

**A Study of the Cultural Features of Globalization  
Seen in the Light of Post-modernist theories**

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**Globalization is a recent phenomenon of the new millennium; it is a process of increasing interdependence between all people of the planet, motivated by economic liberalization and information, communication, and transportation technologies. It is a trend towards looking at economic, social, political and cultural matters from a worldwide rather than a single country viewpoint.**

**With the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, world order is formed by modern technology that generates world problems. One hundred years ago, the global phenomenon did not exist, as there was no world order to be given global measures. Our global age is a time that should be typified by its disasters, injustice, terrorism, aids, drug-trafficking, poverty, military**

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization operations, starvation and pollution. As a result, the new world order must be capable of responding to these global challenges. Such challenges include cases that appeal to the large majority of nations. Consequently, the global period must be studied in relation to the stronger political, social or economic forces that shape our life. Here is what Mel Van Elteren says about the issue: -

Globalization refers to those processes, operating on a worldwide scale, which cut across national boundaries, integrating and connecting communities and organizations in new space-time combinations, making the world objectively and in the experience of people, more interconnected.... (Elteren Online).

However, due to the prevailing sense of doubt and evolution, reality is composed of a plurality of entities. Indeed, there are more than one kind of

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
**ultimate reality. This rejection of the present is provided by the idea of living beyond time, in a historical and social continuity that extends into the future. The depthlessness of actuality is constantly attacked. This explains why the term 'post' expresses the wish to live across cultural space and time; it is also a refutation of the past. The connotative meaning of the term is absolutely irresistible; it means something 'beyond', 'above', 'contra', 'ultra', 'meta' or 'out of the present'. Hence, all categories could be thought of as having limited attributes. This is how Nick Kaye defines the term: -**

..., the postmodern is resistant to prescription and exclusivity. Occurring as a crisis forced into being by a breaking of rules or a reversal of terms, the 'postmodern' indicates a calling into question of the languages, styles and figures through which it is seen.... (Kaye, P. 19).

**Inconsistency becomes a typical feature of postmodernism. The remarkable transition in the postmodern world is towards multitudeness – a mixture that was never voluntary. This inescapable pluralism is an outcome of communication and global capitalism. The postmodern state displays a series of shifts ranging from integrated to fragmented culture, from limited styles to various genres and from national to global awareness. Diverse fields like philosophy, history, sociology, parable or polemics are mixed together and, consequently, maintain a development of traditional cultures within the framework of a common civilization. Since postmodernism includes the fall of the nation–state and the rise of a worldwide global system, it reflects the shift to a global and technological civilization led by world market and communication.**

**The emergence of a global communication system is best represented in jetliners, computer processing, movies, television programs, world circulation magazines and newspapers, a world of economic consumption, international conferences, sporting events, facsimiles, internet and e-mail. Almost**

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
all cultures are now within possible instant  
communication with each other. Jean Baudrillard's  
views on communication are quite interesting to read.  
In "The Work of Art in the Electronic Age",  
Baudrillard's opinions are declared in his interview  
with La Sept: -

### La Sept:

We are in the age of  
electronic Communications; do  
you think that this  
communication has  
fundamentally changed the way  
in which we see and understand  
the world or is it merely an  
accelerated form of technical  
reproduction?

### Baudrillard answers: -

I think we have a kind of  
transformation, yes, perhaps not a  
revolution in the subversive sense  
of the term, but a transformation

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of the relations of exchange. It is often said that we are within communication and we are perhaps no longer exactly within exchange.... So there is an inversion of terms of some sort, where what was a means of communication gains a kind of finality, and possibly also a counter – finality, and then the strategies which revolve around the medium, the communication media, become more essential than the strategies which concern the contents. (*Baudrillard Live, P. 145*).

