

The Hidden Cultural Issues in Postmodernism

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ABSTRACT

Postmodernism is a complex cultural and artistic trend prevailing in the West since the 1960s. Analyzing the cultural problems contained in postmodernism itself is a key to interpret the complexity of postmodernism. This paper mainly uses literature research method, qualitative analysis method and other research methods, expounds the multiple meanings of postmodernism from three aspects of cultural orientation, cultural personality and cultural events, and discusses the ways and modes of different meanings and symbols of "culture". Postmodernism and its cultural problems show an interdependent situation. There is no such a thing as the postmodernism cultures in some countries are high and those in others countries are low in Europe and America and the third world, but an overlapping or parallel situation is presented.

Keywords: postmodernism, hidden culture, cultural issues

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the main reasons why "postmodernism" is so popular in this century, and has such a profound influence on people's thinking and behavior, is nothing more than: under its beautiful and multi-faceted appearance, there is a complex mentality of understanding, wide tolerance and multi-coexistence. And inside its beautiful body, "culture" can be said to be an important vein running through it.

Therefore, when people are discussing the artistic issues related to "postmodernism", the role of "culture" in the overall social changes has become one of the most important points that cannot be ignored.

II. "CULTURE" POSITIONING IN MULTIPLE MEANINGS

According to Raymond Williams, a famous British sociologist, in the 18th and early 19th centuries, the word "culture" had become an "individual" in its own right. By that time, it had four basic meanings by and large. The first is a general state or habit of the mind that is closely related to the idea of perfection of human. The second is the general condition of the development of wisdom and knowledge in the whole society. The third is the general state of art. The fourth is the whole lifestyle consisting of material, knowledge and spirit together. [1]^{p. 224}

Thus, when people are discussing the role of cultural concepts in the development of art today, one of the fundamental assumptions is often commonly used and accepted, that is, that the artistic expression of a period must be closely associated with the prevailing

"way of life" in the past. Or, it may be further said, that the results of these associations make things, such as aesthetics, morality, and social judgment, more closely interlinked and undivided. In fact, such assumptions are generally accepted today and have become a habit of thought. Most people, however, tend not to remember it at all: it is fundamentally a product of 19th-century thought.

Under the same noun concept, Fredric Jameson, a famous American scholar and expert on Marxism, held that "culture" have the following three meanings. The first is "the formation of character" and "the cultivation of the individual" — the product of ideas belonging to the new middle class, the concept of the Romantic Period, and also the spirit, psychological aspect of the personality. The second is all the activities of civilized human beings, showing that culture and nature are opposite to each other, which is an anthropological definition and it's also social. The third is activities related to poetry, painting, music, drama and film, etc., which are in opposition to the money activities of industry and commerce, and in conflict with the general daily work and life, so it is only a decoration. [2]^{p. 283} But it is clear that in the third interpretation, the opposing elements (artistic activity, science and technology, economy and trade) follow the forces of society today: they prove to be integrated and symbiotic. Jameson, therefore, put forward a similar question like this: when "cultural text" turns to "modernism", modernism has been clearly divided into "pure culture" and "modernization" in life and science and technology; if this is true, then how does modernism in art combine with the modern "culture" of daily life? And does it really exist? Or perhaps, from the above model, a similar question today can be quickly proposed: how

does postmodernism in art relate to the postmodern "culture" in people's lives today?

In fact, Raymond Williams wrote in his book "Culture and Society, 1780-1950" in 1963 about these kinds of questions: "'culture' would be simpler if it were only for the idea of industrialism; but the truth is quite clear: it also addresses new ideas about political and social relations, and the business of democracy. So, as far as this relationship is concerned, it is the product of a complex and radical response to the new problem of social 'class'". [3]^{P. 172} Therefore, the development of the word "culture" can be said to be a true record of people's spiritual changes in social, economic and political life, as well as the many important and continuous responses it has triggered, and, moreover, has influenced people's evolution and development on the artistic level.

