

**MINISTERUL EDUCAȚIEI**  
**UNIVERSITATEA „1 DECEMBRIE 1918” DIN ALBA IULIA**  
**FACULTATEA DE ISTORIE , LITERE ȘI ȘTIINȚE ALE EDUCAȚIEI**  
**ȘCOALA DOCTORALĂ DE FILOLOGIE**

**ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS**  
**LITERATURE AND THE MEDIA: FROM PARODY TO**  
**AESTHETICIZATION**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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**ALBA IULIA**

**2024**

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**Key words:** media, multimedia, modernism, postmodernism, genre studies, discourse analysis

The topic of media has been a subject of debate since its apparition as the reception of literature intertwined with that of the media. The reader also becomes involved in the reading process by means of textual correlations. In trying to decipher the mechanism through which media is depicted in literary texts, we have used discourse analysis as a starting point, accompanied by the most influential critical theories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. More specifically, we have looked into the way in which language is regulated by social practice and social conditions. Over the course of this research report, we intend to examine some texts that give evidence about the changing status of the literary texts and the way in which writers understand their own medium (the system through which information is available for selection). In modernism and postmodernism man and his language construct reality. The ultimate truth was replaced by the idea of a working hypothesis. Modernist writers asserted themselves in opposition with the new technological advancements which dehumanize mankind, reducing people to machines and narrowing consciousness, therefore the quest for meaning in a meaningless world of their characters. In postmodernism, the paradigm is reversed and writers begin to use symbolic representations instead of real, palpable objects. The media is omnipresent, the new reality no one can escape from and the one which defines ourselves. The surrounding world is now experienced through TV news and reality shows. In this respect, the purpose of the media has been that of simplifying and interpreting reality.

As a working tool, we have found **discourse analysis** appropriate in order to explore the relationship between world schemata and text schemata in consumerism advertisements and we have mainly focused on how cognitive values are influenced within literary texts. **Discourse analysis** examines language use in social contexts, highlighting its similarity to literary theory in processing sensory data and language.

The literary corpus we have chosen consists primarily of texts belonging to modernist and postmodernist writers. Some modernist writers such as **John Dos Passos** (*Manhattan Transfer*) or **Alfred Döblin** (*Berlin Alexanderplatz*) incorporate media into their fiction so as to expand literary discourse. With them, the literary text and media (photography or moving picture) could no longer be considered separately. In this respect, they foresee the literary agendas that dominated postmodern writing in the late twentieth century. In contrast to the conventional

canon, the aforementioned writers' discourse traverses multidisciplinary subjects like comparative literature and cultural analysis and unites disparate topics in the genealogy of urban experiences. On the other hand, **Camil Petrescu** declares himself against the aforesaid texts in *Patul lui Procust (Procastes' Bed)*. He expresses his opinions about modernity, the visual arts, and the dehumanizing and alienating effects of a consumerist society through his fiction. **James Joyce** (*Ulysses*) and **Virginia Woolf** (*Mrs. Dalloway*) resort to media (language of advertisements) in order to make a parody of consumer culture that was starting to shape the society at the beginning of the twentieth century.

With postmodernist writers, the tendency is to aestheticize media, as consumers experience the world through TV news or reality shows. Media (in the form of television, radio, photography) is predominant in **Graham Smith** (*Out of this world*), **Thomas Pynchon** (*The Crying of Lot 49*), **Don DeLillo** (*White Noise* or *Cosmopolis*), **Bret Easton Ellis** (*American Psycho*), or **David Foster Wallace** (*Infinite Jest*).

In the **first chapter** of my research paper we have focused on the emergence of media in the twentieth century which resulted in a blurring of the lines between high and low in the arts, literature being of course subject to such influences. Literature developed a critical function to help readers understand themselves by assisting them in realizing the unconscious effect of the manipulation exerted by the media, which frequently forces our world into a hyper-reality beyond our mental control.

