

MANIFESTATIONS OF POSTMODERNISM IN HERMANN HESSE'S NOVEL “THE GLASS BEAD GAME”

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The paper attempts to consider the connections between postmodernism, aesthetics and Herman Hesse's novel *The Glass Bead Game* referring to the history of the last most influential manifestation of the theoretical and aesthetic thought of the West – postmodernism, also characterized by paradoxes. Based on a number of fundamental principles of the aesthetics of postmodernism and data on the work of Hermann Hesse, the specific relations that connect Hesse's work with postmodernism, are considered. This refers first to the ideas of *the world as chaos*, then *aesthetic eclecticism*, *multiculturalism* and finally *game*. Within the framework of the idea *the world as chaos*, the wide use of the concept of simulacrum in both Hesse's and postmodernist works is considered. *Aesthetic eclecticism*, which is “the dominant sign of the culture of the postmodern era” (J.-F. Lyotard, I. Ilyin), is also found in Hesse's novel in various manifestations. *Multiculturalism*, both as a social utopia and as an aesthetic principle, is also widespread among postmodernist aesthetes (especially L. Fiedler) and in Hesse's novel. In the novel the East-West political and cultural dialogue also deepens. Finally, the game, being one of the stable European cultural codes, is rediscovered both in Hesse's novel and in postmodernist aesthetics (U. Eco).

Keywords: *high modernism, postmodernism, postmodern relativism, deconstruction, text, chaos, simulacrum, eclecticism, pluralism, game.*

Introduction

For more than five decades, the aesthetic and philosophical thought of the West has been massively talking about postmodernism as the dominant movement of political, social, scientific and artistic culture of the late 20th and the 21st centuries: scientific and fictional texts, interpretations have been and are still being created, conferences are being held, scientific theses are being written. However, there is a paradox: until today there is still no clarity in the perceptions

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of the term and concept of postmodernism. Various encyclopedia definitions and those given by some literary scholars, repeating each other, often contrasting, create an extremely multi-layered contradictory picture of postmodernism - from a system of philosophical, epistemological, scientific-realistic and sensual concepts, aesthetic pluralism, a special literary methodology to spiritual existence, the spirit of the time, and similar concepts. As described by Umberto Eco “postmodernism is not a movement enclosed by certain chronological frames, but a spiritual concept or, more precisely, *Kunstwollen* (Will towards art), a practice” (Eco, 2014, p. 113). Eco, undoubtedly one of the most authoritative postmodern theorists, believes that the era of each modernism is necessarily followed by postmodernism, and according to this logic, he considers Rabelais and Sterne postmodernists. François Lyotard speaks of a “postmodern situation”. More opinions of this kind can be mentioned. They, of course, affirm that postmodernism, like modernism, is more than just a literary movement. It would be correct to describe it as an aesthetic state that predetermines the consciousness of a writer and an artist. It is noteworthy that the aesthetic-theoretical thought manages to give a complete historical, but not theoretical portrait.

It should be noted that the history of this literary movement is rich in other paradoxes as well, one of which has already been mentioned. For example, the emergence of postmodernism is paradoxical. The thing is that literary movements usually make a name long after their formation, while postmodernism appeared earlier than the literary texts representing it. As is known, it's related to Robert Pannwitz's work *The Crisis of European Culture* published in 1917, when there was nothing postmodern in the publication. There are paradoxical, contradictory lines in relations between modernism and postmodernism.

Although the formation of postmodernism is, to some extent, related to overcoming the crisis typical of modernism, not only do they fail to overcome, but they also deepen to the extreme. However, the aesthetic features of these literary movements are best seen when their ideological paradigms are combined. For example, if modernism highlights the symbol, the pattern, the entirety, the purpose, the genre, the skill, the metaphor and the choice, then postmodernism fundamentally changes everything giving importance to absurdity, antithesis, deconstruction, game, text, weariness, metonymy, combination. It should also be noted that modern literature begins to speak quite widely not only about the connections of postmodernism with modernism, but also with other literary

movements - romanticism, especially baroque. There are also manifestations of paradox in the formation and development of postmodernism in German-speaking countries. While in Germany this literary movement does not stand out at all with significant success, there are postmodern giants in Austria and Switzerland, in the person of Peter Handke and Max Frisch. Though there is an opinion that postmodernism has no homeland, the Spanish-American countries are pointed out as a geographical environment of its origin.

