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An outlook on postmodernist elements in Jules Verne's *Doctor Ox's Experiment*

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Abstract

As a countermovement to modernism, postmodernism embraces multiple perspectives and presents a theory in which there is no singular truth. The postmodern novel also challenges the fundamental concepts of reality and truth, demonstrating how the human construction of reality allows for the creation of an unlimited number of alternate realities. The tradition of closed-ended narration buried between lines in texts has been broken, paving the space for numerous linguistic uses in literary writings. The reader is entangled in a sequence of events that generate profound meaning through the use of a variety of linguistic tricks and strategies. Thus, a postmodern novel aims to analyze literary texts through the use of techniques like irony, pastiche, intertextuality, and pluralistic viewpoints. Within this framework, *Doctor Ox's Experiment* by Jules Verne is an important work that challenges and redefines conventional literary texts. In the book, Verne's use of irony in portraying the stereotypes of the Quiquendonians, his incorporation of fictional elements to enhance the plausibility of the events in that town, and his establishment of intertextual connections, all demonstrate characteristics commonly associated with postmodernism. The objective of this study is to analyze Jules Verne's literary piece titled *Doctor Ox's Experiment* via a postmodern lens, employing the key components of postmodernism. By examining these aspects, this analysis will offer a fresh perspective on Jules Verne's work.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Postmodernism has exerted a far-reaching influence within the realm of literature in the 20th century. To put it another way, the texts generated using conventional methods during the 19th century underwent a significant transformation in the 20th century. This method challenges conventional narrative strategies and substitutes them with other approaches. In this period, writers have lost the ability to convey a specific message to their readers and skillfully guide them in the desired direction. These postmodern texts are presented through deliberate juxtapositions of contrasting elements such as the dichotomies of reality-fiction, wealth-poverty, and morality-immortality. These contradictions undermine any discourse that adheres to commonly accepted norms and conventions and challenge the notion of a fixed truth. Postmodern literature challenges conventional narrative structures and interrogates the reader's understanding of reality. Given its subject and narrative approach, this story by Verne could be seen as an example of postmodern literature. In this research, it is conducted a comprehensive analysis of Jules Verne's literary masterpiece, *Doctor Ox's Experiment*, critically examining its postmodern elements. Using a postmodern lens to analyze the text, this research illuminated several aspects of Verne's masterwork, such as the juxtaposition of several perspectives, the subversion of conventional narrative, the blurring of reality and fiction, and the use of language games. The intertextuality technique emerges as the most prominent narrative technique within this work, exemplifying its postmodern characteristics. Verne incorporates intertextuality by alluding to narratives relevant to various other literary works within the discourse. Not only do references make it easier for the reader to recall past works, but they also establish a connection between several different texts. These allusions also provide the reader with the opportunity to draw on their vast literary expertise and unearth hidden meanings. Furthermore, by incorporating historical facts into his fiction, Verne displaces the actualities of the past. By altering the facts in light of past events, it provides the reader with a fresh viewpoint. This exemplifies Verne's skill and innovative style in fiction. Verne also uses sarcasm to criticize society's folly and illusions. Readers are shown how foolish judgments are made by people in the name of scientific advancement through the use of irony. Thus, Verne highlights society's shortcomings and challenges his readers' preconceptions by employing sarcasm. It is also worth noting the author's remarkable employment of language games. Conversational dialogues and interactive language games create an immersive experience for the reader. Through the incorporation of dialogues between the reader and the narrator, Verne effectively challenges the conventional role of authorial dominance, thus granting agency to the reader in shaping the narrative.

The narrator's frequent appeals to the reader create a sense of playfulness, blurring the lines between reality and fiction. This emphasizes the author's power over the plot and guides the reader. At the same time, the narrator's interruptions serve to heighten the suspense, keeping the readers on the edge of their seats as the story unfolds. This keeps the reader engaged with the book and allows her to mentally piece together the tale. He gets drawn into the narrative in this way. The narrator's intervention creates a tense environment for readers, who eagerly anticipate the outcome of Doctor Ox's trials. There is an increase in the readers' curiosity as a result of the narrator's thorough and fascinating narration, and they develop a stronger attachment to the book to find out what happens in the conclusion. The narrative of Jules Verne's *Doctor Ox's Experiment* is replete with extraordinary occurrences that defy explanation through cause-and-effect mechanisms. The oddity that manifests itself in the actions of the individuals living in a town is where the story starts. People's behavior changes abruptly at the outset of the novel