In the **second chapter** of our thesis, we have delved into modernism from the perspectives of history, art, and journalism and in relation to the rise of the media which had a significant impact on society by changing how people interacted with information and influencing cultural norms and values. In this regard, We have examined the writings of F.R. Leavis and Matthew Arnold as the foundation for the popular culture phenomenon. We have also discussed the idea of **New Historicism**, as questioning historical accuracy and highlighting the influence of power relations.

The **last chapter** explores the shifts in postmodernist literature, which is likewise impacted by historical and technological circumstances and controlled by the culture business. Postmodernists, in contrast to their modernist predecessors, are increasingly integrating media allusions into their fiction, employing them as a tool for reflection on the act of writing and reading rather than as a background. The writings of Daniel Borstin, Friedrich Kittler, and Marshall McLuhan on the subject provided as a theoretical foundation. Most notably,

**Baudrillard's hyperreality** (where people no longer discriminate between reality and mere representations thereof) is the concept threading the whole research as it encompasses everything that media has represented from the start.

Modern society's focus has shifted towards visual and verbal media, amplifying media power's cumulative and pervasive impact on social reproduction. Writers like James, Eliot, and Joyce highlighted language's relationship to consciousness and psychological phenomena, emphasizing the shift from interpreting to mastering the world through language and technology. Our research explores the distinction between language and discourse, emphasizing their respective roles and interactions. Language (*langue*) is a system governed by immutable laws, providing a framework for meaning, while discourse (*parole*) is the situational, functional use of language shaped by social contexts and power structures. Meaning in language is static and symbolic, linking words to mental concepts, whereas meaning in discourse is dynamic and dialogically created, evolving through interactions.

**Discourse analysis**, an academic field since the 1970s, examines how discourse is produced and its impact on social structures and power dynamics. Discourse is seen as both shaped by and shaping social structures, influencing social continuity and change. Historically, discourse has shifted in its function and perception. Ancient Greek poets used discourse for prophecy, while later, as noted by Foucault, the emphasis shifted to what discourse conveyed, rather than its function. Romantic writers in the 18th and 19th centuries reacted against Enlightenment ideals, favoring inspiration and intuition over reason and empirical science. They drew inspiration from the Middle Ages, valuing social stability, chivalry, and the supernatural. Romantic works, such as those by Keats, Shelley, and Coleridge, reflected a longing for the past and an appreciation of nature's beauty, opposing the scientific rationalization of the Enlightenment. This period marked a cognitive shift towards valuing individual imagination and emotional experience, challenging the empirical and mechanical worldview of the previous era.

Starting in the mid-20th century, there has been a significant rise in the fields of general linguistics and literary semiology, with **socio-criticism** focusing on how texts reflect institutionalized social forms. Socio-criticism treats texts as products of history, exploring connections between literary forms and societal structures without concern for text marketing, the author's biography, or reception. This approach emphasizes the traces of institutional pressures in texts, as noted by **Claude Duchet** and **Edmond Cros**, and views literature as a secondary modeling system that reshapes collective discourses. **Pierre V. Zima**, drawing on

**Mikhail Bakhtin's** philosophy of language, highlights that all discourse is influenced by prior uses, thus bearing ideological and circumstantial weight. Socio-criticism examines these "sociolects," collective languages that define groups and their interactions over time. The concept of mediation bridges the gap between text and context, crucial for understanding the transformation of reality into written form. Edmond Cros introduces the spatial metaphor of "genotext" (the sociohistorical conditions) and "phenotext" (the linguistic material), emphasizing the conflict at their intersection. **Lucien Goldmann's** concepts of the trans-individual subject and the no-conscious further explain how collective subjects influence individual consciousness and literary expression.

