

The Event within the Narrative: A Postmodernist Study of “The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World” and “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”

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Abstract

Postmodernism critiques modernity’s grand narratives and utopias. The study is grounded in Jean Francois Lyotard’s postmodern theory, which examines how the differend and the event in narratives disrupt established norms and traditions. This research explores Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s “The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World” alongside Ursula K. Le Guin’s “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” to discover the notions of postmodernism within the narratives. It is a qualitative study that employs narrative analysis to explore the postmodern concept of the event and the differend proposed by Jean-François Lyotard’s postmodernist theory. It reflects the postmodern scepticism towards grand narratives and embraces diversity and fragmented perspectives. The study highlights their contrasting responses to disruptive events. The arrival of a mysterious drowned man in a village is an event that ensues reevaluation of beauty, identity, and community values. Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s text builds around differend that challenge the nature of truth and societal constructions. Le Guin’s narrative probes individual moral agency, while Garcia Marquez emphasises communal transformation. The introduction of hidden suffering is an event in the narrative: a mentally impaired child confined to a basement whose misery sustains the idyllic existence of the city. This revelation challenges the idealised facade of Omelas, exposing a profound ethical dilemma. This paper enriches the existing scholarship by offering a comparative postmodernist analysis of these texts. Previously, both have been explored individually but not in relation to each other through the notions of the event and differend. The findings suggest that the arrival of a drowned man and the hidden suffering serve as events that prompt collective transformation and emphasise ethics for societal well-being. Both stories invite readers to question their ideologies and the utopia of the grand narratives.

Keywords: Event and differend, Grand narratives, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Jean-François Lyotard, Narrative disruption, Postmodernism, Ursula K. Le Guin

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Introduction

Postmodernism stands out as a paradigm shift for its radical critique of grand narratives and its fondness for showcasing the narratives' relative, subjective, and fragmented nature. "Postmodernism recognises the fragmented, disjointed nature of reality, rejecting the notion of a unified, coherent world. It is not just a rejection of traditional forms but a statement on the experience of the world itself" (Hassan, 1987, p. 47). The short story is a literary genre that often serves as a concentrated medium through which philosophical ideas can be explored and conveyed with precision and depth. The current study delves into the complex layers of postmodernism through a focused reading of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World" and Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas". Both stories embody the essence of postmodernist aesthetics through their explorations of the events that dismantle and disrupt the ordinary flow of modernity. The present research underscores the pivotal role of the differend and the event and their transformative role that challenges the stability and fixedness of modernity and its rhetoric. The event and the differend invite readers to question the very fabric of reality and truth. "In postmodern thought, there is an incredulity toward universal explanations and totalising narratives, embracing instead the relative, the contextual, and the plural" (Hassan, 1987, p. 12).

Gabriel Garcia Marquez is an essential figure of Magical Realism, and he integrates magical elements and fantastical notions within realistic settings to blur the lines between real and unreal. His stories are often soaked with the surreal and the extraordinary within the ordinary. In this story, "The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World", he addresses themes of the transformation of society. This happens in the story when a drowned man appears, and this arrival of the most handsome man is the event in the narrative that dismantles the village's perceptions and understandings. "A differend is a case of conflict between two parties that cannot be resolved because each party's argument relies on a system of judgment that the other cannot understand" (Lyotard, 1988, p. 9). The postmodern notion of the differend is apparent in how the villagers interpret the drowned man to objectify their desires, fantasies, and values. On the other hand, Le Guin is a master of speculative fiction. Her fiction often explores imaginary worlds that disrupt societal and moral boundaries. The story "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" showcases a utopian city built upon a moral compromise. The hidden suffering of the child is an event that disrupts the illusion of utopia in the grand narrative. "The event occurs

when the subject is thrown into the world of the differend, where there is no discourse that can fully capture it. The event opens the possibility of new forms of knowledge” (Lyotard, 1984, p. 83). The event creates a difference, the crisis of conscience, where ethical choices individuals must make to confront the truth about their society’s foundations. This differs from moral choice and tension, and whether to accept or reject the moral cost of prosperity remains at the story’s heart. The perfection of the city is built on lies. It is a strong critique of the ethical compromises inherent in modern capitalist societies that claim to provide happiness for the majority at the expense of a marginalised group or individuals.

