

**Postmodern Narrative in Chuck Palahniuk's *Invisible Monsters***

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The postmodernism movement arose as an opponent-force to modernism, the former confronting a number of those utopias that modernity had preached. Foremost among these was the idea of the narrative itself. Modernist and pre-modernist mainstream literature tended to adhere to traditional grand narrative structures designed for the successful portrayal of history, morality or human progress. Stories were to be able to maintain a narrative arc, maintaining coherence and providing a vision of the human condition within the world they showed. Postmodernism, however, disrupted this expectation. However, by undermining the legitimacy of such grand narratives, it has restructured the method of storytelling to favour fragmentation, multiplicity and instability over coherence or universality.

As Abu Rahma and Amani quotes,

The presence of criticism alongside creativity indicates a growing awareness, transforming the process into writing consciousness, a process that is the partial result of increasing self-awareness, social awareness, and cultural consciousness. (Samet and Attia, 153)

The earlier narratives that were conventional had their stream of thoughts with set of rules and built purpose on it. Then came in Metafiction where characters and plots were built to have its own artificial way of depicting literariness with imagination and creativity.

Whereas the grand narratives sought to aim and bring elements from tragedy, morality and aristocratic history or historical representation The novelist wrote on the subjects that were existing into the world already, as the authors states,

The novel placed its creator before an important question: What is his stance toward the self? And what is his stance toward the world? He then begins to write consciousness, condensing all old sayings and grand narratives to represent only himself. (Samet and Attia, 153)

Eventually towards the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the narratives took a shift in portraying the distorted and factual and universal truth with the roles being swapped, understood and improvised.

Critics of postmodern metafiction pointed to the death of the novel, claiming that the creator exposes his narrative methods and techniques, breaking the worlds of imagination in his writings. Meanwhile, enthusiasts argued that it grants the novel unlimited potential, once thought to be introverted and self-referential, but in fact, it is materially open. (Samet and Attia, 153)

This led to non-linear narrative format and collapses the grand narratives in the contemporary society. The postmodern novels and narrations paid attention to the ongoing political, societal, and cultural changes with philosophical concepts, provided with the extreme creativity of hyper-reality. Such broken narratives and hyper realistic series of plot can be found in Chuck Palahniuk's *Invisible Monster*. Chuck Palahniuk was born in 1962, Washington who had a fractured life with his family members. He underwent the pain of his parent's divorce and was found to spend most of his childhood days at his grandmother's place. He was completely detached from rural life and began his literary work post his career in Journalism.

Chuck believed that the narration should not have any indirect or layered meaning hidden behind the narration, rather the plot should transparently and directly address the readers with facts, despite its grotesque plots and evokes discomfort. Most of his novels his writings always interrogate the broken identity of his protagonists and provide a raw experiential satisfaction.

*Invisible Monsters* is an attempt to disrupt the conventional storytelling in order to reflect the instability of the human mind and their identity in the society. The narration is nonlinear and is structured with fragmented time, place, and memory which makes the readers to reconstruct the events narrated by the protagonist, Shannon McFarland which also portrays the disjointed chronology of Shannon's psychological disintegration. Palahniuk uses abrupt scene shifts,

“You know, miss,” he says, “to break them on rocks. For the marrow.”

On the Pad, with the pencil, I write:

ha, ha, ha

Jump to just before my bandages came off, when a speech therapist says I should get down on my knees and thank God for leaving my tongue in my head, unharmed. (51)

The narration abruptly shifts from external dialogue and detached observation to a personal and internal memory. This jump fractures and fragments the linear time, which is reflecting Shannon's fragmented psyche. It has thus reinforced the novel's nonlinear structure, were trauma and identity blur across past and present moments. The “Jump to” (113) phrase are the words for any abrupt jump in time and memory, which is witnessed in the novel all the time. It shows Shannon's fragmented consciousness and Palahniuk's

postmodern approach to storytelling, as it collapses linear chronology and probes identity through disjunctive and affectively expressive memories.

The narration is fast paced, rough around the edges, and unapologetic but it shares a raw point of view with Shannon's process of change and confession. Her confessions are regularly scenes of memory and eyes wandering to find the scene, events and conversations. The constant dilemma of her internal narration is fragmented,

Give me courage.

Flash. Give me tolerance.

Flash.

Give me wisdom.

Flash.

Jump to the truth. And I say:

“No” (152)

Shannon's narration is highly unreliable that it embodies the central theme of the novel where the identity of an individual is never fixed, it is every attempt to define it must be dismantled before what was created. In doing so, Chuck has defamiliarized the idea of authentic self and turns the act of narration in to act of performance, where he doesn't just describe the identity, but make it reality which makes the narrative is both reliable and performative

**References**

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