

# Evolution of American Postmodernism through I. Hassan Orpheus, Prometheus, Oedipus \*

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Vanishing Orpheus leaves behind a lyre without strings; the moderns inherit it. Their song of silence responds to an ancient sentence with intimations of transcendence, upward or downward. (*The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, 6)

Prometheus, gnostic, dreamer, prophet, Titan transgressor and trickster, giver of fire, maker of culture - Prometheus is our performer. He performs Space and Time; he performs Desire. He suffers. (*The Right Promethean Fire*, 207)

The term postmodernism is not only awkward; it is also Oedipal, and like a rebellious but impotent adolescent, it cannot separate itself completely from its parent. (From *Postmodernism to Postmodernity: The local/global context*, 8)

Key Words : Ihab Hassan, postmodernism, indeterminance, autobiography, Prometheus

## 1 . Introduction

Gone are the days of the eighties when the controversy concerning postmodernism was most heated in America among critics, philosophers, historians, and sociologists with special emphasis laid on its periodization, recognition, and definition<sup>1)</sup>. The debate has been transferred to Europe and new members of critics, Lyotard, Habermas, Baudrillard, to name but a few, have continually participated in it, but many claim that we are entering a new postmodern epoch, a new era of postmodernity, fundamentally different from the modern era in culture, society, politics, economics, technology, media<sup>2)</sup>. The term, ' postmodern ', has become synonymous with contemporary, which echoes ' modern ' designating the present time, or contemporary<sup>3)</sup>. S. Allan, a series editor, argues that " Indeed, its ( postmodernism ) appearance in mass media discussions concerning topics as diverse as architecture, drama, fashion, literature, music or film has become almost a daily occurrence<sup>4)</sup>. Two

decades, therefore, are long enough to generalize and summarize the opinions given on postmodernism under a broader perspective than in the eighties.

This essay is to chart the development of Hassan's meditations on postmodernism for thirty years, tracing his efforts to define, diffuse, and practice it. I. Hassan (1925~), one of the America's most influential contemporary literary and cultural critics, is "widely recognized as a leading theorist of postmodernism"<sup>5)</sup>.

The argumentation surrounding postmodernism is particularly American in character<sup>6)</sup>, because America was the first to enjoy the unprecedentedly affluent and mass-produced society after the Second World War, affecting substantially her life, culture, and idea, which stimulated critics to ponder on the reasons, effects, expansion, and future of the new trend. Another reason why in America began the discussion among intellectuals earlier than in any other country is that a new and innovative literary theory was expected after the 'New Criticism' had lost its effect in the sixties, a theory by which the new form of literature - avant-garde - could be elucidated<sup>7)</sup>. In a theoretical vacuum, I. Hassan appeared as a literary critic and theorist, connecting the study of literature with that of new trend of culture, postmodernism.

After graduating from the University of Cairo, Hassan was sent to America by the Egyptian government to study engineering at the University of Pennsylvania in 1946. When he took a master's degree in engineering, he changed his course into literature. Thus he turned from a scientist into a humanist, starting his scholastic career as an analyst and critic on the contemporary American literature. His first book, entitled *Radical Innocence* (1961), discusses the contemporary American novelists, S. Bellow, J. Salinger, and the following book, *The Literature of Silence* (1967) deals with H. Miller and S. Beckett. It was not until 1971 when he published *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* that he launched into the study of culture at large, postmodernism. In this way, Hassan relates literature with culture.

His contributions to the study of postmodernism are threefold: defining, diffusing, and practicing. Though he didn't coin the term, postmodernism, Hassan was counted among the first to promulgate it. He has traced its history, and given a minute and inclusive definition of it by creating the world-famous and oft-quoted parallel columns of modernism and postmodernism. The twin terms used in them, immanence and indeterminacy, or their compound, indeterminance, have become the gauge by which the two *isms* can be distinguished. The debate on postmodernism has been accentuated since the meeting at the University of Wisconsin in 1976 where Hassan played a leading role and read a keynote address entitled, 'Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture?'<sup>8)</sup>. The French sociologist, J-F Lyotard, was invited to the meeting and read a paper in the conference at which Hassan presided. His book, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, presaged the heated debate on Postmodernism in Europe. Hassan proclaimed that "the postmodern debate drifted from America to Europe"<sup>9)</sup>. Thus Hassan is regarded as a transmitter of postmodernism from America to Europe,

connecting postmodernism with poststructuralism. Hassan, moreover, is a practitioner of postmodernism in that his activity as a scholar and critic covers the whole field of humanities, blurring the boundary of genres. His writings, furthermore, are tinged with postmodern traits: fragmentary, eclectic, allusive, being a collage of quotations, essays, travelogues, and autobiography.

He is a prolific scholar, author of a dozen books and nearly two hundred articles, many of which are directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, related with postmodernism, so that it will not be an easy task to trace the trajectory of his ideas on postmodernism completely<sup>10</sup>. We, therefore, confine the focus of analysis to his four books and some articles most directly connected with postmodernism, referring to other related materials, if necessary, to make the point of argument clearer. The following books will be dealt with in a chronological order: *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*, *Paracriticisms: Seven Speculations of the Times*, *The Right Promethean Fire: Imagination, Science, and Cultural Change*, *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture*.

## 2 . Orpheus, or the Definition of the Term.

To probe into the origin of the term ' postmodernism ' seems to be as difficult as to define it. Hassan is probably among the first to tackle the problem. Though he insists that its origin remains uncertain<sup>11</sup>, he gives us a brief history of the term. Hassan indicates that in 1934, " Federico de Onís uses the word *postmodernismo* to suggest a reaction against the difficulty and experimentalism of modernist poetry ". Hassan explicates that " in 1939, Arnold Toynbee takes up the term in a very different sense, proclaiming the end of the ' modern ' Western bourgeois order dating back to the seventeenth century. Then, in 1945 ", says Hassan, " Bernard Smith employs the word to suggest a movement in painting, beyond abstraction, which we call Socialist Realism. In the fifties in America, Charles Olson, in conjunction with poets and artists at Black Mountain College, speaks of a postmodernism... By the end of that decade... Irving Howe and Harry Levin, respectively, argue that postmodernism intimates a decline in high modernist culture "<sup>12</sup>.

Hassan insists that " only in the late sixties and early seventies, in various essays by Leslie Fiedler and myself, among others, does postmodernism begin to signify a distinct, sometimes positive, development in American culture, a critical modification, if not actual end, of modernism. It is in this latter sense, I believe, changing masks and changing faces, that postmodern theory persists today "<sup>13</sup>.

