaret Atwood, Donald Barthelme, and many other – or in references to popular genres such as sci-fi and detective fiction. An early 20th century example of intertextuality which influenced later postmodernists is "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" by Jorge Luis Borges, a story with significant references to *Don Quixote* which is also a good example of intertextuality with its references to Medieval romances. *Don Quixote* is a common reference with postmodernists, for example Kathy Acker's novel *Don Quixote: Which Was a Dream*. Another example of intertextuality in postmodernism is John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* which deals with Ebenezer Cooke's poem of the same name. Often intertextuality is more complicated than a single reference to another text. Robert Coover's *Pinocchio in Venice*, for example, links Pinocchio to Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. Also, Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* takes on the form of a detective novel and makes references to authors such as Aristotle, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Borges[2]

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[1] Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction.* NY: Routledge, 2004. http://www.questia.com/online-library/books/postmodern-fiction.html

[2] Яценко И.И. Интертекст как средство интерпретации художественного текста (на материале рассказа В. Пелевина «Ника») - Мир русского слова, № 1, 2001.

Pastiche

Related to postmodern intertextuality, pastiche means to combine, or "paste" together, multiple elements. In Postmodernist literature this can be an homage to or a parody of past styles. It can be seen as a representation of the chaotic, pluralistic, or information-drenched aspects of postmodern society. It can be a combination of multiple genres to create a unique narrative or to comment on situations in postmodernity: for example, William S. Burroughs uses science fiction, detective fiction, westerns; Margaret Atwood uses science fiction and fairy tales; Umberto Eco uses detective fiction, fairy tales, and science fiction, Derek Pell relies on collage and noir detective, erotica, travel guides, and how-to manuals, and so on. Though pastiche commonly refers to the mixing of genres, many other elements are also included (metafiction and temporal distortion are common in the broader pastiche of the postmodern novel). For example, Thomas Pynchon includes in his novels elements from detective fiction, science fiction, and war fiction; songs; pop culture references; well-known, obscure, and fictional history mixed together; real contemporary and historical figures (Mickey Rourke and Wernher Von Braun for example); a wide variety of well-known, obscure and fictional cultures and concepts. In Robert Coover's 1977 novel *The Public Burning*, Coover mixes historically inaccurate accounts of Richard Nixon interacting with historical figures and fictional characters such as Uncle Sam and Betty Crocker. Pastiche can also refer to compositional technique, for example the cut-up technique employed by Burroughs. Another example is B. S. Johnson's 1969 novel *The Unfortunates*; it was released in a box with no binding so that readers could assemble it however they chose.[1]

[1] McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1987 and "Constructing Postmodernism" New York: Routledge, 1992). http://www.questia.com/online-libary/00987/klm/f.u.c.k/text.html

Metafiction

Metafiction is essentially writing about writing or "foregrounding the apparatus", making the artificiality of art or the fictionality of fiction apparent to the reader and generally disregards the necessity for "willful suspension of disbelief". It is often employed to undermine the authority of the author, for unexpected narrative shifts, to advance a story in a unique way, for emotional distance, or to comment on the act of storytelling. For example, Italo Calvino's 1979 novel *If on a winter's night a traveler* is about a reader attempting to read a novel of the same name. Kurt Vonnegut also commonly used this technique: the first chapter of his 1969 novel *Slaughterhouse Five* is about the process of writing the novel and calls attention to his own presence throughout the novel. Though much of the novel has to do with Vonnegut's own experiences during the firebombing of Dresden, Vonnegut continually points out the artificiality of the central narrative arc which contains obviously fictional elements such as aliens and time travel. Similarly, Tim O'Brien's 1990 novel/story collection *The Things They Carried*, about one platoon's experiences during the Vietnam War, features a character named Tim O'Brien; though O'Brien was a Vietnam veteran, the book is a work of fiction and O'Brien calls into question the fictionality of the characters and incidents through out the book. One story in the book, "How to Tell a True War Story", questions the nature of telling stories. Factual retellings of war stories, the narrator says, would be unbelievable and heroic, moral war stories don't capture the truth.

Poioumena

Poioumenon (plural, "poioumena") is a term coined by Alastair Fowler to refer to a specific type of metafiction in which the story is about the process of creation. In many cases, the book will be about the process of creating the book or includes a central metaphor for this process. A common example of this is Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* which is about the narrator's frustrated attempt to tell his own story. A significant postmodern example is Vladimir Nabokov’s

Pale Fire, in which the narrator, Kinbote, claims he is writing an analysis of John Shade's long poem "Pale Fire", but the narrative of the relationship between Shade and Kinbote is presented in what is ostensibly the footnotes to the poem. Similarly, the self-conscious narrator in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* parallels the creation of his book to the creation of chutney and the creation of independent India. Other postmodern examples of poioumea include Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, John Fowles's *Mantissa*, and William Golding's *Paper Men*, and Gilbert Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew*.[1]

Historiographic metafiction

Linda Hutcheon coined the term "historiographic metafiction" to refer to works that fictionalize actual historical events or figures; notable examples include *The General in His Labyrinth* by Gabriel García Márquez (about Simón Bolívar), *Flaubert's Parrot* by Julian Barnes (about Gustave Flaubert), *Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow (which features such historical figures as Harry Houdini, Henry Ford, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, Booker T. Washington, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung), and Rabih Alameddine's Koolaids: The Art of War which makes references to the Lebanese Civil War and various real life political figures. Thomas Pynchon's *Mason and Dixon* also employs this concept; for example, a scene featuring George Washington smoking marijuana is included. John Fowles deals similarly with the Victorian Period in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. In regards to critical theory, this technique can be related to *The Death of the Author* by Roland Barthes.[2]

Temporal distortion

This is a common technique in modernist fiction: fragmentation and non-linear narratives are central features in both modern and postmodern literature. Temporal distortion in postmodern fiction is used in a variety of ways, often for the sake of irony. Historiographic metafiction (see above) is an example of this.