Postmodernism is deeply sceptical of universal truth and grand narratives. “The loss of the metanarrative is one of the central features of postmodernism, where multiple small narratives, or ‘mini-narratives,’ are seen as more valid and relevant than overarching grand narratives” (Hassan, 1987, p. 90). It offers a critical eye through which the story’s events can be dissected and appreciated. Jean Francois Lyotard provides a theoretical framework in his seminal work, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979). Postmodernism champions the mini-narratives over the metanarratives. Thus, it celebrates plurality, diversity, and inclusivity. In Garcia Marquez’s story, “The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World”, the appearance of a drowned man on the shores of a community acts like an Event that challenges the villagers’ perceptions and expectations. The story engages with the postmodern theme of identity, otherness, and transformative power of the event. The study explores how the event within the narrative serves as a microcosm for the postmodern critique. It unravels the fabric of the community’s shared reality and weaves it anew with threads of desire, myths, and imagination. The current work showcases how Garcia Marquez employs story as a medium and vehicle for critiquing the limitation of the narrative of modernity. The current research enriches the discourse on postmodernism and literary critique. It uncovers how these narratives challenge normative frames and contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding modernity and postmodernism.

Previous critical studies have discussed postmodern themes in literature and often focused on the deconstruction of grand narratives and the subversion of established norms and traditions. However, few researchers and critics have undertaken a comparative study of Garcia Marquez and Le Guin’s short fiction from a postmodern perspective to dissect the transformative potential of the event within the narrative. The study bridges the gap by examining Garcia

Marquez and Le Guin's stories, discovering the power of the event. It criticises the social norms and the metanarratives projected by modernity and challenges readers' perceptions. The study deepens the understanding of postmodernism and its implication for short fiction analysis.

Research Objectives

1. To identify and analyse the postmodern notions of the event and the differend within the narratives of Garcia Marquez's "The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World" and Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" that disrupt the Grand narratives of modernity.
2. To compare how Gabriel García Márquez and Ursula K. Le Guin employ postmodern notions of the event and the differend in their short stories, focusing on their differing approaches to transformation and ethical dilemmas

Research Questions

1. How do the postmodern notions of the events and the differend in Gabriel García Márquez's "The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World" and Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" challenge established norms and traditions of modernity within their respective narratives?
2. How do García Márquez and Le Guin depict the event and the differend, and what do these representations reveal about their views on societal change and moral complexity?

Significance of the Study

This paper is a significant contribution to the understanding of the postmodern paradigm. It expands not only the scholarly discourse of modernity but also the postmodern idea of the event and the differend. The research showcases how events within the narrative challenge and subvert established norms and traditions. The event disrupts conventional social expectations of beauty, identity, and values. It also highlights short fiction's scope for discussing philosophical ideas of modernity, paradigm shift, and postmodernism. This also underscores that the event deconstructs the social construction of reality — as a disruptor of grand narratives. It deepens our appreciation of postmodernist aesthetics, ethics, and philosophical underpinnings of literary experimentation. The current study is significant because it bridges literature with philosophy

and cultural studies by incorporating theoretical insights from postmodernism and textual analysis. It shows how postmodern short fiction can serve as the site of philosophical inquiry and artistic reflections. It also underscores the importance of the critical study of short stories to explore complex ideas and re-evaluate social values. The study enriches the existing scholarship by offering a comparative postmodernist analysis of these two texts. Specifically, this study addresses the lack of research on how the concepts of the ‘event’ and ‘differend’ as proposed by Lyotard, disrupt traditional utopian visions and challenge modernity’s grand narrative.

Literature Review

Many scholars and writers have recently focused on criticising grand narratives. Authors often embrace relativism and experimental narrative techniques. In his seminal book, *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean Francois Lyotard displays the world’s transformation to the disbelief towards metanarratives. Postmodernism questions the basic principles of modernity and its utopian promises. The current study analyses Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s “The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World” and Ursula Le Guin’s “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” to highlight the postmodern debate, themes, and challenges. “The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World” was first translated into English and published in *Leaf Storm* in 1972. One of the recent collections in English, *The Short Stories of Gabriel Garcia Marquez* (2009), includes *Leaf Storm*. On the other hand, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” by Ursula K. Le Guin was first published in the *New Dimensions 3* anthology in 1973. The most updated publication of Ursula K. Le Guin’s short story in 2017 is in a collection titled *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas: The Complete Short Stories of Ursula K. Le Guin*.

Marquez is famous for using magical realism, a postmodern technique that dismantles the modernist stable world. Magical realism becomes the tool to disrupt the modernist narrative. It offers a means to explore the coexistence of the real and the fantastical in a way that questions the nature of reality itself (Faris, 1995). Garcia Marquez blurs the lines between the real and the surreal; thus, in this way, he challenges the reader’s perception of reality (Zamora & Faris, 1995). The drowned man’s appearance in the village happened to be an event that catalysed the examination of concepts of otherness, identity, and community, which are pivotal to postmodern thought. Scholars have studied Garcia’s narrative techniques and highlighted how Garcia Marquez subverts traditional notions of strength, beauty, and social structure (Bell-Villada,

1990). These subversions indicate postmodernism and its emphasis on the role of narrative in constructing reality (Hutcheon, 1988).

