

# The Postmodern Other in the Populist Society

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### **The Postmodern Other in the Populist Society**

*In the wake of the World War II, postmodern ideas took the world by storm, transcending the literary world and encompassing all spheres of life. Lyotard's "postmodern condition" gave rise to the prevalent philosophy of rejecting and deconstructing meta-narratives, which previously governed the academic frame of thought. Countering American conformism of the 1940s, the birth of various human rights movements germinated the notion of "Otherness" in the heavily uniform consumerist society. This reinforced the importance of personal perspective with twofold consequences – the flourishing of minority perspectives and the accession of diversity in perspectives and perception. The paper examines how the works of Donna Haraway, bell hooks and Salman Rushdie encouraged the growing salience of the marginalised Other in the society in the face of the white male domination. In turn, an onslaught of unsupported scientific opinions harboured by the dominant societal groups burgeoned under the pretext of respecting subjectivities. The paper expands on Englebretsen, Laquer and Willower's criticism of the postmodern thought and support of mini-narratives. In the light of the recent racist and nationalist outbreaks, theories on evolutionary psychology and motivation are looked into with regards to the possible fear of being side-lined by the previously subjugated groups. It may be inferred that the ascension of the scientific scepticism, combined with the insistence on the acknowledgement of every opinion have sparked off a series of unwarranted consequences displayed through intolerance and animosity.*

Key words: postmodern condition, postmodern other, populism, criticism of postmodernism, deconstruction of metanarratives.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the wake of the World War II, the global community stood dumbfounded by the animosity, which unfurled before its very eyes, clutching at the unshakeable resolve not to allow for such atrocities to ever happen again. What perturbed the global community was the utter lack of logic and reason behind the frightful escalation of the war, which opposed everything the world brought up in the spirit of Enlightenment knew. In the age of exhaustion with no replenishment in sight, a new literary movement emerged seeking a bold way to respond to the existing turmoil and make a break with the coercive and formalistic binds of Modernism. Difficult to define and even name as it may have been, postmodernism developed ways of asserting itself, firstly in the field of architecture, steadily seeping into all forms of art and writing itself most expressively in literature. However, the dispersion of the movement across different fields brought its defining to a halt, as pointed out by Ihab Hassan, engendering the idea of a historically and semantically unstable concept marked by the notion of indeterminacy – “the term which subsumes ambiguity, pluralism, heterodoxy, dispersion, deconstruction and others difficult to delineate clearly” (1987: 7). In spite of the initial skidding through the conceptualisation of the movement, postmodernism paved its way into the society, transcending its literary confinement, entrancing both sciences and humanities with its audacious ideas. Though prickly in its presentation, as its primary tenet seems to be the undermining of the existing philosophies, postmodernism brought about the somewhat necessary scepticism and the desire to change the world.

As the post-war developments started gaining ground, technological advancements spread and the logic of capitalism sparked off the human necessity to pamper itself and people sank into the conformity and an impasse. “Traditional roles were reaffirmed” (“The Culture of the 1950’s”) and both the old and the young fell in