when Doctor Ox begins delivering gas to the city. After this intriguing experiment, people exhibit increased aggression and uncontrollable events. Tensions and disputes emerge as a result of the upheaval to the town's social order. Jules Verne's intricately designed plot keeps the reader glued to the book's pages and compels her to eagerly turn to the next page. The reader is prompted to reflect and pose questions about the world in which he lives as a result of these series of events. Verne's lush language and captivating storytelling make this novel remarkable and unique. This article examines how postmodernism is employed in Jules Verne's *Doctor Ox's Experiment*. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated how Verne's use of language and storytelling can create an outstanding experience when mixed with postmodernism. Consequently, this study will contribute to our comprehension of the influence of postmodernism on literature and demonstrate how Jules Verne's writing is enhanced by a postmodern perspective.

Keywords: Conventional, Fictional, Postmodernism, Reader.

INTRODUCTION

According to Anderson, Federico de Onis coined the term postmodernism to refer to a conservative response to modernism in 1930. It signifies a tendency to seek refuge from the overwhelming demands of modernism. Instead, it embraces a more subdued approach characterized by intricate details and ironic touches (Anderson, 1998, p. 4). Multiple views also exist on postmodernism as a modernist extension. One such example is Hutcheon's assertion that modernism and postmodernism are inextricably linked. She suggests that their connection is intricate and characterized by a web of outcomes, distinctions, and independence. (Hutcheon, 1995, p. 38). However, as time passed this term underwent a conceptual shift, encompassing social, cultural, and historical transformation. Anderson suggests that it took about twenty years for the term to be used "as an epochal rather than aesthetic category" (1998, p. 5). In the 1950s the term postmodernism was influenced by the significant changes occurring in Western society. Toynbee considered the Franco-Prussian War as a significant event marking the beginning of the postmodern age. In their work, *The Postmodern Turn*, Steven Best and Douglas Kellner argue that the 1960s marked a significant turning point in postmodernism. A new emphasis on difference and multiplicity emerged, advocated by postmodern theorists (1997, p. 4-5). Fiedler sees postmodernism as a refreshing and welcome change. In the 1960s, he celebrates the emergence of postmodernism as a positive development among the younger generation in America. These "cultural mutants" as described by Fiedler deviated from traditional historical narratives and embraced values of nonchalance and disconnection which were found in postmodern literature (Anderson, 1998, p. 13). During the mid-1980s, postmodernism made a significant impact on a variety of disciplines including literature, politics, and architecture. It was at this time when long-held beliefs started to fade away and new ways of thinking gained traction.

One of the defining characteristics of postmodernism lies in its rejection of the absolute truth. Postmodernists argue that reality is constantly shifting and there is no single and definite truth

that applies to all situations. This philosophical stance contradicts the modernist view of universal truths and objectivity. For Sim, skepticism undermines and casts upon the claims made by the other philosophical perspectives (p. 3). This perspective challenges the dichotomous categorization approach that establishes rigid divisions by associating individuals with specific labels such as good-bad, white-black, and ugly-beautiful. Postmodernism encourages an open and equal world where there is no room for exclusion and privileging one over another. In this regard, postmodernism aims to question, reevaluate, and bring attention to all ideas and perspectives that were previously marginalized, and disregarded. It is aptly described by Rosenau in his book called *Post Modernism and Social Sciences*. According to him, postmodern social scientists call for an examination of the boundaries and shed light on overlooked aspects of society such as marginalized communities, traditional beliefs, and the eccentric and sublimated elements of human nature (Rosenau, 1992, p. 8).

The fundamental stance of postmodernism towards reality is highlighted by its rejection of sustained realism. Rather than conforming to any existing system or suggesting a new one, postmodernism takes on a lighthearted approach to keep its core beliefs. In other words, by deconstructing the established system and refusing to propose an alternative framework, postmodernism embraces the intricacies and contradictory nature of things (Butler, 2002, p. 37). In this sense, the literary texts are not a mere reflection of reality but rather a deliberate distortion and restriction perception of it. In these postmodern texts, the representation of reality is individual perspectives and interpretations, thereby instilling a sense of skepticism about the nature of reality itself. The divergent nature of these literary works amplifies the elusive nature of reality, ultimately muddling the reader's comprehension of reality. According to Barthes, literature lost its status as a socially privileged form of communication, but rather as a language that encompasses hidden complexities, resembling both a dream and a potential threat (Barthes, 1968, p. 3). The reader is no longer able to grasp the truth. What he encounters are fragmented and fictional statements lacking profound meaning. The traditional role of the author and the intended meaning of a text are discarded. The text takes on a life of its own, free of any preconceived notions or symbolic interpretations. The act of writing, according to Barthes has undergone a series of transformations, shifting from being observed to being actively engaged in and even destroyed. Writing has now reached a final transformation in our present time (Barthes, 1968, p. 5). He implies that this transformation leaves room for more investigation and interpretation.

