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INTERTEXTUAL ECHOES: POSTMODERN LAYERS IN BORGE'S *THE OTHER DEATH*

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigates the elements of Postmodernism in the short story "The Other Death" by the renowned postmodern author Jorge Luis Borges. The scientists have identified elements of postmodernism in the story to support the assertion that the story is a postmodern work. The study is an exploratory study and uses a qualitative approach. Furthermore, the study has been conducted and analyzed with his/her filter of postmodernism. The study is based on the content analysis of Jorge Luis Borges' Book of the Thousand Faces. The short story The Other Death. The researchers have invoked the following for the present study: The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodernism means the theory of postmodern fiction mentioned in The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodernism, in which the author, Bran Nicol, is a writer of fiction. In this research study, the interpretative method has been used to analyse. The text in "The Other Death" is in Japanese, whose content analysis has been extensively employed from the perspective of postmodernism of literary texts. The results of the study have demonstrated the following: many postmodern elements, but the major elements explored by researchers are: Intertextuality, Metafiction, and Magical Realism. The short story is embedded with various perspectives, such as the richness of the elements, for readers to understand multiple meanings. The text exhibits literary allusions and the author's commendatory style, along with the elements of magical realism. It's a well-integrated text for postmodern analysis and realism.

KEYWORDS Fiction, Inter-textuality, Jorge Luis Borges, Magical Realism, Metafiction, Postmodernism.

Introduction

Literature has always been subjected to many changes and dramatic shifts, which have, in the end, influenced the content of literature (Ramzan & Khan, 2019, 2024). Likewise, there have been different movements with much greater changes in their content and subject that have been brought about by literature. "Postmodernism is one of such movements which has had a paramount influence on all branches of literature like the Romantic Movement" (Hootie, 2014). Postmodernism is such a philosophical movement that always puts question marks in front of human dogmas, philosophical beliefs, and rational doctrines, and that's how to arrange all similar thoughts in the same manner. Al-Shalabi (2015) writes that the very term postmodernism is a much-debated topic of discussion in literary academia nowadays. He claims that the term was introduced by Nichol Contends. This has been a movement for him that is a reaction to the values of modernism. It is also postmodernism, which has its origins in architecture, he writes, about a reaction against modern architecture that started in America and spread throughout the rest of the world in a short time. Hooti (2011) defines postmodernism as ushering in a new age where every activity is unclear, an obvious mystery, and hard to comprehend. This era marks that every meaning and implication is incomprehensible.

Postmodern literature is very much concerned with the study of modern ideologies, political and social issues, cultural changes, and changes in the social world. In recent times, postmodern philosophy has been seen in literature, and above all, a postmodern theory has occupied a paramount place in the realm of art, history, literature, and architecture. It does not

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have any exceptions to the culture, intellectual development, or sense of beauty in society. At first sight, the term postmodernism was used in society; since then, it has been the subject of literary discourses by Latin American writers in the 1930s and 1940s, and has been a much-debated topic in literary circles and academia (Preda, 2015). In her research, Sheeba (2017) identified the following features of postmodern literature: they are mainly influenced by the influence of modernity, and without understanding it is impossible to clearly grasp modernity, for that is what postmodern thought is. These features are Ambiguity is one of the most important characteristics of the postmodern texts and is also ambiguous in nature. In addition to the denial of religious dogmas, reality is individual: anti-positivity and anti-validity are even the subject matter of postmodern literature. Postmodern literature is hard to comprehend and understand on account of its diverse outlook. In literature, this postmodernism puts emphasis on the difficult language, different artistic forms and styles, complex forms, awkward terminology, and phrases. Further the way of presenting literary texts in the form of ambiguity and the readers find it hard to get the gist of the texts. Not only does it, but postmodernism also negates the use of simple language and favors simplicity, but keeps the texts confusing, unclear, and ambiguous. Even the postmodern theory distorts reality and tarnishes the identity, so there are again identity crises that would be explored at the level of postmodernism.