Tracing the genealogy of the term elucidates the shift of the connoted meanings ranging from the usage attached to the artistic movement in South America, to the contemporary sense via historian's periodization. Onís, who was a close friend of the Spanish philosophers, Ortega and Unamuno, coined the term to indicate a conservative and reversal trend of artistic expression.

Hassan's study also makes it clear that the term ' postmodernism ' was mainly employed in the artistic sphere and only in America in the sixties did it begin to be used in a broader context, that is, in signifying a certain trend of culture and particular mode of thought: apathy, anarchy, avant-garde. The

decade witnessed a complete change or division from the former days<sup>14</sup>). The United States rushed into a consumer society and experienced astonishing succession of liberation and counter-cultural movements. “The forms of thought and art shifted from static to performative, from the hypotactical to paratactical... Not Heidegger but Derrida; not Matisse but Duchamp; not Schönberg but Cage; not Hemingway but Barthelme <sup>15</sup>).

After tracing the transition of the meanings of the term, Hassan grappled with the difficult task of defining it. He started his academic career as a critic on avant-garde literature and extended the work into the sphere of contemporary American culture. His first ( 1961 ) and second ( 1967 ) books discuss the latest American and avant-garde literature respectively, and the following one, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* ( 1971 ) is a kind of literary history not of modernism, but of postmodernism, where he analyzes the works of Sade, Hemingway, Kafka, Genet, and Beckett, in terms of ‘ silence ’, a key term of Hassan’s literary criticism. The writers share, Hassan opines, a propensity for liberating from the history, extinguishing the form, and blurring the genre: they “[ tend ] toward vanishing forms <sup>16</sup>). In short, the new writers showed the common inclination towards silence, one of the most notorious features of contemporary literature. Hassan succeeded in explicating the new trend of the literature after the Second World War, literature of postmodernism. Hassan refers to the title of his book saying that “[ an ] abstract reading of the ( Orphic ) myth may insist on the conflict between Apollo and Dionysos, art and nature, form and energy <sup>17</sup>). ‘ The dismemberment of Orpheus, ’ the scholar suggests, is a metaphor for the contemporary crisis in art, especially literature. “ Metaphors spread a net to capture unseen life; their contours ripple with each haul. Because silence is more metaphor than concept, it must need drift a little with the currents of our thought <sup>18</sup>). In this way, Hassan extends his study from literature to art, from culture to consciousness, and concludes that “[ silence ] implies alienation from reason, society, and history, a reduction of all engagements in the created world of men, perhaps an abrogation of any communal existence. Its radical empiricism resists and even disrupts human systems, and elicits the babble in everyday words <sup>19</sup>).

In a similar vein, Hassan attempted to interpret the new trend of culture in general in his essay, *POSTmodernISM: A Paracritical Bibliography* ( 1971 ) which is later included in his anthology of criticism, *Paracriticisms: Seven Speculations of the Times* ( 1975 ). He mapped up the fundamental shift of culture, enumerating various features peculiar to modernism and postmodernism. The minute and detailed list is taken as a helpful guide for having a bird’s eye view of the distinction between modernism and postmodernism. In the rubric of Modernism, he indicates seven features: urbanism ( Baudelaire, Proust, Joyce, Eliot ) technologism ( Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism ), dehumanization ( elitism ), primitivism, eroticism ( Sado-masochism, solipsism, nihilism ), antinomianism ( discontinuity, iconoclasm ), and experimentalism ( innovation, dissociation <sup>20</sup>). In each counter column are given the specific features of postmodernism: global village, spaceship earth, science fiction, anarchy and fragmentation, entropy of meaning, the new sexuality, counter, occult, discontinuity, antiformalism,

indeterminacy, minimalism, and intermedia. The list of binary oppositions serves to formulate the criterion of postmodernism, and, at the same time, illustrates his propensity for parallel columns<sup>21</sup>). Hassan has continued to revise the checklist since then.

At first sight, the frames of reference are broad enough, consisting of various ideas and concepts of thinkers, critics, philosophers, and, therefore, defy explanation. But his basic assumptions of dichotomy between modernism and postmodernism may be summarized as follows; shifting from elitism to antielitism and participation, the closeness of the modern city paralleling an anarchic and fragmented postmodern city, transition from the wholeness of technology to the computer-aided technology and media. Hassan's concept of postmodernism appears to have derived from that of avant-garde literature whose specific traits are silence and deformation. Following this concept, he takes up these artistic movements as signifiers of postmodernism: radical play, comedy of the absurd, black humor, camp, conceptual art, beat and hip, rock culture. As the literature of silence arrives at the discontinuity, art and culture of postmodernism, Hassan argues, come to the apogee with 'entropy of meaning'. Everything is open, playful, rebellious, and discontinuous. In this way, Hassan gives us a device, a touching stone, through which are gauged various contemporary phenomena. "Hassan's construction of the postmodern, pioneering... [ He ] was the first to stretch it across the arts..."<sup>22</sup>).

A decade later, Hassan revised his catalogues of modernism and postmodernism, enumerating ten conceptual problems in its definition<sup>23</sup>).

| Modernism                    | Postmodernism                  |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Romanticism/Symbolism        | Pataphysics/Dadaism            |
| Form ( conjunctive, closed ) | Antiform ( disjunctive, open ) |
| Purpose                      | Play                           |
| Design                       | Chance                         |
| Hierarchy                    | Anarchy                        |
| Mastery/Logos                | Exhaustion/Silence             |
| Art Object/Finished Work     | Process/Performance/Happening  |
| Distance                     | Participation                  |
| Creation/Totalization        | Decreation/Deconstruction      |
| Synthesis                    | Antithesis                     |
| Presence                     | Absence                        |
| Centering                    | Dispersal                      |
| Genre/Boundary               | Text/Intertext                 |
| Semantics                    | Rhetoric                       |
| Paradigm                     | Syntagm                        |
| Hypotaxis                    | Parataxis                      |

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Metaphor                          | Metonymy                               |
| Selection                         | Combination                            |
| Root/Depth                        | Rhizome/Surface                        |
| Interpretation/Reading            | Against Interpretation/Misreading      |
| Signified                         | Signifier                              |
| <i>Lisible</i> ( Readerly )       | <i>Scriptible</i> ( Writerly )         |
| Narrative/ <i>Grande Histoire</i> | Anti-narrative/ <i>Petite Histoire</i> |
| Master Code                       | Idiolect                               |
| Symptom                           | Desire                                 |
| Type                              | Mutant                                 |
| Genital/Phallic                   | Polymorphous/Androgynous               |
| Paranoia                          | Schizophrenia                          |
| Origin/Cause                      | Difference-Differance/Trace            |
| God the Father                    | The Holy Ghost                         |
| Metaphysics                       | Irony                                  |
| Determinacy                       | Indeterminacy                          |
| Transcendence                     | Immanence                              |

“ The preceding table, ” Hassan admits, “ draws on ideas in many fields - rhetoric, linguistics, literary theory, philosophy, anthropology, psychoanalysis, political science, even theology - and draws on many authors - European and American - aligned with diverse movements, groups, and views. Yet the dichotomies this table represents remain insecure, equivocal <sup>24</sup>).