The Postmodern Condition (1979) is a seminal book by French author Jean-Francois Lyotard. In it, Lyotard introduced the concept of “incredulity towards metanarratives,” which signals a shift away from grand, all-encompassing accounts of reality and toward fragmented, pluralistic perspectives. This foundational concept has influenced literary analyses. Gabriel Garcia Marquez is often linked with the postmodern concept of magical realism, where reality is blurred with myth. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) and shorter fiction like “The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World”, he challenges readers’ perceptions of truth and reality and subverts conventional storytelling.

A second important feature of postmodern thought is that it critiques modernity’s utopian ideologies. Ursula K. Le Guin’s short fiction questions utopian ideals and grand progressive narrative. By portraying ethical dilemmas, she exposes the hidden dark side of modernity to the readers. A Latin American thinker, Walter D. Mignolo, in his work, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (2011), showcases modernity’s evil side, exploitation, slavery, and the dehumanisation of others. The prosperous side of the Western world is dependent on the dark side of the exploitation, cruelty, and slavery of others. It reflects the postmodern scepticism toward idealised constructs. The intersection of philosophy and literature has been instrumental in shaping arguments on postmodernism. The works of Roland Barthes, Derrida, and Michel Foucault inform critical approaches that emphasise the deconstruction of myths and the dismantling of meta-narratives. They advocate for the plurality of meanings in any text rather than believing that a text presents a single reality or fixed meanings. Scholars such as Fredric Jameson and Linda Hutcheon have also explored the phenomenon of events and their potential to disrupt normative structures of ethics and aesthetics. Hassan (1987) writes, “The loss of the metanarrative is one of the central features of postmodernism, where multiple small narratives, or ‘mini-narratives,’ are seen as more valid and relevant than overarching grand narratives” (p. 90). The present study focuses on the notions of Lyotard because Jameson’s idea centres around cognitive mapping, and Hutcheon’s notion focuses on historiographic metafiction. Lyotard notions provide frameworks for the current study to understand the subversive power of events in the narratives of the selected works.

Garcia Marquez is widely known for his creative and magical realism. This technique binds the real with the fantastical—scholars such as Narun Hahr and Md. Abdul Momen Sarker (2018) explored Marquez’s technique of magical realism in his works. They argue that this technique undermines the static nature of reality. Some scholars also connected his magical realism to existential themes. In his study, Muganiwa, J. (2014) examines *Strange Pilgrims* by Gabriel García Márquez by focusing on the portrayal of women in the short fiction. It studied the complexities of female characters in various roles, from housewives to prostitutes. It explains Marquez’s treatment of gender and societal expectations.

In contrast, Ursula K. Le Guin’s works engage with utopian themes. Alief M. Fiandana (2019) examines the themes of happiness in her fiction. Fiandana uses Wolfgang Iser’s Reception Theory to explore how endings confront boundaries. Other scholars, such as Manuel Sousa Oliveira (2022), studied Le Guin’s discourse, which criticised the utilitarian logic of ‘greatest good for the greatest number of people. Sousa, M. S. (2022), in her article, examines ethical dimensions of happiness in “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” by Ursula K. Le Guin and “Torching the Dusties” by Margaret Atwood. She studied the moral consequences of a utopian society.

Research Gap

Many studies have been conducted individually on Garcia Marquez’s or Le Guin’s works, but none have undertaken a comparative examination from a postmodern lens. The study fills this gap by juxtaposing the narratives of these two writers. The study fills a gap in existing scholarship by offering a comparative postmodernist analysis of these two texts, both of which have been explored individually but rarely in relation to each other through the lens of Jean-François Lyotard’s theory of the event and differend. The current research aims to deepen the understanding of postmodern critique and its implications for contemporary short fiction analysis.

Research Methodology

The study examines the narratives of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Ursula K. Le Guin through the lens of postmodernism. It employs qualitative research methods to understand the events within the narratives. The research integrates postmodernism, narrative analysis, and short

fiction to elucidate how authors dismantle modernity's grand narrative and challenge the established norms. The researchers take two short stories, "The Most Handsome Drowned-Droned Man in the World" and "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas", for close textual analysis. These short stories serve as the primary texts for an in-depth study. The critical inquiry focuses on the power of the event within the narrative.

The current paper employs postmodern literary analysis, which is principally based on Lyotard's notions regarding narratives and critique of grand narratives. Within this framework, the study used narratives and themes to analyse where the differences in the events in the narratives of the selected texts are examined, as well as how they challenge traditional hegemonic structures. Lyotard's postmodern notions of the event as a disruptor of fixed meanings and the differed, unresolvable tension between different forms of expression are central to this study. The idea of disruption plays a central role. It argues that events within the stories disrupt conventional understandings of values and ideas and thus reflect postmodern scepticism towards universal truths. The study seeks to understand how these stories offer multiple, often conflicting interpretations and highlight reality's fragmented and plural nature. This text critiques the Western ideology of modernity. The analysis evaluates the text's reconsideration of the accepted truths.

