Manifestation of Art & Literature Through Centuries

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Abstract:
Art and literature are not seen as representing reality, rather they considered reality themselves. Language and sculptures do not describe reality; rather they construct it. It is rightly stated that literature and art are the mirrors of persisting society. Thus this becomes a conjecture in postmodern era as these two elements are seen as a construct of the different societies persisted during various centuries of the past.

Keywords: Literature, art, paradigm, era, human.

Introduction: The Canterbury Tales marks a "paradigm shift" in literature and art. What I mean be paradigm shift is those moments, events or creations in history that mark a development and or turning point in the way in which we see the literary and artistic world. As these art forms are basically depended on the human instinct and mindset, we have witnessed many different paradigm shifts or revolutions in literature and art in the past 2,500 years.

Literature: The word literature is derived from the Latin word literature, which means the ability to use letters or to read. With the passage of time, the word literature became more and more exclusive and its usage came to be associated with learning, scholarship and creativity. In the 18thC, the word literature came to be associated with imaginative writings, including poems, plays, novels, short stories and drama. Somehow in its history of evolution the word literature acquired sacrosanct position and its creators started assuming superior position with claims to being divinely inspired and especially gifted genius who were above the rest of humanity. The focus on author as god like figure and literature as a work similar somehow to scriptures kept focus away from the artificiality and constructed nature of both the author and the work and the social function which they invariably performed.
Leavis' Method: F R Leavis' approach to literature and criticism is regarded as the quintessence of traditional approaches to literature as it embodies all the key principles of approaches to literature prior to the advent of theory. His approach is now generally called 'Leavis method' and his followers are dubbed as 'Leavisites'. L Eaglestone has summarized the key points of 'Leavis method' as under;
The study of literature has a 'civilizing mission' to 'humanize'. A text can and should be studied and judged 'objectively.Writing in third person rather than first person is assumed to be more objective. The reader must demonstrate sensibility or an individual response to the text which happens 'naturally' when a literary text is read.
Practical criticism is the most effective method for studying literature. There is 'canon' or authoritative list of great literary works that everyone with sensibility should study and admire. A literary text is free from history and time, and has intrinsic artistic worth.
A major shift in the contemporary intellectual milieu has been from literary criticism to literary theory. This shift marks a decisive break in the approaches to the study of literature and its appreciation. Literary criticism is a broad term which refers to the appreciation, evaluation, elucidation and analysis of literature. It is normative, evaluative and analytical in its approach. While literary critics criticized literature from various angles and perspectives they never questioned their own perspective or the tools which they were using for their purposes. Goring et al. 3 , in 'Understanding Literature' 'distinguish criticism' from 'theory' by suggesting that they have different objects of investigation. Theory is metacriticism. It provides tools for the business of criticism. The tools are patterns of thought that form the basis of literary criticism.

Major Stages in Literature

Epic/Myth: The earliest literature — Homer, Gilgamesh, The Bible — is "epic" literature. Ancient literature tends to be concerned with depicting and explaining the birth / creation of the entire world, and the sweeping events that lead to the present condition. It is a literature that attempts to explain the existence and the reason for everything.

In epic and mythological literature, the human and God / gods is direct. God or the gods have a "character" role in the action. In many ways, the plot of epic literature depends upon and is controlled by the forces of God or gods. Epic literature, therefore, leans toward the providential, the fated, the fixed, the predestined. Epic literature is also always concerned with origins. Where did we come from? How? Where are we going?

High Mimetic: Ancient Greek drama in particular represents a shift away from the Epic / Mythological stage in literature. The "high mimetic," or high representation, begins to draw its focus to the human more than the epic. The human becomes more of a character and less of a god or a supernatural presence. There is still a direct relationship between human and God or gods, but the relationship becomes more severed, distorted. The protagonist of high mimetic literature tends to be a powerful person, someone who is fairly close to having supernatural power, a dominant personage. The protagonists of high mimetic drama are *not* yet characters who exist on a "normal" level of human existence.