Though provisional, as Hassan acknowledges, this binary scheme manifests the qualities intrinsic to modernism and postmodernism and demonstrates the distinction lying between them, seen in every field of literature, culture, and philosophy. Hassan ’s contrastive table, consequently, has become an oft-quoted barometer of the cultural change.

The rubric is too comprehensive, and, therefore, invites various forms of criticism. For instance, Dadaism should be regarded as Modernism, but is placed in the column of postmodernism: Participation contradicts anarchy, but both of them are put in the same column ( postmodernism ): Classifying semantics and metaphor into modernism, and rhetoric and metonymy into postmodernism is oversimplified. Hassan made the same mistake as Lyotard did, of indicating the loss of the ‘ great story ’ in the postmodern era - we have still various great stories<sup>25</sup>).

Hassan explicates the difficulty of definition of postmodernism, referring to ten conceptual problems inherent to the concept itself<sup>26</sup>). To resolve the bottleneck, he proposes the distinction of three modes of artistic changes in the last hundred years: avant-garde, modern, and postmodern. “[ Avant-garde ] assaulted the bourgeoisie with their art...But their activism could turn inward, becoming

suicidal....Modernism, however, proved more stable, aloof, hieratic....Postmodernism strikes us by contrast as playful, paratactical and deconstructionist...Yet postmodernism remains 'cooler'... cooler, less cliquish, and far less aversive to the pop, electronic society of which it is a part, and so hospitable to kitch<sup>77</sup>). From the rough sketch of the cultural history, he deduced the twin features of postmodernism: immanence and indeterminacy. The key terms are utilized to illustrate the postmodernism, which will be analyzed in the following chapter.

As stated elsewhere, one of Hassan's contributions to the study of postmodernism lies in activating and diffusing the debate from America to Europe via French sociologist, Lyotard. Up until the publication of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, published in 1978 and translated into English in 1981, the controversies on postmodernism were purely American phenomena centering on the analysis of the contemporary American culture: pop, rock, anarchy, avant-garde. Lyotard first launched into the debate when he was invited to an International Symposium on Post-Modern Performance at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1976. Lyotard read a paper named 'The Unconscious as Mis-en-Scene', in a session hosted by Hassan<sup>28</sup>). At the meeting, Hassan read a paper, or performed an academic play, entitled 'Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture? - A University Masque in Five Scenes - for Anima'. He made an academic paper into a monologue, and played both as a playwright and protagonist, ranging from text to pretext, from context to paratext, from metatext to mythotext, and from heterotext to posttext, which was evaluated as a highly postmodern performance<sup>29</sup>). "Orpheus is surely no monster of *hubris*. The cults we associate with his name blend word and flesh into the dance of existence. Orpheus sings, and his song moves stones, trees, and beasts. The reason is simple: singing Orpheus restores himself to nature, and moves with the secret life of things<sup>30</sup>). Hassan contributes to postmodernism as a performer, a contemporary Orpheus, as well as theorist.

### 3 . Prometheus, or Scientific Postmodernism

In 1978, Hassan wrote an essay, 'Culture, Indeterminacy, and Immanence: Margins of the (Postmodern) Age,' and stepped forward by extending his thought into a novel sphere, science. "[The] social and the cultural are tightly intertwined. Debates over the future direction of social - and global - trends cannot afford to ignore the cultural dimensions<sup>31</sup>). Nor can science. Science is no longer considered to be apart from culture. He tried to relate natural science with the study of postmodernism by analyzing the innovative development of physics, particularly the Quantum Theory. From the study, he deduced the concepts of immanence and indeterminacy: key terms designating the specific features of postmodernism. The double terms were already used in the column of postmodernism in the table mentioned before. He argues that "current analogies between science, culture, and sundry artistic and spiritual phenomena can prove too facile<sup>32</sup>).

Hassan regards the year 1905 as a turning point of natural science. "In that year," Hassan asserts, "Albert Einstein published his paper on the Special Theory of Relativity. Events are always perceived

with reference to a particular frame; in another system of coordinates, the ' same ' events are not the same. As Einstein succinctly put it: ' There is no absolute motion. ' Nor is there absolute time or space. ... In 1915, Einstein formulated the General Theory of Relativity, which reckoned with gravity and inertial systems as elements of a unified field. ... [ With ] both theories Einstein forced the universe of Galileo and Newton to reveal an entirely different face <sup>83</sup>). Then, Hassan goes on to enumerate the revolutionary physicists and their innovative theories along with ' Excursus on Gödel & Proof ': Heisenberg & Uncertainty Principle, Bohr & Principle of Complementarity. " [ Physics ] now dispenses with geometric models to describe subatomic events....Mechanism, determinism, materialism recede before the flux of consciousness, a kind of noetic Heraclitean fire <sup>84</sup>).

After elucidation of the development of the Quantum Theory and new view of the universe, Hassan insists that " it is now clear that science, through its technological extensions, has become an inalienable part of our lives. More, the new Prometheus, quite as in the adamantine days of Zeus, assays nothing less than the unification of mind <sup>85</sup>). His conclusion is that " [ in ] brief, relativity, uncertainty, complementarity, and incompleteness are not simply mathematical idealizations; they are concepts that begin to constitute our cultural languages; they are part of a new order of knowledge founded on both indeterminacy and immanence <sup>86</sup>).