Method of Analysis

The researchers read both texts closely from the postmodern lens and took textual excerpts from these two short stories to systematically analyse the themes and narratives. A criterion for selecting these excerpts will include their representation of postmodern elements such as:

The Differend: Instances where the narrative presents conflicting or fragmented perspectives.

The Event: Moments that reflect Lyotard's concept of the "event" as a disruption in the narrative flow or a shift in the understanding of reality.

Subversion of Grand Narratives: Passages that disrupt traditional ideas of progress, utopia, or social harmony.

Comparative Analysis: The study compares the two texts and demonstrates how both exemplify postmodern challenges to universal truths.

The study employs a postmodern theoretical framework for narrative analysis. The focus is on the deconstruction of meaning within the text. The researchers identified the key events in both stories that deconstructed the established norms. The analysis shows how both stories problematise the traditional binaries and ideals of modernist thinking. The study dismantles that binary to reveal their constructedness. The narrative is interpreted and contextualised within a broader debate of modernity's grand narrative, utopian worlds, and postmodernist views of fragmentation, plurality, and mini-narratives.

The current study is grounded in Jean Francois Lyotard's postmodern theory of events, differences, incredulity towards metanarratives, and metafiction. These perspectives and notions inform the framework and guide the interpretation of the text, the identification of the event within the narrative, and its disruptive impact on the grand narrative and morality topics.

The study employs a conceptual postmodern framework to identify the events that dismantle and subvert modern grand narratives and challenge the normative societal constructive myths of progress and the ideal world. The narrative is interpreted from Lyotard's postmodern notions of the event and the differend. Close reading gives the researchers a general understanding of the narrative structure and themes. Then, the text will be identified according to two themes: mini-narrative, fragmentation, and incredulity towards grand narratives. At the last stage, the text is given a broader postmodern critique, especially concerning Lyotard's theory.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, this paper is rooted in postmodern thought, particularly in the notions of Jean Francois Lyotard. Lyotard (1984) asserts that the postmodern era is characterised by an "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 24). Lyotard gives us a lens through which the study analyses Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World" and Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas". Postmodernism encounters the metanarratives that purport to offer universal truths with scepticism. This incredulity aligns with the events to subvert the traditional societal norms and present a reality that defies the simple categorisation of things often presented by modernity as the natural order of things. Postmodernists look at the modernist version of reality and societal construction with ambiguity and uncertainty.

Lyotard's Postmodernism

Jean-Francois Lyotard is a French philosopher and theorist whose seminal work, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), critiques modernity, its reliance on grand narratives, and its projection of illusions of progress and utopias as universal fixed truths. Lyotard (1984) defines, "The postmodern condition is not a new historical period, but the state of knowledge in a culture dominated by the science of information and the uncertainty that accompanies this transition" (p. 3). The power of discourse legitimises modernity and hides the darker side of modernity by the power of rhetoric. On the other hand, incredulity towards metanarratives is the central notion of postmodernism, which challenges the grand notions of reality that attempt to explain and justify the social, cultural, and philosophical systems. Lyotard's concepts destabilise and disrupt narratives that attempt to provide totalising or universal explanations about art, literature, politics, and history. Through these disruptions, the primary aim of Lyotard's philosophy is to highlight different voices and alternate ways of epistemology and identity. "In the postmodern age, knowledge is no longer validated by a single master narrative but through a variety of smaller, more localised narratives, each with its own legitimacy" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 37).

By presenting 'the unrepresentable', art and literature transform established ways of writing or presenting the world. Through testifying to the existence of differences, the critic can open up new possibilities for thought and action and allow the voices threatened with silence to be heard. "Investigation of the signs of history can discover those points at which the grand narratives of modernity are called into question and ways are opened to more pluralist modes of thinking history and the present. In each of these cases, the occurrence of a sublime moment, differend or sign has the status of an event" (Malpas, 2003, pp.103-104). In *An Answer to the Question: What is the Postmodern?* he compares the postmodern artist to a philosopher, arguing that the postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher:

The text he writes or the work he creates is not, in principle, governed by pre-established rules ... Such rules and categories are what the work or text is investigating. Therefore, the artist and the writer work without rules to establish the rules for what will have been made. This is why the work and the text can take on the properties of an event. (Lyotard, 1992, p. 15)

Key Concepts

Incredulity towards Metanarratives & Grand Narratives

Lyotard criticises modernity's reliance on grand narratives such as emancipation, progress, or enlightenment. He argues that these narratives oversimplify complex realities and exclude marginalised voices. Postmodernism embraces plurality, inclusivity, and border thinking. It rejects a totalising explanation of history, culture, and society.

Postmodern art was described as a means by which this silencing exclusion could be indicated and exposed. Through formal experimentation, postmodern art and literature can present the fact of the unrepresentable's existence and force the recognition that art can be disorienting, that it has the potential actively to question received ideas about reality and challenge the genres of discourse that emerge with them. (Malpas, 2003, p. 87).

