

Emerging Trends and Challenges in English Literature

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Abstract: In this paper, we have discussed emerging trends and challenges in English Literature. Firstly, we have discussed what literature is, its different ages and what kind of literature was written in those times. There are many trends which have emerged already like micro fiction and flash fiction, six word novels, twitter fiction, graphic novels. On one side it made writing easier for people but on the other side it degraded the language badly, grammar has lost its value and research has become history. We are facing it since the advent of the Internet, where everything is available online and no one wants to pause and read lengthy novels where shorter versions are available online. Everyone has become impatient and has less attention span especially the newer generation and this is the biggest challenge of writers to hold the attention. We are living in an abundance of concepts, signs and words. Change that we are facing in today's times; we avoid this because it is uncertain and unknown.

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1. Introduction

Before we discuss the trends and challenges in literature, first we need to understand what literature is. Literature is the mirror of society, what we see, feel, and observe around us is reflected through our writing. It was influenced by several socio-political and socio-cultural factors. Literature is not merely a group of words which we write on paper, it is an organization of words which gives pleasure to the reader, influences the thinking and transforms the society. Each age has its own attributes uncovering that specific period and its literature. The Renaissance Age (1500-1660) etymologically means a rebirth. It is known for beauty, truth and wit for intellectual freedom and solace among all classes. The Neo-classical age (1660-1798) is known for order, accuracy and structure. This age is opposite to renaissance age as the latter age believes in goodness of man but the prior one believes that man is inherently flawed. The Age of Romanticism (1798-1837) is known for love of nature, beauty, imagination, spirituality, individualism and solitary life but not for reason. The Victorian Age (1837- 1901) was a period of social inequality, migration, unemployment, but on the other hand, growth of population, stability, power and wealth extended across the globe. In the late 19th century and beginning of the 20th century,

people faced immense changes due to Industrialization, Globalization and Urbanization. With the advent of the First World War, there was massive destruction of human lives, loss of values, beliefs and the faith in the supreme power was incredibly shaken. Writers like Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy portrayed the bitter aspects of life. Alfred Lord Tennyson portrayed themes of pessimism, death and escape from responsibility. Whereas Robert Browning was the only poet in this age who talked about optimism and positivity.

Before the World Wars, writers were writing about Victorian age values. After Charles Darwin's Origin of Species (1859) everyone's belief got shaken up on God. People started questioning the existence of cosmic power. H. G. Wells wrote Utopia (1872) which was optimistic in nature and gave hope to people that science and technology would transform the world. Later, the Aesthetic movement got popularized, which focuses on the principle that art exists for the sake of beauty only and it is based on the motto "art for art's sake". Oscar Wilde was the major proponent of this movement which is visible in his works like The Importance of being Earnest, Woman of No Importance. Some writers opted for imitation of classics and some did translation of classical works and regional literature. For instance, Ted Hughes translated Ovid's Aeschylus and Euripides works. Works of Mahasweta Devi, Rabindra Nath Tagore and Munshi Prem Chand have been translated in English and other languages as well.

Another movement came into existence in the 20th century i.e. Modernism. It had meaning, sense and structure like other ages. Writers like Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot talked about modernism in the anthology Des Imagists and the epic poem The Wasteland respectively. Due to Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx, the treatment of characters have changed, earlier they were treated like action heroes and now they are projected as if they can feel, have power to think and possess a soul too. This gave rise to another movement which we know as Psycho analysis. As this movement continued, writers like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf projected the psyche of their characters in the works like Ulysses, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Mrs. Dalloway respectively. Joyce presented the monologues of the characters and Woolf depicted the

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consciousness of the characters and this depiction is known as Stream of Consciousness in novels and it is known by the name of Expressionistic technique in drama. Arthur Miller used this technique with perfection in *Death of a Salesman* (1949). With more and more people talking about the value of individuals, Existentialism came into existence. This movement discussed the existence of a human being, how his life depends on his own actions which are based on how he acts and reacts in different situations. Fyodor Dostoevsky best represented this movement in his work *Crime and Punishment*.

When we talk about the value of individuals, the feminist movement also comes to mind. Feminist writers talk about gender issues in relation with other categories like race and class. Writers like Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf and Alice Walker wrote about feminism in their work. Writers from Black Continents and *Orients* shocked the literary world by their stories. They wrote about the poor treatment by colonizers, their brutality and injustice was clearly discussed in post-colonial literature. Writers like Wole Soyinka's *Lion* and the Jewel and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* discussed the unhappiness and hypocrisy of the government.