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[1] Postmodernism. Techniques and themes described. http://www.en.wikipedia.org/postmodern-literature.html

Distortions in time are central features in many of Kurt Vonnegut's non-linear novels, the most famous of which is perhaps Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse Five* becoming "unstuck in time". In *Flight to Canada*, Ishmael Reed deals playfully with anachronisms, Abraham Lincoln using a telephone for example. Time may also overlap, repeat, or bifurcate into multiple possibilities. For example, in Robert Coover's "The Babysitter" from *Pricksongs & Descants*, the author presents multiple possible events occurring simultaneously -- in one section the babysitter is murdered while in another section nothing happens and so on -- yet no version of the story is favored as the correct version.[1]

Technoculture and hyperreality

Fredric Jameson called postmodernism the "cultural logic of late capitalism". "Late capitalism" implies that society has moved past the industrial age and into the information age. Likewise, Jean Baudrillard claimed postmodernity was defined by a shift into hyperreality in which simulations have replaced the real. In postmodernity people are inundated with information, technology has become a central focus in many lives, and our understanding of the real is mediated by simulations of the real. Many works of fiction have dealt with this aspect of postmodernity with characteristic irony and pastiche. For example, Don DeLillo's *White Noise* presents characters who are bombarded with a "white noise" of television, product brand names, and clichés. The cyberpunk fiction of William Gibson, Neal Stephenson, and many others use science fiction techniques to address this postmodern, hyperreal information bombardment.

Paranoia

Perhaps demonstrated most famously and effectively in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* and the work of Thomas Pynchon, the sense of paranoia, the belief that there's an ordering system behind the chaos of the world is another recurring

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[1] Журавлёв С. Постмодернизм в литературе. – Интернет-энциклопедия «Кругосвет». www.krugosvet.ru/

postmodern theme. For the postmodernist, no ordering system exists, so a search for order is fruitless and absurd. *The Crying of Lot 49* by Thomas Pynchon has many possible interpretations. If one reads the book with a particular bias, then he or she is going to be frustrated.[26] This often coincides with the theme of technoculture and hyperreality. For example, in *Breakfast of Champions* by Kurt Vonnegut, the character Dwayne Hoover becomes violent when he's convinced that everyone else in the world is a robot and he is the only human.[1]

Maximalism

Dubbed maximalism by some critics, the sprawling canvas and fragmented narrative of such writers as Dave Eggers has generated controversy on the "purpose" of a novel as narrative and the standards by which it should be judged. The postmodern position is that the style of a novel must be appropriate to what it depicts and represents, and points back to such examples in previous ages as *Gargantua* by François Rabelais and the *Odyssey* of Homer, which Nancy Felson hails as the exemplar of the polytropic audience and its engagement with a work.
Many modernist critics, notably B.R. Myers in his polemic *A Reader's Manifesto*, attack the maximalist novel as being disorganized, sterile and filled with language play for its own sake, empty of emotional commitment—and therefore empty of value as a novel. Yet there are counter-examples, such as Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon*, James Chapman's *Stet*, and David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* where postmodern narrative coexists with emotional commitment.[27][28]

Minimalism

Literary minimalism can be characterized as a focus on a surface description where readers are expected to take an active role in the creation of a story. The characters in minimalist stories and novels tend to be unexceptional. Generally, the short stories are "slice of life" stories. Minimalism, the opposite of maximalism, is

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[1] Online Anthology of American Literature. http://www.norton-anthology.com/postmodern-fiction.html

a representation of only the most basic and necessary pieces, specific by economy with words. Minimalist authors hesitate to use adjectives, adverbs, or meaningless details. Instead of providing every minute detail, the author provides a general context and then allows the reader's imagination to shape the story. Among those categorized as postmodernist, literary minimalism is most commonly associated with Samuel Beckett.

Different perspectives

John Barth, the postmodernist novelist who talks often about the label "postmodern", wrote an influential essay in 1967 called "Literature of Exhaustion" and in 1979 wrote "Literature of Replenishment" in order to clarify the earlier essay. "Literature of Exhaustion" was about the need for a new era in literature after modernism had exhausted itself. In "Literature of Replenishment" Barth says,

> My ideal Postmodernist author neither merely repudiates nor merely imitates either his twentieth-century Modernist parents or his nineteenth-century premodernist grandparents. He has the first half of our century under his belt, but not on his back. Without lapsing into moral or artistic simplism, shoddy craftsmanship, Madison Avenue venality, or either false or real naiveté, he nevertheless aspires to a fiction more democratic in its appeal than such late-Modernist marvels as Beckett's *Texts for Nothing*... The ideal Postmodernist novel will somehow rise above the quarrel between realism and irrealism, formalism and 'contentism,' pure and committed literature, coterie fiction and junk fiction...

Many of the well-known postmodern novels deal with World War II, one of the most famous of which being Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. Heller claimed his novel and many of the other American novels of the time had more to do with the state of the country after the war:

> The antiwar and anti government feelings in the book belong to the period following World War II: the Korean War, the cold war of the Fifties. A general disintegration of belief took place then, and it affected *Catch-22* in

> that the form of the novel became almost disintegrated. *Catch-22* was a collage; if not in structure, then in the ideology of the novel itself ... Without being aware of it, I was part of a near-movement in fiction. While I was writing *Catch-22*, J. P. Donleavy was writing *The Ginger Man*, Jack Kerouac was writing *On the Road*, Ken Kesey was writing *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Thomas Pynchon was writing *V.*, and Kurt Vonnegut was writing *Cat's Cradle*. I don't think any one of us even knew any of the others. Certainly I didn't know them. Whatever forces were at work shaping a trend in art were affecting not just me, but all of us. The feelings of helplessness and persecution in *Catch-22* are very strong in Pynchon and in *Cat's Cradle*.