In this way, he was the first to bring the two topics together, natural science and culture, or postmodernism, and by doing so, deduced the fundamental twin concepts of postmodernism, indeterminacy and immanence. Later, the double undercurrents of postmodernism were compounded and a neologism ' indetermination ' was coined by him, which parallels the Derrida & way of coining a ' différance ' from difference and deferral; a key term of poststructuralism<sup>87</sup>).

Hassan elucidates the twin terms, implicating the relationship between culture and science, as follows.

As in scientific so in cultural thought, indeterminacy fills the space between the will to unmaking ( dispersal, deconstruction, discontinuity, etc. ) and its opposite, the integrative will. Cultural indeterminacy, however, reveals itself with greater cunning and valency; choice, pluralism, fragmentation, contingency, imagination are only a few of its ambiguous aspects<sup>88</sup>).

His explanation leads to the conclusion that "[ through ] all these concepts moves a vast will to undoing, affecting the body politic, the body cognitive, the erotic body, the individual psyche - the entire realm of discourse in the West <sup>89</sup>). His concept of ' unmaking ' echoes the French philosophers ' favorite words such as ' deconstruction ', ' unmythifying ', and ' decentering ', but the term is used in particularly American context in that "[ it ] surely need not deny an ideal of harmonious perfection; nor is strangeness sometimes but the action of an immanent future in our lives <sup>90</sup>). Indeterminacy, a vast will to undoing, or better still, indeterminacies called by Hassan, is a blanket term, designating tendencies

within postmodernism: “resistance of closure, and celebration of ambiguity, discontinuity, heterodoxy, pluralism, and the like”<sup>81</sup>).

As for immanence, he employs it “without religious echo to designate the capacity of mind to generalize itself in symbols, intervene more and more into nature, act through its own abstractions, and project human consciousness to the edges of the cosmos”<sup>82</sup>). Hassan goes on to explain that “[this] mental tendency may be further described by words like diffusion, dissemination, projection, interplay, communication, which all derive from the emergence of human beings as language animals, *homo pictor*, or *homo significans*, creatures constituting themselves, and also their universe, by symbols of their own making”<sup>83</sup>).

Hassan concludes that the double tendencies, immanence and indeterminacy, or the will of unmaking and the capacity of mind to generalize itself in symbols, have become its own environment, characterizing the postmodernism. The two concepts have been universal in that “our sense of immanence has become at once more semiotic and more technological; and our sense of indeterminacy, no longer the possession of a few, has become almost a decree of our cultural consciences”<sup>84</sup>). Thus Hassan linked science and culture, an epoch-making attempt in the history of the study of postmodernism, and succeeded in finding between them “not analogies, but rather similarities of structure, structural *homologies*”<sup>85</sup>).

#### 4 . Oedipus, or Postmodern Turn

Hassan, who once accepted the postmodernism turn, the Oedipian disruption of postmodernism from modernism, gradually revised his concept, and in the eighties did he come to form the opinion that the “(postmodern period) must be perceived in terms *both* of continuity *and* discontinuity, the two perspectives being complementary and partial”<sup>86</sup>). Hassan betrays his recognition that “Modernism and postmodernism are not separated by an Iron Curtain or Chinese Wall; for history is a palimpsest, and culture is permeable to time past, time present, and time future. We are all, I suspect, a little Victorian, Modern, and Postmodern, at once. And an author may, in his or her own life time, easily write both a modernist and postmodernist work”<sup>87</sup>). He concludes that “The Apollonian view, rangy and abstract, discerns only historical conjunctions; the Dionysian feeling, sensuous though nearly purblind, touches only the disjunctive moment”<sup>88</sup>). We have to see a period in terms both of continuity and discontinuity. “[We] cannot claim that everything before 1960 is modern, everything after, postmodern”<sup>89</sup>). They now *co-exist*.

What lies behind the change of concept, from disruption of postmodernism from modernism to uninterruptedness of the latter. To quote Hassan’s own words, “The term postmodernism is not only awkward; it is also Oedipal, and like a rebellious impotent adolescent, it cannot separate itself completely from its parent (modernism)..Oedipal or parasitical if you wish...it remains a conflictual ‘dialogue’ with the older movement”<sup>90</sup>). Behind the change of his opinion seem to lie four elements,

linguistic, historical, political, and aesthetic.

The first reason is linguistic, which is inherent in the term, ' postmodernism ' itself. Morphologically, Hassan asserts, "[ the ] word postmodernism ... evokes what it wishes to surpass or suppress, modernism itself. The term thus contains its enemy within, as the terms romanticism and classicism, baroque and rococo, do not <sup>51</sup>). The prefix ' *post* ' is a temporal signifier, presupposing modernism, but the exact definition of modernism, an apparently impossible task, will not make postmodernism stand on its own as baroque and rococo do<sup>52</sup>). Postmodernism, therefore, can't be separated completely from the modernism, and " to call one's own period in history ' postmodern ' is an extraordinary act of hubris <sup>53</sup>). Hassan regards this as a morphological instability of the term.

Hassan argues that " postmodernism suffers from a certain *semantic* instability: that is, no clear consensus about its meaning exists among scholars <sup>54</sup>), because the term is too young in its usage to be realized in general, and a phenomenon can be called modernism, postmodernism, avant-gardism or even neo-avant-gardism.

Hassan goes on to elucidate the second instability of the term postmodernism, saying that " A related difficulty concerns the *historical* instability.... There is already some evidence that postmodernism, and modernism even more, are beginning to slip and slide in time, threatening to make any diacritical distinction between them desperate <sup>55</sup>). The postmodern period, therefore, should be viewed in terms both of continuity and discontinuity, which shows the marked turn of his concept of postmodernism. Hassan was fond of binary opposition, either/or, but the two instabilities inherent in the term make him take a compatible stance, and/or. Hassan started as an anti-modernist-cum-postmodernist, confessing that "[ his ] sympathies are in the present, <sup>56</sup>) but gradually betrayed doubt of the ongoing process of postmodernism, regarding it impossible to sever modernism from postmodernism.

Concerning the political reason, P. Anderson argues that Hassan's concept of the binary opposition between modernism and postmodernism, " had a built-in limit: the move to the social was barred <sup>57</sup>). The eighties witnessed the upsurge of political shift: " the euphoria of the Reagan boom, and the triumphant ideological offensive of the Right, culminating in the collapse of the Soviet bloc... <sup>58</sup>). Under these revolutionary political situations which show a marked contrast with the sixties - apathy, anarchy, avant-garde - the conventional distinctions lost bearing on our thought, suggesting the end of history, or finality of humanism. Hassan expounds that words like " left and right, base and superstructure, production and reproduction, materialist and idealist... have become nearly unserviceable, except to perpetuate prejudice <sup>59</sup>). The recognition of the contemporary conservative political tendency made Hassan's initial distaste for ideological rage and the hectoring of religious and secular dogmatists grow larger<sup>60</sup>), keeping him aloof from political scenes, which led him to withdraw from the debate on postmodernism in the end of the eighties<sup>61</sup>).