**Modernist** writers like **Joyce, Woolf, and Eliot** critically reacted to the impact of technology on traditional life, portraying cities as dynamic yet alienating spaces. Their works reflect a fragmented interior life, influenced by new ideas in anthropology, psychology, and philosophy. Modernism's preoccupation with urban settings, psychological depth, and innovative discourse marks a departure from earlier literary forms. Technological advancements, from cinema to the internet, have continuously reshaped literature and its reception. The modern condition is characterized by existential dilemmas, paranoia, and the tension between ideals and their perceived mythic nature. Literary heroes often embody the modern man's struggle with epistemological uncertainty and a sense of powerlessness against complex societal forces. **Slavoj Žižek** links contemporary paranoia to a distrust of public ideology, underscoring the modern reliance on conspiracy fantasies as a response to these challenges. **Jean Baudrillard** coined the term '**hyperreality**' in 1994, describing it as a representation without an original referent, a simulation that creates symbols representing something non-existent. Hyperreality blurs the lines between the real and the simulated, leading to a world where fabricated realities are consumed as real. This phenomenon is particularly evident in consumerism, where brand attachment replaces genuine emotions with artificial simulations. Baudrillard emphasizes that society's incessant production and reproduction of the real are attempts to restore a reality that continually escapes, resulting in the hyperreal. Hyperreality manifests in various forms, from the prettiness of artificial Christmas trees to the melodramatic actions of game show contestants.

**Postmodernism**, which gives rise to hyperreality, challenges the very fabric of reality and human significance. It is pervasive and resistant to straightforward critique. Baudrillard's hyperreality, linked to postmodernism, involves preferring illusory objects over authentic ones. For example, soap opera viewers may start seeing dramatic on-screen relationships as authentic. Art, however, can counterbalance hyperreality by fostering genuine unity, unlike hyperreality,

which severs real connections. This transition from real to hyperreal is also evident in the virtual world, where the internet creates a simulated topography that masks the finite reality.

Examining texts and the evolving status of literary works, **Alfred Döblin's** *Berlin Alexanderplatz* employs montage techniques to capture urban experiences, blending literary discourse with other media forms. Döblin's narrative objectivity and use of lowlife slang reflect the modernist concern about parasitic discourses colonizing individual minds. Similarly, **John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer*** uses rapid scene changes and media elements to depict the complexities of modern city life and critique mass media and urban consumer culture. Baudrillard's hyperreality reveals a world where simulations replace reality, driven by consumerism and postmodernism. Art and literature offer potential resistance, highlighting the distinction between genuine experience and artificial simulations.

In his novel *Patul lui Procust*, **Camil Petrescu** contrasts with earlier texts by using fiction to express his views on modernity, the visual arts, and the detrimental effects of consumerist society, such as depersonalization and alienation. The novel serves as a moral manifesto, encouraging resilience against inauthenticity and a lack of identity. Petrescu intertwines popular culture with high culture and critiques the notion of flâneurs—characters who are intellectual but superficial, engaged in urban life and consumerism without finding true happiness or authenticity. Modernist authors like Joyce and Petrescu experimented with literary techniques to capture the fragmented and indeterminate nature of reality. They deconstructed traditional narratives, revealing the manipulative nature of styles and the complex interplay between language, thought, and reality.

Modernist literature often reflects the era's preoccupation with technological advancements, urbanization, and mass media, employing fragmentation and distortion to depict the chaotic experience of modernity. Authors critiqued the commodification of culture and the impact of mass media on individual identities and societal values. The Bauhaus movement, from 1919 to 1933, exemplified modernism's influence on architecture and design, promoting minimalism and functionalism. Key figures like Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer emphasized integrating art with mass production, impacting various artistic disciplines. Feminist and gender studies, emerging post-WWII, found rich material in modernist texts, with authors addressing gender roles and identity through innovative literary techniques. **New Historicism** and **Cultural Materialism** analyze literature as both reflective of and active within historical contexts, viewing texts as vehicles of social and political significance. Modernist literature, particularly

works like Joyce's *Ulysses*, exemplifies these theories by intertwining historical context with narrative structure to critique and reflect societal changes.

