

## *POSTMODERNISM AS A PARADIGM*

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*Abstract: The difficulty in providing an accurate and all-encompassing definition of Postmodernism arises from its heterogeneous nature so that the question which needs answering is this: Is postmodernism a trend, an ideology, a movement, or a stylistic system? This paper argues that none of these terms is wide enough in scope to stand for what postmodernism represents and proposes a term used in the philosophy of science by TS Kuhn, namely 'paradigm'. He used this term to account for the rules, laws, and observations which govern any scientist's activity and the suggestion in this paper is to borrow this term and apply it to Postmodernism. The paper looks into the characteristics of paradigms and then investigates the causes which led to the advent of Postmodernism. As such, it pinpoints the influences of the Hegelian theory of tensions and contradictions and the existence of a finality in history. It then moves on the Saussure's concepts of langue and parole and the structuralists' attempts to eliminate the subjectivity of the interpreting mind, and presents the poststructuralist reaction and the realization that any message can be interpreted in a plurality of ways. It discusses Derrida's questioning of the concept of origin and Lyotard's rejection of metanarratives and accounts for the two phases of postmodern fiction: the first, the reaction which contested the precepts of modernism and which appeared to be solely a rejection, a negation, but whose aim was actually to establish postmodernism as a self-sustainable paradigm; and, the second, more subdued and inclusive which arose once postmodernism made its stand.*

*Keywords: Postmodernism, paradigm, Hegel, relativization, legitimacy*

It is difficult, if not impossible, to provide an accurate and all-encompassing definition of Postmodernism. Many literary critics have attempted it only to be contested by others. The main reason behind this failure is the fact that Postmodernism is in itself quite heterogeneous as it encapsulates many features, trends, and developments, which are not solely literary or artistic in nature. In fact, one very important aspect of Postmodernism, as well as of modernism, is that it is the result of the societal, economic, political, cultural, educational, ideological,

philosophical, and scientific factors which shape society as a whole. It cannot be separated from society and analysed in isolation, solely as a stylistic trend. Therefore, it would be wrong to treat Postmodernism as a unitary ideology, as Hutcheon suggests (1989), and oppose it univocally to modernism. Postmodernism may have started as a reactionary trend to some of the tenets of modernism, but since its inception, it has developed into a more tolerant and inclusive manifestation.

First of all, I shall attempt to explain what Postmodernism is, meaning what it should be called. Is it a trend, an ideology, a movement, an aesthetic, or a stylistic system? I would actually argue that none of the before-mentioned terms is wide enough in scope to stand for what Postmodernism represents. Zima suggests that Postmodernism, and not only, could better be described as a 'problematic,' that is, as a 'compound of problems,' by which he means that it should be viewed as 'social and linguistic situations within which conflicting answers to certain questions or incompatible solutions to certain problems are proposed.' (2010: 12) This approach could account for the divergent, occasionally contradictory, even incompatible aspects of Postmodernism, but the term itself is so general that it offers no structure whatsoever to the term which it attempts to define.

However, I have another suggestion, which comes from a different domain, the philosophy of science. Thomas S. Kuhn introduced the term 'paradigm' to account for the rules, laws, and observations which govern any scientist's activity (Kuhn, 1996). I suggest that this term could be taken over and applied to Postmodernism for several reasons, which have to do with the nature of these paradigms, as explained by Kuhn. He posits that paradigms are frameworks within which scientists work implicitly, without having to agree on, even without having to produce a full rationalization of exactly what that paradigm is, what elements form its make-up (1996: 44). If necessary, the paradigm could be directly inspected, especially when some new development appears, and then explicit rules and formulations could be produced. However, under normal circumstances, this is not necessary. When applied to Postmodernism, this idea proves very helpful. Although critics have attempted to come up with a set of features and rules for postmodern literature, their task has been greatly encumbered by the diversity of literary works. Writers, like scientists, function within the postmodern paradigm without paying any heed to its characteristics, rules or functioning. They do not question the paradigm directly any more, and I will enlarge upon this further on in my analysis.

