

## THE QUINTESSENCE OF POST MODERN ECRITS THROUGH THE WINDOW OF GENERIC ENCYCLOPEDIISM

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### Abstract

Generic Encyclopaedism stands for a particular approach to literature adopted by most of the writers of modern times who have been credited with literary compositions, covering all or most of the genres of literature. Encyclopedism is a craft which can be harnessed to its full potential only by those writers who are gifted with literary essences such as predilection for largescale delineation of the current, past environs and the visualized future the essence of which is overall mental, physical, psychological, sociological, political and economic elevation of this human society of ours. Encyclopedism is a technique the fruits of which has been efficaciously used by John Milton in his chef-de-oeuvre "Paradise Lost". What is evident from that masterpiece about encyclopedism is that it signifies the exploitation of resources from literature, mythology, science, society, language, history and geography. Milton has showcased his predilection for encyclopedism only in the field of poetry. What is highly praiseworthy about encyclopedism is that by treating society and the relevant social upheavals in the sphere of politics and morality, it braves itself to pronounce judgements that if taken with consideration always contribute to the amelioration in the social sphere which is dotted with innumerable problematic aspects. Before Milton this tendency of encyclopedism has been detected in the writings of Shakespeare and before him too there is a name whose citation is worth-mentioning and he is none other than Geoffrey Chaucer.

### Preface

It becomes imperative on our part after taking into consideration that encyclopedism has been resorted to by writers from time to time. Sometimes this trend is witnessed genre-wise: that is to say, is utilized to its full potential in different genres such as poetry, drama and sometimes it is cultivated writer-wise. The writer-wise aspect of encyclopedism is that a particular writer can go for harnessing the essences of encyclopedism in all the genres of literature wherein he has established his mastery. After all it behoves one to enumerate the essences of generic encyclopedism both with respect to the versatility aspect of some of the writers and then also

with respect to different genres of literature in relation to their content-based encyclopedism and their objective-based encyclopedism.

### **Introduction**

Generic Encyclopedism is basically a postmodern phenomenon but the origins of which can be traced to writings in the ancient times contemporary with the literary productions during the Hellenic and Roman epochs. Whatever the case may be, this sort of encyclopedism has been partially cultivated throughout the different epochs in the domain of literature in English both in and out of England and even in the geographical environs where native speakers use Latinate languages other than English. And to speak the truth fascination for experimentation with encyclopedism in terms of content has reached its climax in this era of what can be christened as either postmodern or post-postmodern. Writers such as Jose Vargas Llosa, Marquez, Louis Borges, Humberto Echo, WoleSoynika, NgugiWaThiongo are citable in this regard with their acclaimed excellence in this field. Most writers today either go for attempting different genres or they treat their subject matter with encyclopedic themes and through their objectives which encompass theorization of judicious and viable postmodern tenets relating to modus vivendi, social equilibrium, psychic stability, political tenets. Often these writers achieve such objectives by way of interweaving different parameters of knowledge such as philosophy, history, geography, mythology, science, politics and other significant frontiers of knowledge. As this experimentation has been widely noticed in the domain of poetry and fiction, hence it feels judicious on the part of the author to explore the issue within the purview of those two genres.

Broadening the issue of Generic Encyclopedism: As pointed out above, generic encyclopedism is pertinent to different genres of literature and furthermore warrants the observation of the dictum that each and every genre of literature harbours the mission of exploiting encyclopedic resources, concepts, facts and gleanings and at the same time sets encyclopedic objectives.

Diagnosing encyclopedism with respect to resources harnessed by different genres of literature: The discourse can be begun by citing first of all the case of poetry. The word poetry is a combination of two words namely poem and geometry. The word 'poem' is the anglicised version of the Greek word 'poematos' and it is derived from the Greek word 'poieo' which means 'to make'. Thus a poem is related to making. And because poetry is a combination of the two words namely poem and geometry .it thereby both carries connotative and denotative significations. In denotative sense it insinuates something which is fabricated, taking into consideration certain measurements and hence certain objectives; simultaneously in connotative sense it means the evolution of a concept or an ideology with its extensions, limitations and constraints.