One of the distinguishing characteristics observed in postmodern texts is that the author takes a back seat while the reader takes the central stage. The focal point of the narrative is no longer confined to either the author or the text itself; instead, it places the reader at its core. “No longer is the reader a passive subject to be entertained, instructed, or amused. S/he is given the freedom to attribute meaning to the text without consequence or responsibility” (Rosenau, 1992, p. 25). The texts are not solely the product of one author, instead, they become subject to numerous possible meanings, allowing readers to derive their own unique meanings from them. As Allen implies: “ideas are not presented as finished, consumable products, but are presented in such a way as to encourage readers themselves to step into the production of meaning” (2000, p. 34). Creating an impression of incompleteness in novels is a prevalent motif observed in postmodern texts. Through the intricate language games, the author invites the reader to develop meanings, drawing on their own experiences, and imagination. This approach allows for a departure from traditional linear narratives and embraces a more open-ended and ambiguous style. Thus, postmodern texts resist the traditional notions of a text that has a definite conclusion, instead emphasizing the active participation of the reader in constructing the textual meaning. This is confirmed by David Lodge’s words. “We can’t see the closed ending of the traditional novel that the truth is revealed and the fate has been determined, nor the open ending of the modernist novel that is satisfying but not ending” (Lodge, 1987, p. 45). The idea of “flattening time into a space” is a way to disrupt the linear progression of time and create a sense of timelessness. (Connor, 1997, p. 172). As the fragmented nature of time allows for subjective experiences, the readers bring their experiences into the completion of the story (Connor, 1997, p. 172). Thus, the reader is encouraged to use their imagination to complete the missing pieces and unfinished endings. The reader’s subjective interpretation of a text results in a multitude of interpretations. In this sense, Deeds emphasizes the profound role of language in shaping our perception of time and consciousness. She suggests that time is no longer merely a passive element, but rather an active force intertwined with the functioning of the language (1992, p. 140). Put another way, language acts as a lens through which we view the passage of time and the world around us.

Postmodernism does not emerge as a direct reaction against the established art forms and beliefs. It embraces diverse elements from various styles, cultures, and periods, fostering a more unique and eclectic aesthetic. This approach reevaluates and reinterprets previous works, lifestyles, and perspectives through the lens of a new narrative. The incorporation of earlier works into new ones is a prevalent technique in postmodern literature. This intertextual technique with its objective of challenging preexisting thoughts and perceptions serves to enhance interconnectedness among diverse literary works. In this regard, intertextuality

assumes a pivotal role within every postmodern text. The employment of this technique in postmodern texts can stem from the notion that all possible ideas have already been expressed, which leaves little room for originality. All written materials are essentially repetitions of previously constructed texts in the most profound sense (Rosenau, 1992, p. 36). Harvey emphasizes the Interconnectedness of texts and words in both the creation and interpretation process. According to him, writers draw inspiration and are influenced by the texts they come across, which subsequently mold their own works. In a similar vein, readers interact with the texts based on their prior experiences with other texts, so contributing to the ongoing process of text creation (Harvey, 1990, p. 49). Texts can draw inspiration from a wide range of sources, including novels, mythological narratives, and historical events. However, it should be noted that the author deliberately makes connections to other texts, whether through allusions or direct references. Instead of simply mimicking them, the author places reference texts in different contexts, resulting in unique and fresh texts.

Pastiche is a literary technique that involves the imitation of an author's writing style, themes, and techniques. Fletcher emphasizes the unique nature of pastiche as a creative practice. By striking a balance between originality and replication, it allows artists to produce something new and unique (2017, p. 43). Thus, the authors take inspiration from previous works and reinterpret them using their own language and expression style. As a result, they create a fresh work that makes reference to the original text while still bearing the hallmarks of the author's unique style and creative vision.