The word postmodernism in literature, however, is used to impart several colors to the term in context and meaning. Even postmodern literature has no answers for the issues surrounding society. Probably the most important and elusive issues are made more complicated and difficult to handle, and this is the very reason that the postmodernism concept is not clear, but a lot of critics consider postmodernism to be merely a theory, which is very far from reality. Shaikh (2009) defines postmodernism as marked by an era of pessimism, hopelessness, but not of optimism, clarity, and individuality. Postmodernist critics in the field of literature deliberate upon issues of contemporary society and, in the end, contemporary life. It was a representation of society and culture. The postmodernist literature mainly gives exposure to life that is chiefly deviated from the centre. “Postmodernism does not deem any art and field of study as separate; rather it Rakesh Sharma and Murari Rao studies objects and their relation to the centre irrespective of isolation” (Chaudhary, 2011). The critics of postmodernism are engaged in experimentation with the earlier works and are always reluctant to change the mode of narration and structure of the text. These critics have a knack for disclosing that the old and traditional forms of all works are broken, and they are trying to reframe and re-contextualize them as per the needs and demands of the readers. “They are always pluralist in their nature and relativist in their outlook, even if they conceal and refute the very ideas of a coherent and real truth and reality in the open” (Crews, 1999). All postmodernists have a great possibility of skepticism, which is why they are doubtful of everything, even of the times in which they live. “These postmodernists always raise their voices about every sphere of life, from political, social, and religious issues related to contemporary life, which are the subject matters of literature.” (Barrett, 1997)

Literature Review

As an intellectual movement, postmodernism has made a tremendous impact on different fields, such as education, around the world. From the beginning of the late 20th century, a school of thought has spread throughout the world, and this movement of ideas has also spread throughout the Muslim countries. As an intellectual movement, postmodernism is not only a major concern in scientific approaches, but also in a variety of political, social, educational, and other fields (Ramzan et al., 2023, 2025). This movement is not a systematic movement with a rational background and didactic consequences which may be precisely and well-defined; moderately, the approach of this school of thought necessitates renovating the form and integrating numerous inclinations. Consequently, there is discussion over the explanation

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of postmodernism and its association with modernism (Mahnaz & Akram, 2026), as well as the explicit identification of the forerunners and their educational consequences (Abdelrady et al., 2025, 2026).

"Forghani's research study maintains that Postmodernism highly arose in Western materialistic surroundings. It mainly stresses heterogeneity and contingency and throws out any absolute trust or worth" (Forghani, 2015). However, opposes essentialism and contemplates human individuality to be a societal paradigm. Moreover, it discards the notion that human values are highly constructed on evolving authenticities and also dismisses the indispensable effect of human activities on their destiny. "Postmodernism highly encourages a diversity of viewpoints, which improves our ability to know and comprehend one another" (Akter, 2018). It's a good idea to dismantle all of those factors in today's rational, imaginative, and enlightening procedures. The researcher furthermore advocates that modern ideologies, the presence of detached reality, and the ultimate truth clearly characterize postmodernism.

In the same manner, Kahraman (2014) in his research admits that Postmodernism is defined as a structure and a response to modernism. Postmodernism is a form of modernism that grapples with and comes to terms with impossibilities that exist in and of life. Moreover, it is also a separation of modernity. Abdullah (2013), in his research study, advocates that this school of thought is primarily concerned with the subjectivity and pliability of values in human life. It clearly pervades all aspects of existence. It was a break with modernism, which recognized human beings' capability to generate, develop, and transform their environment through logic, experimentation, and technical information. However, the negative effects of World Wars and imperialism resulted in great suffering for humanity in the long term. As a result, a new worldview emerged, discarding rationalism's utmost power, realism's domination, and utter truth's supremacy, all of which are symbols of postmodernism.

Ghunshyam (2009) in his study elaborates that postmodernism and critics of this theory find it very controversial and rather deem it a phenomenon to challenge, for this theory puts a question mark before every modern concept. Additionally, it is based on all contradictory notions and beliefs found in politics, art, culture, and literature. He further quotes the statements of Hutcheon in the words that postmodern critics and postmodern writings are characterized by the writings of authors who willingly distort history and are in the habit of self-reflexivity.

Sharma (2011) argues that Literature and works written by postmodern authors exhibit key features of an era that is reported after World War II. These writers mainly employ some features like paradox, fragmentation, and multiple voices and narrators in their works. Further, they are entirely interested in going against the ideas of the Enlightenment and modernism. The theory of postmodernism in literature as a whole is very complicated and undefinable. However, postmodern writers infer many meanings, and mainly postmodern novels have been marked with the tendencies of the quest for identity and reality.

According to Maule (2018), it is an anti-modernist critique. The difficulty with modernism was its postulation of universality, as well as its claims to transparency. The postmodern distinction mainly stems from its failure to incorporate the fundamental assessment of the modern, as well as its incapacity to achieve such transparency. It also rejects all words used by modernists, such as logic, authenticity, objectivity, and truth. The researcher further admits that postmodernism as a literary movement has highly infiltrated all social systems and caused a cultural shift. According to Kahraman (2014), postmodernism is a network of societies that has developed its own life procedures. However, postmodern societal values not only foresee the freedom of mind but also preserve the local ethos.