Narrative perspective is crucial in **James Joyce's** *Ulysses*, as the narrator delves deeply into the characters' inner thoughts using the stream-of-consciousness technique. In *Ulysses*, the narrative constructs reality using linguistic formulas. Joyce transitions from objective to subjective perspectives, employing various styles, rhetorical devices, and figurative language. Fashion and consumer culture are significant in *Ulysses*, reflecting early 20th-century trends. Women's fashion, influenced by advertising, emphasized items like the S-bend corset and elaborate hats, mirroring societal standards of beauty and class. The "Nausicaa" chapter, paralleling *The Odyssey*, centres on Gerty MacDowell, who embodies the ideal female consumer. Her narrative, filled with advertising language, highlights the era's consumer culture and its impact on women's self-perception. Joyce meticulously details consumer products and advertising in *Ulysses*, illustrating their pervasive influence. Leopold Bloom, an advertising canvasser, epitomizes the modern consumer, constantly evaluating and creating advertisements. His interactions and reflections on advertising underscore its role in shaping desires and societal norms. Overall, Joyce's *Ulysses* uses intricate narrative techniques and linguistic innovation to explore the construction of reality, the impact of consumer culture, and the profound relationship between language and perception.

"Mrs. Dalloway" by **Virginia Woolf** juxtaposes Clarissa's privileged existence with the tragic figure of Septimus Warren Smith, a war veteran suffering from PTSD, highlighting the societal decay and psychological trauma post-war. Woolf employs innovative literary techniques to explore themes of alienation, urban life, and the evolving role of mass media, particularly newspapers, in shaping public consciousness and personal identity. Through "Mrs. Dalloway," Woolf invites readers to ponder the complexities of human existence against the backdrop of a modernizing city, where streets not only connect physical locations but also serve as conduits for emotional and intellectual journeys. Her exploration of London as both a physical and psychological space underscores her mastery in depicting the interplay between environment, consciousness, and the human spirit.

Our research paper also explores the cultural shifts brought about by **postmodernism**, emphasizing the transition from engagement with tangible realities to symbolic representations. This shift is driven by pervasive media influence and the dominance of virtual realities, shaping contemporary experiences. It contrasts the traditional "House of Being" with the modern "House of Language and Images," illustrating how individuals now interact with the world



through media like TV news, reality shows, and digital communications. **Matthew Arnold's** concept of culture as a pursuit of perfection contrasts sharply with the mass culture critique of **F.R. Leavis**, who laments the dilution of traditional values and cultural integrity in the face of mass-produced entertainment and media saturation.

Additionally, the emergence of **New Historicism** in literary theory is discussed, highlighting its departure from traditional historicism by foregrounding the dynamic interplay between literary texts and their socio-political contexts. This approach challenges earlier notions that viewed literature as merely reflecting historical realities, instead suggesting a reciprocal relationship where literature shapes and is shaped by historical forces.

Our research paper discusses the profound impact of media and technology on contemporary culture, particularly in the last decade of the 20th century and beyond. **Marc Augé's** *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1992) critiques the emergence of artificial, image-driven realities that redefine identity through identitarian stereotypes and erasure of traditional social spaces and practices. The Frankfurt School's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), notably **Horkheimer** and **Adorno's** critique of the culture industry, explores how mass media manufactures conformity and distraction, shaping human consciousness in ways that perpetuate societal norms rather than challenging them. **Marshall McLuhan's** seminal work *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964) underscores the transformative power of media as a medium itself, urging a focus on its societal and cultural implications. The influence of **Friedrich Kittler's** theories on literature as a subset of media studies highlights how technological advancements dictate modes of communication and archiving, shaping both historical narratives and contemporary discourse. This perspective has influenced contemporary media theory's exploration of digital technologies and their impact on knowledge organization and perception. Moreover, **Daniel Boorstin's** *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (1961) critiques the pervasive influence of mass media in creating fabricated spectacles that replace genuine human experiences with staged narratives and images. **Guy Debord's** *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) expands on this critique, arguing that commodity capitalism commodifies social practices and material production, reducing authentic human interactions to mere visual representations.