Kuhn explains that, although, in general, the appearance of a new paradigm entails the complete rejection and replacement of the previous one, this does not always need to be the case (1996: 95-7). A new paradigm does not necessarily ruin previous ones; in fact, it can be a further articulation of a previously-existing paradigm, a new articulation, necessary because the society within which it operates has altered its principles, has developed further, and the paradigm needs to be adjusted in order to keep abreast of these evolutions. Kuhn further refines this idea by adding the fact that a paradigm which has become outdated can become a special case, meaning an instance, an aspect of its successor (1996: 103). This is of interest to me especially in light of my contention that Postmodernism does not exist in a relation of complete opposition to modernism, but that, in certain respects, it is a continuation, refinement, and adaptation of modern precepts.

It is important at this stage of my argumentation to explain how Postmodernism came to be, what discontents led to its appearance. As Feyerabend explains, new theories occur only when and because some thinkers have decided not to be bound by certain methodologies, i.e. by certain systems of thought, and therefore, they transgress those systems (1993: 14). This is the necessary first step in the progress of human knowledge: the complete rupture with the past, the proposal of a new hypothesis that will in time, if validated by society, turn into a new paradigm. He further explains that new theories can only become coherent, clear and reasonable paradigms only after they have been employed for some time (Feyerabend 1993: 18). Again the similarity with Postmodernism and its evolution is obvious. Initially, Postmodernism was incoherent, unreasonable, challenging, apparently unmethodical, and resisted categorisation and method. However, once this incipient phase was surpassed, Postmodernism became less radical and more coherent. Postmodernism arose, according to Zima, as a revolt against the 'metaphysical residues of modernity in modernism' (2010: 132)<sup>1</sup>. Authors tried to distance themselves from modern absolutist notions such as truth, autonomy, and utopia. Modernism was largely based on Hegelian concepts of objective rationalism and on structuralist divisions. To take them in turn, I shall first briefly address Hegel's philosophy and the role which it played in the modern paradigm.

Hegel considers modern philosophy, culture and society fraught with contradictions and tensions, such as those between subject and object, mind and nature, the self and the other,

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<sup>1</sup>Zima views modernity as a long epoch which started with the Enlightenment, while modernism is late modernity, more precisely, 'an auto-criticism of modernity' (Zima 2010: 5-10).

knowledge and faith, Romanticism and Enlightenment. Hegel's main philosophical goal is to interpret these contradictions and tensions in light of and as part of a comprehensive, evolving, and rational unity. His claim is that there exists a finality in history and that human progress is methodical, as the expression of historical becoming. In his view, historical becoming refers to the incremental progress which humankind makes as a result of solving conflictual situations by means of synthesis. Hegel is a rational and methodical philosopher, whose basic tool is the triad of thesis, antithesis and synthesis and the way these interact to open new horizons for human knowledge in an objective fashion. The thesis and the antithesis are the extremes which, by means of human reasoning, can be brought together into a synthesis which is in fact, the progress that society undergoes. His belief is that differences can be overcome, that there is, in actuality, common ground between them out of which the synthesis can appear.

Structuralism is based on the assumption that there is an underlying system of 'distinctions and conventions' (Culler 2002: 5) which facilitate and guarantee the transmission of meaning. Structuralism explores the relationships and the basic structure of meaning in language, literature, and other social sciences, and the way in which they are organized into meaning-generating networks. The structuralist aim is to analyse linguistic, literary and social phenomena in their totality in order to uncover how their components interact to produce significance. The starting point of this trend resides in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, who first put forth the concepts of *langue* and *parole*. The former refers to the abstract structure of a language, made up of the rules and regulations which are the foundation for phrases, sentences and discourses. The latter is the concrete manifestation in communication of *langue*.