Formation of postmodernism

As is known, the history of literature traces the roots of postmodernity to the end of the 19th century, that is, to the literature of decadence and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. In this regard Richard Tarnas writes: “According to all signs, Nietzsche was the chief prophet of postmodern thought, with his radical inquisitive consciousness, his powerful and poisonous sense of smell, which allowed him to anticipate the nihilism originating in the Western thought” (Tarnas, 1995, p. 335). And the representatives of *high modernism* - Joyce, Faulkner, Kafka, Muzil, T. Mann - become the direct preparers of postmodernism, undoubtedly, among them Hermann Hesse. Moreover, without underestimating the contribution of the listed writers to establishing postmodernism, we find that through his prose and poetry Hesse makes it possible to speak more thoroughly about relationships. Let us try to argue this hypothesis. When talking about Hesse as one of the bearers of Western thought and culture, in addition to the many features of his work, due to which Hesse is a world-famous figure in literature today, I would like to highlight one of them in particular - universalism. It is a unique feature characteristic of only chosen ones, by which they connect times and ideas. It has probably been noticed that this feature is not only characteristic of Hesse, but of other writers of *high modernism* as well. And, of course, Kafka’s *The Trial*, Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* or Joyce’s *Ulysses* (though Umberto Eco especially highlights the novel *Finnegans Wake*) could have become a subject of research in terms of relations with postmodernism with no less scientific interest. However, each of these writers is universal in their own way.

High modernism and “hyper reality”

How are Hermann Hesse and postmodernism related? What are the points of contact where Hesse and postmodernism become comparable and allow us to talk about the relations between them?

1. First and foremost, it is the idea of “the world as chaos” that was spoken about by modernists as well. But there is a significant difference in their perception of chaos. If in the literature of modernism a certain effort to overcome chaos, to achieve the unity of existence and consciousness is still preserved, postmodernism consistently destroys any social, cultural or spiritual structure. As is known, postmodernism is formed as a reflection of a new historical situation. The two world wars, and the ensuing scientific and technological revolution, along with the deep disillusionment with humanistic values, lead to the entrenchment of consumer psychology and its corresponding morals. We must add to them the spread of mass culture, the sharp outbreak of philosophical, literary-theoretical, linguistic-philosophical schools and currents. Postmodernity is born from these realities, which bring uncertainty to literature and art, lack of civic-political ideals, cultural weariness and entropy - indifference to the State, Man, God, Intelligence and to other fundamental values, which deepens the idea of chaos.

But in fact, the beginning of the consciousness of chaos is initiated by F. Nietzsche with his famous judgment, “God is dead”. The idea of chaos develops uniquely by the aestheticians of postmodernism, M. Foucault, R. Barthes, J. Derrida and others. The death of God is followed by the ideas of the death of the author, then of the individual (reader), and finally of the style (R. Barthes). G. Deleuze and F. Guattari introduced the term *chaos* (quoted by J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*). As a sign of chaos, they speak of “endless changes”, “endless speeds”, “moments” that are either too short or too long to turn into time (Deleuze, & Guattari, 1998, p. 256).

The idea of chaos is interpreted in an interesting way in Hermann Hesse’s novel *The Glass Bead Game* as well.

As is well known, the events in the novel “The Glass Bead Game” take place in a utopian environment, in the 22nd or 23rd centuries. In retrospect, he refers to the serious political, economic, and spiritual catastrophes of the early 19th and late 20th centuries. Hesse calls those times “feuilleton”. Speaking of those times of economic and political upheaval, of endless wars and spiritual impoverishment, among the “examples of the intellect’s debasement, venality, and self-betrayal” (Hesse, 2016, p. 14). Hesse highlights especially fake spiritual values, mass leisure activities, primitive, simplistic reports, articles and speeches (or feuilletons), with the help of which the society was fed and a false intellectual environment was formed. They were written on a variety of topics, such as Goethe, Arabic culture, Friedrich Nietzsche 1870’s women’s fashion, composer

Rossini's favourite dishes, the importance of house dogs to great courtesans, "in all of them a number of fashionable phrases were shaken up like dice in a cup and everyone was delighted if he dimly recognized one or two catchwords" (Hesse, 2016, p. 18). But what Hesse is talking about is nothing but the concept of simulacrum (from the Latin word *simulacrum*, meaning image, likeness, semblance) proclaimed by postmodern aesthetics (G. Bataille, J. Baudrillard). The simulacrum or false image, known since ancient times (Epicurus, Lucretius), has become one of the most important concepts of postmodernism, reflecting the catastrophic rupture between reality and language.