Novelist and theorist Umberto Eco explains his idea of postmodernism as a kind of double-coding:

> I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows that he cannot say to her "I love you madly", because he knows that she knows (and that she knows he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still there is a solution. He can say "As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly". At this point, having avoided false innocence, having said clearly it is no longer possible to talk innocently, he will nevertheless say what he wanted to say to the woman: that he loves her in an age of lost innocence.

Novelist David Foster Wallace in his 1990 essay "E Unibus Pluram" makes the connection between the rise of postmodernism and the rise of television with its tendency toward self-reference and the ironic juxtaposition of what's seen and what's said. This, he claims, explains the preponderance of pop culture references in postmodern literature:

> It was in post-atomic America that pop influences on literature became something more than technical. About the time television first gasped and sucked air, mass popular U.S. culture seemed to become High-Art-viable as

a collection of symbols and myth. The episcopate of this pop-reference movement were the post-Nabokovian Black Humorists, the Metafictionists and assorted franc-and latinophiles only later comprised by "postmodern." The erudite, sardonic fictions of the Black Humorists introduced a generation of new fiction writers who saw themselves as sort of avant-avant-garde, not only cosmopolitan and polyglot but also technologically literate, products of more than just one region, heritage, and theory, and citizens of a culture that said its most important stuff about itself via mass media. In this regard one thinks particularly of the Gaddis of *The Recognitions* and *JR*, the Barth of *The End of the Road* and *The Sot-Weed Factor*, and the Pynchon of *The Crying of Lot 49* ... Here's Robert Coover's 1966 *A Public Burning*, in which Eisenhower buggers Nixon on-air, and his 1968 *A Political Fable*, in which the Cat in the Hat runs for president.

Hans-Peter Wagner offers this approach to defining postmodern literature:

Postmodernism ... can be used at least in two ways – firstly, to give a label to the period after 1968 (which would then encompass all forms of fiction, both innovative and traditional), and secondly, to describe the highly experimental literature produced by writers beginning with Lawrence Durrell and John Fowles in the 1960s and reaching to the breathless works of Martin Amis and the "Chemical (Scottish) Generation" of the fin-de-siècle. In what follows, the term 'postmodernist' is used for experimental authors (especially Durell, Fowles, Carter, Brooke-Rose, Barnes, Ackroyd, and Martin Amis) while "post- modern" is applied to authors who have been less innovative.

2.1.5 Postmodernist Writers and Critics in American Literature. Influential Works

The term "postmodern" is too vague to define simply because it encompasses a very large amount of subjects and there are too many discrepancies in defining its genuine characteristics. Vaguely, postmodern fiction is a literary movement after World War II against modernist literature. It stands to question the reality, hierarchy, and organization of the principles of our society through literature. It questions the social, political, and economic conditions of certain historic and present events. "While postmodern fiction challenges mimetic representation, it also offers a new, more overtly textual and self-reflexive form of representation that exposes its own filtered or biased quality". Instead of focusing on identifying universal themes in a literary work, it seeks the instability and ambiguity of human experience, with many interpretations. Techniques such as resurrection/reconstruction, self-reflection, and multi-narratives are all applied conventions of postmodern fiction and allow us to stray from the regular conventions of modernism.

Many writers of fiction developed postmodern tradition in the USA after the WWII and here we give major writers of postmodernist literature of the USA and their most influential works.

Joseph Heller

- Born May 1, 1923 in Brooklyn, New York
- Known for his post World War satires and playwrights
- Catch 22 most well-known of his works
- Other works include: *Something Happened, Good as Gold, and Closing Time.*
- Also wrote plays: *We Bombed in New Haven, Catch 22, Clevinger's Trail*

Thomas Pynchon

- Born May 8, 1937 in Glen Cove, New York.
- Known for his fictional writing over many different subjects that include: science, mathematics, and history
- Known for his early works: V, The Crying of Lot 49, and Gravity's Rainbow.
- Also wrote essays concerning diverse topics such as missile security and Watts Riots (a large scale riot that lasted six days in the Watt's neighborhood of LA).

Kurt Vonnegut

- Born November 11, 1922 in Indianapolis, Indiana
- Known for using Patiche in his works. Blends satire, black comedy, and science fiction to create novels, such as *Slaughterhouse Five and Breakfast of Champions.*
- As a former soldier and prisoner of war, many of his experiences influenced his later works.