Romance: The medieval development of the Romance begins to mingle the high mimetic with a more "low" mimetic literature. The protagonists (usually a figure like a Knight, a leader, a nobleman) is still the larger than life character, not quite a god, but not quite human either. But the fallibility of the protagonists becomes more prominent. Too, the world of the Romance is interfused with the supernatural. There remains a connection between God, gods or supernatural elements and humans. The world-vision of the Romance remains one in which the world is charged with the presence of God.

Low Mimetic: As the Renaissance (1400 – 1660) progresses, literature becomes represented by the "low mimetic." In low mimetic literature, there no (or very little) direct connection between the human and God / gods. Usually if there is a supernatural element, it comes in the form of convention or hallucination. The low mimetic represents protagonists as human beings, on a level that most humans can identify. The protagonist might be a powerful, larger than life, heroic character, but he / she is not so in a godly or supernatural sense. As low mimetic develops, in fact, we become much more aware of protagonists whose actions fall beneath our own.

Ironic Mode/Modern Literature: In roughly the past few centuries, literature falls into the "ironic mode." Generally, the worldview represents a complete divorce between human and God/gods/cosmos. Or, in many cases, literature emphasizes the absence of any cosmic force, such as God. In ironic literature, protagonists are frequently personages beneath us. Often times protagonists and action in the ironic mode is absurd, meaningless or chaotic. The vision of the world is now completely removed from the cohesive, epic / mythological vision of a complete world.

What is pronounced about the development of literature over the course of history is what Frye calls the "dying of the gods." Or the gradual distance that grows between human and God, or the human and a cosmic or supernatural world. In fact, the birth and development of literary realism, upon which the novel grew as a genre, develops from this divorce and distance between a concrete and supernatural world, the emphasis upon what we can understand.

Some thinkers, like Frye and Joseph Campbell, believe that this few thousand year development is a "cycle" which will repeat again. In other words, ironic literature will tranisition back into epic literature, and the cycle will begin once again. There is some credence, I believe, to this theory. Since the Atomic age in the past fifty or so years, there is a genre growing of apocalyptic literature. There is literature and movies fascinated with the end of the world or the end of an age in which civilization must begin anew. We see this in many forms: as a nuclear holocaust, and the post holocaust world that must rebuilt; a world in which the machine takes over the human, and the human must begin again; a world destroyed by nature because of our harm, and we must adapt to nature and begin again; a world in which technology and a virtual world consumes us, and we must adapt or rebel, ie, begin again.

Art: A paradigm determines the way we understand the structure of a certain part of reality, in this case art. Heinich identifies three art paradigms: classical, modern and con- temporary, each representing a rupture from the previous one and each founded on a different understanding of what art is.

Classicism: Classicism, in the arts, generally refers to artwork created by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Classic artwork may also be categorized as one of the ancient arts or called either Greek or Roman art. Classical Art encompasses the cultures of Greece and Rome and endures as the cornerstone of Western civilization. Including innovations in painting, sculpture, decorative arts, and architecture, Classical Art pursued ideals of beauty, harmony, and proportion, even as those ideals shifted and changed over the centuries.Classical art was diverse and often publicly accessible. It was usually used to decorate temples and public buildings. In its purest form, classicism is an aesthetic attitude dependent on principles based in the culture, art and literature of ancient Greece and Rome, with the emphasis on form, simplicity, proportion, clarity of structure, perfection, restrained emotion, as well as explicit appeal to the intellect. The term is generally used when referring to art created after the decline of the Roman Empire that places significance on values associated with art from antiquity. These principles include harmony, idealism, proportion, restraint, and balance. They established them as being: unity, duality, polarity, equilibrium, and proportion. The Greeks believed these creative principles were of universal origin, and by understanding them, they could complement the beauty of nature in their art and architecture. The golden ratio, also defined by the letter φ (phi), is the most telling example. This mathematical formula is considered by some as a universal rule of beauty. With a proportion equal to $x^2=x+1$, the golden ratio in art creates a balanced relationship that the mind's eye loves.