According to Baudrillard, simulation creates a "hyper-reality" that has nothing to do with reality. According to this philosopher, modernism is a total simulation, which affects all the social and cultural cells (cited in Tsurganova, 2004). G. Deleuze interprets language as "the highest of the simulacra" (Deleuze, 1998, p. 371).

It is noteworthy that in the novel "Steppenwolf", that is, 15 years before the novel *The Glass Bead Game*, Hesse speaks about the simulacrum or false truths the society is fed with. In the episodes of Mozart and Goethe, Hesse very subtly presents the whole tragicomic situation of the civic environment based on false taste. "And in fact, to my indescribable astonishment and horror, the devilish tin trumpet spat out, without more ado, a mixture of bronchial slime and chewed rubber; the noise that owners of gramophones and radio specialists call music. And now you hear not only a Handel who, disfigured by radio, is, all the same, in this most ghastly of disguises still divine; you hear as well and you observe, most worthy sir, a most admirable symbol of all life. Just so does life, the so-called reality, deal with the sublime picture-play of the world and make a hurley-burley of it" (Hesse, 2013, pp. 244-245). Harry, the protagonist of the novel, experiences the same pain when he sees Goethe's picture in the house of a familiar professor, but done in a bad taste, as a result of which the great German poet, deprived of his naturalness, presents himself in a "sweet, snobbish, salon" image.

2. *Eclecticism* is the second idea. According to J.-F. Lyotard, "Eclecticism is the dominant sign of the culture of the postmodern era." (cited in Tsurganova, 2004, p. 327). It is somewhat present in Hesse's novel, it is true that Hesse's and postmodernists' perceptions of this concept are slightly different. First of all, *The Glass Bead Game* itself is an example of eclecticism. Moreover, here, we see such a synthesis and variety of literary genres, styles, literary techniques that is rarely found in great literature. Here, prose, poetry, philosophical essay, political

pamphlet, legend, chronology follow each other. If closely observed, it is possible to point out just three or four types of novels, for example, biographical, psychological, historical, educational, and social.

As for essay and essayism, Lyotard himself writes, “The postmodern writer or artist is in the state of a philosopher” (cited in Tsurganova, 2004, p. 327). This genre, which is the result of the unification of philosophy and literature and not a novelty at all in the history of prose, gets a new life thanks to the postmodern philosophers and writers (M. Kundera, U. Eco, J. Derrida, M. Blanchot, M. Heidegger, R. Barthes). Speaking about the philosophical language of the prominent postmodern theorist Jacques Derrida, I. Ilyin emphasizes that what is important in his work is not only the ideas, but also the manner of their presentation, due to which the philosopher’s speech acquires the features of “intellectual aestheticism”, “artistry”, which indicate that philosophy in terms of language has long since departed from the classical German gloom and approached the French mental joy (Ilyin, 1998, p. 40). We shouldn’t forget that Nietzsche is one of the founders of that tradition with his *The Gay Science*.

3. *Cultural pluralism* or *multiculturalism* which is one of the most complex concepts of postmodernism and more typical of American postmodernism, is excessively characteristic of Hesse’s prose and it is an essential compositional element in the novel *The Glass Bead Game*, which is here presented from two perspectives. First of all, the image of European culture is given in detail with all its fundamental types: spiritual, scientific and artistic. Then, what is very important, cultural codes of the West and the East, the Chinese in particular, are compared. Without mastering the Daoist philosophy, Joseph Knecht can’t reach the level of perfection required to become a Master of the Game.

It is noteworthy that postmodern theorists associate multiculturalism with marginalism. “In a sense, poststructuralism and postmodernism can be described as expressions of the phenomenon of marginalism”, writes I. Ilyin (cited in Tsurganova, 2004, p. 266). In other words, the very opposite idea of multiculturalism is presented, when a foreign culture is considered unacceptable. Hermann Hesse’s novel provides many examples to speak about this phenomenon as well. After all, it is completely based on the marginal principle of two opposite worlds. At the same time, this type of worldview is typical of almost all of Hesse's works, with types of contrasts of instinct and intelligence, art and reality, philosophy and poetry.

In *The Glass Bead Game* Castalia and the rest of the world are irreconcilable oppositions. The game separates those two worlds. One is the ordinary world,

with its ordinary daily life and lifestyle, the other is the world of elite people, Castalia, where the chosen ones live and only men, who, serving the spirit, try to save the cultural heritage created by mankind. Castalia, on the one hand, symbolizes Hesse's connection with this important place name of Greek mythology and Apollo, on the other hand, the relations with two giants of German literature - Goethe (*Wilhelm Meister; Pedagogical Province*) and Schiller (*Aesthetic State*). The men in Castalia believe that there is no need to create a new culture, it is just necessary to appropriately preserve what has already been created, which also contains some elements of marginalism. There are also marginalist elements in the mysterious suicide of Joseph Knecht, with which he tries to reconcile the two worlds. It is interesting that in this respect one can find an ideological similarity with Hesse's novel in Jenks' judgement that postmodern art is gifted with "dual coding" and it is addressed not only to the elite but also to larger masses (Dickens, 1985, p. 136).