line, believing in the innocuousness of the status quo. Per contra, minority groups, side-lined as they were, started raising their voices, seeking equality and equity, setting into motion a number of revolutionary initiatives and movements. It may be difficult to pinpoint the exact direction of influence of the societal stirrings and postmodern urge to question the dominant groups' grand narratives, but it is safe to say that the metaphorical tug-of-war gave birth to new ideas and actively sought to deconstruct the old ones. A vast number of minorities started gathering around pivotal revolutionary ideas in order to oppose the uniformity and the oppression of dominant groups. Their efforts mainly aimed at the acquisition of human rights and finding the way to make those civic rights available to everyone. The general idealistic tendency reflected greatly on literary accomplishments, primarily through the establishment of the previously stifled voices through the restitution of their identities. The African American community spoke in jazz-coloured tunes of the deliberately overseen struggles; women started breaking out of the patriarchal moulds wearing Rosie the Riveter's victory rolls and others followed suit. What postmodernism invariably employed in these developments was precisely the deconstruction of uniformity, i. e. apart from acknowledging the minority groups, it is necessary to recognise the individuality of each member, thus deepening the concept of mini-narratives. Still, the concession of their importance turned out to be a double-edged sword, somewhat carelessly swung towards, what Lyotard termed "delegitimisation of science", warning us about the scientific thought being turned against itself in its rush to deliver conclusions on the matters of importance without grounding them in sound facts and logic (1984: 68). The onslaught of uneducated guesses and opinions, "postmodernistically" fuelled by the growing populist tendencies has invariably brought the legitimacy of the whole movement into question. This paper sheds light on how most prominent minority groups wove themselves into the fabric of reality through literature, exploring postmodern theory and the most notable works of minority authors and their overreaching impact on the dominant groups. Additionally, the downsides to blind acceptance of mini-narratives are looked into with a view to sensitising the society and the individuals and safeguarding against this new type of conformity. Finally, as the uncritical support of all opinions may be



tied to the newest discriminatory outbreak, some of its exponents will be looked at in the light of the theory of motivation.

## **DECONSTRUCTING SPOKEN REALITY**

The years after the World War II saw the decline of Modernism, whose aim, noble as it was, to explore the limits of human cognitive capacity was streaked with the haughty tendency towards delineating the elitist circles from the average person. Such an arrogant goal held strong until the society found itself in the embrace, or rather, jaws of capitalism and consumerism. The reinvigorated and reinvented population pressed for new literary and cultural forms, often ironically (mis)quoting grand ideas of the bygone days. The clash of high and low culture set the scene for postmodernism, firstly shown in architecture and closely followed by proponents of other fields. As Stuart Jeffries says, “out went social stratification, funless functionalism and, ultimately, male commitment to wearing neckties on formal occasions. In came an ironic mashup of stylistic quotations, artists dabbling in a playful cross-fertilisation from different eras” (2011, n. p.). This mixture of popular and elitist culture, sprinkled with irony as its defining principle, in Barry Lewis’s words, employs the mindset of scepticism – the inverted philosophy, which targets the existing philosophies (Sim 2001: 6) in order to relieve itself from the formalist binds of the strictly imposed rules and limitations. Although Sim argues that postmodernism does not have its own doctrine, should we disregard its insistence on undermining the existing ones, the movement adheres to several tenets. Firstly, postmodernism challenges the structuralist idea that language is an assiduously defined system and thus predictable. Derrida, one of the most notable representatives of poststructuralist thought, was concerned about the precariousness of language, putting forth that there was “[no] perfect conjunction of signifier and signified to guarantee unproblematical communication“, that is to say, there is always room for linguistic and semantic ambiguities (Sim 2001: 5). He coined the famous *différance* in order to illustrate both the linguistic instability and its creative potential. He expanded his views to comprise the idea that it is nearly impossible to deliver a factual, sound conclusion about any theory, owing to the constant shift in perception and the state of the reader’s mind. By extension, this theory suggests that any source of

knowledge could have been influenced by a mere matter of circumstances triggered by a particular shift in the mind flux parading under the pretence of “divine inspiration”. It comes as no surprise that such a revelation dovetails with a call for reevaluation of all the knowledge. However, it should be noted that deconstruction cannot be seen as a method or a literary theory. Derrida himself berated such an idea, stating that it is “neither an analysis nor a critique” (1997: 4). He, however, does emphasise that deconstruction is inherent in any application of structuralist ideas, as the division of Sign into its Signifier and Signified is in itself an analysis, and thus the effect of “de-structuring” the entity. Evans proposes that deconstruction must approach the traditional origins or centres analytically in order to question them and provide new readings (1991: 19). This intimates that providing an alternative to the established understanding of structure already turns any interpretation into deconstructive reading. Therefore, deconstruction in itself presents any non-normative reading of the given utterance. As such, deconstructive reading necessitates the acknowledgement and acceptance of the existing structure and its subversion through the realisation of “difference” in context. With this in mind, it became possible to sensitise the global population to the existence of the oppressed minorities, which rose to counter the dominant groups. The side-lined may well be observed as the literalised metaphor for non-normative forces resisting the fossilised forms of knowledge represented mainly by Western dualisms and perpetuated by the most visible, white, male groups.