In literature, modernism's existential inquiries contrast with postmodernism's ontological explorations, which are deeply influenced by technological advancements and digital media's transformative effects on narrative forms and reader engagement. The rise of trans-medial

narratology and multimodal narrative analysis reflects contemporary fiction's adaptation to digital media's fragmented, interactive, and multi-sensory nature.

In the realm of postmodern literature, the convergence of mass media and consumer culture has dramatically transformed the landscape, erasing traditional distinctions between high and low art. **Cristian Popescu's** reflections in his work *Nouăzeci (Nineties)* offer a vivid depiction of postmodernist poetry in Romania during the 1990s. He describes this poetry as a dynamic blend that incorporates elements of journalistic reportage, essays, narrative forms reminiscent of novels, urban folklore, and the oral tradition, all infused with metaphysical vibrations. This hybrid approach is emblematic of Popescu's Balkan expressivity and his adeptness at combining high and low cultures, including kitsch and colloquialism.

The influence of media and visual culture in literature is further exemplified in **Graham Swift's** novel *Out of this World*, where photography serves as both a medium and a barrier for the characters. Swift's protagonist, Harry Beech, a photojournalist, uses photography to document history and personal trauma, yet he also experiences disillusionment with the superficiality and distancing effects of technology. The novel employs fragmented narrative techniques, reflecting the characters' fragmented lives and the postmodern condition of multiple, overlapping realities. Swift explores the metaphorical power of photography as a tool that captures and distorts reality, echoing **Susan Sontag's** view that photography not only reproduces but also reinterprets reality, blurring distinctions between truth and falsehood, beautiful and ugly. Moreover, the novel engages with postmodern themes such as the absence of objective reality, the breakdown of traditional narratives, and the pervasive influence of media and technology on human experience. Both Popescu's poetry and Swift's novel exemplify how postmodern literature in Romania and England, respectively, navigates the complexities of contemporary life through innovative forms that embrace hybridity, fragmentation, and a critical engagement with media and visual culture. They underscore the profound impact of mass media and consumerism on artistic expression and the construction of personal and cultural identities in the late twentieth century.

In **Thomas Pynchon's** novel *The Crying of Lot 49*, the protagonist Oedipa Maas navigates a complex narrative that shifts between modernist and postmodernist sensibilities. Pynchon's narrative style mirrors Oedipa's journey, disrupting traditional storytelling with fragmented scenes and dense allusions. The novel critiques modern society's reliance on mass media and consumerism, which strip away genuine human connection and replace it with superficiality. *The Crying of Lot 49* challenges traditional literary conventions, embracing postmodern themes

of multiple perspectives, cultural references, and the breakdown of meta-narratives. Ultimately, Pynchon's work invites readers to ponder the implications of media saturation and consumer culture on personal identity and societal values in the postmodern era.

In **John Barth's** novel *Chimera*, the evolution of postmodernist literature becomes a dynamic arena where various intellectual pursuits collide. *Chimera* challenges traditional realist conventions by embracing a narrative strategy that highlights its own artificiality. Characters within the novel are depicted attempting to escape constructed worlds, mirroring Barth's own struggle with writer's block. The narrative's focus on heteroglossia—juxtaposing diverse language styles and intertextual references—creates a polyphonic texture where multiple discourses intersect, reflecting the plurality of realities within postmodern fiction. In the 'Bellerophoniad' section, Barth employs a serialized narrative akin to a radio drama, enhancing the novel's multi-layered approach to storytelling. This episodic structure, coupled with vivid imagery and descriptive language, immerses readers in a narrative that oscillates between reality and fiction, challenging them to reconsider the boundaries between these realms. *Chimera* exemplifies postmodern literature's interrogation of reality and representation, offering a narrative that is at once playful and profound. By blending ancient myths with contemporary concerns and experimenting with narrative form, Barth invites readers to participate actively in the creation of meaning, reflecting on the role of storytelling in shaping our understanding of the world.