Tim O'Brien

- Born October 1, 1946 in Austin, Minnesota
- - His career began with the release of *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Ship me.* Wrote mainly about his experiences in the Vietnam War
- O'Brien uses fiction and reality and blends them into his own genre. He labels his works fiction, however, he uses his situations he experienced in his works.
- Most famous work: The Things They Carried

The Most Influential works in the US Postmodernist Fiction include:

- *Catch 22* – Joseph Heller
- *Slaughterhouse Five* – Kurt Vonnegut
- *Lost in the Funhouse* – John Barth

- *The Things They Carried* – Tim O'Brien
- *White Noise* – Don DeLillo
- *Gravity's Rainbow* – Thomas Pynchon
- *The Crying of Lot 49* – Thomas Pynchon

Postmodernist Critics

- Jacques Lacan
- The members of the Frankfurt School
- Michel Foucault
- Roland Barthes
- Jacques Derrida
- Academically trained in philosophy, used substantially the works of philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Martin Heidegger, or G.W.F. Hegel

Chapter 2. "Catch 22" and "Gravity Rainbow" as the most outstanding postmodernist novels in the 20th Century American Literature

2.2.1 Joseph Heller's "Catch 22" and its peculiarities

The first novel in the top ten American Postmodern Novels is Catch 22. Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* is a satirical antiwar novel written at the end of World War II in 1944, on an island off the coast of Italy. It contains black humour, an unusual narrative structure, surrealism (a genre which features strange imagery and events), and a not-so-heroic protagonist who struggles to deal with the insanity of war and concludes that the only sane response to it is not to participate in it. Heller began writing *Catch-22* in 1953, and a chapter from the still-in-progress novel was published in an anthology in 1955. The completed novel was published in 1961.[1]

American army pilot John Yossarian is an antihero, that is, a protagonist lacking some traditionally heroic qualities. He is obsessed with being rotated out of active flight duty. His commander, Colonel Cathcart, keeps raising the number of missions the men in the squadron must fly before they can be rotated out. Consequently, Yossarian is desperate to find another way out of his dilemma. He asks the squadron's doctor, Doc Daneeka, to declare him unfit for duty by reason of insanity. Doc refuses, citing the mysterious Catch-22: if Yossarian asks to be let out of his duties, he must be sane. Only a crazy man would want to continue to fly missions, but the only way Daneeka can ground him, according to Catch-22, is if he asks to be grounded — which would indicate his sanity. The circular reasoning of this "catch" is the central metaphor for the absurdity of war and the military bureaucracy.[2]

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[1] Darren Felty, in an essay for *Novels for Students,* Gale 1997 http://www.answers.com/catch-22.html
[2] An Anthology of American Literature. Norton.
http://www.nortonanthology.com/twentieth_century_fiction.html

Yossarian's questions and responses to his situation show that he is indeed a sane man in an insane situation. Heller uses black humor, absurd and even surreal events, and a nonlinear narrative structure in which events are arranged by theme rather than by chronology, to drive home his point that institutions such as the military, big business, government, and religion are corrupt and individuals must find their own responses to this corruption. Heller's questioning of these respected institutions, and of war in general, foreshadowed the social protests and antiwar movements of the late 1960s, and made it one of the most popular and enduring novels of its time.[1]

2.2.2 Central ideas depicted in "Catch-22"

a) Individual Vs. Society

Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* traces the efforts of Yossarian, an American bombardier in World War II, to escape participation in a war that seems meaningless. Yossarian represents the individual against a huge, corrupt institution of any sort, whether it is the army or a large corporation. The bureaucracy and rules of such large institutions, Heller suggests, often exist for their own sake, not for a good reason. Milo Minderbinder's M & M enterprises represents the corrupt corporation. In the pursuit of profits and wealth, he will trade anything, even life rafts or morphine that is needed to save the lives of the pilots, with anyone, including the enemy. The obvious question is, if we can communicate enough with the enemy to make business deals, why can't we settle our differences instead of killing each other? Negotiating peace is not the concern of Milo or his customers, however. Thus, Heller suggests that some businesspeople value money even more than human life. When Milo actually has the American pilots bomb their own base as part of a business deal with the Germans, it is perfectly logical and at the same

[1] http://www.eng.wikipedia.org/Catch-22/novels.html

time completely unethical. Yossarian, the sane individual, recognizes that this act is insane and evil.

The other corrupt institution in *Catch-22* is, of course, the military. Yossarian is the voice of reason. He is stunned by the priorities of the army, which at best are absurd and at worst evil, such as when the military police care about his going AWOL more than Captain Aardvaark's rape and murder of the Italian girl. Many of the orders issued by the men in power serve only to secure their own positions. Yossarian is constantly questioning the foolish arbitrary military rules and decisions and even sabotages his plane's communications systems in order to abort a mission that he feels is wrong. Individual men such as Yossarian are powerless to fight the army's corruption, which is why Yossarian decides he must leave rather than be a part of it.

b) Sanity and Insanity

The outrageous military regulation called Catch-22 captures Heller's attitude toward sanity and insanity. It is, he suggests, impossible to exist as a sane person in an insane environment. Heller portrays life for the men in the squadron as completely crazy. They are at the mercy of ambitious commanders who care more about their own careers than the men's lives. Their sanity is challenged by military rules that make no sense but which they must blindly obey. They see ethics thrown out the window, by Milo in pursuit of profit, for example, or by the old man in Rome, who lives only for pleasure. They are asked to endanger their lives, and begin to question why this is necessary, especially when they are asked to bomb an innocent village just to block a road.

The men deal with this insanity in different ways. Yossarian fakes illness to hide out in the hospital. McWatt buzzes people with his plane. Yossarian calls it — to distract themselves from their fears and their deep-rooted feeling that they are risking their lives for foolish reasons.

Only Orr seems to cope well, to stay sane amid the madness, and the reader later learns it is because he has been focused on a plan to escape, and has even

been practicing that escape. When Yossarian realizes what Orr has been doing, he makes the choice to escape as well. Despite the tremendous odds against the success of Yossarian's plan, Heller suggests it is not a crazy but a sane response to an insane situation over which Yossarian has no control.

b) Heroes and Heroism

The protagonist of a novel is generally called the hero because he or she usually has heroic, admirable qualities. An antihero, however, is someone who does not have heroic qualities such as courage and selflessness, but is still admirable because he has qualities that may mean just as much to the reader. Yossarian is certainly not courageous: he will do anything to get out of combat, even fake illness. He's not selfless; in fact, he's obsessed with saving himself from danger. Note that Heller chose as his setting World War II, an unambiguously "good" war to most Americans. Yossarian is rebelling against fighting a just war against a very evil empire, Nazi Germany. In theory, the reader should not like or identify with such a protagonist.