**Baudrillard has managed to break out of the confines of the academic world into a wider sphere of cultural analysis. To him, global exchange of information fosters consciousness of global concerns. Individuals find it impossible to see themselves completely detached from world events. Sympathy with other people's living**

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
**conditions arises due to different forms of exposure. To  
quote Donald Janelle: -**

Through direct actions, localities  
are assuming responsibility for an  
extended world community. They  
are channelling time, effort and  
money in support of broad  
humanitarian principles....  
**(Janelle, P. 44).**

**Accordingly, globalization launches broad  
humanistic understanding of world culture past and  
present, encourages scholars from diverse systems to  
exchange ideas on life and examines the ways native  
culture relates to world society. As a result, global  
culture is using a combination of several disciplines for  
a common purpose. In this way, global culture serves as  
an area in which scholars from multiple disciplines  
share their own experience and as a staging ground for  
creative topical activities. In pursuing multidisciplinary  
ways of knowing, global culture seeks to incorporate  
into its own work the latest research of other domains  
and to develop links among fields of study. In crossing**

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
so many disciplinary and chronological boundaries, global culture has led scholars increasingly towards a strong belief that their culture must be perceived in global terms. It participates in a wider cultural tradition, a shared system of beliefs, derived from various backgrounds throughout the world and formed by democratic assumptions through which individuals give meanings to their lives. Global culture exposes differences as well as commonalities. It encourages us to rely upon reason for the control of personal and social issues, not to establish absolute judgements.

On the other hand, the unprecedented diffusion of information could result in a preponderant influence of one culture over another. Ironically, the dominant culture adopts imagery of pseudonymity and symbolic representation. However, the dominant side exerts the supreme determining or guiding influence over others, claiming to correct the misdeeds of humanity. In our contemporary times, the imperial authority extends its control over communities by gaining indirect influence over cultural life. This view is



Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization implied by Istvan Meszaros in his interview with Elias

**Kanellis: -**

**EK:** What do you think about cultural globalization?

**IM:** 'Cultural globalization' Inescapably goes with socioeconomic and political globalization, and is subject to the same contradictions. The capital system is a thoroughly hierarchical one in which the weaker members are always at the receiving end.... In this sense, the question of cultural globalization is inseparable from the antagonisms of contemporary imperialism.... (Interview with Istvan Meszaros Online).

The new culture includes dissimilar constituents that are shifted into new formula. As a result, concepts of authenticity and genuineness have transformed from their older context to the one of popular culture. This argument is reinforced by John Docker: -

If you didn't see various things as dominating, not least, mass culture produced by media barons for 'the market', that source of evil in the world, then you were naïve, slightly ridiculous, and uncaring about how people were the victims of the media and mass culture and how mass culture kept social and ideological change, disruption, transformation from happening.... (Docker, P. XI).

Scholarly interest in the compelling effect of popular culture has reached its peak in the nineties. Par excellence, the Euro – Disneyland is one of the best examples of the controlling influence of popular culture. Disneyland is a purely imaginative entertainment that functions as an escape or a flight from confinement into fanciful or unrestrained imagination. Disneyland Paris is an imaginative place where one can dream in a sleeplike state. Disney's imagiNations parade is the biggest and most imaginative parade ever. It is a

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
**celebration of a worldwide carnival of colours and traditions with all the Disney friends on gigantic floats four storeys high. As the sun sets, Disneyland Paris is transformed into a magical fairyland of light with the illumination of 'Main Street Electrical Parade'. In this manner, when American mass culture extends outside its borders, it captivates and holds the interests of millions. It seems that Disney arouses young people's sympathetic responses because of its association with informality, liberality or vitality.**

**However, Disneyland could constitute an act of encroachment on the right or privilege of native lands. To Miles Orvell, "We need to understand Disneyland because so many, here and abroad, seem to want it...." (P.148). Orvell also adds: -**

... this was a material invasion, a violation of France, of Europe, on its own native grounds. It's one thing to have American mass culture safely in America – you go there if you want to, it's *there*, safely outside one's native

country. It's another thing to have it on the European continent itself, capturing the mentalities of millions, seducing them through the endless tuneful repetition of 'When you wish upon a star'....  
(Orvell, P. 148).