Later, a new trend emerged which is using the vernacular language in English Literature like Mulk Raj Anand in his novels *Untouchables* and *Gauri*; Bapsi Sidhwa in novel *Ice Candy Man* and Chinua Achebe in his novel *Things Fall Apart* have brought many regional languages like Punjabi, Hindi, Parsi etc. with standardized English. The reason behind the emergence of this trend was to feel the sense of belongingness and it is only possible in native language where one can freely discuss how differently he was treated by colonizers in his own land. These biases also gave rise to another type of literature i.e. Dalit Literature. Dalits are often called by various names like harijans or untouchables and people treat them as if they are impure. This literature is best captured in *Untouchables* of Mulk Raj Anand; Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan*; Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke*. There are several movements like realism, regionalism, science fiction, Kitchen Sink Drama, Comedy of Menace and Theatre of Absurd which have not been discussed here that influenced literature but we cannot draw a line between to separate texts because writers used more than one style.

As we talk about contemporary times, everything is available online in no time and in concise form. The Internet has made everyone impatient, especially the younger generation. They want to read but lack a high attention span to read lengthy sentences, never ending paragraphs and any detailed description. For instance, Thomas Hardy who filled many pages for detailed descriptions of landscapes to describe the setting, which is not very much liked by today's generation.

The biggest challenge of writers nowadays is to hold the attention of the younger generation. This gave rise to micro fiction or flash fiction to write a story in minimum words possible. This kind of fiction may be fascinating for people but on the other hand it is the most difficult one to write in. For instance, *Angels and Blueberries* by Tara Cambell; as *The North Wind Howled* by Yu Hua and *Baby Dolls* by Becky Robison are some of the best stories which are liked by people.

Flash Fiction has changed the reading pattern of people drastically because earlier people visited the libraries and spent time reading books, newspapers and used a dictionary to find a word but now every word, every information is just a click away. Now the six word novel is a new trend. This is a bit shocking that one can equate six words to a novel. This is the most difficult and challenging task to sum up the novel in just six words. But this made people curious, thoughtful and intrigued and they frame their own versions of it by explaining different stories. Earlier we could not even imagine that this can even be possible someday because writing a full length novel is still easy. We can explain things but to fit in six words requires a lot of creativity. "After she died, he came alive" by Rebecca James and "One gun, two shots, three dead" by Marcy are the best examples of this type of novel. In *Death of the Author*, Roland Barthes says that text should be more readerly than writerly and by the emergence of six word novels; we are getting closer to it because it has lots of gaps which makes it more readerly than writerly.

Now the sibling of flash fiction is emerging as well i.e. Twitter Fiction. One should write a few lines and just tweet it and it becomes twitter fiction. It has the same features of micro fiction, like concise, open to interpretation. This has turned out to be a revolution and blogging tool and user based site like Tumblr and Reddit. Nowadays, people just write a few copied lines from here and there with no grammar and research in it and it is labeled as literature. It becomes so easy to be a writer these days for anyone as there are fewer hurdles in who gets a chance to publish in the literary world.

Whenever we face change around us it comes with both its advantages and disadvantages as well. Many literary idealists believe that these tools that people are using to write are deteriorating the status and image of literature. Grammar has lost its significance, no one worries if a comma or a word is missing or proper research has been done or not. For instance, on Twitter, 'Pride and Prejudice' by Jane Austen has formed: "Woman meets man called Darcy who seems horrible. He turns out to be nice really. They get together". 'The Catcher in the Rye' by J.d.Salinger is: "Rich kid thinks everyone is fake except for his little sister. Has breakdown." Such type of writing is informal and gives rise to abuse of language. Classical works seem boring and old to them and anything short and concise is fascinating and interesting to them. Before this internet boom, people used to make scrapbooks and write diaries as well. But nowadays people want to put pictures and status online and even if they want to relive their memories, they find facebook and other sites more appealing. We are living in a world where everyone wants knowledge but with minimum words. The present world is full of signs, concepts and words. More and more individuals are involved in writing more than before. We cannot control this change as this is uncertain and untold.

2. Conclusion

This paper presents an overview of Emerging trends and challenges in English literature.

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