The fourth reason is aesthetical. P. Anderson opines that the reason is internal to his account of the

arts itself<sup>62</sup>). Some critics argue that nearly all of the notions of postmodernism seem to be based on its being an “ extension, intensification, subversion, or repudiation of modernism ”<sup>63</sup>, and Hassan’s primary anticipation was for the “ exasperated forms of classic modernism - Duchamp or Beckett ” - to be intensified and extended, which was “ just what De Onís had presciently termed ‘ ultramodernism ’ in the thirties ”<sup>64</sup>. But the contemporary trend of arts, postmodernism, has extended and intensified, another aspect of modernism, for which “ Warhol could stand as short-hand ” - “ the languid or decorative involution of modernist *élan* which De Onís had contrasted as ‘ postmodernism ’<sup>65</sup>. In time, however, Hassan sensed that the former aspect, ultramodernism, would be predominant, but the end result fell short of his expectation. In *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* ( 1987 ), he confesses that “[ Postmodernism ] itself has also changed, taken, as I see it, a wrong turn. Caught between ideological truculence and demystifying nugacity, caught in its own kitsch... ”<sup>66</sup>.

Modernism was never a monolithic phenomenon, so that there would be various forms of reaction, rejection, anticipation to each face of it. With time the suppressed side of postmodernism, popular, commercialism, mass-produced, increased to intrude on his awareness, and finally came to assault him. At the Grand Palais in Paris, “ under the banner of ‘ Styles 85 ’ - the banner portrayed Einstein’s head with tongue waggishly thrust out - , a hundred hectares of postmodern designs, ranging from thumbtacks to yachts, displayed another aspect of postmodernism. Walking through the bright farrago, hectares of *esprit*, parody, persiflage, [ he ] began to feel the smile on [ his ] lips freeze ”<sup>67</sup>. A sudden surge of awakening caused him to recognize the reality of the postmodernism: postmodernism itself has changed, taken a wrong turn<sup>68</sup>. What remains, according to him, are “ kitsch, camp, pop, ... hermetically reflexive, or simply otiose ”<sup>69</sup>. Hassan’s reaction at the gallery parallels that of A. Huyssen’s at the Seventh Documenta in Kassel in 1981 where he felt what he saw was “ fad, advertising pitch and hollow spectacle ”<sup>70</sup>. Thus, linguistic, historical, political, and aesthetic reasons made Hassan disillusioned and disabused with the end-result of postmodernism, and compelled him to retire from the debate at the end of the eighties. But his untiring and inexhaustible energy was directed into another sphere of postmodernism, playing the role of a practitioner.

## 5 . Prometheus forever, or a Practitioner

As analyzed above, Hassan has contributed to defining, diffusing and practicing, of postmodernism. He has long been regarded as the leading critic on postmodernism in America. But in the eighties, postmodernism changed, so did his stance. Critical concern on postmodernism shifted from America to Europe, and Hassan himself gradually lost interest in theorizing it<sup>71</sup>. He, instead, began to act as a practitioner of postmodernism and betrayed himself in his writings: postmodern tendency to increase the personal character of discourse.

Hassan’s critical works, though highly academic and theoretical, are characterized by the propensity for demonstrating personal tone with autobiographical elements, replete with self-references.

This inclination is present in his entire work as an undercurrent, covering literature, culture, science, performance, thus crossing the boundary, blurring genres, which he called ' paracriticism '. Its earliest implication was revealed in *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* ( 1971 ).

[ We ] never end by writing the book we began; nor do we write the book that others read. This is the decree of the imagination in its necessary clash with existence. We change to live, and living change still further. It is all too likely that some uneasiness in this work may betray a manner that I consider no longer my own. I dare to write only in the present<sup>72</sup>).

For Hassan, " writing is neither a pastime nor a mere professional necessity; it is an existential quest, a risk <sup>73</sup>). Hassan confesses that "[ the ] varieties of critical experience are endless. I shall speak only of three, desiring, reading, acting...These are all fragments of an autobiography, itself but a sentient reed in the universe <sup>74</sup>). Founded on the belief, the idea of ' paracriticism ' was propounded by him, a trial for crossing over genre.

I am not certain what genre these seven pieces make. I call them paracriticism: essays in language, traces of the times, fictions of the heart. Literature is part of their substance, but their critical edge is only one of many edges in the mind, I would not protest if they were denied the name of criticism<sup>75</sup>).

In short, his writings reveal distinctively postmodern traits: fragmentary, ambiguous, playful, self-reflexive<sup>76</sup>). His essays are a collage of fragmentary evidences, quoting, self-quoting, blurring genre. Some critics, therefore, criticize him for his innovative postmodern style arguing that " Hassan 's approach is symptomatic...an ironic, detached, playful, and wilfully cryptic and allusive use of postmodern discourse. A paradigmatic example of a certain postmodern style, Hassan 's book is a pastiche of fragmentary essays... <sup>77</sup>). Hassan himself admits that "[ his ] writing offended most when it addressed postmodernism in paracritical form. The paracritical mode certainly was fallible, at its worst otiose, at its best a timely affront to orthodoxy; in any case, it was unrepeatable <sup>78</sup>). Still, he retorts that postmodern critics should decenter their work. "[ He ] wondered why so many radical ideas, meant to revolutionize consciousness and change the world, found only banal and clumsy expression <sup>79</sup>). He professes himself a practitioner as well as theorist, of postmodernism, and embarks on writing autobiography, which is, according to him, an extension of his critical work. His attitude as a critic reminds us of the famous aphorism by Paul Valéry saying that " there is no theory that is not in fact a carefully concealed part of the theorist 's own life story <sup>80</sup>). In Hassan 's mind, theory and practice are both sides of a coin, too tightly combined to separate.