However, the war that we see in the book is not the Allies versus the Axis powers but the individual against the bureaucracy. Again and again, the military and business bureaucracies steal the dignity and hope of the men in Yossarian's squadron. The reader can understand Yossarian's point of view and empathize with him because he can never reach the number of missions he must fly before he goes home; the number will constantly be bumped up — not because that is what is necessary to stop the enemy, but because more missions will help the individual ambitions of one man gunning for a promotion. The reader sees Yossarian helpless against an absurd militaristic bureaucracy, held hostage and even physically endangered by the mercenary, money-grubbing business dealings of M & M Enterprises. The reader comes to like and respect Yossarian for standing up to the absurdity, refusing the dishonesty of betraying his fellow men by taking Cathcart and Korn up on their offer (he'll be discharged if he lies and tells people he never refused to fly or challenged his superiors). Under the circumstances, Yossarian's

character flaws are no match for his decency and honesty, traits which seem utterly absent in the military.

c) Absurdity Language and Meaning

While the purpose of language is to communicate, Heller shows that corrupt people and institutions misuse language in order to confuse and manipulate others and avoid responsibility. The characters' bizarre and illogical uses of language help create an atmosphere of absurdity — a state in which unreal, irrational things happen every day. In the beginning of the book, readers may be cOrrused by the seemingly illogical discussions of flies in Appleby's eyes or Orr's story of stuffing crab apples or horse chestnuts in his cheeks to make them rosy, but soon it's clear that the men's unorthodox use of language mirrors that of their commanding officers'. Colonel Cargill tries to instill pride in the men, saying, "You're American officers. The officers of no other army in the world can make that statement." This self-evident statement has no real meaning. Captain Black says signing his loyalty oath is voluntary, but anyone who does not sign will be starved to death. And Major Major tells his assistant "I don't want anyone to come in to see me while I'm here." While the sentence is grammatical, it makes no sense. It is just a round-about way of saying he doesn't want to see anyone, ever, which of course is absurd. He has to talk to people to do his job. Circular logic and redefining words, Heller shows, allows people to avoid the reality of situations, or to twist reality to suit their purposes. No wonder that when asked if Appleby has flies in his eyes, Yossarian thinks this impossibility might be true because "it made as much sense as anything else."[1]

[1] Heller, J. Catch 22. e-book from http://www.projectgutenberg.org/catch22/text.html

2.2.3 Techniques of postmodern literature in “Catch-22”

The story is told in third person. Sometimes the narrative is omniscient ("all-knowing"), meaning that readers can see the large picture and everything that goes on. Sometimes, however, the narrator's vision is somewhat limited: we see things as if through a particular character's eyes. For example, the first several chapters are really from the point of view of Yossarian, but then in chapter nine we pull back and see the larger picture. This switching from limited to omniscient narration allows Heller to focus on the big picture or just one character.[1]

a) Structure

“Catch-22” is not a linear novel in which events follow each other chronologically. Instead, to underscore his points, Heller has the narrative jump around in time, using flashbacks and *déjàa vu* — a French term for repetition meaning "already seen." This allows the author to juxtapose scenes that have a strong connection to each other thematically. The reader can follow the chronological chain of events by noting the references to Cathcart's continual raising of the number of missions the men must fly; the growth of M & M enterprises, which becomes increasingly powerful over time; and the revelations about the gruesome death of the young pilot named Snowden, a singular event that serves as an epiphany for Yossarian, that is, a moment that makes him "see the light." After he finally relives the event in full, he is determined to escape the insanity of war rather than try to find a way to cope with it.

The scrambling of scenes serves a second purpose as well: to reflect the state of mind of a combat pilot. Life in the military is in certain ways controlled and orderly, even dull, but it is intermingled with the sheer terror of death, which is completely unpredictable. Heller wants the reader to understand that time itself has

[1] Catch 22 Overview. http://www.answers.com/catch_22.html/style.html

a different meaning for someone in this situation, that what is important is not each day's separate events but the themes that are apparent in so many different situations at different times: the absurdity of bureaucracy, the callousness of ambitious men, the difference between reality and appearance.

b) Irony, Satire, and Black Humor

Writers often combine irony, satire, and black humor to express their themes and ideas, because the three techniques work together well. Heller uses all of these techniques liberally in "*Catch-22".* One definition of irony is the use of words to express something other than their literal meaning — or even the opposite of their meaning. Thus, naming a pilot who is inexperienced at his craft "Kraft" is an ironic choice. Satire is the holding up of human vices and follies to ridicule or scorn through wit and sarcasm. "*Catch-22"* is a social satire, ridiculing targets such as the military (an example would be Scheisskopf's absurd obsession with military parades) and big business (witness the success of Milo's M & M Enterprises: countries that are actually at war with each other hypocritically do business with each other as well). Satire usually involves extremes, and certainly much of the absurdity in *Catch-22* is due to extreme examples of bureaucracy run amok, or capitalism at its most corrupt. The absurdity Heller creates is also funny, although not in a lighthearted way. Heller uses black humor, that is, humor with a dark tone to it, or an edge. Joking about death, for example, is a form of black humor. Thus, when Heller makes the army unable to recognize that Mudd is dead and Doc is alive (because they have more faith in the military's records than in the reality of one dead and one live body), it is black humor.[1]

c) Allusions or intertextual connections

Allusions are subtle references authors make to other books or events that are relevant to the point at hand, or to other events within the book itself. Throughout "*Catch-22",* Joseph Heller makes references to literature, the Bible, and other writings and historical events. So, for example, when Yossarian censors

[1] Catch 22 Overview. http://www.answers.com/catch_22.html/style.html

letters in an absurdly nonsensical way, he signs off on them as "Washington Irving" or "Irving Washington." Washington Irving, a nineteenth-century novelist and essayist, often used black humor, and created the famous character Rip Van Winkle, who was, like Yossarian, an antihero (a protagonist whose admirable qualities are not the usual ones). This allusion points out to the reader that Yossarian identifies with the antihero Van Winkle and with Irving's black humor.