Thus it behoves one first of all to endeavour a philosophical and in-depth analysis of the frontiers of poetry. First it is an entailment to be exercised on our part to broaden and modify the romanticism-inspired and Victorian philosophy inspired definition of poetry, even keeping under the anvil, the modern and post-modern connotations of poetry. It is highly incontrovertible to observe that poetry is recollection of emotions stored in the brain, resulting in the formation of a new edict through the channel of prolific decantation from the cerebrative brain of the writer. Equally it is true to observe that it is the smart combination of reason with emotion and then it does always make a noble attempt of criticizing the life and society constructively. In modern and postmodern era, poetry is often conceived as a tool of intertextualizing texts and thereby

serving as a medium philoprogenitive in terms of begetting a gamut of equally differentiated experiences.

Encyclopedically poetry can be thus understood to signify a cluster of tenets and it is so because at no cost we can really embolden ourselves to overlook the practices in the domain of poetry in English Literature right from the days of the anonymous writer of Beowulf to 21<sup>st</sup> poets in England. The case becomes a matter warranting a broadened approach when we come across this inevitable truth that even now a days poetry has become able to carve a niche in and among the population of speakers of English outside Britain and then among the people who do not speak English at all. In the light of all these considerations ,one must arrive at a consensus that it assumes a set of encyclopedic tenets. We are thus in a position to conclude that poetry stands for the imbuelements and application of almost all types of knowledge. It is concerned with nature and natural motivations and at the same time it also stands for the geysering of emotions. Its foundation is built on recollection of both individual and social experiences that play pivotal roles in our lives. Sometimes or oftentimes it theorizes a philosophical tenet of modus vivendi. Because whatever we take for granted and whatever we incur as memorable experiences , all are only possible through the application of conscience, commonsense and presence of mind: it can be undoubtedly observed that neither the writer nor the reader can detach himself from his being acclimatized to the application of such tools. Whatever it articulates in the form of experience is directly linked to its mission of either edifying us or entertaining us. While reflecting on society, it can bring under its purview the universal society, irrespective of race and country and thereby exercises its cosmopolitanism. Obviously, this being the case, we can observe that poetry extracts essences of history, geography, literature, mythology and all frontiers of knowledge. Sometimes it introduces novelty in the form of multilingualism and andepigraphing. This is a pointer to the fact that in thematic choosing, it is highly encyclopedic as for its resources , it can exploit any frontiers of knowledge. Rhyme , rhythm and meter equally play conspicuous roles in ensuring the fact that it can fulfil its mission of inundating the receptive organs of the reader with the sweetest expressions and articulations. Thus vocabulary and its permutation and combination are anticipated to help the writer in achieving his target easily impressing the readers. Sometimes it is abstract and sometimes concrete by choosing certain layout patterns. Without images with strong significations, it can't imagine its standing and hence it also rests itself on the foundation of both imagism and imagination.

Missionary encyclopedism in poetry is what everyone can think of and truly speaking it stands for the encyclopedic nature of objectives as visualized by poetry. It has been already observed that its one noble aim is to edify , moralize and entertain the readers. But frankly speaking, there is more to it: it sometimes theorizes political , economic, social , history-based and philosophical tenets and dogmas. It is committed to portraying the society, bringing out its pros and cons , making necessary prescriptions, suggestions wherever the requirement is appreciated. It develops new insights and truths by commenting on and treating both the contemporary society and that of the mythological times. It is related to exploration, exposition,philosophization. It functions as interconnector of human societies, irrespective of nationalities. After all it will be no wrong to observe that it is acclimatized to setting up and living the notion of encyclopedism in its objectives as well.