Another important aspect of Saussure's theory is the emphasis which he places on the way in which signs function in a formal setting, in a system based on relations of opposition and exclusion. His view regarding meaning is purely relational and structural, as he considers that no word could transmit meaning unless it is opposed to and in relation with all the other words in the linguistic system. The referentiality of words is not approached in Saussure's theory, as the meaning of words resides in their systemic relations, and does not derive from the intrinsic significance traits, or from their connections to the material world. Signs refer to one another (Saussure 2011). When Saussure refers to the value of a sign, he views it as depending on the relations which a sign holds with others signs in the system. A sign has no value out of the context. His famous analogy with the game of chess (based on the fact that the value of each piece is given by the place which it has on the board), is in his view, a perfect

parallel for the significance; the message clearly depends on the relation between the two parts of the sign, and the value of the sign is given by the relation between that sign and the other signs in the system seen as a whole.

Linguistics was not the only area of study which was permeated by Saussure's dichotomy. It is also found in social studies where it is employed in order to organise and classify human interactions. As Best explains, structuralism attempted to disclose the underlying rules which organised phenomena into social systems (1991: 18-9). In this endeavour, structuralism relied on the belief that the analysis which it provided was objective, rigorous, truthful and coherent. The assumption was based on a set of clearly-established rules and dichotomies, which made it as similar as possible to other sciences. The idea was that it could do away with the subjectivity of the interpreting mind. Meaning could be found only in the binary oppositions which the system provided and which governed the relations within it. Culler further details this point by explaining that structuralism does not aim at viewing an action as part of a chain of causality, nor as the product of a subject's imagination (2002: 31). What it actually does is to place an object or an action in relation to a system of conventions of similarity and discrepancy. Through this placement, the respective object or action gains meaning. Meaning and the identity of any item stem from the tension of opposition between the various components of a system. Consequently, the production of meaning is relegated to the system of language.

Poststructuralism shares this view, considering that the 'speaking subject' is not relevant in the meaning-making process. Taking it even further, it claims that the self, as a coherent entity, is only a fictional construct. Any individual is an amalgam of idiosyncratic, conflicting knowledge. Based on this claim, poststructuralists also reject the concept of *langue*. They believe that there is no set of rules which could ever solve the inherent contradictions in the world, or the individual. As Best explains, poststructuralists believe that a historical approach to the differences between and evolutions of any form of consciousness, identity, and signification is the most effective because it could account for the variations which might not otherwise be explained (1991: 20).

Poststructuralists also contest the opposition between signifier and signified, and the unique relation of meaning which structuralists claim to exist between the two. This relation is in fact not stable, but endlessly deferred by means of 'infinite implication' (Derrida 1973: 58). Derrida claims that a sign actually gains strength from this 'infinite equivocality' (ibid.), and

this is the reason why interpretation, the reading process and the reader *per se* gain such momentum in poststructuralist studies. Meaning transmission becomes a game which is played by one transmitter and multiple receivers, who depending on their own personal backgrounds and experience, could interpret the message in a plurality of ways and thus, render it new and forceful (at least in theory, since in practice, the number of possible interpretations is not infinite, as it is restricted by the interpreters' mind-sets and competences).

Postmodernism has appropriated these two concepts: the dismissal of the uttering subject and of the univocal meaning given by the author to the text. A feature which Postmodernism has in common with both structuralism and poststructuralism is the interest in and the primacy accorded to discourse. Texts are no longer perceived as apriorically containing the meaning, and awaiting a reader to decode it. On the contrary, meaning-making becomes an active process of social construction, in which individuals, institutions, and the whole society partake. As Best explains, discourse becomes the site where several powers interact, and the aim of any interpreter is to see how this interaction unfolds, what power relations it presupposes, which ideologies it represents (1991: 26). Discourse is, in fact, a battleground on which several groups struggle to gain the upper hand.

