

Modernism, Postmodernism, Realism, Socialist Realism and Social in Vikram Seths Novels

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Abstract – Socialist realism is a form of idealised realism that originated in the Soviet Union and spread to other socialist nations after World War II. It was the official style in the USSR from 1932 to 1988. The representation of communist principles, such as the emancipation of the proletariat, characterises socialist realism. Figures in this style are generally idealised, especially in sculpture, where it often relies on classical sculpting standards. Social realism is a genre of art that realistically shows socially relevant issues, but it should not be confused with other forms of "realism" in the visual arts. Socialist realism depicted an idealised Soviet Union in a very clear and evident way. Socialist realism was frequently devoid of any kind of nuance or nuanced aesthetic meaning. In this paper a review of Modernism, Postmodernism, Realism, Socialist Realism and Social Realism.

Key Words – Socialist realism, Modernism, Postmodernism, Realism

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INTRODUCTION

• MODERNISM

New and distinctive aspects of literature and other arts in the early decades of the 20th century are commonly referred to as "modernism," particularly after World War I. (1914-18). According to many critics, modernism is a purposeful and profound rupture from some of the old foundations not only in Western arts, but in Western society in general. In this sense, intellectuals who had questioned the certainty that had sustained conventional modes of social structure, religion and morality, as well as traditional methods of conception, are important intellectual antecedents of modernism. Fredric Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and James G. Frazer, who wrote *The Golden Bough* in the 1890s, were among the human Self-thinkers who emphasised the similarities between Christian beliefs and pagan, often barbaric, myths and rites.

Ulysses by James Joyce, *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot and *Jacob's Room*, by Virginia Woolf, were all published in 1922 and marked the beginning of the modernist revolution. The First Global War (1914-18) had shattered trust in the moral foundation, coherence, and Western civilisation of the old literary styles and their ability to reflect harsh *post-War world* realities. T.S. Eliot, in *Cantos* and Eliot's poetry, also embraced new forms and stylistic approaches. Using stream-of-consciousness narrative and other novel techniques,

Joyce's revolutionary work *Finnegans Wake* subverts the basic norms of earlier prose fiction. Automatic writing, or writing that has been emancipated from the control of the conscious and purposeful mind, was a kind of writing that Gertrude Stein experimented with. The representational traditions of expressionism, impressionism, and surrealism were altered by these new kinds of literary composition and literary movements.

As a modernist feature, the avant-garde (a military expression, which meaning an Advance Guard) is a purposeful attempt to "make it new" by defying existing norms and conventions of art, as well as the established order of society. In addition, they reintroduced previously ignored order and attempted to establish new creative forms and a style. They also resisted the existing order, norms, and pieties of the prevailing bourgeois culture by introducing neglected and banned subject matter.

• POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism, according to Hans Bertans, is a term for the shift from modernism. He goes on to explain further "Hassan informs us here that James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is without a doubt the most important text, adding with a great deal of confidence. It is true that he changes this again in the 1975 *Query Revised Edition*. Is it a modern, or a postmodern, or both? The post-war period, however, is steadily delimited by him in his approach to postmodernism. American literary criticism's new

internationalism has led to the abandonment of periodization in favour of one rooted in literary history itself. As a result, Hassan's postmodernism gains a distinct American flavour. One or two exceptions to this rule may be found in the earlier European literature on silence, which is now considered "antecedents" to Postmodernism. There is no longer a Heideggerian, sacramental strand in the Literature of Silence since Hassan has opted to abandon the Heideggerian strain that had been part of the Literature of Silence in prior volumes "As a matter of fact,

In the early days of Postmodernism, one of the most prominent voices was Ihab Hassan, a professor of English who was born in 1925. An extensive bibliography of the components and influences that imply a transition from modernism to postmodernism appears in his article *POST modern ISM: A Practical Bibliography* (1971). Postmodernism is characterised by cultural features such as visual textual abnormalities and deliberate silliness. In his opinion, post-modernism is an exciting new direction. Postmodernism, according to him, is an attempt to write what is impossible to write. Indeed, "We live blissfully in the Unimaginable," he says.