In a similar vein, Lyotard maintains that “whoever controls knowledge, controls the politics” (qtd in Sim 2011: 8) and therefore the people. In order to prevent manipulation, he proposes making all knowledge available to the public. He is particularly wary of the so-called grand narratives – the means of communication used to convey knowledge. In his *Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard illustrates how the linguistic structures in fairy tales are used to teach values and modes of behaviour. The language plays a pivotal role in expressing how we should treat our relatives, what virtues a hero must yield and how great journeys unfold. However, in a similar fashion to Derrida’s, Lyotard acknowledges that language no longer has the ability to transparently depict reality (1984: 24). As “language is arranged and rearranged”, this contributes to the need to question the homestead of

the existing bodies of knowledge (Lyotard 1984: 24). The growing scepticism towards grand narratives is reflected in the increased acknowledgement of mini narratives – individual voices and the “differends” (Lyotard 1984: 80). Thus, Lyotard brings into the foreground the idea of the Other, though not explicitly stated, as the driving force behind challenging and subduing dominant ideas and tendencies. According to him, the society has become more open to difference, discord and dialogue, outgrowing the definitive philosophies which imbue metanarratives. The acceptance of mini narratives gave rise to a variety of groups which came to be known as the postmodern Other, marked by these very differences, finally visible, yet still not completely equal.

Finally, both Derrida and Lyotard’s work detract the previously lauded ideologies, structuralism and metanarratives respectively, sparking off the notion of deconstruction. They both acknowledge that language cannot provide us with unbiased singular meanings, and since language is used to convey knowledge, its messages need to be evaluated carefully. When observed through the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis on linguistic relativism, their ideas press for the denouncement of any ideas which are a given. Seeing as the speaker’s language affects the way he sees the world, the mere repetition of the idea passed via metanarratives shapes and perpetuates the longstanding views. Deep-seated and often skewed opinions regarding particular groups’ behaviour, ideas, and their roles in the society have always existed, nearly inbred to the point of becoming metanarratives. Postmodern thought actively seeks to counter any dominant group or opinion, by dismantling its foundations both on the linguistic and on the existential plane. Changing the terminology used to address certain issues holds immense power in changing the attitude towards it, and such is the case for the postmodern other. The literary establishment of minority voices has irrefutably led to a different perception of their lives and by the same token the revolutionary calls for their full inclusion and equality. The postmodern other has become the ever-present concept, which employs the focal tenets of Derrida and Lyotard’s work in order to fully deconstruct the oppressive reign of the domineering and the despotic, thus greatly impacting the society.

## **THE POSTMODERN OTHER – HEAR ME ROAR**

As postmodern thought slashed through the very foundations of the callously set elitist narratives, the idea of the decentred subject was reinvigorated. Namely, the opposition to the unified, singular subject was first brought up by Francois Bataille, who toyed with the thought of challenging the subject's isolation in the world of experiences. The leading lights of postmodern theory, Derrida, Lacan, Lyotard, to name but a few, explored the same notion from different perspectives, mainly coming to the conclusion that there could be no heuristic and hermeneutical singularity in language. Consequently, as linguistic production has its roots in human thought and experience, it can be inferred that heterogeneity is just as prevalent among the subjects. In the spirit of deconstruction of the dominant white male ideology, the marginalised, decentred subjects, if inadvertently centred around some unifying factors, were given more house room in the society and literature.