Postmodern art presents the unrepresentable and focuses on the event, the sublime moment, to evaluate the established truth or reality. It is experimental and challenging to the edifice of modernity. "the very basis of each of the great narratives of emancipation has, so to speak, been invalidated over the last fifty years" (Lyotard, 1989, p. 318).

The Event

Bill Readings, one of the most incisive commentators on Lyotard's work, defines the event in the following manner:

An event is an occurrence, as such ... That is to say, the event is the fact or case that something happens, after which nothing will ever be the same again. The event disrupts any pre-existing referential frame within which it might be represented or understood. The eventhood of the event is the radical singularity of happening, the 'it happens', as distinct from the sense of 'what is happening.' (Readings 1991, p. 31).

The difference between 'something happens' and 'what happens' is crucial. To say 'what happens' means to have already understood the meaning of an event, to have drawn it into consciousness, and to fit it into the discourse. On the other hand, the 'something happens' calls for a receptivity to the event itself, a reaction to it that is not guided by pre-given guidelines, and a questioning of those genres of discourse that appear unable to fit the event into their schemes of thought. "In this form of response, the event resists representation (it is, in itself,

unpresentable), yet it challenges those established modes of representation as they attempt to suppress its strangeness. This distinction between the ‘something’ and the ‘what’ is the basis for Lyotard’s philosophy of the event” (Malpas, 2003, p. 101).

This notion of the event is vital to Lyotard’s thought. It marks the point at which something happens that can shatter prior ways of explaining and making sense of the world and calls for new modes of experience and different forms of judgment. “The event might be as simple as a painting or a poem, or as complex and world-changing as Auschwitz or the French Revolution” (Malpas, 2003, p. 101).

Differend

Lyotard proposed the notion of ‘differend’ to underscore the inherent conflict and contradictions foregrounded when different language games or discourses intersect. The “differend” highlights language’s limitations and the challenges of expressing the incommensurable (Lyotard, 1984). It highlights the fragmentation and complexity of contemporary society, where diverse and multiple perspectives, viewpoints, and narratives coexist without resolution. Lyotard describes a differend as “the unstable state of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be” (Lyotard, 1988a, p. 13). The primary focus of postmodern writers and analysts is to discover the text’s differences. This, Lyotard argues, is the role of the postmodern thinker: “What is at stake in a literature, in a philosophy, in politics perhaps, is to bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them” (Lyotard, 1988a, p. 13). Lyotard based his notions on Ludwig Wittgenstein’s ideas of ‘language games’ to show the diversity of linguistic practices and the multiplicity of stories and narratives that shape the reality in which we live. Every reality is socially created and then seminated by modernity as the only explanation. Postmodernism sees narratives as context-dependent and as interpretations of the truth. It resists fixed meanings, the absolute truths, and the utopian accounts of reality.

Applying Lyotard's Postmodern Framework to Narrative Analysis

Narrative Disruptions

The event within the narrative disrupts the text and demonstrates incredulity toward conventional expectations and norms. Disruptions also challenge the reader's expectations and destabilise the established way of interpretation, leading to critical engagement.

Fragmentation and Plurality

Postmodernism is sceptical of universal truths, and it recognises the voices at the borders and perspectives on the margins. It underscores the constructed nature of meanings and invites readers to navigate their paradoxical nature. Postmodern aesthetics and ethics emphasise the need to accept diverse experiences and pose challenges to the hegemonic discourses that perpetuate hierarchies.

Garcia Marquez's story disrupts the notion of identity, beauty, and community by introducing a fantastical event that dismantles village norms, values and traditions. On the other hand, Le Guin's story exposes ethical dilemmas of societal contradictions to prompt questions about the utopian ideals of Western modernity. Lyotard's focus on fragmentation, plurality, and incredulity towards metanarratives offers a lens through which we can interpret the events and their disruptive values in Garcia Marquez and Le Guin's narratives within the context of postmodern discourse.

Data Analysis

Textual Analysis of García Márquez's Narrative

The analysis begins with closely examining García Márquez's narrative, emphasising key events and themes that align with postmodern aesthetics.

Event as Disruption

In "The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the arrival of the drowned man proves to be a disruption in the conventional beliefs and norms of the village. "His beauty was so excessive that it seemed unreal" (Márquez, 1968, p. 64). This showcases how the drowned man's appearance challenges the villagers' established notions of beauty. "For the drowned man had a face and a body of perfect proportions and a skin of smooth,

polished leather as if he were made for eternal youth” (Márquez, 1968, p. 64). This detailed description reinforces the drowned man’s unrealistic appearance and its disruption of the villagers’ understanding of beauty.