For Jameson, pastiche, as a form of imitation, does not intend to evoke laughter but rather focuses on imitation without any profound meaning behind it. It involves the blending of different historical styles without any specific reference. He further argues that this trend reflects the importance of "neo" in post-modern society (Jameson, 1997, p. 23). The art of mimicry is free from any limitations imposed by rules. Thus, it has the freedom to combine different styles and periods. This results in a revival of historical novels where the past is artificially constructed and blended with realistic and fantastical elements (Anderson, 1998, p. 61).

Irony is also essential to postmodern writing. It is a form of expression that goes beyond literal meaning. It occurs when the intended meaning is contradicted by the context in which it is used either deliberately or unknowingly. Acknowledging that meanings are not absolute but rather subject to several interpretations, we become conscious of the remnants of previous and possible applications that words possess. Thus, irony is more than just cynicism and mockery;

rather, it is a sign that you understand how ideologies shape reality (Nicol, 2009, p. 13). It is used in postmodern texts and serves as a counterpoint to criticize the beliefs of modernism. Ironic discourse has been extensively used in postmodern texts to subvert the solemn tone of modern texts. It has the power to disrupt the established norms and groups by challenging the norms of society and the language used in everyday life (Colebrook, 2005, p. 150). The loss of trust in general validity and tradition compelled the readers to critically examine their own beliefs and assumptions. According to Wayne C. Booth in his book *A Rhetoric of Irony* irony functions as an invitation for individuals to nurture a sense of skepticism and challenge prevailing beliefs. “Irony is usually seen as something that undermines certainties, opens up vistas of chaos, and either liberates by destroying all dogma or destroys by revealing the inescapable canker of negation at the heart of every affirmation” (1975, p. ix). Thus, irony has the capacity to bring about emancipation due to its subversive nature, it also bears the risk of disastrous effects.

One more essential characteristic of postmodernism is that it offers to reevaluate the past. To put it another way, historical facts, sources, and explanations cannot be confined to the subjective discourse and are susceptible to many interpretations. Accordingly, Ankersmit discusses traditional and postmodern historical views. For him, the postmodernist regards evidence as a tool for examining many historical interpretations, whereas the modernists views evidence as a way to find out what really happened in the past. As an example to further illustrate his points, Ankersmit uses the metaphor of tiles. The tile is seen by the modernist as an opportunity to reveal hidden truths and depths. For postmodernists, the tile is a stepping stone to explore other possibilities. This symbolizes a new approach to knowledge and comprehension. (1994, p. 172). According to Iggers, historical accounts are constructed through language, highlighting the importance of the subjective nature of historical narratives (2009, p. 123). Postmodern novels therefore seek to investigate numerous previously discussed subjects from a fresh angle. The authors in postmodern novels reinterpret and reassess another author’s work in relation to its narrative, content, and protagonist. Therefore, authors distort and misrepresent historical facts, which enables readers to draw parallels between stories told in the past and those told in the present.

DISCUSSION

One prominent theme in postmodernism is the reevaluation of historical events and the blurring of boundaries between reality and fiction. Throughout the story, Verne elevates the narrative to a metafictional realm, immersing the reader within the confines of a fictional world. He

strategically employs historical elements as a means to construct his fictional narrative. Verne's approach to history diverges from the conventional perspective. He presents an interpretation of the historical events through a lens of skepticism. He incorporates fictional historical events into his storytelling, presenting them as if they were actual occurrences. From the first lines, the writer provides the reader with an imaginary description of the town of Quiquendone and its inhabitants. The writer expresses his curiosity about the absence of a town called Quiquendone on modern maps. He suggests that this fascinating town is not recognized in any atlases, guides, historical records, and chronicles. With the sentences starting with "If you try to find, on any map of Flanders, ancient or modern, the small town of Quiquendone, probably you will not succeed. Is Quiquendone, then, one of those towns which have disappeared? No." (Verne, 1875, p. 1). He witnesses a moment where the boundaries of reality is shattered. This moment of reality breaking disrupts the reader's perception of reality and invites them to question the reliability of sources of knowledge such as maps. By providing specific dates and locations such as the laying of the first stone in 1197 by Count Baldwin and the town's position between Oudcnarde and Bruges, Verne adds a sense of historical authenticity to the story. The principal industry of this town is whipped cream and barley sugar, which suggests that the town is prosperous. He also tries to make the story feel more realistic by describing the characteristics of the people of Quiquendone. By emphasizing their wisdom, prudence, and hospitality, the writer gives the reader a sense of what the people in this town are like. (1875, p. 2). This helps to create a more believable setting for the story.