### **Postmodern Blackness**

American conformism in the post-war years may have deluded itself regarding its own self-sustainability, but new ideas and the urge to fight for human rights soon took the decade towards other developments. The Civil Rights Movement, seeking to abolish segregation and systematic racist practices in the society went great guns to deliver African-American voices and ideas to the world. Theirs may well be one of the most prominent experiences, which challenged the grand narratives shaped by white supremacy. Race is yet another grand narrative supported by the language permeated with racism and ethnic slurs. Devised by white colonisers and imperialists, races were given a hierarchy and the colour as a signifier of intellectual abilities, preconceived behaviour and capacities. Despite liberation movements and legal enforcements following the Civil War, these grand narratives stood their ground, sparking off the emergence of the new, black narrative, which boasted its own regulations and body of knowledge. bell hooks essentially believes that the Black Power Movement “can be easily labelled as modernist [as it had] a modernist universalising agenda” (2000: 363). In her view, this could be due to the African-American community's fear of change. More

specifically, any shifts in their fragile identity may lead to the deterioration of the movement and the obstruction of its further success. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the black experience is often characterised as collective, a trait starkly noticeable in the works of its representatives and particularly Nobel-laurel Toni Morrison. Her unscrupulous and audacious writing has left many speechless and deeply embarrassed by the imagery she so boldly delivers. Morrison draws attention to the truths we are not ready to accept or even face, the unfulfilled desires and the past, which burns against the historical events in spite of being pushed under the rug. According to Primlyn, Morrison writes about the collective memory to enhance the understanding of the Blacks' position in the present, as it cannot be fathomed without being aware of the past (2012: 1). The gravity of this approach can be reinforced further by Hayden White's understanding of historical narratives, which are a mere "model of structures and processes [whose] contents are as much invented as found" (1983: 82), i. e. they are a mere construction of the historian's own making. He believes that the success of history is grounded in its ability to weave chronicles into stories through the process of emplotment (White 1983: 83). History, much like any other product of human thought and language, is yet another grand narrative and the black shades of American history have been grandly neglected, and therefore, the "modernist universalism" bell hooks mentions and Morrison's uniformity of memory turn out to be the necessary steps in the formation of the African-American literary voice.

Morrison's novel *Beloved* could be used as a prime example of the modernist formation of subjugated identities. As the people of Cincinnati remembered themselves in the process of banishing the title character, they inaugurated their own identity. The collective remembrance of the long lost ritualistic processions in the face of the overarching, supernatural force implies the necessity of a strong, unitary minority voice before the individuals are addressed and empowered. Such an essentialist driving force could head-on rush towards the metanarrative of forgetting and ignoring black experience, and disavow the oppressive ideas, etching its inextirpable historic and literary mark in the postmodern scenery. Consequently, the process of remembering lost identities can thus become the means of "historical and psychological recovery" (Ghandi qtd. in Elias 2008, n. p.).

Another work, which illustrates the position of the black America in a somewhat less flabbergasting, but equally heart-wrenching manner, is Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*. A harrowing story gains even more recognition and evokes more angst as it is told from the perspective of young girls, "the most vulnerable members of the society" (Morrison qtd. in Hoby, 2015, n. p.). The story follows Pecola, whose sole dream is to have blue eyes, as they symbolise beauty in the cruel, superficial world, obsessed with the construct of colour. She seeks to "discover what eluded [her]: the secret of the magic [white girls] weaved on others. What made people look at them and say, 'Awwwww,' but not for [her]" (Morrison 2007: 22) – the ambition which transcends even the loss of sanity and persists throughout her whole life. This "demonization of [her] entire race" ingrained in a fragile girl's identity pins down the oppressive practices and treatment of the African-American community, which pervaded the Whites' mentality long after the abolishment of slavery in the shape of the grand narrative (Morrison 2007: XI). To further expand on Lyotard's understanding of metanarratives, this noxious behaviour is perpetuated through language. The Whites' manner of speaking about and addressing the African Americans not only illustrates their mind-set, but it also enhances it. Namely, children are "not introduced, merely pointed out", discarded as irrelevant (Morrison 2007: 15). Still, the candid, sharp-tongued representation of the aforementioned issues rises as a non-normative, deconstructive power in the milieu of fixed, structuralist-influenced meanings. Repugnant as the notion may be in the contemporary society, a literary slap in the face of the dominated groups could be observed as the rise of the Other, firstly through the stark difference in skin colour, followed by cultural divergences and different identities. Putting forth the issues, which are preferred to be under the white supremacist rug, Morrison, who prides herself on writing for black people, has made a quantum leap towards deconstructing the narrative of silence. Her works trace the collective, universalised black through singular examples giving voice to "60 million and more" (Morrison 1987: 3). As she penned her slave narratives, she bolstered the memory and this paved way for the augmentation of the African-American identity, giving this Postmodern Other prominence in the white dominance.