Allusion can also achieve a comic effect. At one point, Heller turns around Shakespeare's classic proclamation that "some men are born to greatness" and "some men have greatness thrust upon them" by writing that Major Major Major was "born to mediocrity" and had "mediocrity thrust upon him." The reader, remembering the loftiness of the original quote and its source, is meant to see the humor in changing "greatness" to "mediocrity,"[1] as if mediocrity, like greatness, could be stunningly admirable and spoken of with the utmost respect.

Finally, allusions to events within the novel itself remind readers of thematic connections between the events. Heller makes many such allusions to drive home his themes.[2]

[1] Heller, J. Catch 22. e-book from http://www.projectgutenberg.org/catch22/text.html
[2] Catch 22 Overview. http://www.answers.com/catch_22.html/style.html

2.2.4 Gravity Rainbow by Thomas Pynchon as a number two postmodern novel in American literature

"Gravity's Rainbow" is a postmodern novel written by Thomas Pynchon. The narrative is set primarily in Europe at the end of World War II and centers on the design, production and dispatch of V-2 rockets by the German military, and, in particular, the quest undertaken by several characters to uncover the secret of a mysterious device named the "Schwarzgerät" ("black device") that is to be installed in a rocket with the serial number "00000."

"Gravity's Rainbow" is transgressive—not only because it questions and inverts our standards of deviance and disgust[1] but also because it breaks down, or transgresses, the hermetically sealed either/or boundaries and categories of Western culture and reason. Frequently digressive, the novel subverts many of the traditional elements of plot and character development, and traverses detailed, specialist knowledge drawn from a wide range of disciplines.

The novel has been praised for its innovation and complexity, though the acclaim has been criticized by some. In 1974, the three-member Pulitzer Prize jury on fiction supported *Gravity's Rainbow* for the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. However, the other eleven members of the board overturned this decision, branding the book "unreadable, turgid, overwritten and obscene." The novel was nominated for the 1973 Nebula Award for Best Novel and won the National Book Award in 1974. Since its publication, *Gravity's Rainbow* has spawned an enormous amount of literary criticism and commentary, including two readers' guides and several online concordances, and it is frequently cited as Pynchon's magnum opus.[2]

"Time Magazine" included the novel in its *All-Time 100 Greatest Novels*, a list of the best English-language novels from 1923 to 2005. In addition, it has

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[1] Booker, *Techniques of Subversion in Modern Literature*, p.13
[2] Pynchon, Thomas | Authors | guardian.co.uk Books at books.guardian.co.uk

appeared on several other "Greatest" lists, and is considered by some critics as one of the greatest American novels ever written.[1]

2.2.5 Thematic postmodernist features and structure of the novel

The plot of the novel is complex, containing over 400 characters and involving many different threads of narrative which intersect and weave around one another.[2] The recurring themes throughout the plot are the V-2 rocket, interplay between free will and Calvinistic predestination, breaking the cycle of nature, behavioral psychology, and conspiracy theories such as the Phoebus cartel and the Illuminati. *Gravity's Rainbow* also draws heavily on themes that Pynchon had probably encountered at his work as a technical writer for Boeing, where he edited a support newsletter for the Bomarc Missile Program support unit. The Boeing archives are known to house a vast library of historical V-2 rocket documents, which were probably accessible to Pynchon. The novel is narrated by many distinct voices, a technique further developed in Pynchon's much later novel *Against the Day*. The style and tone of the voices vary widely: Some narrate the plot in a highly informal tone, some are more self-referential, and some at times may possibly even break the fourth wall. Some voices even narrate in drastically different formats, ranging from movie-script format to stream of consciousness prose.

As if to showcase both the erudite and the naughty, the narrative contains numerous descriptions of illicit encounters and drug use by the main characters and supporting cast, sandwiched between dense dialogues or reveries on historic, artistic, scientific, or philosophical subjects, interspersed with whimsical nonsense-poems and allusions to obscure facets of 1940s pop culture. Many of the recurring

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[1] "ALL-TIME 100 Novels". TIME. http://www.time.com/time/2005/100books/

[2] Tanner, T. (1982). "Gravity's Rainbow". *Thomas Pynchon*. London and New York: Methuen. p. 74.

themes will be familiar to experienced Pynchon readers, including the singing of silly songs, recurring appearances of kazoos, and extensive discussion of paranoia. According to Richard Locke, megalomaniac paranoia is the "operative emotion" behind the novel,[1] and an increasingly central motivator for the many main characters. In many cases, this paranoia proves to be vindicated, as the many plots of the novel become increasingly interconnected, revolving around the identity and purpose of the elusive 00000 Rocket and *Schwarzgerät*. The novel becomes increasingly preoccupied with themes of Tarot, Paranoia, and Sacrifice. All three themes culminate in the novel's ending, and the epilogue of the many characters. The novel also features the character Pig Bodine, of Pynchon's novel *V.*. Pig Bodine would later become a recurring avatar of Pynchon's complex and interconnected fictional universe, making an appearance in nearly all of Pynchon's novels thereafter.