Another trend in critical theory that influenced Postmodernism at its origin is deconstruction, whose main promoter was Derrida. He takes critical theory a step forward by questioning the concept of origin. If we start from the premise that meaning is endlessly deferred, it understandably ensues that its initial point of origin could never be reached and unveiled in the network of interconnected and interdependent meanings. Consequently, Derrida states that language refers onto itself and cannot and does not reflect an outside, objective world. Any and all worlds are created, derived by means of discourse. Consequently, presence itself is nothing more than a derivation, a construct based on other linguistic and metalinguistic elements. All meanings are based on the sum of these derivations and on the users' knowledge and experience of these derivations and differences. For this reason, Derrida (1981: 37-9) introduced the concept of *différance* as a combination of the two meanings of the verb *différer*, to differ and to defer. By means of this term, Derrida attempted to reject presence, and to replace it by a generalised absence, or a difference. In his view, any text appears in the interplay of presence and absence: meanings which are at one point present in the discourse, and others, which are absent, but referred to implicitly. Thus, the text is produced only by working upon, by transforming other existing texts, or traces thereof. Deconstruction, as a result, relies on the

rejection of the system of oppositions upheld by structuralism and on the admission that meaning cannot be defined solely, as the product of one author, text or reader.

It is my belief, however, that Derrida's view errs not on the side of caution, but on the side of radicalism. Discourse is the world, and the world is discourse; therefore, all its elements are always present, and play upon each other and against each other to give rise to certain concrete meanings, at certain given moments, in certain contexts. Consequently, one cannot speak of absence, but of a myriad of intricate connections which help actualise meaning in a variety of ways which depend on the author's intentions, the discursive context, and the reader's knowledge. All these variations, of course, can never give rise to one meaning alone, but neither do they imply that anything is absent.

So far I have looked at the ways in which structuralism, poststructuralism and deconstruction have influenced the rise and development of Postmodernism. These theoretical views certainly played a part in the change of paradigm, but it is my belief that the most important role was that of Modernism. I believe that Hutcheon is accurate when she surmises that Postmodernism displays an oedipal opposition and, at the same time, a filial faithfulness to modernism (1988: 366).

As previously explained, new paradigms can rest on the shoulders of their precursors, meaning that they take over parts of old paradigms, while openly contesting other aspects of the very same paradigms. This phenomenon can be observed even when the relation between Postmodernism and Modernism is examined. The questioning of the modern paradigm was one stage in the development of the postmodern paradigm, the initial one, when the modern paradigm was in place and it was no longer deemed satisfactory. Consequently, the first stage in the development of the new postmodern paradigm was an interrogation of the limits of the previous modern one. Its applicability, restrictions, and inadequacies were revised. The first postmodern writers directly addressed the rules and formulations of modernism and challenged them if they found them lacking.

Zima explains that there are three cultural values around which modernity, modernism (as late modernity, see endnote) and Postmodernism revolve around: *ambiguity*, *ambivalence* and *indifference* (2010: 14). He briefly explains that it is the different views with respect to these major concepts that shape the core of the three paradigms. The literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century was dominated by ambiguity, but it was accompanied by philosophy, by the theory of knowledge and by the narrator's explanations, which eventually

helped. In modernism, the realist epistemological optimism is dismissed as illusory and thus, an era of ambivalence is heralded.

Young Hegelians adapt Hegel's initially all-encompassing rationalistic view of historical progress through reason, and argue that only some extremes could be reconciled by means of methodical and rational synthesis, while others remain opposites, such as good and evil, truth and lie, or essence and appearance. Hence the notion of ambivalence. As the philosopher of this age, Nietzsche declares that the world is ambiguous, appearances are impossible to dissolve and essence is thus unattainable (1990). He actually anticipates the postmodern concept of indifference by explaining that opposites are so well knitted together that they are impossible to separate, and thus, they might actually become identical, indistinguishable.