## Women and Other Animals

Toni Morrison may have proudly taken the title of the author who writes for the African-American community, but one notion unwittingly emerges from her authoring novels of black representation. Her works give precedence to female characters, draw attention to fictional and historical figures and, accompanied by the fact that she is a woman, bring about yet another “other” of the global society – women. Much like the grand narrative of race, gender is, according to Judith Butler, another concept which has its own means of representation and perception – ways that have proven to be just as exclusive within the community of the “privileged whites”. It is irrefutable that women’s voices have been stifled throughout history, leaving them without rooms of their own in the dialectic of sex the world has firmly grounded itself in. If looked through the Lyotardian lens, the position of women can be understood as the mere product of the patriarchal metanarrative, further perpetuated through language and representation. Western society has a single-minded view of the male constructive subject, to which female corresponds only as the other (Thornham 2011: 44). As women are presented via symbols, the society’s acceptance of them further reinforces the grand narrative of the male standard. According to feminist authors and spokespersons, the binary opposition, deeply ingrained in the mind of the West, deepens the chasm between the sexes, which calls for their re-evaluation and deconstruction. Butler addresses the problem of politics and representation, spelling out that any juridical discourse engenders the subjects it seeks to represent, showing that “the subject is produced and restricted [by this practice]” (1990: 2). Such an attitude is essentialist, and neglects the fact that woman as a subject is plural and diverse, and its unification merely lends it to a great deal of dissension. Simone de Beauvoir, Donna Haraway and Judith Butler all proposed ways in which this may be done, but they all agree that the movement ought to “reclaim feminist history” (Thornham 2011: 41). They suggest that the social construct of gender is another metanarrative, which needs to be deconstructed. Only when gender becomes the poststructuralist empty signifier will there be room for equality, owing to the fact that the situation now bases the idea of being equal on the male standard. In other words, women all over the world are pressing for being equal to men, yet disregarding the fact

that it is still the male white principle that sets the bar for what human rights and equality mean. It should also be underscored that women who achieve personal success and fame do not necessarily aid the cause, as their individual accomplishments are still measured against the already existing male ideal (hooks 1991: 92). Similarly to aforementioned claims, Butler also suggests that some provisional unity is necessary, but that feminist critique must resist totalizing claims lest it become as restrictive as a masculinist dialectic. Women should turn to legitimation narratives, find new ways of linguistic and symbolic representation and, similarly to the African-American community, build a universalist programme in order to deconstruct the existing oppressive ones. bell hooks, who writes from a black female consciousness, adds to this idea in her sharp and observant book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, where she underpins the fact that women need to stop discrimination against each other with a view to finally bringing down sexual oppression. Postmodernist views are conducive to the cause as they recognise women as “the other”, which accounts for the first step towards full liberation and empowerment.

It is a well-known fact that women writers could only write as “surrogate men” throughout history (Thornham 2011: 43). Mary Ann Evans might not have published a single letter, had it not been for her male *nom de plume*. Her example illustrates the power of signifiers, as the mere male pseudonym was enough to convince the Victorian readership that the author was indeed male and thus worth their time. Dickens appears to have been the only person observant enough to spot tell-tale signs of “female writing”, which in no way affected the quality of the work itself – rather the mass perception of it. Brontë sisters also employed deceptive names as they “had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice” (Clooney 2016: n.p). It would alleviate the pressure of this metanarrative, were we to say that this has changed for the better, but modern examples would easily disprove such a claim. Namely, JK Rowling was advised against using her real name, as it was widely established that boys would not readily buy books written by women, and JK sounded ambiguous and deceptive enough. Be that as it may, the publishing world is still harsh in its treatment of women. Yes, they



are not as impeded when it comes to bringing out books, but the age-old prejudice remains, thus underpinning the female otherness.