III. THE CHARACTER OF "CULTURE" BEING CONSUMED

In the past, the German classical philosopher Immanuel Kant also divided human activities into three categories, which are roughly practical, epistemological and aesthetically. Since Kant, however, many aesthetes and symbolists have continued to extol the greatness of "art" and "beauty" mainly because of their isolation from the realms of commerce and science (both practical and epistemological). They seem to generally believe that "beauty" and "art" are a pure and commercial-free field. But unfortunately, the facts of history shows that this view has been completely revolutionized and destroyed in postmodernism. [4]^{P. 179}

In the postmodernism, due to the boundless advertisement, image culture, unconsciousness and so on, the capital itself and the logic of capitalism have been fully penetrated. And the form of commercialization in art, culture, unconsciousness and other abstract realms, has also been omnipresent. And in that sense, human are really at a new stage in history. In daily life, "culture" also has a different meaning and it can be all inclusive. Most of them are related to industrial life or commodities, even the political level, have been included in the sphere of influence of today's "culture".

When exploring the "consumption" personality and historical facts about the post-modern "culture", the renowned Australian social and cultural scholar John Docker or in a paper entitled "From Las Vegas to Sydney" article, for example, points out that from the perspective of the international modernism that swept the world in the 1960s and 1970s, the sail-shaped opera house in Sydney, Australia, was repudiated by the lofty modernism of the time. (The "modernism" of the time was, in today's view, a mistake of overconfidence.) And Darling Harbour itself, after breaking with the

international form of modernism in general, turns to warmly welcome and embrace the local nature — a kind of thought and behavior that covers the history and manners of a variety of nationalities and complex cultures. [5]^{P. 559} Thus it can be seen that the spiritual "consumption" of an independent "culture" is indeed enough to profoundly influence the cultural track and artistic style of a country or region.

This may be further described as that in the past, people defined "culture" as the appreciation of high-class art, music, dance, drama and other activities, and regarded it as just a way to escape from reality. However, in post-modernist thinking, "culture" has been thoroughly democratized. The distance and gap between "high" culture and "low" culture (elegant, pure, and popular, civilian) has already been gradually faded and disappeared. The logic of politicization or commercialization has profoundly influenced the way people think. This is what Frederic Jameson called "no deep culture" under the profound influence of Jean Baudrillard's views on postmodernism culture. In this regard, Jameson thinks that post-modern "culture" is a culture in a consumer society — the post-World War II stage of late capitalism. In such a society, through the infiltration of symbols and rumors, "culture" has been given a new range of meaning — any event existing in social life can be referred to as a "cultural" thing. [6]^{P. 479}

Thus, from another point of view, post-modernist "works of art" and "theory" also seem to be a kind of "commodity", because the concept of commercialization has indeed completely entered the "culture". However, this does not mean that famous artists or theorists can (or have) become rich by selling their works; on the contrary, it means that the specific cultural realm of the past has disappeared. In addition, the "culture" of postmodernism has entered people's daily life. The "culture" of postmodernism has become one of the consumer goods.

IV. "CULTURAL" EVENTS IN POSTMODERN GOODS

Before the 1990s, the idea of "discarding pessimism" had been firmly held for decades, had been thoroughly shattered, and had lost its authority — the orthodoxy of the so-called modernist popular "culture". The cultural idea is that in some of the most important works of Jean Baudrillard and Frederick Jameson, it is believed that many of their situations and trends have also moved into the present postmodernism. So, in the post-modern era, there seems to be every reason to look up the many obvious events of 2017 about "culture" in the memory of history from the perspective of Raymond Williams or Frederick Jameson and others' interpretation of "culture". Important examples include Israel's construction of a new Jewish settlement, the first conference on "comfort women" museum held in

Tokyo, the "red line" drawn by the UK in the Brexit negotiations, and the BRICS Summit in Xiamen...

V. CONCLUSION

For the most part of Europe, Asia and the United States, the cultural issues of postmodernism have covered the pulse and direction of the whole society. However, for countries and nations in the third world, "postmodernism" has not become the only strong-ism, and "culture" has not been so valued. This is because among countries and nations that are under-developed in terms of technological civilization (In fact, in the original meaning of human life, or in the spirit of divine purpose, "they" are not underdeveloped, and "we" are by no means highly civilized), "culture" is a development approach and mode with different meanings and symbols. Therefore, it is inevitable that the aforementioned multifaceted "cultural" phenomena will coexist parallel in the third world, and sometimes even sneak into the "our" world.

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