This is what happens in Postmodernism, when cultural, aesthetic and moral values are replaced by economic ones. In Zima's opinion, Postmodernism is, thus, an era of indifference, i.e. of interchangeable ideas, values, and ideologies (2010: 16). Although values exist, none of them could claim universality. I would argue that it is rather an era of inclusion as globalisation and mass media have brought about is greater access, exposure to and (possibly) understanding of other views. The world has become a more open space, although not necessarily a more tolerant one, as there are many cases of extremist reactions, nationalistic drives, and ethnic conflicts. But overall, today's world is more aware of its members, of their ideologies, values, and identities. Values are not exchangeable, neither are they indifferent; they are in fact relative to the context of their production, they are no longer absolute. Gender, nationality, position, economic factors or religious aspects play an important and decisive role in shaping values. Then, the values are relative to these aspects. This is why values can be said to coexist either peacefully or conflictually, but are part of people's consciousness.

Within this context of inclusion and relativity, it is important at this point to identify those features of Postmodernism which set it apart from modernism, and those which the two share. One characteristic of Postmodernism is, as Lyotard states it, the rejection of metanarratives (1979). This rejection goes hand in hand with the view that the world is too large for only one mind to master it, that it is an impossible task for any narrative to try to encompass the whole world. Consequently, narratives should be small and try to focus on relating bits and pieces of the world. This idea is in keeping with the relativisation of values depending on the subject, context and discourse in which they appear.



Postmodern narratives have accepted the fact that general views of the world are impossible to attain in a complicated, technologized and information-driven society. Knowledge is fragmentary, it comes as an answer only to certain questions. Modernism made use of metadiscourses to legitimise its stance and claims. Postmodernism refutes all forms of totalising thought: it refines differences, and ‘reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable’ (Lyotard 1979: 75). This radical view is tamed by others such as Best (1991) and Zima (2010), who argue that in fact metanarratives are not dismissed or discarded; they are simply reinterpreted in a critical fashion, and their strengths and weaknesses are uncovered. Postmodernism, as the paradigm of inclusion, does not exclude metanarratives, but accepts them with a grain of criticism.

This rejection of metanarratives casts a long shadow on postmodern fiction. As McHale (1992) and Rorty (1983) notice, this is in fact, only another metanarrative which has been thrown onto Postmodernism, another generalisation which goes against the grain of what Postmodernism strives to be, i.e. inclusive. The first reaction of postmodern writers, as I have argued before, was one of rejection of metanarratives, taken to such an extreme as to almost destroy the narrative itself. Only later, once the initial refusal softened, was the narrative retrieved and revived. It happened because postmodern authors accepted and started to tolerate the fact that metanarratives could not be escaped; the only course of action they could undertake was to keep narrating. Postmodernism has overcome its initial rebellious state and has become tolerant.

Linda Hutcheon also notices that Postmodernism rejects continuity and grand narratives, in light of the fact that reality is too unmasterable to be tamed by any narrative system (1989). In her view, postmodern texts are contradictory and parodic in their intertextual relation with modern texts and conventional genres. They transgress and ridicule traditions in an attempt to capture the fragmentary nature of reality. However, there are two issues on which I do not believe that Hutcheon’s theory is entirely sustainable. Firstly, she does not take into account that modernism itself was not a paradigm of continuity: it was mainly dominated by experiment, it tested all the boundaries between genres, and it denied narrative as the exact rendering of an objective reality.

She models her view of modernism solely on those works which stay within the confines of certain traditions. Not even Joyce’s *Ulysses* respects all these boundaries. It is not a work of continuity, but rather of fragmentation, of interrogation of limitations. It pushes the

boundaries of the narrative. In no way do modernists, as Hutcheon (1988) claims, view history as universal. They, in fact, proclaim the opposite: there is no universal history that can be narrativized; there are only individual stories which become the discourses of history. Secondly, Hutcheon insists on the fact that postmodern literature is socially and politically active, involved, ideologically laden while modernists kept their distance from whatever was 'social'. Once more, this is not the case. There are many postmodern novelists who are not concerned in any way with political issues; on the other hand, some modernists were. I would argue that unlike Postmodernism, Modernism believed that a narrating consciousness could make sense of a story, could master it and organise it into a coherent whole. This is what Postmodernism no longer holds to be true and the 'whole' has been replaced by fragmentariness.