In addition to the growing support for unadulterated female voices, Bonnie Jo Campbell's notable collection of short stories *Women and Other Animals*, can be analysed in terms of female visibility in written works. Women have been objects of the literary world, but more often than not seen through the typically male perspective, permeated with the burdens of social expectations. Yet, in Campbell's work, the protagonists of short stories yearn for freedom and liberation, but their position, as they wallow in desperation and desolation, is disturbingly exposed through the lens of "the male gaze". For instance, "The Perfect Lawn" provides an insight into the mind of obsessive Kevin who spies on Mrs Martin, the girl whom he used to like in school. What is particularly disturbing about the depiction is his fixation on the woman who never returned his feelings and the lascivious thoughts he fuels daily. Abhorrent as it may be, even years after the publication, Kevin's behaviour illustrates male oppression and entitlement present at various social strata. However, writing about it in a deadpan, wry manner again addresses the unpleasant truths of human nature, much like Morrison's work, thus highlighting the existence of the problem. While the society may applaud its advancements in the legal departments, the deeply ingrained sense of superiority still colours the mindset of the white male dominance. Finally, as Woolf puts it, "The history of men's opposition to women's emancipation is more interesting perhaps than the story of that emancipation itself" (2014: 53). Nonetheless, writing openly about the issue sensitises the audience about the status of the female Other and steers towards the deconstruction of the grand narrative of sexual oppression.

### **The Other Others**

As has been put forth, postmodernism has striven towards giving voices to subjugated groups in its pursuit of achieving higher moral ground. According to some philosophers, the nub of its ethics lies in the acceptance of the Other, whereas the neglect for its existence would lead to the obliteration of the narrative of being moral (Mineva 2007: 33). This overriding ambition of postmodernism to equate and

appease each member of the society may be most abundantly clear in the matters of African-American and women's voices, but there are many notable authors whose works address the oft disregarded Other. For instance, Salman Rushdie observes the subcontinent both from within and without. Being essentially a newcomer to the Anglophone world, he offers a unique perspective on how the dominant group perceives the Other. In his highly controversial and immensely entertaining book *The Satanic Verses*, two protagonists, Chamcha and Farishta, fall out of a plane during a bomber's attack and miraculously survive. The minor consequences of their fall entail their transformation into the devil and the angel – a metaphor, which ironically illustrates “a climate of British conservative reaction against immigrants” (Pal 2014: 3). The novel deals with the trepidation and frustration young people feel after immigration, regardless of the circumstances in which it may have taken place. The political scenery, craftily presented through challenges of being literal metaphors of good and evil, corresponds to the understanding that dominant groups prefer to be xenophobic. On the other hand, the notion of constant fluidity of identity, which is ever-present in postmodernism, has in Saladin's case twofold consequences: he is regarded as a traitor by his family and the demon by the community he's trying to join (Kakutani 1989, n. p.). Rushdie cleverly pokes fun at the fearful British society, saying that “something is badly amiss with the spiritual life of the planet... Too many demons inside people claiming to believe in God” (2000: 204). Other similar examples include typecasting Farishta as any Indian god currently needed and forcing Chamcha to change his name upon his arrival in England, due to the fact that his given name is impossible to pronounce. By the same token, it may be inferred that language is used to oppress further through depriving the Other of its own signifier. Furthermore, bereaving a group or individuals of their name may lead to identity decentring, leaving them scattered about and unable to maintain their idiosyncrasy. Moreover, given his unique position, Rushdie also writes about the conflicting attitudes immigrants form regarding their new country. Chamcha resents India and glorifies England as he attempts to become a true Englishman. Just like the aforementioned “conviction of ugliness”, the supremacy of the English-speaking world is bolstered through the media and it is particularly strong in the former colonies, thus imposing self-ridicule and slashing the assurance one could get from their own origin. What

Rushdie ultimately suggests is revival, re-vision and re-living through one's own culture in order to overcome detrimental identity politics, redefine oneself and set sails towards being accepted as a visible and ambitious Other.