*White Noise* by **Don DeLillo** portrays a world where media and technology dominate, shaping perceptions and behaviors. Television, in particular, is omnipresent, influencing family dynamics and personal identities. DeLillo critiques modern society's reliance on simulacra—copies of reality that become more real than reality itself. This theme is exemplified by the novel's exploration of a hyperreal world where even natural experiences are mediated and consumed through technology. The novel offers a commentary on the superficiality and detachment fostered by consumer culture and media saturation, questioning how these influences shape human experience and understanding of life and death in a postmodern world.

In *Cosmopolis*, mass media emerges as a pivotal force shaping protagonist Eric Packer's worldview, while also underscoring broader themes of alienation, hyperconnectivity, and the commodification of identity. Throughout the narrative, Packer, a young and exceedingly wealthy currency trader, is incessantly bombarded by a myriad of media forms—from television and radio to the internet. This constant influx of information paradoxically isolates him further from genuine human connections and experiences. His interactions with media,

both as consumer and subject, highlight the novel's exploration of how modern technology and capitalism intertwine to reshape personal identity and societal norms.

**Bret Easton Ellis's** novel *American Psycho* is a striking critique of consumer culture and the excesses of 1980s America, encapsulated through its protagonist, Patrick Bateman. The novel intertwines elements of popular media with the persona of the serial killer, emblematic of a broader societal fascination with violence and consumption. The narrative is structured around frequent references to popular culture, framing Bateman's life through meticulous descriptions of consumer products and media influences. This reflects a society where individuals, like Bateman, derive identity and meaning from material possessions and appearances. Ellis's portrayal of Bateman, a wealthy and narcissistic investment banker, highlights the shallow values of the yuppie culture prevalent at the time. The novel's style and content align with the "blank fiction" literary movement, characterized by its affectless prose and focus on themes such as violence, excess, and the commodification of human. Critically acclaimed for its bold critique of consumerism, *American Psycho* challenges readers to confront the consequences of a society obsessed with image and material wealth. Ellis's narrative defies traditional moral resolutions, leaving Bateman unpunished and society complicit in perpetuating his behavior. This lack of closure underscores the novel's bleak portrayal of a civilization trapped in its own cycle of consumption and moral decay. *American Psycho* stands as a provocative exploration of the intersection between popular culture, consumerism, and violence. Through the lens of Patrick Bateman, Ellis delivers a searing critique of 1980s America's obsession with wealth and image, challenging readers to reconsider the true cost of societal values driven by materialism and media.

*Infinite Jest* by **David Foster Wallace** stands as a monumental work in contemporary literature, renowned for its ambitious scope and intricate narrative structure. Wallace's narrative style is characterized by its non-linear structure, abundant footnotes, and diverse perspectives, reflecting a postmodern sensibility that challenges traditional storytelling conventions. The novel's fragmentation mirrors the fractured experiences of its characters and underscores its exploration of identity, existentialism, and the impact of media saturation on personal and cultural life. Thematically rich, *Infinite Jest* delves into the complexities of American culture and the human condition in an era defined by rapid technological advancement and media proliferation. It offers a poignant critique of societal values and norms, highlighting the existential struggles of its characters amidst a backdrop of consumerism, corporate influence, and the erosion of authentic human connections. Wallace's work portrays a dystopian future

where corporate influence permeates everyday life, from the sponsorship of time periods to educational institutions. The novel anticipates technological advancements like video telephony, yet paradoxically depicts their decline due to consumer preference for older, less intrusive communication methods. Wallace's critique extends to the entertainment industry, where cultural products become vehicles for consumerism, embedding brand promotions and advertisements within narratives.