Verne employs the intertextual technique of postmodernism in the novel, which enables the reader to comprehend the text more fully. Intertextuality manifests through allusion to other literary works, thereby expecting the reader's familiarity with those works to fully grasp the significance of the text. Without prior knowledge regarding the referenced situation, the identification of such references becomes considerably challenging for readers. Verne employs insinuations rather than explicit references to certain events in the story, compelling the reader to possess a certain level of literary understanding. For example, Doctor Faustus, written by Christopher Marlowe is an exceedingly ambitious scholar. His quest for unfathomable knowledge and power drives him to make a deal with the devil, exchanging his soul for twenty years of unlimited power. He uses his knowledge for selfish and sinister purposes. Similarly, Doctor Ox conducts an experiment to manipulate the emotions of the Quiquendone town through the use of gas, which leads to disastrous and unforeseen outcomes. Both characters go to extremes in pursuit of their own desires. Both of them challenge the established system and push boundaries either through experimentation or the pursuit of forbidden knowledge.

Another aspect of postmodernism is its ability to break down traditional narratives and make the reader doubt and wonder. This challenges the notion of a single authoritative voice. For the most part of the book, narrator directly addresses readers and invites them to be more active in the story. In the book, the narrator raises several intriguing questions about Dr Ox's proposition to conduct an experiment and questions why he specifically chooses the peaceful town of Quiquendone to introduce his unheard-of lighting system. He also acknowledges that the exact nature of his plans remains unknown as he only confides in his devoted assistant Yygene (1875, p. 21). In this regard, it is possible to say that the omniscient position of the author was shattered by the diminishing of his power, which allowed both the reader and himself to explore imagination. Rather than adopting an all-knowing attitude, he develops into a writer who approaches observations and accounts with skepticism. Phrases like "I know not" (p. 30), "I cannot say why" (p. 89), "that I cannot tell" (p. 2), "or is it" (p. 2) let the reader feel he is in the story while simultaneously keeping him in the same line as the narrator which allows both to perceive the story from a similar perspective. These phrases in the text obscure reality while demonstrating that the narrator is not more knowledgeable than the reader. For example, in chapter four, the narrator assumes a non-traditional narrative approach by directly addressing the reader, thereby indicating a departure from the conventional omniscient narrator who possesses superior knowledge.

Who, then, was this personage, known by the singular name of Doctor Ox... Was Doctor Ox rich, then, that he should undertake to light a whole town at his expense? Probably, as he permitted himself to indulge in such extravagance,—and this is the only answer we can give to this indiscreet question... Why had he, of all the Flemings, selected the peaceable Quiquendonians, to endow their town with the benefits of an unheard-of system of lighting? (Verne, 1875, p. 19-20)

In the quotation, the narrator explicitly admits that he has no idea why Doctor Ox decided to invest in lighting up Quiquendone, holding the reader in suspense and highlighting the postmodernist idea of challenging established conventions. Thus, the narrator encourages the reader to question the underlying motives behind Doctor Ox's act of generosity. His intentions leave for interpretation and discussion. Thus, Dr. Ox's experiment will either bring about innovation or cause harm to the townspeople, which leaves the reader to anticipate for what is about to unfold.

The narrator also attempts to engage the reader's cognitive faculties by encouraging him to recollect the information previously shared. He refers to the previous events such as "The reader will not have forgotten the strange custom by which M. Van Tricasse would become a widower and..." (p. 71), and "If the reader has not forgotten, it was said, during the long

conversation of..."(p. 21) . In this way, he challenges traditional storytelling and invites the reader to become an active participant in piecing together the fragmented narrative. The sincere tone used by the narrator also adds credibility to the story and helps to foster a genuine connection between the narrator and the reader. In an attempt to persuade the reader, the narrator offers substantiating evidence such as "so much so", "such is", and "such was".

In addition to engaging in a conversation with the reader, the narrator also provides them with pertinent information that can be beneficial for the subsequent development of the narrative. By constantly justifying his narrative choices like "Let us explain"(p. 55), "This demands explanation"(p. 9), and "This is why"(p. 9) the narrator playfully manipulates reality and creates a sense of skepticism for the reader to question the reliability of the narrator's voice.