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Research Objectives

- To find the significant postmodern features in Jorge Luis Borges' short story *The Other Death*
- To analyze the narrative methods Borges uses to question the ideas of reality and truth in *The Other Death*
- To explore the themes of memory, identity, and multiple realities are explored from a postmodern perspective in *The Other Death*
- To discuss the meaning and interpretation of *The Other Death* in terms of its postmodern literary elements

Research Questions

1. How do the postmodern features used by Jorge Luis Borges shape the short story *The Other Death*?
2. How are Borges' literary devices in *The Other Death* challenging the reality and truth?
3. How do the postmodern elements define the theme of memory, identity, and multiple realities in *The Other Death*?
4. How do the postmodern literary elements shape the interpretation and meaning of *The Other Death*?

Material and Methods

The present study uses a qualitative method of research, namely, which is a proper method for data analysis that is the non-numerical data to explore the ideas or to develop new ideas" (Flick, 2009). In this kind of approach, as Gay (2009) says, it is important to have a grasp of the rationale behind the approach and in this research; the data is gathered in the "real world" and so there are the ideas of original state.

Theoretical Framework

The key aim of this research study is to identify the postmodern aspect in *The Other Death* is a short story by Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges. In this way, the researchers have used the theory of postmodern fiction that is referred to in *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* by Bran Nicol.

Textual Analysis and Findings

The text of *The Other Death*, by Louis Borges, using the interpretative method. This approach to the texts is suggested by many scholars. Bryman (2004) supports this method in discovering new meaning in the texts. Similarly, Silverman (2005) also used this approach, which was encouraged, and he coined the term hermeneutics for it. "This technique has been commonly applied to texts based on the aforementioned context; the textual analysis was used" (Lashari, 2018). "It is the explicit or implicit mention of the other texts and the genres" (Nicol, 2009). Metafiction is the self-reflective technique in which "a text highlights its status as a fictional state that construction means referring to itself. It is the technique in which the writers mix the realistic and the fantastic elements. The primary violation of this technique is chiefly on the side of physical laws or rational understanding of things.

Intertextuality refers to the technique in which a literary text directly or indirectly mentions other texts or genres and extracts ideas from or quotes others. In *The Other Death,* there are several instances where reference is made to other texts and copied from different sources. On the first page of this story, the narrator calls to mind the essay that Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote this poem, titled "The Past". The speaker says, "Approximately, it was (I can't seem to remember the name of the letter) written by Gannon, two years ago from Gualeguaychu

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to tell me he was sending me a translation, which in my case, was most likely the first to be translated into Spanish. Quotes from Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem, "The Past" (p. 223).
This line indicates the principal idea of the story is based on Emerson's essay "The Past". The story concerns history, war, and the demise of a character named Pedro Damian. Further, it also examines the theological concept of "removing the past." Also, an indirect mention of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. However, this reference does not refer to the novel itself, but to the title of the novel. Moreover, this usage of *The Sound and fury* may also refer to William Shakespeare's *The where it says*. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying ands insert the word "Nothing" and replace the word 'full' with the word 'Nothing' in the following sentence: full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. (Shakespeare, 2008). But both of these references are equal as regards their meanings, Order is the theme of both, and both refer to the disorder of the city. This story revolves around the mystery of the death of a character whose name is Pedro Damian. The name Damian can also be a reference to Robert's name. Their names were François Damiens (1715-1757), who was publicly executed brutally during the rule of Francois Damiens. This is the same as that of the French King Louis XV (Foucault, 1995). This person is referred to in detail in Foucault's "Discipline and Punish". This text may refer to French Damiens, as both characters are known for their death. This way, the question of the death of Damian might also pertain to the real-life Damiens who were executed horribly in France. Although this may be an indirect reference to this historical person who made his place in the history of capital punishment.

In addition, this story also mentions Joseph Conrad's 'Lord Jim' and the character named with it the same name (Conrad, 2000). The narrator says, "The gaucho Martin Fierro, I thought, 'Razumov' was not as memorable as Lord Jim or "less" (p. 224-225). In the same line, there's another one with a reference to another text as well. It is to the protagonist Kyrilo Sidorovitch Razumovitch from Joseph Conrad's 'Under Western Eyes' (1996). Edgar is a direct reference in the story by the American short story writer Edgar Allan Poe. From this story, it is said that Edgar Allen Poe is a complicated, educated, and remarkable writer. In this regard, the narrator of the story gives a short commentary, "When I saw that he was looking at me strangely, and I said, the beginnings of a sense of terror," My way into a literary quarrel regarding the kind of person who would criticize Emerson, a poet. I argued, more sophisticated and better accomplished, and certainly more amazing, than poor Edgar Allan Poe." (p. 226)