Ihab Hassan puts forth a taxonomy of the features which contrast Modernism to Postmodernism. I would argue from the very beginning that there is a major flaw in his categorisation, as it is solely based on stylistic features. Postmodernism is a paradigm which is not limited to literature or to art. Moreover, it is difficult, if not impossible, to define two such major paradigms on the basis of a dualistic, mutually exclusive list of attributes. It is once more a structuralist trap which is easy to fall prey to. Hassan argues that modernism appears 'hieratic, hypotactical and formalist,' while Postmodernism is 'playful, paratactical, and deconstructionist' (1987: 91).

He goes on to negatively connote aspects of Modernism and oppose them to positively nuanced traits of Postmodernism: form/anti-form, purpose/play, design/chance, hierarchy/anarchy, mastery-logos/exhaustion-silence, distance/participation, creation-to-totalization/decreation-deconstruction, synthesis/antithesis, presence/absence, centring/dispersal, hypotaxis/parataxis, root-depth/rhizome-surface, signified/signifier, metaphysics/irony, etc. (Hassan 1987: 91-2). I would argue that these separations are not in fact as clear-cut as Hassan would have us believe. Play, anti-form, absence, and irony, to name just a few, are present both in modern works of fiction and postmodern ones.

Hassan goes on to explain several of the main features which he considers could help shed light on what Postmodernism is. I shall discuss them in more detail below:

1. The term Postmodernism as such sounds odd: 'post' implies comparison to and measuring up against a predecessor. But Postmodernism is not an epigone of modernism; on

the contrary, it is the breath of fresh air that both ‘uses and abuses’ the conventions and all previous trends without completely rejecting any of them.

2. Postmodernism suffers from a certain ‘semantic instability: that is, no clear consensus about its meaning exists among scholars.’ (Hassan 1987: 87) It is very difficult to propose a definition of the term ‘Postmodernism’ without feeling that some aspect always fails to be included, or that some feature is not detailed enough. And the other aspect which causes disagreement among critics is the fact that some characteristics of Postmodernism are contradictory, and it would be very difficult to include them all in a ‘scientific’ definition.

3. ‘Modernism and Postmodernism are not separated by an Iron Curtain or Chinese Wall; for history is a palimpsest, and culture is permeable to time past, time present, and time future.’ (Hassan 1987: 88) Many critics have noticed that Postmodernism draws its strength from modernism while at the same time, rejecting it. Hutcheon claims that Postmodernism contests the modern separation of art and life, its individual subjectivity, its high-low culture (1988: 43). On the other hand, Postmodernism takes over features of modernism such as self-reflexivity, irony, or repudiation of realism.

4. Postmodernism is a question of opposites, of conflicting double views, of rupture and unity, of a past both honoured and denied. The tensions which hold between opposites nourish postmodern fiction. They inform its paradigm and help it define itself in relation to, not necessarily in opposition to, its precursors.

5. Literary history needs to be perceived as ever-changing, as a continuous process of innovation, renovation, and, I would add, recuperation. The novel is the base of progress because it reprocesses old materials. It re-conceptualizes and reorients them, including them in its new paradigm.

With respect to history, both Hutcheon and Hassan notice that historical facts no longer define fiction. The former (1989: 37) claims that the border between facts and fiction has been crossed over so often we can now speak of hybrids; the boundaries are clear, but they no longer matter. The reader is instead caught up in a network of hybridization. Hassan, on the other hand, claims that facts no longer exist; what remains in their wake are interpretations; knowledge is also infinitely deferred because it is hidden behind countless meanings (1987: 49). Both of them conclude that totalization, an overall idea or meaning of a discourse can no longer be attained. Novelists explore limits and refute confinement to one genre or one social

field. By interrogating limits, the novelists come to surpass the borders of the traditional novel and invade other fields of social sciences. Ergo, hybridization of genres arises.

It is important to note, at this time, that no matter how compelling and apparently flexible Hassan and Hutcheon's views of Postmodernism may appear at first, they rely on a shaky foundation as they consider Postmodernism solely at the level of the literary text. However, Postmodernism must be viewed as a social paradigm first and foremost, because an analysis based solely on stylistic features will fail to capture its essence.

Brian McHale views modernism as *epistemological*, as a system which believes knowledge can be attained, and, consequently, the questions which it poses are epistemologically structured: 'How can I interpret the world I belong to?', 'What can I know?', 'Who knows it and how reliable is this knowledge?', 'What are the limits of the knowable?' (1987: 9). These questions are a reflection of the progress registered by humankind as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Progress is seen as steady and unimpeded begetting the belief that the world is conquerable, comprehensible and moldable into the desired shape. On the other hand, Postmodernism can be viewed as an *ontological* system, in which answers are attempted to questions such as 'What kind of world is this?', 'What should I do in this world?', 'Which of my selves should do it?', 'What is a world?', 'What worlds are there, how are they made, and how do they differ?' It is clear from these questions that while Modernism is focused on knowledge, on organising the world, in other words, it faces outward, Postmodernism is focused more on the individual, on the subject, as a biased, limited interpreter of what happens in the world around.

Postmodernism does not deny the existence of the subject, does not even reflect too much on it, but rather takes its existence for granted with all its limitations and inherent subjectivity. McHale believes that modernism and its extreme epistemological uncertainty eventually gave rise to ontological pluralism and instability. As he puts it, 'Push epistemological questions far enough and they "tip over" into ontological questions' (McHale 1987: 11). This idea is extremely relevant to my argumentation that Postmodernism is a paradigm in the sense that modernism pushed its boundaries so far that its key concepts and principles could no longer explain the problems which it was facing or answer the questions which it was posing. Thus, the need arose for a new paradigm better suited to find answers.

Although pertaining to a different field, Feyerabend argues along the same lines as McHale when explaining the way in which knowledge progresses. He synthesizes best the way

in which Postmodernism as a paradigm should be viewed. He explains that knowledge is not a series of 'self-consistent theories' (Feyerabend 1993: 21) which will eventually converge to give rise to an ideal, coherent view of the world; truth cannot be approached gradually, through the accumulation of this knowledge into well-formed patterns. Knowledge within a paradigm is actually 'an ever increasing ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives, each single theory, each fairy-tale, each myth that is part of the collection forcing the others into greater articulation and all of them contributing, via this process of competition, to the development of our consciousness' (Feyerabend 1993: 21). With this view in mind, I would argue that nothing can ever be settled once and for all when it comes to the delineations of the postmodern paradigm. A comprehensive account of Postmodernism must be left open, flexible to include new aspects, new discoveries, and new avenues of narrating. Moreover, as argued above, seldom, if ever, does it happen in history for a new era to represent a complete break from and exclusion of all the values of the previous ones. History and sociology prove that we are more likely to deal with transitions, transformations, and developments.

The aim of this paper has been to prove that the most fruitful approach to Postmodernism is to consider it a paradigm in the sense put forth by Thomas S. Kuhn. This view has the major advantage of accounting for what we would call the two phases of postmodern fiction: the first, the reactionary, which contested the precepts of modernism and which appeared to be solely a rejection, a negation, but whose aim was actually to establish Postmodernism as a self-sustainable paradigm; and the second, more subdued, more tolerant and inclusive which arose once Postmodernism had made its stand and had come to be recognised as a paradigm in its own right. Once its rebellious stage was complete, Postmodernism has shown its true nature, has started to exist affirmatively, not solely as a negation of all that existed before it, no longer solely reactive, but proactive and creative in its own right. As such, it has taken over aspects, theories, concepts from structuralism, poststructuralism, deconstruction, and modernism and has re-wrought and incorporated them into its own framework.

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