Distinguishing between Modernism and Postmodernism is critical. Linonel Trilling states, "I can recognise as the alienation of our culture with itself... the sharp thread of hatred to civilisation that runs through it (modern literature)... In my opinion, the idea of letting go of one's own self-interest and morality in order to experience life to the point of self-destruction, surrendering oneself to the experience without regard to one's own self-interest or conventional morality, is an element in the mind of every modern, self-aware person. He says that "In so much as we are still moderns, I would argue that we are the progeny of Humanism and the Enlightenment." Henry Levin In a certain sense, it has been a success for the intellect to recognise and isolate the power of unreason. As the anti-intellectual undercurrent comes to the surface, it has strengthened this anti-intellectual sentiment. "Postmodern" is what I choose to call it."

He then goes on to discuss various aspects of Modernism, such as urbanism, technological progress, dehumanisation (which is really elitism), irony, abstraction, and the archetypes that lie behind abstractions. He also discusses eroticism, sadomasochism, solipsism, nihilism, the aesthetics of change in all its forms, and Antinomianism. New languages provide new ways of thinking about the world.

A poem, novel, or drama will no longer be able to use the same title as another of its kind. Modernism relies heavily on these specific aspects. "Postmodernism may be a response, direct or oblique, to the Unimaginable. that Modernism glimpsed only at its most prophetic moments," says Professor Ihab Hassan. There isn't any doubt that we are more concerned about global denaturalization and the

extinction of human life than we are with arts dehumanisation. We are, I feel, citizens of a different era and galaxy, and we are unsure of how to respond to our new surroundings.

In respect of the Anarchy or Pop of Post modernism or its Fantasy, Prof. Ihab Hassan further elaborates that:

" ... True, there is enhancement of life in certain anarchies of spirit, in humour and play, in love released and freedom of imagination to over reach itself, in a cosmic consciousness of variousness as of unity. I recognize these as values intended by Postmodern art, and see the latter as closer, not only in time, but even more in tenor, to the transformation of hope itself. Still I wonder, if any art can help to engender the motives we must now acquire; or if we can long continue to value an art that fails us in such endeavour".

Self-contradictory implications of postmodernism Apocalyptic material and subversive techniques are too heady to a brew for readers to enjoy the self-conscious employment of deceit, humour, and unexplained supernaturalism.

• REALISM

Literature critics have two ways of using the term "realism," the first of which is as an umbrella term for a literary movement that featured Honore de Balzac (France), George Eliot (UK), and William Dean Howells (US). Second, the phrase is used to denote a recurring way of depicting human existence and experience in literature throughout many eras and literary media.

It's not uncommon for people to resist romantic fiction in favour of more realistic literature. Romance is supposed to depict life as if it were more beautiful, exciting, adventurous, or heroic than it is in real life. However, in Realism, it is more important to identify realism in terms of the reader's experience. By portraying life and society as it is seen by a typical reader, a realistic novelist creates the impression that the persons and events depicted in his or her work are genuine. Even if these novelists are drawn to the minutiae of everyday life, they must present their subject matter in a way that makes it appear as though the reader is experiencing it for the first time. For example, Daniel Defoe in the early eighteenth century dealt with the astonishing experiences of a stranded mariner, Robinson Crusoe. Another work, titled *Moll Flanders*, tells the storey of a lady named *Moll Flanders* and her incredible exploits and misfortunes. All occurrences, whether simple or remarkable, are rendered in a realism-based style by him. Both modern books of Magic Realism and Farz Kafka's writing employ a realistic method in depicting situations that are essentially fantastic, ludicrous, or downright impossible in order to create their desired impact.

Critiques of Russian structuralism argued that both subject matter selection and rendering style are realistic. Russian formalists followed these critics more closely. In order to make a novel look like an accurate depiction of ordinary life, the reader must be familiar with literary norms and standards.

When it comes to literary representation, there is no basis for claiming that any one type of diction is more realistic than the rest, some theorists argue. However, it is common knowledge that certain novels actually have the impact on the reader of portraying the normal flow of events. As opposed to a philosophical concept that rejects any objective reality independent of modifying human convention, scepticism regarding the feasibility of fiction's realism is an empirical belief that relies on the general experience of literature readers.

The phrases "Socialist Realism" and "Social Realism," which are commonly employed in literature and literary criticism, must be distinguished.

In the art world, "Social Realism" is a word that refers to a "realistic objective but socially conscious and detailed technique of creative expression." "Social awareness" is the distinguishing feature of Realism that sets it apart from other shades of the genre.