The use of irony which is a technique of postmodernism is prevalent throughout the text. The author presents a seemingly straightforward elucidation of ironies within the text while concealing a significant amount of criticism behind the text. The author's words are imbued with veiled sarcasm and an overarching sense of disregard, which is perceptible through careful examination. Verne's ironist attitude is evident in his portrayal of individuals who are eccentric and absurd characters. He uses the townsfolk in Quiquendone to provide a sarcastic portrayal of society. They are depicted as mere pawns, perpetually entrapped within the confines of their own absurdity. For example, whether they are out in public or at home, they show no sign of excitement and maintain a steady pace of life. They engaged in daily activities coldly and mechanically. Their hearts' pulsation, which average fifty to fifty-two beats per minute, represents the unchanging aspect of their existence. They are stuck in an unending cycle of dull repetition where time seems to be stand still (Verne, 1875, p. 56). The postmodernist technique of intertextuality is also used in this example. Like the characters waiting for something to give their lives meaning, in *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett's play, these people cannot free themselves from the cycle of monotony. In this way, the writer draws parallels between the two works by incorporating the technique of intertextuality.

Another ironic aspect of the novel is the peculiar tradition in this town that courtships lasted for ten years. During this prolonged courtship period, the young couples immersed themselves in getting to know one another's personalities and values. The narrator compares the length of courtship and the time spent studying for professional careers. Even though ten years is a long time to spend courting, the narrator says it is not too long when compared to the lifetime commitment of marriage. The narrator sarcastically suggests that becoming an engineer, or

physician requires less effort than acquiring the knowledge to be a good spouse (Verne, 1875, p. 36). Thus, the narrator mocks the exaggerated nature of their extended courtship period.

Furthermore, even the actors intentionally slow down their performance style to match the Quiquendonian's slow nature. The author takes this scene ironically, as shown: "But what applause greeted these artists, who enchanted without ever wearying the audiences of Quiquendone! All hands clapped one after another at tolerably long intervals, which the papers characterized as "frantic applause"(Verne, 1875, 43). The phrase "frantic applaud" highlights the irony between the audience's genuine response and the overblown description used by the papers. While the phrase sounds like a strong reaction, it is clear that the applause was not truly frantic. The repetitive clapping at long intervals highlights a sense of sarcasm, which suggests a robotic reaction instead of a sincere display of admiration.

The character's obliviousness to their predicament adds irony to the narrative, emphasizing the absurdity of their situation. Despite living in darkness for centuries, they did not protest against their situation. The town has already been unlighted for centuries. Instead, they express urgency at the thought of having to wait eight more years for the town to be lit up. Characters' acceptance of their unusual situation can serve as a commentary on the human tendency to normalize even the most bizarre situations. It suggests a detachment from reality and a blurring of traditional expectations. Thus, readers are encouraged to critically assess the absurdities in their lives through the lens of ironies used in the story.

In a postmodern narrative, conventional beliefs are challenged and questioned. Verne through Doctor Ox's experiment presents a narrative where the reader gains insight into the human capacity for change and misleading aspects of scientific experiments. He challenges the notion that the Quiquendone people, known for their quiet nature, will remain unchanged as well as the belief that technological advancements, as represented by Doctor Ox's experiment, will consistently yield favorable outcomes. The inhabitants of Quiquendone experienced no changes in their lives such as quarrels and excitement yet they underwent noticeable changes in their social lives. The townspeople who were once resigned to their monotonous life transformed into lively and energetic inhabitants. Doctor Ox's high concentration of oxygen leads to uncontrollable behavior among the townspeople. The level of tension and conflict among the citizens whether it be at the town hall meetings, academy sessions, or council reunions leads to heated arguments rapidly. Within two hours, the tension escalated into an angry dispute. Even during church sermons, the citizen's emotional states disrupt their ability to listen attentively (Verne, 1875, p. 56). This portrayal of a deteriorated relationship exemplifies the criticism of established norms. This unexpected reversal challenges the belief that the inhabitants of

Quiquendone are passive by nature. This can be reflected as a postmodern aspect, where reality is subjective and constructed. The narrator invites the reader to question the truthfulness of the events. Verne also questions the established truth that scientific progress always leads to positive outcomes. The writer highlights how society embraces technological advancement without critically examining its consequences. Doctor Ox bears the entire expense of the experiment, which relieves Quiquendone people from any financial burden. They do not express any concerns about the experiment itself, but rather focus on the financial aspect and the potential benefits it will bring to their town. They are excited about being the first town in Flanders to have such advanced technology.