4. It is necessary to consider one more issue, which is connected with the judgement that postmodernism has no homeland (Hag D. Silverman). Maybe there is some truth in that, if we mean that it is so widespread around the world, though in reality such a thing does not usually happen, literary movements and directions always originate from somewhere.

In this case, the Spanish-American cultural environment is more often circulated (Anderson, 2011, p. 11). But the idea of not having a homeland becomes much more meaningful when we spread it over postmodern heroes. Really, they have no homeland. If the literature of Romanticism and Modernism raises the idea of "transcendental homelessness" (*Obdachlosigkeit*) as an element of a human tragic condition (Lukasc, 1962, p. 32), then the postmodernity, bent on a cosmic scale, loses the meaning of the concept of homeland because they have lost the identity. They live in perfect conditional environments, that is, they live everywhere and nowhere. The musician Pablo, the protagonist of Hermann Hesse's novel *Steppenwolf*, is an example of such a hero, we very often come across in *The Glass Bead Game*.

5. Another circumstance worthy of note is the following: in the novel Hesse speaks about the fact that nothing new is created in Castalia, but the old is carefully preserved, and, for the sake of their freedom, they reproduce it in sign language in *The Glass Bead Game*. This idea is important in terms of the fact that features of postmodernism, which seem to replicate Hesse's idea to some extent, obviously manifest themselves in it. Postmodernists are also skeptical of the idea of creating a new culture, a new literature and attribute everything to text and

intertextuality. One of the most famous writers of postmodernism, Luis Borges from Argentina, who presents the universe as a huge labyrinth, writes in the famous story-essay *The Library of Babel*: “The certainty that everything has already been written cancels us, or renders us phantasmal” (Borges, 1992, p. 55).

6. Finally, the concept of *game*, which, in essence, combines all of the above ideas, becomes fundamental to both Hesse's novel and postmodern aesthetics.

V. Bychkov's formulation is noteworthy in this case. “Postmodernism,” he writes, “is first of all, the sense and consciousness of existence, culture, reasoning as a game” (Bychkov, 2004, p. 453). The connection between Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* and postmodernism is so famous that another literary scholar has such an expression: “The postmodern writer is a glass bead game-player, who solves problems posed or conceived” (Kuritsyn, 1992, p. 226). As is known, the idea of the game as a cultural phenomenon has been known since the time of Plato and has gone through stages of development until Schiller and Huizinga. Neschen, Spengler, Wittgenstein (with his concept of language games) also make a certain contribution to this path. The idea of the *Game* became fundamental for postmodern theorists as well. We think that the influence of Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* is extremely great in the refinement of its perception. The idea of the game, as Hesse presents, is born first in the environment of talented musicians and mathematicians, followed by philologists, historians, artists, theologians, philosophers - intellectuals who voluntarily want to serve the spirit and save culture. Hence, the name of the hero, Joseph Knecht, literally meaning servant, not in Hegelian, but in Christian terms. Hesse presents the already formed and continuously improving Game as a mysterious and esoteric concept, which contains the general content and values of culture. Hesse writes: “All the insights, noble thoughts, and works of art that the human race has produced in its creative eras, all that subsequent periods of scholarly study have reduced to concepts and converted into intellectual property - on all this immense body of intellectual values the Glass Bead Game player plays like the organ-player playing the organ” (Hesse, 2016, p. 14).

Conclusion

Until today, there is no clear idea of what *The Glass Bead Game* represents. As is known, in contrast to J. Huizinga's empiricism, Hesse uses transcendental dimensions of the Game in the novel, which radically change its character and, especially, make it more complicated. While not having a clear meaning, it can have many parallels in real life. Hesse lays the groundwork for this uncertainty

first by giving more than one description: *magic theatre*, *game play*, *lingua sacra*, *sui generis art*, etc. Many experts have tried to interpret the word, but in vain. The prototypes of a number of basic ideas of postmodernism can be found in the concept of the Game.