The phenomenon of cultural icons and hyperreality in contemporary society is discussed as exemplified by the portrayal of a Gothic wedding on YouTube. The text explores how cultural figures from movies, such as Johnny Depp and Amy Lee, serve as templates for real-life identities and events, blurring distinctions between the virtual and the real. This hyperrealist perspective, as theorized by Baudrillard, suggests that representations in media and popular culture now precede and influence actual experiences, rather than simply reflecting them. **Louis Andriessen's** *La Commedia* (2008) serves as a contemporary experiment in intertextuality, multimedia representation, and generic hybridization. Andriessen's work, subtitled a "film opera," defies traditional genre labels, blurring the boundaries between music, film, and theater. The composition intertwines Dante's "Commedia" with modern reinterpretations, such as casting a female Dante and depicting Beatrice dressed as a man, alongside a film component that adds another layer of narrative complexity.

Lastly, we have tried to focus our interest on multimodal communication, as a complex interplay of technological affordances, social practices, and cultural meanings, offering insights into how individuals and communities navigate and shape digital landscapes.

**In conclusion**, while modernists referred to themselves as artists of their time, synchronized with the progress of the modern world, they still supported a form of aesthetic autonomy, the creative act being for them as pure and impersonal as in classicism. On the contrary post-modern artists have a real interest in inserting their works into everyday life, probing into its ethical, political and religious dilemmas. From this perspective, postmodernism closes a loop in European culture, going back to the perception of art before the romantic revolution. Today, more than ever, there's a risk that postmodernism, just like romanticism and modernism in their days, might become a sort of panacea which ties and unties everything occurring in contemporary art. Being postmodern is not in fact a statement of value but rather an option of writing, misleadingly perceived as a recipe for success. The prefix post (in itself) marks for some an ending and for others the continuation of modernism. Regardless of the views, we

cannot help but acknowledging the cyclical vision of history. The death of art is the key element for progress in the history of art.

The role attributed to the media in society is pretty much the same throughout the century: it simplifies, stereotypes and misrepresents reality. However, there is a marked distinction between the haughty positioning of the modernist artist in relation to the communication channels of the masses and the acceptance of media discourse by the stream literature of postmodernism when the distinction between high art and pop culture is no longer tenable. Our focus in this research project has been a significant change in the history of culture: the levelling down of class distinctions as a consequence of the democratization of luxury in the consumer society has borne upon the status and prestige of what high culture meant in the modernist phase of late modernity.

Overall, my paper traces the evolution from modernism to postmodernism, highlighting shifts in cultural values, artistic practices, and societal norms, ultimately posing questions about the future of art and culture in an increasingly mediated and globalized world.

Our focus in this research project has been a significant change in the history of culture: the levelling down of class distinctions as a consequence of the democratization of luxury in the consumer society has borne upon the status and prestige of what high culture meant in the modernist phase of late modernity. In a prototypical novel of the age, *Ulysses* by James Joyce, Stephen Dedalus, the artist figure, is trying to refine language and disentangle art from the swarms of commodification, in opposition to Bloom's advertising obsessions. Bloom will end up as his disciple, calling him teacher, and creating his own narrative of gratuitous wordplay, enjoyed for its own ingenuity.

In the second phase of late modernity – postmodernism – the public sphere of discourse has been to a large extent monopolized by “netizens”, users of social media, who have borrowed from computer language practices of codification (mainly from the American Standard Code for Information Interchange). An artificial, codified, language replaces the natural language. They regard themselves as the new elite, using Leetspeak” (the language of the elite), where letters are replaced with numbers and symbols. This new jargon, for instance, reads 1337 (1 becomes 1, e becomes 3, and t becomes 7).

Real-life events are aestheticized, parodying mainstream culture (such as the “gothic wedding” video clip). The consequences of this mutation, not only in the history of taste, but in the sociology of art and the philosophy of institutions, can hardly be predicted. We can only keep on observing and searching for a legitimating narrative.

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