Metafiction

Metafiction is the postmodern technique in which the text refers to itself, takes its fictionality for granted, and does not say that it is true. In this context, *The Other Death* does not claim to be true or that whatever is narrated occurred somewhere. The story's narrator(s) can be found in several locations. Admits this story has more than one version of the events. The narrator responds, "Absurdly, Col. Tabares' version of the events embarrassed me" (p. 224). This shows that the speaker considers this text to be a fictional product that can be presented in different ways. There is also one other point of confession by the narrator in which she accepts the fictionality of the story. In this confession, the subject matter states that the lack of one or two details that are missing in this winter for my tale of fantasy (which stubbornly refused to find its proper shape) made me return to Col. Tabares' house" (p. 225). In this line, it is clear that the narrator is accepting that this tale is a tale of fantasy that is the birth of his imagination. There's one other spot where he admits that this story is a work of fiction and is not based on truth. The narrator admits, "I am not sure that I have written the truth. In my story, I'm sure there are some inaccuracies" (p. 228). This line shows that the story is the birth of memory or recollections. These recollections may be false recollections. In this aspect, it could be stated that the story embraces its fictionality and does not attempt to make it real or claim to be true.

Magical Realism

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In magical realism, elements of fantasy and realism are combined. It involves the use of events that contradict the laws of physics and produce a magical situation. Magical realism is another postmodern element that can be found in the story. In this story, we can find that the dead man comes back to his homeland. This is an event contravention that applies physical laws and establishes an almost magical situation. The best example of magical realism in this story is when the narrator tells us that Pedro Damian died in captivity in battle and, at his death, prayed to God to bring him back to Entre Rios. God hesitated a second before granting that favor, and the man who had asked it was dead; there were some men who had seen him killed. God can change, but He can't change the past. “The images of the past changed the image of death to one of unconsciousness, and in between the two rivers, the man from Entre Rios went back to his country. Returned, but we should recall that he was a shade, a ghost" (Pp. 226-227). From this example, it's clear that the man strolls back to his homeland as a ghost, the most famous example of magical realism.

Discussion

After the analysis, this research study comes up with the findings that the first element of postmodernism in Borges' story *The Other Death* is intertextuality. In this regard, quotes and paraphrases a variety of texts and extracts ideas from them. This story is about the texts that it refers to, including " *The Past* an essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson, and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. This is a BBC 'Great Lives' edition of the Christmas Eve edition of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Joseph Conrad’s Lord *Jim* and *Under Western Eyes*, Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Further, it also indirectly refers to Damiens, who is mentioned in Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*. Apart from texts, it also refers to Aristotle and Edgar Allen Poe, whom the narrator says that he was a complex and extremely interesting author. The second postmodern element that we find in this story is metafiction. Metafiction is a type of fiction where the storyteller reveals that they are making up a story and does not say that the events they tell about are true or occurred somewhere.

In this regard, there are various places in this story where the narrator confesses that this is a work of fiction or fantasy. At one place he confesses that the events that are narrated here have more than one version, which shows that some versions may not be true. Otherwise, in another location, in this story, the narrator admits he hasn't always been able to tell the truth. Moreover, he admits that this tale is a recollection and that there could be some errors. The author's confessions in the story explicitly make it clear that the story is a warning to the readers. This is the work of fantasy or fiction and should not be considered to be true. Magical realism is the third postmodern feature that we see in this story. Magical realism is a technique that is commonly used in postmodern fiction. This technique involves: Many laws of physics are broken, and a blend of realism and magic is shown. In this story, it is found that the dead man walks back to his native land as he had prayed to. God heard his prayer, and God was pleased. But he walks, though, as a ghost back to his homeland. A magical realism example of this walking back of the dead man to his home land, as such events are unnatural and bring about a rather magical situation.

Conclusion

After the analysis and findings, this research study concludes that Borges's short story *The Other Death* is a typical example of a postmodern short story. It has the element of intertextuality in which it directly or indirectly refers to various texts, thinkers, or philosophers. Many texts are mentioned in this story. This story also uses ideas that are drawn from other texts. It also uses the indirect quotations of other philosophers, such as Aristotle, and bases its arguments on those quotations. Further, this story also contains the elements of metafiction, in which it warns the readers that this text may be treated as a work of fiction, and it does not claim that all that is narrated in this story is based on truth. Moreover, the technique of magical

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realism is also used in these stories, which gives them a fantastic touch and makes them good postmodern stories.

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