Some other examples include Julian Barnes's collection of stories on growing old – *The Lemon Table*. Witty, evocative stories tell of a variety of characters facing old age, some of them gracefully, others kicking and screaming. Hardly ever are the elderly so pointedly represented in literature, as we are so inculcated with the fear of growing old that we refuse to even think about it. Barnes gently prods at these issues in a humorous way, but overall he marks yet another Other which deserves a voice and representation in the society.

It is nearly impossible to list all the examples of the ever-growing momentum of the Otherness in postmodern literature, but the responsibility the movement has assumed has irrefutable potential to bring about equality. Through means of representation of the marginalised Other, it becomes easier to raise awareness about the existing oppression and deconstruct the grand narratives completely.

## **POSTMODERN DEMOCRACY, GLOBAL REGRESSION**

Postmodernism may have had its roots in the field of arts and its programme in the urge to surpass modernism (Hassan 1987: 1), but its radical, yet appealing ideas soon went on to become an integral part of any cultural or social manifestation. In Spencer's view, "postmodern" has become a label easily attached to any event or product, which strays from the essentialist or ambitiously realist views (qtd. in Sim 2001: 166). Its incredulity towards grand narratives has irrevocably sparked off a series of changes in the attitudes toward, representation and understanding of the Other, previously so blatantly ignored and deliberately neglected. Postmodern ambition to deconstruct the grand narratives escalated quickly and found its way into the movements seeking to abolish oppression and achieve equality. It has been argued that, in order to do so, the variety and variability taking shape in mini narratives, must be acknowledged and given credence and consideration. Such a bold programme has been conducive to the establishment and solidification of the postmodern Other, thus

levelling the field and preparing for toppling oppressive regimes. However, there are stealthily hidden pitfalls of this, severely detracted by Englebretsen and Laquer.

Laquer essentially claims that postmodernism has extended its reach too far beyond its literary confines. While a perfectly reasonable theory to apply when reading, his view is that the endless emphasis laid on the reader and the “scriptible” modus operandi have imbued the society with a sense of universal applicability (Laquer 2001: 159). The notion took the world by storm and soon enough, the dissection of metanarratives began to take swing, bringing into question the limit of such practices. Certainly, postmodernism has impacted on the desire for social change, but it has overstayed its welcome in its attempts to plunder other fields. While it may be sensible to take everything with a grain of salt, there are some deeply disturbing instances of defying logic. In a similar vein, Englebretsen maintains that mini narratives occlude reason and aim to be primarily democratic in their acceptance of any dissenting voices, giving rise to global irrationality (qtd. in Laquer 2001: 153). Furthermore, he emphasises the conspicuous absence of the Truth in the rush to accept every opinion and illustrates the dangers this poses for education. “None of us is in a privileged position when imparting knowledge”, which allows everyone to preach their beliefs (Laquer 2001: 153). Such an abundance of impetuously accepted bundles of information streaked with uneducated opinions is bound to destabilise the very foundations of knowledge carefully set in the premises of the Enlightenment. Postmodern democracy in communication opposes the “sceptical open-mindedness, impersonal criteria of evaluation and (...) objectivity”, of scientific studies (Willower & Uline 2011: 2). If science seeks the ultimate reality, and postmodernism strives to deny its existence by pointing out at the empty signifiers and the multiplicity of perspectives, education and knowledge are to suffer the hardest blow.