It functions as an event, in the sense defined by Jean-Francois Lyotard. For him, an event is something that disrupts the established narrative. It is a turn that challenges existing epistemology. In this case, it can be noticed that the villagers’ sense of beauty is confined to their usual and subjective understanding and experience of it. Drowned man, however, becomes the source of dismantling their limited apprehension of beauty. It happened to be an event for their limited idea of beauty. The drowned man, with his outlandish features, shatters their concept of attractiveness. “No one dared to remember the stench” (Márquez, 1968, p. 65). It emphasises the villagers’ prioritisation of aesthetics over the unpleasant reality of the drowned man’s state. The narrative challenges the notion of a universal standard of beauty propagated by Western modernity and showcases the subjective nature of perception. “We should have built something with it” (Márquez, 1968, p. 67). It reflects the villagers’ shift in focus from practicality to aesthetics.

The people of the villages project their desires onto the drowned man. He appears as a blank slate, a mirror reflecting their dreams and aspirations. “They saw reflected in his beautiful drowned eyes the immense indifference of nature” (Márquez, 1968, p. 66). It reflects the “difference” created by his arrival. Lyotard (1984) introduces the concept of the “differend” - an event or experience that cannot be fully grasped or communicated through existing language. Multiple notions appear and subvert the idea of a fixed and ideal self. It shows that identity is a story, a fiction, a construct. This event threw the community into disarray and disrupted their ideology. “They felt frustrated at the lack of explanation for his presence” (Márquez, 1968, p. 67). It showcases the villagers’ struggle to understand the drowned man’s origin and purpose, reflecting the “differend” created by his arrival. Lyotard (1984) suggests that encountering the “differend” can catalyse critical reflection and create new forms of expression.

The community becomes obsessed with the drowned man, and his presence distracts them from their own lives. From the moment the villagers discover and bring the most handsome drowned man’s body to the village, he enjoys a central position in the lives of the inhabitants. The event disrupts the ideals of modernity: progress, advancement, salvation, and utopia. “An

event does not happen within the field of a narrative; rather, it ruptures the structure of meaning and demands a new language for its articulation” (Lyotard, 1984, p. 82). The event poses challenges to modernity. “Modern systems of thought strive to find universal answers to the questions facing society” (Malpas, 2003, p.10). It undermines the modernist idea of society working towards attaining a utopian state of complete harmony and progress by reason and logic. This story and its events critique modern ideals and grand narratives. He suggests that grand narratives fail to account for the complexities and diversity of human experience (Lyotard, 1984).

Modernity relies on its grand utopian stories of progress, development, and salvation through logic and reason only. The event or the differend appears as a question to the grand narratives of modernity. It showcases the fluidity of beauty, flexible identity, fluid social order, subjectivity, and fragmentation. “They even discussed the possibility of burying him standing up” (Márquez, 1968, p. 67). This showcases the villagers’ desire to defy the tradition and create a unique burial that reflects the drowned man’s extraordinary appearance.

The villager’s interpretations of the drowned man show subjective experience and the fragmented nature of knowledge. The event displaces the centre to the margin. It focuses on the marginalised element. The story centres around an outsider, the drowned man who reflects the postmodern interest in marginalised voices, border thinking, and neglected experiences. The event of the drowned man blurs the reality and myth. The drowned man’s exceptional beauty and unrealistic features transcend modernity’s limitations and push it toward the realm of myth. It also challenges the reader’s perception of what is real and what is myth. This disruptive event pushes what can be called fantastical into the everyday lives of the community. It transforms the villagers’ perceptions. The event sparks creativity, fluidity and possibility in the community. This enables them to see the fantastical, breaking the mundane reality. “For the first time in their history, they saw their houses as they were: sheds for sleeping and eating” (Márquez, 1968, p. 68). This emphasises the villagers’ newfound awareness of the mundane nature of their lives compared to the exceptional figure of the drowned man. The story does not discuss the drowned man’s origin but his extraordinary features. There is ambiguity and uncertainty about him. This opens the door to mythmaking and speculation and blurs the lines between reality and fantasy.

The narrative critiques the notion of absolute truth. When the villagers interpret the drowned man as the most handsome, it is entirely subjective. It dismantles modernity's idea of universalism. It challenges the notion of universal truths and highlights the role of individual perspectives. The drowned man is a blank canvas on which everyone projects their desires. It subverts the idea of fixed self-propagation by modernity. The multiple narratives and narrators undermine the notion of an omniscient narrator who presents absolute truth and compels the reader to accept reality unquestionably. Blurring myth and reality allows the reader to interpret the story differently. This undermines the notion of being single and encourages the readers to question their assumptions. Fantastical elements remind the readers that aspects of life and the universe are yet to be explored. It has many possibilities and mysteries. This challenges the modern notion of grand narratives. "Lyotard describes another form of metanarrative: the grand narratives of modernity.(Malpas, 2003, p. 25).