In 1986, Hassan published a highly challenging and intriguing autobiography: *Out of Egypt*:

*Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*. The book is challenging in that it is against the convention of autobiography: non-linear, fragmentary, non-self-revealing. His autobiography is intriguing as well for its mystifying mode of narrative: the fragmentary evidences don't allow readers to make sense of his whole life, which parallels Barthes' autobiography, arranged in alphabetical order from antipathy to writing, thus fragmenting and deconstructing his identity<sup>81</sup>). In a similar vein, Hassan's autobiography is composed of sections called memoirs, scenes, and arguments, where he betrays the recollection of his youth, talks with his wife, and meditations on love, life, death, pedagogy, beauty and beast.

We sense two selves embedded in the unprecedented way of writing: the subjective 'I' and the objective 'I'. The former observes, contemplates, and records the latter. The 'observed I', on the other hand, intervenes in, intrudes into, the 'writing I'. The duality of protagonist-cum-narrator structure betrays itself in the depiction of the maternal relationship with his son, the autobiographer, followed by that of his conjugal conversation.

This evening, ( my wife's ) eyes fall on the lines about my mother's spitz. She laughs: " Will sibling rivalry never end? " Then in a darker voice: " How was your mother *really*? "<sup>82</sup>). [ italics original ]

Note the use of the three different tenses of the verb. In this passage, the past encroaches on the present, the moment of writing the autobiography. The future tense suggests the ongoing process of story-telling. The reader is put in a world of a chronological disorder. The same is true of the depiction of the conversation with his only son, Geoffrey, who asks the writer " incredulously: ' Dad, you're writing an autobiography? But you never spoke of Egypt at home! '...He has brought the snapshot ( of his mother's ) to Munich - to remind me of my parents? "<sup>83</sup>). In this writing, there is a temporal and spatial mixing: chronologically past, present, and future mingle, and spatially Egypt, Munich, and Milwaukee intertwine. As the subtitle suggests, Hassan's autobiographical work is not autobiography proper, but a mélange of past recollection, conjugal conversation, and theoretical speculation on many subjects covering all humanities. In short, his autobiographical writing contains trait of postmodernism in that it is a collage of various genres.

The propensity for including personal details in his criticism culminates in composing autobiography. No other critic has put into practice the idea that " criticism and autobiography are difficult to separate, since they are both self-conscious discourses ' about ' language and thus engaged in the same task "<sup>84</sup>), more faithfully than Hassan. As a practitioner of postmodernism, he should be regarded as its forerunner. He is another Prometheus who "[ transforms ] the cultural critic's role, " " just as Prometheus's theft of fire transformed human power to approach that of the gods "<sup>85</sup>). He wonders " what role can the critic play when history shakes? " His answer is " only a modest but dual role: one of subversion, the other of making "<sup>86</sup>). As a critic, he proceeds " in three continuous

movements: desiring, reading, acting, " throughout his life<sup>87</sup>).

## 6 . Conclusion

Tracing Hassan's development of ideas of postmodernism has made it clear that he is indeed the leading theorist as well as practitioner of postmodernism. He has investigated the origin of the term, and made a definition of it in binary oppositions, resuming these lists several times. He has expanded the target of the study of postmodernism from literature to culture in general, extending into science. Hassan, moreover, has played the role of diffusing the debate on postmodernism in Europe by inviting Lyotard, the author of *The Postmodern Condition*, to the conference in America. Though Hassan seems to have lost interest in theorizing postmodernism, his critique of contemporary culture is still sharp, and the table of binary oppositions he proposed has not lost its validity as an indicator of separation of modernism from postmodernism. As a postmodernist, Hassan writes in a style peculiar to postmodernism: being rife with fragments, a *mélange* of many genres. As Hutcheon insists, Hassan's theoretical works as well as the travelogue and the autobiography blur the distinctions between the discourses of theory and literature<sup>88</sup>).

Hassan's conclusion saying that " I know less about postmodernism today than I did thirty years ago, when I began to write about it..[ No ] consensus obtains on what postmodernism really means <sup>89</sup>), illustrates how ambiguous and intriguing the term is. His final words may affirm that the attempt at defining it is incompatible with and antithetical of postmodernism. But as a born avant-gardist, he has set himself a tough assignment.

As long as we recognize the present state of the world as postmodernism, Hassan's contributions will remain as the starting point from which debate begins. " To study the present is an inherently risky business in which one is bound to make mistakes which become only too evident when they are eventually seen with the benefit of hindsight. The intellectual risks are worth taking, however, since some critical understanding of one's own time is a vital resource for surviving it, let alone changing it <sup>90</sup>). Hassan tackles the aporia, postmodernism, and sings as Orpheus did, giving us fire and knowledge, like Prometheus.

\* I would like to thank my two former faculty members for their encouragement to study the works of I. Hassan. Prof. Reiichiro Hashimoto presented me with Hassan's *Out of Egypt* in memory of his retirement, and Prof. Yorio Nishimura invited me to attend a seminar held in Osaka where I. Hassan gave a lecture on contemporary American literature. This paper owes a great deal to their help, though every flaw in it is mine.

## Notes

1 ) McGuigan, p. 5; Best and Kellner, p. ix. Debates on postmodernism were heated in Japan in the eighties. Her unprecedented prosperity allowed for a discussion about postmodernism in conjunction with the appearance of a

group of young and innovative scholars and critics called ' *new academism* ', but with the burst of economical bubble, the bitter controversy came to an end at the end of the eighties. Unlike in America, the controversy was transient in Japan.