As has been discussed, the knowledge in the form of narratives is imparted through language, but the postmodern embrace of the precariousness and ambiguity of expression engender unintelligibility. To cap it all, unintelligible as they may be, dominant groups still find it simple to instigate new narratives and gain ground

in social and political contexts, owing to their superimposed privilege. This can be illustrated by the recent onslaught of populist tendencies. Namely, applying simpleminded solutions to complex issues, while hiding behind the skirt of postmodern acceptance of mini narratives, has all but threatened to deface and derogate the achieved progress regarding the marginalised Other. Additionally, the consumerist society, brought up on advertisements and conformity, has been groomed to believe that the world exists to accommodate them, and that, consequently, they and their racist opinions matter. If “emplotted” carefully, these racist narratives gain ground at a neck-breaking speed and can only produce negative and regressive effects on the society.

The theory of motivation suggests that the oppressors might be pressing on with discriminatory radicalism for fear of being subjugated themselves. This in turn intimates that, in spite of the human urge to suppress the thought of its own darkness, the oppressive masses may well be aware of the havoc they wreak in the sphere of civic rights and fear the possible turning of the tables. A similar point is raised by Judith Butler, who in her anti-essentialist critique outlined the idea of the simulacra of gender. She went on to explain that the male dominance feels threatened because they are aware that the nature of gender is measured against an unattainable ideal, “an image for which there is no original” (qtd. in Thornham 2011: 46). Despite vying for harsh criticism, the perpetrators vociferously emphasise their own right to venture their beliefs. Be that as it may, the society needs to respond just as harshly to such intents by providing airtight reasons and education on problematic issues. Finally, the best course of action may lie in focusing on the advantages of the postmodern deconstruction of grand narratives as regards oppressive worldviews, while practicing logical reasoning and carefully evaluating each mini narrative.

## **CONCLUSION**

Postmodernism has become a cultural and social label for nearly every occurrence and mode of behaviour. So stubborn, cheeky a movement as it is, it has renounced the prospect of being defined, yet it has become inherent in the description of many literary, cultural and

social models. In spite of the myriad of fluctuating characteristics, postmodernism seems to be bent on several fixed programmes. Namely, addressing the problem of grand narratives, unsustainable in the time where reason and logic had fled the door, postmodern philosophy sought to dismantle them and provide a more realistic image of the world. It opposed the unitary views presented in the earlier times and introduced the notion of *differends*, i. e. the previously neglected groups and individuals who do not fit the conformist norms and standards. Consequently, the postmodern Other was given a voice and a chance for emancipation, which through various liberation movements gave rise to the African-American narratives, women empowerment and many others. They unearthed ways of calling out to the society from literary works, firstly by candidly depicting their struggles under oppressive regimes and subsequently sparking off the call for change. Interestingly enough, it seems that in order to deconstruct the metanarratives, the subjugated groups initially needed to form their own grand narratives, thus employing modernist philosophy for postmodernist purposes. Furthermore, postmodernism may be cordially lauded on its democratic insistence on acknowledging the ideas and opinions of the minority groups. However, this comes with surreptitious and noxious consequences, as postmodernism is not limited to accepting marginalised opinions only, but every other as well. The issue piggybacks this blind acceptance and the stubborn need to deconstruct every body of knowledge, as it makes the world fatuously irrational. It comes as no surprise that the commodity of flinging every idea about without analysing it first has brought about populist outbreaks of violence, racism and somewhat dubious political choices. Therefore, it may be said that the bold embrace of social responsibility should be carefully re-evaluated with the aim of safeguarding against flood-democratic blitzes against the Other. As has been shown, the dominant groups will cling to their unjust supremacy, raving about the invisible threats the Other imposes, usually on primordial instincts, which in turn calls for the sensitising campaigns and goofproof myth-busting. This brings us back to the Other which holds the power to raise awareness of the population about its position and struggles which can be conducted by breaching the borders into the literary world and establishing itself as a visible signifier. It can thus be said that in spite of its conspicuous faults, postmodernism has brought about a number

of positive effects, which ought to be nourished in hope of deconstructing the biased myths and the narrative of silence for good.

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