The novel also shares many themes with Pynchon's much later *Against the Day*, and indeed some critics have called *Against the Day* a "prequel" to *Gravity's Rainbow*. *Against The Day* becomes increasingly dark as the plot approaches World War I, and *Gravity's Rainbow* takes these sentiments to their extreme in its highly pessimistic culmination of World War II .

The opening pages of the novel follow Pirate Prentice, first in his dreams, and later around his house in wartime London. Pirate then goes to work at ACHTUNG, a top-secret military branch, with Roger Mexico and Pointsman, who both worked there at the time. It is here the reader is introduced to the possibly promiscuous US Army lieutenant named Tyrone Slothrop (at certain points in the book, Pynchon leads the reader to doubt the very existence of the women Slothrop claims to sleep with), whose erratic story becomes the main plot throughout most of the novel. In "Beyond The Zero", some of the other characters and organizations of the book note that each of Slothrop's encounters in London precedes a V-2 rocket hit in the same place by several days. Both Slothrop's encounters and the

[1] Richard Locke, book review for *The New York Times Book Review*, March 11, 1973

rocket sites match the Poisson Distributions calculated by Roger Mexico, leading into reflections on topics as broad as Determinism, the reverse flow of time, and the rocket itself. Slothrop meets a woman named Katje, and they fall in love, maintaining a relationship until Slothrop's sudden removal to Germany in part three. Many characters not significant until later are introduced in "Beyond the Zero", including Franz and Leni Pökler, Roger Mexico and Jessica, and Thomas Gwenhidwy, some of whom don't appear until the closing pages of the novel, many of whom don't appear again at all. Indeed, most of the four hundred named characters only make singular appearances, serving merely to demonstrate the sheer scope of Pynchon's universe. Slothrop is also submitted to various psychological tests, many involving the drug Sodium Amytal. Pavlovian conditioning is a recurring topic, mostly explored through the character of Pavlovian researcher Pointsman. One of the more bizarre Pavlovian episodes involves the conditioning of octopus Grigori to respond to the girl Katje. Early in part two, the octopus attacks Katje on the beach, and Slothrop is "conveniently" at hand to rescue her. Their romance begins here, extending into Part Three and the events that follow.

In part two, "Un Perm' au Casino Hermann Goering"[1], Slothrop is studied covertly and sent away by superiors in mysterious circumstances to the Hermann Göring casino in recently liberated France, in which almost the entirety of Part Two takes place. There he learns of a rocket, with the irregular serial number 00000 (Slothrop comments that the numbering system doesn't allow for four zeroes in one serial, let alone five), and a component called the S-Gerät (short for *Schwarzgerät*, which translates to *black device*) which is made out of the hitherto unknown plastic *Imipolex G*. Several companions suddenly disappear or re-appear after extended amounts of time, including the two guards watching Slothrop and Katje. It is hinted at that Slothrop's prescience of rocket hits is due to being conditioned as an infant by the creator of Imipolex G, Laszlo Jamf. Later, the

[1] Pynchon, Thomas (1973). *Gravity's Rainbow*. http://www.projectgutenberg.org/gravity/text/html

reality of this story is called into question in a similar fashion as the existence of Slothrop's original exploits were. After getting this information, Slothrop escapes from the casino into the coalescing post-war wasteland of Europe, "The Zone", searching for the 00000 and S-Gerät. In the closing of Part Two, Katje is revealed to be safe in England, enjoying a day at the beach with Roger Mexico and Jessica, as well as Pointsman, who is in charge of Slothrop's furtive supervision. While unable to contact Slothrop (or prohibited from contacting him), Katje continues to follow his actions through Pointsman.

Slothrop's quest continues for some time "In The Zone" as he is chased by other characters. Many of these characters are referred to as "shadows," and are only partially glimpsed by the protagonist. Much of the plot takes place on "The Anubis", a ferry on which many different characters travel at various times. Slothrop meets and has an extended relationship with Margherita Erdman, a Pornographic film actress and masochist. Originally meeting her in an abandoned studio in The Zone, it is she who leads him on to the Anubis. Here, Slothrop later also has extended encounters with her twelve-year-old daughter Bianca, though it is unclear whether or not he has stopped his casual relationship with Margherita by this time. Margherita is later shown to know a great deal more about the 00000, S-Gerät, and Imipolex G than she lets on, even having spent many days in a mysterious and ambiguously described factory and being clothed in an outfit made from the "erotic" plastic. Towards the end of this section, several characters not seen since early in the novel make a return, including Pirate Prentice, in his first appearance since the novel's very start, as well as Roger Mexico. "In The Zone"[1] also contains the longest episode of the book, a lengthy tale of Franz Pökler, a rocket engineer unwittingly set to assist on the S-Gerät's production. The story details Pökler's annual meetings with his daughter Ilse, and his growing paranoia that Ilse is really a series of impostors sent each year to mollify him. Through this story, we find out sparse details about the S-Gerät, including that it has an

[1] Pynchon, Thomas (1973). *Gravity's Rainbow*. http://www.projectgutenberg.org/gravity/text/html

approximate weight of thirty-four kilograms. The story ultimately reveals that the 00000 was fired in the spring of 1945, close to the end of the war. Slothrop spends much of the time as his invented alter-ego Rocketman, who wears a white Zoot Suit and the cone of a rocket-nose. Rocketman completes various tasks for his own and others' purposes, including retrieving a large stash of hashish from the centre of the Potsdam Conference. This continues until he leaves the region for northern Germany, continuing his quest for the 00000, as well as answers to his past. It becomes steadily apparent that Slothrop is somehow connected to Dr. Laszlo Jamf, and a series of experiments performed on him as a child.