The author's deliberate engagement with the reader by delving into the intricacies of the fiction and providing elucidations is another notable characteristic of the postmodern technique. Through this communication, the narrator endeavours to convince the reader regarding the forthcoming narrative. The writer assures the reader that he will provide a thorough account of these extraordinary events that have recently taken place in the town of Quiquendone. In this way, the writer asserts his agency and exerts his influence upon the text, by employing a conversational style. The author skillfully employs nuanced clues and suggestions to encourage the reader to participate in textual analysis while also offering guidance regarding the progression of the events in the story. For example, in the story, Burgomaster Van Tricasse and Counsellor Nikl usse let go of their anger after reaching the belfry tower. As previously discussed, the entire town became engulfed in a state of chaos characterized by fights, and aggressive behaviour. The writer alludes to the sudden metamorphosis of these two individuals into tranquil beings through the chapter titled "In which it is once more proved that by taking high ground all human littleness may be overlooked". By using the chapter title as a subtle clue, the writer wants the reader to pay attention to the events unfolding in this chapter. The narrator encourages the reader to contemplate the underlying reasons behind the serenity exhibited by the two individuals upon ascending to the summit of the tower.

Then—was it because of their being out of breath?... Their brains became cooler and simmered down like a coffee pot when taken away from the fire. Why? We cannot answer this "why;" but the truth is that having reached a certain landing stage, two hundred and sixty-six feet above ground, the two adversaries sat down and, really calm, looked at each other without any anger in their faces. (Verne, 1875, p. 84)

Through these sentences, the narrator invites the reader to reflect on the possible reasons for the sudden change in their attitude. By leaving the question unanswered, the narrator wants the reader to take an active role in the construction of meaning. The delay in answering the above questions makes the reader doubt the narrator's credibility and the fixed meaning. The response

to the above questions raised in chapter fourteen is intentionally delayed until the narrative progresses to chapter seventeen. Thus, this deliberate technique not only disrupted plot progression but also elongated the process of receiving the answers.

Instead of a disastrous outcome, this story takes an unexpected turn. It reveals a surprising twist challenging the reader's assumptions about the fate of the townspeople. Quiquendone people narrowly avoided a worse outcome due to the exploitation triggered by the combination of oxygen and hydrogen reservoirs. The reader was not only taken aback by the sudden explosion, but it also broke with the usual narrative structure by going in a different direction than the predicted tragic ending. Rather than being the destructive devastation of the inhabitants of the town, the reader takes comfort in the fact that the danger was avoided. This unpredictable solution leaves the reader startled and challenges their previous notions about the townspeople's inevitable tragedy. This ironic twist also illustrates how the author criticizes blind faith in scientific progress and how people should be careful about embracing technological breakthroughs without contemplating their ramifications.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the narrative, Jules Verne prioritizes the creation of fiction over the pursuit of literary depth and plot. In addition to improving the text through the use of postmodern techniques, Verne employs several language games to draw the reader further into the story. Verne skillfully engages the reader in the fictional narrative through clever wordplay, while also strategically incorporating elements such as pastiche, allusion, and fictional historical information to enhance the plausibility of certain events within the novel. The author frequently breaks off the story to pose questions to the reader, engage in conversation, and let her participate in the writing process. At some points in the narrative, the author subtly hints at details that will come in handy later on. These apparently unrelated details come together in a surprising and consequential manner, revealing the true nature of Doctor Ox's experiment and its profound consequences for the town.

All the way throughout the book, the author consistently employs sarcasm as a narrative tool. Stereotypes and established truths are skillfully handled with irony. He satirizes preconceived notions about the supposedly peaceful town of Quiquendone and invites the readers to question these notions. Verne also masterfully employs irony to give a sense of authenticity to his unreal events.

As evidenced by a thorough analysis, postmodern texts have undergone significant changes in various aspects, including narrative structure, linguistic expression, and methods. Traditional

and contemporary literary texts that are intended to convey a specific message and provide guidance to the reader are disrupted as the reader is confronted with a complex narrative incorporating diverse language games and postmodern techniques. These changes encourage the reader to interact with the text in a meaningful way and to consider their own notions of reality.

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