



Parallel Love in Contemporary British Fiction

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary British fiction can be seen to be shaped by several factors chiefly with an experimental attitude. As noted by Morrison, it 're - established itself as the "pre - eminent literary form" triggered by the "range of new developments in the forms and concerns of the novel" . Among the various developments, one significant element is the "revival of an older, often maligned form of fiction: the romance". Significantly, the theme of 'love' occupies a central place in romance without any doubt. One of the features that the contemporary British novelists share is the idea of parallel love: the use of parallel love plots chiefly for achieving certain ends deemed important in the context of contemporary reality.

KEYWORDS: Love in Contemporary British Fiction

Contemporary British fiction emerged not all of a sudden but out of the various socio cultural and political factors; advancement in technologies too contributed towards the broadening of the scope and led towards experimental endeavours of the novelists. It seems to be an echo of the realists at times though with a different outlook, while at other times it encompasses and seeks comfort in the past traditions. Considering the features, it can be maintained that the contemporary British novelists are caught in a "curious compromise between the customary and the aberrant " (Bradford 48) because these novelists are concerned with a society that " has gradually become more amorphous , transitory and superficial " where "

our sense of selfhood ... is at least partly dependent upon society " (Bradford 46-47) . In order to understand the implications stated above , it is necessary to reflect upon the various aspects or signs that necessitated the changes in the society .

Even before the Second World War began , British society saw a rapid change by way of picking up many American traits and terms . After the war , there was a drastic change both in the political as well as socio - cultural front evidently due to the factors such as immigration , decline of white population (natives) . failure of the empire , lessening of class differences , growth of the middle class , reformation of educational provisions , rationing of food and clothes , religious beliefs , etc. There was simultaneously an ongoing pressure and a longing for the Britain of the past , of the period prior to the war . propaganda was chiefly directed towards this . The " orderly , calm , law - abiding nature of British society longing for the Britain of the past, of the period prior to the war; propaganda was chiefly directed towards this. The "orderly, calm, law - abiding nature of British society" (Marr 59) was challenged immensely by the post war effect destroying 'homes' of a large number of people bringing about an unwanted hindrance to family life owing to the war that " separated husbands and wives, deprived children of their parents and in general shaken the family fabric of the country "(Marr 73). To recur this loss, it was found that in 1947 there. took place "more than 400,000 weddings" giving birth to "881,000 babies" (Marr 73). This further led to a change in the family order because was impossible to address the question of privacy with such a huge growth in population.

Added to this was another crisis- the problem of housing; to tackle this issue the government designed and executed certain plans in order to provide assistance to the public but was not able to meet the requirements . Be it in sports , clothing and fashion , travel , or gardening- there was a new outlook and old set of beliefs gradually shattered as in case of ' homosexuality ' . It will , therefore , not be incorrect to say that " church - going " , " openness about sex " , " divorce habit " , " question of morality , etc. are all preconditions in the formation of a new reality of Britain , incorporating the changes undertaking the socio - political structure since the 1970s which the contemporary novelists continuously strive to represent by finding new ways and exploring newness in techniques and forms of writing . The novel as a form has been scrupulously examined and challenged in the contemporary scenario with regard to its scope and importance . In terms of mirroring the realities of its times , the ' novel ' has undergone changes in tandem with the vicissitudes in the British society . In the Preface to the book Contemporary British Novelists , Nick Rennison can be quoted while expressing his concern about the formless kind of fiction writing : " Britain in the last twenty years of the twentieth century and the first few years of a new millennium has shown itself too diverse , too protean to fit within the straitjackets of fictional forms that have outlived their usefulness " (Rennison ix) . Hence , being an " anarchic genre , since its rule is not to have rules " (Eagleton 2) the mode of romance offers the contemporary novelists to experiment with more than one genre , considering the complexity and need of addressing the contemporary scenario , which are then combined to form fictional works , which are so called novels .

To this may be added another point- the expansion of geographical boundaries , Rather than focussing only on the ambit of London . British fiction began to spread its reach to include writings which are set in and around Scotland, Ireland and Wales too, bringing about a diversity in the use of language as well. Most importantly, the changes can be attributed partly to the "turning outwards both to European models and to America" (Sturrock 134). Especially the import of culture from America- "vulgar films, trashed cities, the congestions of cliché and other degradations of language, the clotting of the soul with cultural debris, the submersion of the individual" (Sturrock 137) continued to affect the cultural framework which the earlier British novelists relied upon. This paved the way to discern multiple possibilities and variations of the ever changing society in which novelists found themselves tackling a multitude of issues that are hardly exemplified by one particular genre, and thereby, the tendency to mix several genres have been on the rise.

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