- 2 ) *Ibid.*, p. viii. To differentiate the twin terms, postmodernity and postmodernism, is an intriguing question. McGuigan argues that " postmodernism refers to philosophical ideas mainly derived from poststructuralist theory, and cultural formations, especially associated with popular culture. Postmodernity, in contrast, refers to societal or civilizational claims. " McGuigan, p. 2. In a similar vein, Lyon insists that with regard to postmodernism, the accent is on the cultural, and with postmodernity, the emphasis is on the social. " Simply put, they lie in the impossibility of *separating* the cultural from the social, however desirable the *distinction* might be. " Lyon, p. 6. Hassan shares the opinion with additional definition saying that "[ postmodernism ] and postmodernity are not necessarily identical; the latter is a more inclusive historical term, implying the end of a cycle that began with the European Renaissance. " Hassan ( 1980a ) pp. 107~108. Narrower conception of postmodernism is taken by Giddens arguing that " Postmodernism, if it means anything, is best kept to refer to styles or movements within literature, painting, the plastic arts, and architecture. It concerns aspects of *aesthetic reflection* upon the nature of modernity. " McGuigan, p. 4. McGuigan maintains that " For Lyotard, the postmodern is an epistemological condition, a condition, that is, which is to do with how knowledge is legitimized. " *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 3 ) Some critics, of course, reject the nomenclature ' postmodernism ', and among them is Hutcheon who argues that " what I want to call postmodernism is fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political. " Hutcheon, p. 4.
- 4 ) McGuigan, p. ix. Lyon shares the same opinion with McGuigan saying that " since the 1980s [ postmodernity ] has engendered a huge, sometimes angry, sometimes anxious, debate in many disciplines from geography to theology and from philosophy to political science...So the postmodern has leaked out well beyond the ivory towers, denoting for many a range of everyday lived experiences. " Lyon, p. 4.
- 5 ) Hutcheon, p.49.
- 6 ) McGuigan argues that " what was comparatively new was that it should be happening so markedly in mass-popular culture. This, no doubt, emanated from the counterculture of the 1960s. " McGuigan, p. 8. He cites Huyssen's words indicating " the specifically American character of postmodernism. " *Ibid.*, p.9. See, Huyssen, p. 11, pp. 16~17.
- 7 ) L. Anderson, p. 16, p. 139; P. Anderson, p. 16.
- 8 ) Another conference which stimulated debate on postmodernism was the forum on the question of Postmodernism at the MLA Meeting in 1978 organized by Hassan, who read the Keynote speech entitled ' The Question of Postmodernism '. See Hassan ( 1980b ) p. 125, fn. 1.
- 9 ) Hassan ( 1987 ) p.222. Hassan explains his relationship with Lyotard minutely in the same book. *Ibid.*, p.233, fn. 27.
- 10 ) Scheer-Schäzler, p. 240.
- 11 ) Hassan ( 1987 ) p. 85. Cf, Hutcheon, pp. 37~38.
- 12 ) Hassan ( 2001 ) pp. 6~7; P. Anderson, pp. 3~4. Hassan gives us a short bibliography of postmodern criticism including his own articles, covering G. Steiner, H. Kenner, L. Fiedler, S. Sontag, R. Poirier, and J. Barth. Hassan ( 1975 ) pp.45~46; Hassan ( 1987 ) pp. 31~32.
- 13 ) Hassan ( 2001 ) p. 7.; Hassan ( 1980b ) p.118.

- 14 ) Hassan ( 1982 ) p. 261, p.266. Hutcheon insists by quoting Kristeva that the 1960s witnessed “ limits of language, of subjectivity, of sexual identity, and we might also add: of systematization and uniformization. ” Hutcheon, p.8.
- 15 ) Hassan ( 2001 ) p.7.
- 16 ) Hassan ( 1982 ) p.247.
- 17 ) *Ibid.*, p.5.
- 18 ) *Ibid.*, p.12.
- 19 ) *Ibid.*, p.13.
- 20 ) Hassan ( 1975 ) pp.49~52; Hassan ( 1987 ) pp. 35~37.
- 21 ) Hassan ( 1975 ) pp.54~58; Hassan ( 1987 ) pp.39~44.
- 22 ) P. Anderson, p.19.
- 23 ) Hassan ( 1982 ) pp.267~268; Hassan ( 1987 ) pp. 91~92.
- 24 ) Hassan ( 1982 ) p.269; Hassan ( 1987 ) p. 92.
- 25 ) Lyon, p.55. P. Anderson insists that the triumph of capitalism in the eighties damaged the Lyotard’s presupposition of the loss of ‘ grand narrative ’. P. Anderson, pp. 33-35.
- 26 ) Hutcheon, p.49
- 27 ) Hassan ( 1982 ) pp. 266~267; Hassan ( 1987 ) pp. 90~91.
- 28 ) Hassan ( 1987 ) p. 231, fn. 7.
- 29 ) Hassan ( 1980a ) pp. 187~207.
- 30 ) Hassan ( 1982 ) p.5.
- 31 ) Lyon, p.17.
- 32 ) Hassan ( 1980a ) p. 105.
- 33 ) *Ibid.*, pp. 98~100.
- 34 ) *Ibid.*, pp. 101~102.
- 35 ) *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- 36 ) *Ibid.*, p. 105.
- 37 ) Hassan ( 1982 ) p. 263. His terms echo Derrida’s ‘ indeterminacy of language ’. Derrida asserts that every word contains no central meaning of its own, which is differed and deferred. He compounded the twin verbs and coined ‘ différance ’. G. Allen, pp. 65~66; Lyon, p.11, p. 13; Currie, pp. 45~47.
- 38 ) Hassan ( 1980a ) p. 109.
- 39 ) Hassan ( 2001 ) p. 4.
- 40 ) Hassan ( 1980a ) p. 92.
- 41 ) Klinkowitz, p. 114.
- 42 ) Hassan ( 2001 ) p.4.
- 43 ) *Loc. cit.*
- 44 ) Hassan ( 1980a ) p. 115.
- 45 ) *Ibid.*, p.106.
- 46 ) Hassan ( 1982 ) p. 264; Hassan ( 1987 ) p. 88.
- 47 ) *Loc. cit.*
- 48 ) *Loc. cit.* On the question of continuity and disruption, opinions differ. Hutcheon insists that “ postmodernism cannot simply be used as a synonym for the contemporary...[ What ] I want to call postmodernism is

- fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political...[ these ] contradictions are certainly manifest in the important postmodern concept of ' the presence of the past ' .” Hutcheon, p. 4. McGuigan argues concerning A.Giddens that “ Giddens rejects postmodernity on both philosophical and sociological grounds: he believes that rational knowledge of the social world is possible and that this can be derived from analysis of the institutional parameters of modernity in a ' late ', ' high ' or ' radicalized ' phase. ” McGuigan, p.4.
- 49 ) Hassan ( 2001 ) p.8.
- 50 ) *Loc. cit.*
- 51 ) Hassan ( 1982 ) p. 263; Hassan ( 1987 ) p. 267.
- 52 ) Hassan ( 2001 ) p.8. Concerning a deluge of the prefix ' post ', Best and Kellner name the first chapter of their book as ' The Time of the Posts ' and opine that “ [ according ] to many, we live in the time of the ' posts ' - postindustrialism, postFordism, postMarxism, posthumanism, posthistory, and postmodernism. The term ' post ' signifies a historical sequencing in which a previous state of affairs is superceded and thus functions in the first instance as a periodizing term. ” Best and Kellner, p.3.
- 53 ) McGuigan, p.2.
- 54 ) Hassan ( 1982 ) p. 263.; Hassan ( 1987 ) p. 267.
- 55 ) *Loc. cit.*
- 56 ) Hassan ( 1987 ) p.45. Jameson classifies critics on postmodernism into four, putting the following labels: pro-postmodernist, anti-postmodernist, pro-modernist, and anti-modernist. Jameson, p. 36. By this criterion, Hassan was anti-modernist-cum-pro-postmodernist but halfway through academic research, he turned into anti-postmodernism.
- 57 ) P. Anderson, p. 19.
- 58 ) *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 59 ) Hassan ( 1987 ) p. 227. *Cf.*, P. Anderson, p. 19.
- 60 ) Hassan ( 1987 ) p. 178.
- 61 ) P. Anderson, p. 19.
- 62 ) *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- 63 ) Hutcheon, p. 49.
- 64 ) P. Anderson, p. 19.
- 65 ) *Ibid.*, p.20.
- 66 ) Hassan ( 1987 ) p. xvii.
- 67 ) *Ibid.*, p.229. *Cf.*, P. Anderson, p. 120.
- 68 ) Hassan ( 1987 ) p. xviii.
- 69 ) *Ibid.*, p. 216.
- 70 ) Huyssen, p. 8. Huyssen concludes that “ Documenta 7 can stand as the perfect aesthetic simulacrum: facile eclecticism combined with aesthetic amnesia and delusions of grandeur. It represents the kind of postmodern restoration of a domesticated modernism... and it parallels the conservative political attacks on the culture of the 1960s... ” *Loc. cit. Cf.*, Hassan ( 1987 ) p. 216.
- 71 ) Hassan points out the three academic events as a stimulus to propagate the controversy on postmodernism in Europe: The Milwaukee and New York City conferences in 1976 and 1978 attended by J-F Lyotard and J. Kristeva respectively, and The Theodor W. Adorno Prize Lecture in Frankfurt in 1980 where J. Habermas

- delivered a paper. Hassan ( 1987 ) p. 231, fn.7, p. 233, fn.27. Hassan analyses the contemporary situation as follows. " Let postmodernism now work itself out as it might. Perhaps all we have learned from it is what the gods have taught us in both myth and history: that even in their own omnivorous eyes, the universe is not single, but still One and Many as it shows itself to our sight. " *Ibid.*, p. 230. He now believes in pragmatic pluralism, or Jamesian pragmatism. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
- 72 ) Hassan ( 1982 ) p. xviii.
- 73 ) Scheer-Schätzler, p. 242.
- 74 ) Hassan ( 1987 ) p. 147.
- 75 ) Hassan ( 1975 ) p. xi.
- 76 ) McGuigan quotes Beck 's comment saying that " Individualization of life situations and processes thus means that biographies become *self-reflexive*; socially prescribed biography is transformed into biography that is self-produced and continues to be produced. Decisions on education, profession, job,... no longer can be, they must be made. " McGuigan, p. 130. Beck 's comment echoes Hassan 's ' unmaking ', ' indeterminacy ', and ' immanence '.
- 77 ) Best and Kellner, p. xiii, fn. 2.
- 78 ) Hassan ( 1995 ) p. xiv.
- 79 ) *Loc. cit.*
- 80 ) Hassan cites the words in slightly modified version. Hassan ( 1980a ) p. 29. In the book, he inserts excerpts of his private journal recorded in France into the academic articles, because " these intertexts still offer a context for [ his ] text. " *Ibid.*, p. xviii. *Cf.*, W.S. Hassan, p.9.; Klinkowitz, p.118.
- 81 ) L. Anderson, pp. 70~76. Anderson argues that "[ the ] book then offers repeated beginnings; not the reconstruction of a past nor a writing about the past but the continuing accretion, through the present act of writing.... " *Ibid.*, pp.71~72.
- 82 ) Hassan ( 1986 ) p.31.
- 83 ) *Ibid.*, pp. 11~12.
- 84 ) L. Anderson, p. 6.
- 85 ) Klinkowitz, p. 119.
- 86 ) Hassan ( 1987 ) p. 165.
- 87 ) *Ibid.*, p. 164.
- 88 ) Hutcheon cites J. Derrida, R. Barthes, and Hassan as an evidence of " the blurring of the distinctions between the discourses of theory and literature. " Hutcheon, pp.10~11.
- 89 ) Hassan ( 2001 ) p.1.
- 90 ) McGuigan, p.7.

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# ハッサンを通して見るポストモダニズム論 オルフェウス、プロメティウス、オイディプス

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## 【要旨】

日本ではポストモダニズムをめぐる議論は80年代の一過性のブームに終わってしまい、活発な論議が今なお続けられている世界の潮流と著しい乖離を来たしている。思想界のみならず、哲学、歴史、文学、工学、等々の広範囲にわたる分野においてポストモダニズム論争は汎世界的な広がりを見せ、その成果は汗牛充棟の様を呈している。

本稿はアメリカにおけるポストモダニズム論の第一人者であるイーハブ・ハッサン(1925年~)の著作を通してその変容を跡付けようとするものである。ポストモダニズム論は、第二次世界大戦後の未曾有の好景気を背景にアメリカにおいて先鞭がつけられた。大量生産に基づく繁栄の下に、アヴァンギャルドな文学作品、ポップ、カウンター・カルチャー、情報革命、等々、新時代を画し、文化全体を巻き込む革新的な運動が起きたが、これらの新しい動きを統一的に捉える必要に迫られた。そのような状況下で、ハッサンはこの語の使用例を歴史的に突き止めたのみならず、その新語に定義を下した。30数項目からなるモダニズムとポストモダニズムの対照表は両者の相違を明快に分ける標準的な指標として用いられ、ポストモダニズム論の出発点となっている。またペンシルベニア大学工学修士の経歴を基に、文化と科学を総合する概念としてindetermanence (indeterminacy + immanence) という新語を生み出したことでも知られている。さらに、ハッサンはリオタールをアメリカに招聘して、ポストモダニズム論をヨーロッパに接続するキーマンの役割をも果たした。彼の活動は理論家の立場に止まらず、ポストモダニズム論の実践者として独特の文体で著作し、斬新な『自伝』を著したとしても名声を博している。本稿はハッサンの理論、実践双方に渡る30年の軌跡を年代順に追う。