From poetry it seems justified enough to switch over to analysing the trace of encyclopedism in the field of essay writing as well as prose fiction. As far as essay or fiction is concerned it too is contentively and objectively encyclopedism-laced. Now what comes deservedly under the anvil of analysis is to map the extent to which encyclopedism is existent or

cultivated. Whenever we refer to this encyclopedic aspect, without any reluctance and with full confidence we can observe that the culturing or acculturation of encyclopedism can be traced to the days when enlightenment came to the fore in the domain of literature in English. Before thus endeavouring to theorize encyclopedism in the department of essay or prose writing, one must have to go through the quintessence of enlightenment. In a singular sweep of articulations, we should acknowledge the contribution of the great British philosopher Francis Bacon. Bacon came out on to the scene with his philosophy of induction that stands on the foundation of empiricism: observation, experimentation and conclusion and thus we have had the prerogative of witnessing a plethora of works such as *Novum Organum*, *The New Atlantis*, *Advancement of Learning* with all being focused on appealing to our mind which is acclimatized to the reception of knowledge, intuition and internalization, excogitation, ratiocination, syllogisation. After all enlightenment has helped in the indoctrination of the human brain by burying the fossilized predilection for incomplete knowledge, the inurement to making premature articulations, the taste for having dogmatic approaches, the wilful submission to superstitions, the inveterate practice of selfishness-pandering, the resultant excess of demoralizing and degenerative symptoms as evidenced in the society, the practice of gender discrimination and the culture of chauvinism. Enlightenment in the successive decades and centuries have been working efficaciously to deracinate the acculturation of slothfulness, complacency, and passivism. Soon after Bacon we encounter a series of writings that have focussed on the issues of discrimination basically in the form of the practice of chauvinism. Mary Wollstonecraft came to the scene with a bang through her work 'Vindications of the Rights of Women' where she observes that women deserve equal rights with men. More than that it will also not be wrong to conclude that enlightenment is reconsideration, modification, replenishment, refurbishment and rejuvenation of all sorts of tenets, dogmas and ideologies.

From this facet of enlightenment, we can pass over on to the real essence of encyclopedism in the domain of fiction writing or essay writing in modern or postmodern times. In the era of postmodernism a two-fold approach to encyclopedism is witnessed: one in the exploitation of the subject matter and the other dotting the field of objectives and perspectives. In the postmodern era we are under coercion to give audience to the articulation of such terms as magic realism, pastiche, intertextuality, multilingualism. Well what happens basically in a postmodern is that it rests on the foundation of an ideology that is built out of the writer's exhaustive knowledge of history, geography, philosophy, literature, language and mythology of all times: past, present and the future. The writer who often considers it his essence is that of his prepossessed and exhaustive knowledge of all disciplines, stylistic nuances and the linguistic excellence, often is found to exercise the luxury of such attributes in his texts which fall under the labels of intertextuality, pastiche. But what is actually making the writer outstanding is that he demonstrates his voracious predilection for the acculturation of encyclopedism through his objectives too. His objectives encompass a revisitation of history, politics, political, economic and social tenets, psychological insights forcing the readers to receive reality with a grain of salt and to conceive realities with variations and mutations. The works of Umberto Eco, Luigi Pirandelli, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi WaThiongo, Andrew Motion, Sylvia Plath and George Louis Borges serve as classical examples where they blatantly display their compositional capitulation to the juggernaut of encyclopedism which has actually resulted in their carving indelible and sempiternal niches in the hall of fame of evergreen and not-outclassed-by-time writers. Thanks to their effort today's writers who have outspoken fascination for generic encyclopedism simply live

off the harvests sown by these predecessors-cum-geniuses and in the times to come it will be no wrong to be sanguine of the fact that there will be booming growth in this discipline.

### **Conclusion**

After all the deliberation presented so far is a pointer to the fact that generic encyclopedism can be understood in multiple ways. It means the treatment of encyclopedism within a particular genre of literature both from the perspective of content and from the perspective of pre-set objectives. And then it also stands for the practice of attempting different genres of literature with encyclopedism present both in stylistics, objectives and in the exploitation of knowledge from different spheres of knowledge. The term ‘ecrits’ has been used only to lend justification to the very use of the word ‘generic encyclopedism’. The term ‘Ecrits’ basically stands for those works which encyclopedicize their themes through the intervention of the stylistic devices such as pastiche, intertextuality and epigraphing, besides the duo of fabulism and magic realism. With Incircumventible presence of these literary devices, it is judiciously concluded that in the days to come, generic encyclopedism especially the one with the latent presence of encyclopedicized approaches within a particular genre will witness more and more of flourishment and enrichment.

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