Slothrop later returns to the Anubis to find Bianca dead, a possible trigger for his impending decline. He continues his pilgrimage through northern Germany, at various stages donning the identities of a Russian General and mythical Pig Hero in turn, in search of more information on his childhood and the 00000. Unfortunately, he is repeatedly sidetracked until his persona fragments totally in part four, despite the efforts of some to save him. Throughout "The Counterforce", there are several brief, hallucinatory stories, of superheroes, silly Kamikaze pilots, and immortal sentient lightbulbs. These are presumed to be the product of Slothrop's finally collapsed mind. The final identification of him of any certainty is his picture on the cover of an album by obscure English band "The Fool" (another allusion to Tarot, which becomes increasingly significant), where he is credited as playing the Harmonica and Kazoo. At the same time, other characters' narratives begin to collapse as well, with some characters taking a bizarre trip through Hell, and others flying into nothingness on Zeppelins. A variety of interpretations of this fact exist, including theories that all of the involved characters have a shared consciousness, or even that the other characters are part of Slothrop's mind, and thus disintegrate along with it. Slothrop's narrative ends a surprisingly long time before the novel's end, which focuses more on the 00000, and the people associated with its construction and launch (namely Blicero, Enzian, and Gottfried,

amongst others). At this point, the novel also concludes many characters' stories, including those of Mexico, Pointsman, and Pirate, leaving only the 00000.

As the novel closes, many topics are discussed by the various protagonists around the world, ranging from Tarot cards to Death itself. Towards the end of "The Counterforce", it transpires that the S-Gerät is actually a capsule crafted by Blicero to contain a human. The story of the 00000's launch is largely told in flashbacks by the narrator, while in the present Enzian is constructing and preparing its successor, the 00001 (which isn't fired within the scope of the novel), though it is unknown who is intended to be sacrificed in this model. In the flashbacks, the maniacal Captain Blicero prepares to assemble and fire the 00000, and asks Gottfried to sacrifice himself inside the rocket. He launches the rocket in a pseudo act of sacrifice with his bound prepubescent slave Gottfried captive within its S-Gerät. At the end of a final episode, told partially in second person, the rocket descends upon Britain. The text halts, in the middle of a song composed by Slothrop's ancestor, with a complete obliteration of narrative as the 00000 lands (or is about to land) on a cinema.[1] Thus the novel opens and closes in wartime Britain, and opens and closes with the landing of a V-2 rocket.

[1] Pynchon, Thomas (1973). *Gravity's Rainbow*. http://www.projectgutenberg.org/gravity/text/html

III. Conclusion

The given qualification paper is dedicated to the study of postmodernist literature in the 20th century American Literature and features. As we mentioned in introduction the actuality of the research is explained by the lack of researches in the area of postmodernist literature. Therefore we attempted to make a research that would embrace and reflect comparatively all peculiarities of postmodernist literature and its development, its highlights in American literature.

In studying the postmodern movement articles and researches made in Russia and other European countries served us as fundamental sources.

In reviewing the literature we tried to study the textual features of postmodernist literature and compare it with the predecessor of it: a modernist literature, which played a great role in the formation of the literary movement we attempted to study.

Postmodernist literature as we concluded is one of the puzzling and complicated movements or phenomena in the 20th century world of art. Many institutions, scholars, philosophers and scientists, literary critics are still trying to explain this phenomenon, though the postmodernism is passing away and replacing itself with the new movements.

We determined the following conclusion as a result of our study that the following factors caused the appearance and development of postmodernism:

- two devastating almost-global wars: World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1941-1945)
- huge changes in industry and technology as compared to the 19th century
- the rise in power and influence of international corporations
- interconnectedness across the globe: cultural exchanges, transportation, communication, mass (or popular) culture from the West;

- the "Westernization" of many formerly traditional societies and nations and a resulting change in their values (often their the detriment of the formerly traditional society and nation). These "modern" values include a belief in the desirability of industrialization, individual political rights, democracy, mass literacy and education, private ownership of the means of production, the scientific method, public institutions;

In comparing postmodernist literature with modernist literature we discovered that: Modernism places faith in the ideas, values, beliefs, culture, and norms of the West, Postmodernism rejects Western values and beliefs as only a small part of the human experience and often rejects such ideas, beliefs, culture, and norms. Modernism attempts to reveal profound truths of experience and life, Postmodernism is suspicious of being "profound" because such ideas are based on one particular Western value systems. Modernism attempts to find depth and interior meaning beneath the surface of objects and events, Postmodernism prefers to dwell on the exterior image and avoids drawing conclusions or suggesting underlying meanings associated with the interior of objects and events. Modernism focused on central themes and a united vision in a particular piece of literature, Postmodernism sees human experience as unstable, internally contradictory, ambiguous, inconclusive, indeterminate, unfinished, fragmented, discontinuous, "uneven," with no one specific reality possible. Therefore, it focuses on a vision of a contradictory, fragmented, ambiguous, indeterminate, unfinished, "uneven" world.

In studying the development of postmodernism in American literature we concluded that postmodernism replaced modernism and/or developed simultaneously from the first half of the 20th century. And among the writers of postmodernism Samuel Beckett, Mark Z. Danielewski, Kurt Vonnegut, Jorges Luis Borges, Hunter S. Thompson, Bret Easton Ellis, Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon,

William S. Burroughs, David Foster Wallace are mentioned as the most outstanding representatives of postmodernist literature.

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