The event appears as a powerful tool for deconstructing absolute truths about identity, the world, and beauty. Garcia Marquez invites readers to understand reality's diverse, inclusive, and subjective nature and meanings. The story celebrates the richness and complexity of human life and experience.

The arrival of the drowned man becomes an event that transforms the established values of the village. It serves as a commentary on the societal constructs and collective identity. It shows the new ways for the community to re-evaluate its beliefs and values. Before the event, the community placed values on needs and utilitarianism. After the arrival of the drowned man, they shift their focus towards acquiring the beautiful objective of his burial. It showcases their newfound emphasis on aesthetics and external appearances. They break their daily mundane routine and show fascination with the drowned man. They prepare an elaborate burial and celebrate his arrival. The event becomes the catalyst for change. It shows the people to forge a new collective identity centred around the celebration of life and beauty.

The dismantling event forces people and readers to question their beauty standards. It shows that reality is a societal construct. The villagers' interpretations and multiple viewpoints reveal underlying creativity and individuality. The arrival of the drowned man becomes an event that disrupts their ideology and presents newness and new meanings to their world. It shows the societal constructs' dynamic nature and vulnerability to the events. Nothing is static and

absolute, as external events can trigger remarkable transformations in traditions, values, and collective identity.

2. Interpretation of Le Guin's Narrative

Ursula K. Le Guin's short fiction, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas", presents a perfect society, Omelas, but there is a chilling truth behind its prosperity: eternal suffering. When we look at the happiness and beauty of Omelas through the lens of postmodernism, it appears that happiness is built upon the child's misery. This exposes the inherent flaw in Western utopias of modernity, which prioritise some people's happiness over the misery of some individuals. It challenges the utopian ideals of Western modernity.

Le Guin's story also questions the standards of modernity. It argues that happiness built on suffering is not true happiness. It raises questions about the utilitarian ethics of Western modernity and neo-liberal capitalism. The revelation of the child's abject conditions enables the readers to face the truth behind the beautiful appearance of Omelas. "They have a grave doubt running through their minds" (Le Guin, 1974, p. 24). This highlights the internal conflict within those who are aware of the child's terrible suffering.

Lyotard questions the grand narratives and their rhetoric to bring to light the darker side of their notions of prosperity, progress, and salvation. Le Guin's narrative deconstructs the traditional utopian concepts of development, progress, and a perfect society. It exposes the inherent darkness in Western modernity's ideals based on exploitation. Her short story also highlights the elusiveness of absolute reality. This aligns with Lyotard's view of fragmented knowledge and the unreliability of the metanarratives.

"The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" questions the sense of morality. It also questions the utilitarian approach and showcases the moral dilemma of deciding whether the happiness and prosperity of the many justifies the suffering of the few. "The guilt of knowing would stun them" (Le Guin, 1974, p. 24). It suggests the moral burden placed upon those aware of the child's suffering in Omelas. The narrative invites the reader to face and contemplate the depicted moral dilemma. The narrative evaluates the utopian Western ideals. The story invites the reader to think critically. It is a postmodern condition where traditional structures become fragmented. The story offers individual choice. The characters who are not complicit walk away from Omelas. They leave behind the perfect Western utopia.

The utopian society of Omelas thrives, and the child's suffering is invisible. Individuals can live with the truth or leave behind this prosperity based on suffering. "Some swallowed their disgust" (Le Guin, 1974, p. 23). It underscores the psychological burden of knowing about the child's suffering, even for those who benefit from Omelas' prosperity. This is a moral choice. It also illustrates that Western modernity conceals its dark side through the power of discourse.

In "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas", the very presence of the suffering child characterises the event. Its (child's) unexpected introduction, almost in the middle of the story, and its worst condition shocks the readers. Moreover, it (the presence of a child) turns the grand picture of Omelas to dust. The romantic world of exuberance suddenly regurgitates its fakeness and mirage of prosperity, falling from the state of worthfulness to the state of sheer worthlessness. It questions the Omelean grandiosity by laying bare the grave truth of its reliance on the continuous horrible agony and the exploitation of a ten-year-old child. The very existence of this moral injustice turns Omelas, the land of beauty and grandeur, into a paradox.

Knowing the truth about the suffering, exploitation, and injustice forces a decision. "They would go through life carrying the knowledge of Omelas" (Le Guin, 1974, p. 25). This highlights the lasting impact of the ethical dilemma on those who choose to walk away. Walking away signifies a rejection of such happiness built on suffering and misery. This situation reflects the postmodern condition. The differend disrupts established systems of morality: "They seemed to know where they were going" (Le Guin, 1974, p. 27). It also suggests that those who walk away may search for a more just and ethical existence. It showcases no single, universal answer to the moral question. "The thought of it chilled them. They shut their minds to it" (Le Guin, 1974, p. 24). It shows the psychological defence mechanism of denial employed by those who remain in Omelas despite knowing the truth. Nevertheless, in other words, those who decide to remain in Omelas become complicit in their silence, which signifies their acceptance of the hidden suffering of that child. Those who leave Omelas show their dissent. "Leave Omelas, they thought. Leave Omelas, go away from it forever" (Le Guin, 1974, p. 25). It showcases the moral courage of some people who reject the prosperity of the majority built on the suffering of the few.