"Truth of typical characters in typical situations," according to Frederik Engels, is the essence of realism. When discussing the history of realism in literature, writers of the 19th century, notably those from France, are often mentioned. "The realism of Balzac and the Goncourt brothers was fundamentally a declaration that, far from being escapist and illusory, the novel was uniquely capable of conveying the truth of actual life in society."

• **SOCIALIST REALISM**

Becker distinguishes between two varieties of realism: critical and socialist, as described by George J. "Criticism and socialism are two separate forms of realism, and it's important to know which one you're referring to. Tolstoy and Ill Turgenev, as well as Balzac and Flaubert, are all examples of critical realism in their depictions of the workings of bourgeois society and its oppressive elements. Socialist realism, on the other hand, aims for a historically accurate depiction of the revolution's progress in the form of a realistic depiction of reality. As well as showing life as it is, a depiction of the inevitable future of the communist society must also be shown. So what we have here is a quasi-philosophical, quasi-theological theory."

Russian critics, who promoted socialist realism, adhered to standards of impartiality, truthfulness, and subterfuge while presenting an author's viewpoints. Realism, according to Frederik Engels, implies presenting the truth in its entirety. Typical individuals and situations are accurately portrayed. He believes that the more the author's views are disguised, the

greater the work of art will be. Even if the author thinks otherwise, the realism might nonetheless emerge.

As far as Frederik Engels is concerned, Balzac is better at being a realist than any Zola ever was or will be. He meticulously details every aspect of his picture of reality, down to the tiniest of minutiae. Even in the economic intricacies of the French Revolution's transfer of real and private property following the French Revolution he assembles around this fundamental image. According to him, he had learnt more from all of the professional historians, economists, and statisticians of the era than from all of them.

In Maxim Gorky's view, "Social Realism" is a disguise for "Revolutionary Romanticism." In addition to depicting the past critically, the goal of socialist realism is primarily to foster the consolidation of revolutionary achievements and a better understanding of the high goals of the socialist future. C. H. Lewis believes that art is derived from reality. As he continues, he says, "Art is the portrayal of Reality... Art constantly strives to represent Reality (i.e. Truth), and no deviation from truth is permitted." Thus, since Realism is the foundation of all art, its polar opposite is not Idealism but Falsism.

Leon Trotsky, another critic, sees socialism's final success not in a perfect solution to the basic human needs of food, clothing, and shelter, but rather in the establishment of a new social order. He claims that the growth of art serves as a gauge of the epoch's life and importance. Mysticism and romanticism are incompatible with revolution, according to him. We need a new form of realism, a philosophy of life rather than the usual literary armoury, at this moment. That's what he goes on to explain "What is meant by the phrase "realism"? Realism expressed the sentiments and demands of different social groupings at different times and in diverse ways. It's important to note that each of these realistic schools has its own own definition and literary evaluation. What connects them? a strong sense of concern for the state of the world. Rather than shying away from the reality of existence, it involves an active interest in the tangible stability and movement of life itself. If you're interested in art, you're interested in three-dimensional life. It's a constant obsession with our three-dimensional lives as an adequate and meaningful topic. With confidence, one can state that the new art will be based on reality in a philosophical sense rather than a literary one."

• **SOCIAL REALISM**

The term "social realism" refers to the depiction of everyday life with sociological perspective. Realism, on the other hand, focuses on the bad elements of life under capitalism, such as labour disputes, the greed of capitalists, the impoverishment of working people, and their noble sacrifices. Complaints about working class injustice and exploitation by the

capitalist class were expressed via art by writers who employed social realism to express their dissatisfaction. Because of this, we have the literature we have today. When it came to the narrative canteen, this was an anti-establishment art form." Revolting voices from the disadvantaged classes of society are presented in a wide sense by Social Realism writers, who emphasise the social side of reality.

It is a writer that adheres to the social realism philosophy that transcribes reality as it really is and expresses his thoughts and feelings on the current social, cultural, political, and religious climate. In his art, he expresses this interplay and response. These are some of the moments that a writer picks up and snatches from the lives of people. The writer concentrates on these moments of humiliation, depravity, and misery in their job and daily lives. An accurate and realistic depiction of life and society is also accompanied with an open critique of the current social structure.