For example, the idea of *the world as a text*. Castilian elite culture and *The Glass Bead Game* itself are a written culture, a text, Josef Knecht is the embodiment of that culture as a perfect hero, or “Culture as a system of signs”. From the point of view of language, we see that the Game has a special language, which combines a number of linguistic means, such as the languages of mathematics, philosophy, music as signs, as a result of which the whole previous culture is presented as a system of signs. As a result of the masterful combination of these signs, which is also an example of eclecticism, “any game must be possible, even a plant to speak Latin with Mr. Carl Linnaeus”. Examples like these can be found with regard to other ideas of destruction, intertextuality and postmodernism.

Of course, there are also many differences between the novel *The Glass Bead Game* and postmodernism. Let us focus on, perhaps, the most important one. While Hesse, with the diversity of his aesthetic and philosophical views, nevertheless remains complete and loyal to humanistic values, postmodern literature is mainly inclined to destroy, make any integrity meaningless, tends to the belief that any attempt to model the world is meaningless and impossible, that is, everything leads to the unknown and the uncertain. At the end of the 20th century R. Tarnas considered this postmodern uncertainty and metaphysical emptiness to be the ultimate problem of our time. “Will it last infinitely, probably taking more tolerable or tougher forms over the years or decades?”, he writes, “Does it act as a special entropic prelude of the apocalyptic resolution of history or does it represent itself an epochal transition to quite a new era, which is the bearer of the new model of civilization and the new worldview, whose ideals and principles are radically different from the ideals and principles that previously pushed the modern world into moving in its dramatic trajectory?” (Tarnas, 1995, p. 348).

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ՊՈՍՏՍՏՐԱԿՏԻՎԻԶՄԻ ԴԻՍԵՎՈՐՈՒՄՆԵՐԸ ՇԵՐՄԱՆ ՀԵՄՍԵԻ «ՀՈՒԼՈՒՆՔԱԽԱՂ» ՎԵՊՈՒՄ

Արա Առաքելյան

Հոդվածում փորձ է արվում դիտարկել այն աղերսները, որոնք առկա են պոստստրուկտուրալիզմի գեղագիտության և Հերման Հեսսեի «Հուլունքախաղ» վեպի միջև: Անդրադարձ է կատարվում պոստստրուկտուրալիզմի պատմությանը, Արևմուտքի տեսական-գեղագիտական մտքի վերջին ամենաազդեցիկ դրսևորմանը, որին բնորոշ են նաև պարադոքսները: Ելնելով պոստստրուկտուրալիզմի գեղագիտության մի շարք հիմնարար սկզբունքներից և Հերման Հեսսեի ստեղծագործության մասին առկա տվյալներից՝ դիտարկում ենք կոնկրետ այն աղերսները, որոնք Հեսսեի ստեղծագործությունը կապում են պոստստրուկտուրալիզմի հետ: Խոսքը վերաբերում է նախ

«Աշխարհն իբրև քառս», ապա «գեղագիտական էկլեկտիզմ», «բազմամշակութայնություն» և վերջապես «խաղ» գաղափարներին: «Աշխարհն իբրև քառս» գաղափարի շրջանակներում դիտարկվում է նաև *սիմուլյակր* հասկացության լայն գործածությունը ինչպես Հեսսեի, այնպես էլ պոստմոդեռնիստական երկերում: Գեղագիտական էկլեկտիզմը, որը «պոստմոդեռնիստական դարաշրջանի մշակույթի տիրապետող նշանն է» (Ժ.-Ֆ. Լիոտար, Բ. Բյրին), ամենատարբեր դրսևորումներով հանդիպում է նաև Հեսսեի վեպում:

Բազմամշակութայնությունը թե՛ իբրև սոցիալական ուտոպիա, թե՛ իբրև գեղագիտական սկզբունք, նույնպես լայն տարածում է ստանում պոստմոդեռնիզմի գեղագետների (հատկապես Լ. Ֆիդլեր) շրջանում և Հեսսեի վեպում: Վեպում խորացվում է նաև Արևելք-Արևմուտք քաղաքական և մշակութային երկխոսությունը:

Վերջապես խաղը, եվրոպական մշակութային կայուն կողերից մեկը լինելով, նորովի հայտնաբերվում է և՛ Հեսսեի վեպում, և՛ պոստմոդեռնիստական գեղագիտության մեջ (Ու. Էկո):

Բանալի բառեր՝ բարձր մոդեռնիզմ, պոստմոդեռնիզմ, պոստմոդեռնիստական իրադրություն, կազմաքանդում, տեքստ, քառս, սիմուլյակր, էկլեկտիզմ, պլյուրալիզմ, խաղ: