

The Literature of Exhausted Possibility: The Entanglement of Postmodern Fiction

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Abstract:

Postmodern literature, fiction in particular, is, according to Barth (1984), a literature of *exhausted possibility* due to its entangled thematic and technical approach which defies the conventional modern fictional form. It reflects *the zeitgeist* or the spirit of postmodernism which is regarded as a reevaluation of the modern enterprise; an enterprise that embodies universality and coherence. The present research paper attempts to address the recurrent thematic element that postmodern fiction revolves around: that of the presence of the historiographic element in postmodern fiction which reflects in itself the evaluation of past history; such a fictional preoccupation reflects the major postmodern philosophers' and thinkers' concerns, such as those of Lyotard and Baudrillard, on the impossibility for the existence of a universal coherent history. This criterion is one amongst other criteria that justify the exhaustion of postmodern fiction.

Keywords: John Barth, Postmodern Fiction, Postmodernism, Post-historicism, Historiographic Metafiction, Jean Baudrillard, Fredric Jameson, Jean-François Lyotard

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