So-called "art for its own sake" is a natural byproduct of the current state of life and art in modern industrial society, according to social realists. Away from reality is where these artists' work comes from, and thus they are forced to leave. In addition, these artists are subjected to a type of conditioning that transforms them.

Socialism has a profound effect on both the work and the life of the artist. A Social Realist aims to unite workers and labourers in a shared goal. It is the job of the artist to depict the lives of the working class, motivate them, and laud their acts. An artist must aim his work towards the general public. Individualism and self-expression are the outcome of the artist's isolation and alienation in capitalist society, according to Social Realists.

A piece of art has become a commodity like any other commodity in the market, and the artist has sold himself and his creation. Rather than expressing and portraying his own feelings of isolation and alienation, an artist must show the ideals that others hold in their daily lives.

As a social realist writer, he is free to utilise his freedom to interpret the goals of a free people rather than engage in self-indulgent, self-expression supported by a decadent capitalism. It is the artist's visual voice that dominates the new culture of the people. Artists have become their prophets. Authors should become "aware" points of modern life drama and convey this information to the general public so that they may better comprehend the possibilities of the present. Social realism is given a new prophetic role. So the criticism of realism encompasses both social historical fact as well as a consistent approach to the spiritual. The artist is forced to deal with the issue of obligations as part of this process. To expect an artist to disguise his own beliefs as those of reality is unreasonable, yet no great artist can afford to be

uncommitted. Balzac and Tolstoy, two of the world's greatest writers, are able to handle this seeming paradox. It's ironic that Balzac, who has an affection for the nobility, is one of the most vicious critics of them all. When it comes to the impoverished, Tolstoy exhibits his deep empathy. Both perceive the roots of human dignity's revival and evolutionary growth in the decay and decaying social order. It is consequently impossible to separate humanism from realism in the socialistic philosophy." If a work of art is so mature, it must have a profound effect on readers' thoughts. In the words of James Berkley, "Listening to a Beethoven symphony, or sitting quietly in a big Cathedral of chatting sincerely with a friend on a subject of true interest to them both—" is like that.

Considering that the future of Russian society under communist control was the most pressing worry for nearly all critics and authors at the time, writers and critics placed a higher value on literature's ability to promote both the good and the partisan aspects of their cause. There was a profound influence of the Marxist concept of life on all aspects of one's existence. In literature, these were also highly regarded. According to Boris Suchkov's explanation of "Socialist Realism," "in socialist realism, which investigates and presents the real contradictions of society... criticism is indivisible from affirmation of the positive social ideal introduced by the socialist revolution, and tasks of building socialist and communist social relations." All aspects of private ownership and the consciousness they have spawned are exposed to an uncompromising, thorough, and well-substantiated critique in social realism. Because it rejects capitalism and the social and spiritual realities that capitalism produces, socialist realism is partisan. Communism is an ideal that social realism vigorously supports, expresses, as well as critiques those things that impede the building of socialism and impede the growth of socialism."

Socialist Realism, as it was generally called in the Soviet Union, has four components, according to Raymond William. These aspects are explained by him. He explains Frederick Engles's idea of typicality, which he presented but left unexplained. He retorts:

A concept of 'Socialist Realism,' as described, may help us perceive the tradition more clearly in the Soviet Union, where past definitions of realism have been maintained and enlarged." In all, these components include four:

Ideas, concepts, and concepts are all part of the nardnosti. Technically, Nordnost is an expression of spirit; the need for popular simplicity and conventional clarity as opposed to the problems of 'formalism'.. Just as nardnost is an ordinary technical meaning of realism, idenost and partiinost are developments of the ideological and revolutionary

attitudes of the realists, just as nardnost is an ordinary technical meaning of realism."

CONCLUSION

Anti-Soviet propaganda has proved that socialist art is not extinct, but rather has been transformed into anti-Soviet propaganda ridiculing socialism's principles and living style, among other things. After becoming familiar with Sots-art, we see a reimagined Soviet reality where sadness is hidden under sarcasm. It is because to the work of the sots-artists that we have gained a fresh perspective on the Soviet past, as well as a new, post-modern worldview.

Despite the fact that Sots-Art is merely a subset of the Russian postmodernism, it is important to note that it is only an art movement when contrasted to postmodernism, which has a wide range of limitations. Opening up the past by pragmatically picking and making it into "consumable" is one of the hallmarks of postmodernism.

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