The Romanesque Era: The Romanesque era is a very specific period that occurred in the later part of the middle ages right before the Gothic era took off. It included the countries of France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and England. It was a period where Christianity gained a higher level of importance. The Romanesque was at its height between 1075 and 1125 in France, Italy, Britain, and the German lands. The name Romanesque refers to the fusion of Roman, Carolingian and Ottonian, Byzantine, and local Germanic traditions that make up the mature style. Combining features of ancient Roman and Byzantine buildings and other local traditions, Romanesque architecture is known by its massive quality, thick walls, round arches, sturdy pillars, barrel vaults, large towers and decorative arcading. This architecture is characterized by towering round arches, massive stone and brickwork, small windows, thick walls, and a propensity for housing art and sculpture depicting biblical scenes.

High Renaissance Art: High Renaissance art is the artistic style of the first half of the 16th century in Western Europe especially as manifested in Rome and Florence and characterized by heroic centralized composition, technical mastery of drawing and conception, and a mature humanistic content. It is characterized by references to classical art and delicate application of developments from the Early Renaissance. Overall, works from the High Renaissance display restrained beauty where all of the parts are subordinate to the cohesive composition of the whole. The High Renaissance of painting was the culmination of the varied means of expression and various advances in painting technique, such as linear perspective, the realistic depiction of both physical and psychological features, and the manipulation of light and darkness, including tone contrast.

The Northern Renaissance: The Northern Renaissance did not represent the idealized human form; instead, they focused on scenes of daily life. Italy, from approximately 1495 to 1527, moved into the high Renaissance as they worked on creating perfect, symmetrical, and idealized figures and compositions.

Modern Art: Modern art includes artistic work produced during the period extending roughly from the 1860s to the 1970s, and denotes the styles and philosophies of the art produced during that era. The term is usually associated with art in which the traditions of the past have been thrown aside in a spirit of experimentation. Characteristics of Modern Art: Use of vibrant colors and bold brushstrokes. Abstract, expressive forms and shapes. Exploration of new concepts such as movement, time, and space. Rejection of mainstream values and traditional techniques.

Modern art is that which was created sometime between the 1860s (some say the 1880s) and the late 1960s (some say only through the 1950s). Art made thereafter (e.g., conceptual, minimalist, postmodern, feminist) is considered contemporary. People love contemporary modern art because it is a fresh way of looking at the world. It allows us to see the world in new ways and to find new meaning in everyday objects. Contemporary modern art can be a source of inspiration and hope. It can make us laugh, cry, or simply think more deeply about life. Although many different styles are encompassed by the term, there are certain underlying principles that define modernist art: A rejection of history and conservative values (such as realistic depiction of subjects); innovation and experimentation with form (the shapes, colours and lines that make up the work) . Modern art is art that rejects traditional techniques. Any art form—including painting, sculpture, architecture, and photography—can be considered modern art. It is a term that includes many different movements and ideas from the 1890s to today. Modern painting began in France in the late 1800s with Impressionism. Modern Art Styles. While there are many movements within modern art, the most distinct include Realism, Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, Dadaism, Abstract Impressionism, and Pop Art. With all these isms it is easy to get confused. However each movement is unique in its style, medium, and influence.

Contemporary Art: Strictly speaking, the term "contemporary art" refers to art made and produced by artists living today. Today's artists work in and respond to a global environment that is culturally diverse, technologically advancing, and multifaceted. Contemporary art is the art of today, produced in the second half of the 20th century or in the 21st century. Contemporary artists work in a globally influenced, culturally diverse, and technologically advancing world. Contemporary art follows from modern art, which is broad term used to define art produced between the 1850s and 1945. However, some art historians set the start date of contemporary art in the 1960s with the emergence of pop art, an artistic movement that represented a radical break from modernism. The seven contemporary art forms are architecture, film, literature, music, painting, sculpture, and theater. However, other categories include digital art, Earth art, installation art, performance art, photography, street art, and video art. Characteristics of contemporary art include a diverse range of media and materials, conceptual approaches, exploration of social and political issues, rejection of traditional boundaries, and often an engagement with globalism and multiculturalism.
Principles of Art & Design: pattern, repetition, rhythm, balance, contrast, emphasis, movement, and unity /harmony. Contemporary art uses materials from the 20th and 21st centuries that are re-worked in surprising ways to challenge the viewer to think critically about contemporary life and society. Contemporary artists have been playing with these conventional rules: replacing them with new, custom rules that apply to specific artworks or groups of works. These rules are carefully articulated to achieve specific effects.