Their act disrupts modernity's façade of progress and perfection. The postmodern approach questions the grand narratives and the established structures of hierarchies. Postmodern

works are inherently disorienting: they break the rules, undermine the categories that the reader or viewer is used to, and raise the question of what art is. Furthermore, What is reality? Their very structure (Malpas, 2003, pp. 49-50). Lyotard argues that grand narratives, such as those of progress, emancipation, or enlightenment, have lost their credibility in the postmodern world. (Lyotard, 1984).

The researchers examine “The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World” and “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” through a Lyotardian lens to reveal the event within the narratives. Both stories challenge the traditional narratives of enlightenment and societal progress. The drowned man exposes the possibilities of transformation, while Omelas disrupts the utopian ideal of progress and happiness. Both stories discuss the postmodern condition. The villagers face the possibility of diverse interpretations, and Omelas faces ‘differend’ on the ethical dilemma. The postmodern condition exposes plurality and knowledge as fragmentation. Lyotard emphasises the importance of narrative plurality, where multiple and often contradictory narratives coexist (Lyotard, 1984). Both stories deconstruct the established meanings and reconstitute them anew. The drowned man leaves the reader to question the value placed on aesthetics, and Omelas presents a complex moral issue. Lyotard suggests that stories and narratives are crucial in constructing and understanding knowledge in a fragmented world (Lyotard, 1984). The postmodern notion of events poses challenges, and individuals must grapple with complexities. The event in the Drowned Man blurs the lines between myth and reality.

Omelas employs a utopian setting that later reveals a dystopian truth. The drowned man centres around the community’s transformation, while Omelas focuses on the individual’s agency. The arrival of the drowned man becomes an event in Garcia’s story, and the revelation of Omela’s secret becomes an event in Ursula’s fiction. The study explores the postmodern condition in both stories’ narratives and raises essential questions. “Postmodern art, he says, must wage a War on totality” (Lyotard, 1992,p.16).

Conclusions

The study examined both short fictions through a Lyotardian lens to gain a profound appreciation for the complexities of the postmodern world. Both stories discuss the postmodern condition from different angles. Postmodernists critique the grand narratives and embrace

diverse perspectives. The study critically evaluated the postmodern idea of the event and its potential to disrupt the idealistic notions of modernity related to beauty, social harmony, progress, and salvation. The study highlights that meanings in the postmodern world are subject to constant questioning. The event has a transformative impact on society and individuals. Disruptive events challenge the established norms and re-evaluate the identity, ethics, and societal constructs.

Garcia Marquez's story reveals the destabilising effect of the drowned man's arrival on the village. It exposes the inadequacies of modernity's standards and the fluidity of truth. Similarly, Le Guin's story presents a utopian society where the event, in the form of a hidden truth, jolted the edifice of modernity and its false promises and perfection. This scepticism towards the metanarratives is within the broader discourse of postmodern aesthetics and forces readers to question absolute truths. The denial of resolution in both narratives mirrors Lyotard's notion of the event as a disruptive force that resists closure and promotes openness and unpredictability within the literary discourse. The narratives also exemplify how storytelling can subvert dominant ideologies, reshape perceptions, and invite readers to engage critically with complex essential, aesthetic, and ethical questions.

The study employs Jean Francois Lyotard's postmodern framework to reveal the rich tapestry of shared themes and notions in both short stories. Both narratives challenge grand narratives of beauty, societal harmony, and modernity's notion of progress and salvation by highlighting the limitations of universal truths. "The Most Handsome Drowned Man in the World" utilises the event and its disruptive power through the arrival of the drowned man. On the other hand, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" employs a seemingly utopian world to explore the limitations of the grand narrative and the importance of individual agency in confronting ethical dilemmas. These stories demonstrate the enduring power of storytelling in a fragmented postmodern world. The event has no easy and final answer; they encourage us to move beyond the established narratives and embrace the complexities of human experience. This ongoing process of questioning, exploring, and encountering differences is a defining characteristic of navigating the complexities of the postmodern condition. The study highlights the importance of plurality, inclusivity, border thinking, and diverse epistemologies.

Both writers engage with postmodern notions; however, their treatment of the event and the differend is diverse. Garcia Marquez's narrative is more optimistic, presenting the event as an opportunity for transformation and reimagination. Le Guin's story in the contest showcased the event as an ethical dilemma and questioned the easy solutions provided by the grant of the idealised social structures.

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