**In this sense, the term 'Americanization' implies the belief in a global diffusion of American ways of life with its media, politics, economy or entertainment. In fact, the terms 'Americanization' and 'Globalization' are used interchangeably. According to Peter Berger, the "Mc World Culture" is reasonably classified under the term 'Westernization' or rather 'Americanization'. Peter explains: -**

... 'Mc World' fits best. And it is this culture that is most credibly subsumed under the category of Westernization, since virtually all of it is of Western and more specifically American,

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalizatic  
provenance.... (Peter Berger  
Online).

**American popular culture is omnipresent everywhere; it represents a record of multiple materials or subjects as Hollywood films, advertisement, design, dance or music. Berger adds: -**

Take the case of rock music. Its attraction is not just due to a particular preference for loud, rhythmic sound and dangerously athletic dancing. Rock music also symbolizes a whole cluster of cultural values - concerning self-expression, spontaneity, released sexuality, and, perhaps most importantly, defiance of the alleged stodginess of tradition....  
(Peter Berger Online).

**Jazz and rock music has been assimilated into the European environment. MTV (Music Television) started in America in 1981, and from it other branches emerged; MTV-Europe, MTV-Asia, MTV-Australia,**

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
**MTV-Brazil, MTV-Japan and MTV-Latin America. It raises the development of musical taste among the youth. So, viewers are allowed to encounter different musical kinds like metal, rap, new wave, mainstream pop, ... etc.**

**In addition, fashion is also associated with heterogeneity, evolution, intertextuality and globalization. Fashion lines spread all over the globe in an immediate instant only to be substituted by new ones with great rapidity. There is a general agreement on basic principles in culture, that tell us about what various articles of clothing stand for or mean. These meanings are usually based upon new fashion or old ones on the one hand, and on the mixture of different styles on the other hand. Arthur Asa Berger points out that "fashion is a cultural phenomenon involving communication and meanings and is much broader than clothes people wear...." (Arthur Berger, P. 193). Similarly, globalization involves the interaction of the same dichotomies. To Mel Van Elteren, globalization involves "Universalization versus particularization", "Homogenization versus differentiation", "Integration**

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization versus fragmentation", "Centralization versus decentralization" and "Juxtaposition versus syncretization" (Elteren Online). A closer scrutiny of postmodern theories may reveal a number of links with global features. However, I concentrate on the way postmodernism has shown itself in our life. Such being the case, the focus of my attention is on the influence of postmodernism on our society and not on the theory. Postmodernism is now a widespread trend in all fields. It has formulated modern man's personality, taste, fashion, literature, food, architecture and communication. 'Postmodernism' as a term also usually covers a wide range of opinions and views that are relative not so much to the artistic domain as to social and cultural theory. Such views have spread before us by a number of scholars and thinkers like Ihab Hassan, Jean Francois Lyotard, Fredric Jameson and Jean Baudrillard. Their literary tropes shape the social and cultural climate.

Ihab Hassan, 'the father of postmodernism', offers eleven of postmodern features. To him, postmodernism contains "Indeterminacy",

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
 "Fragmentation", "Decanonization", "Self-less-ness", "The  
 unrepresentable", "Irony", "Hybridization",  
 "Carnivalization", "Performance", "Constructionism" and  
 "Immanence" (Hassan, pp. 131.2.3). Hassan pursues the  
 matter a little further here: -

I repeat: these eleven traits  
 do not define postmodernism –  
 the concepts of period and genre,  
 of definition itself, are  
 antipathetic to the postmodern –  
 although they help to gauge the  
 climate of its discourse. They  
 reveal, in any case, the  
 dispersive, aporetic imperative of  
 the times, which, liberating as it  
 may be, subverts consensus,  
 undermines the possibilities of  
 sustained moral or social action.

**(Hassan, P. 133).**

**Postmodernism, then, is a system that consists of a  
 dispersed substance or nonhomogeneous components.  
 Ihab Hassan promotes individuals to exchange each  
 other's values and codes. He went to America on a**



Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
**Fulbright Fellowship to earn a doctorate in electrical engineering. Yet, he turned to literary criticism when he observed in his milieu the unyielding challenges of postmodernism.**

**Concurrently, Jean Francois Lyotard's account of postmodernism goes along with Hassan's. His views are to be found in *La Condition Postmodern*, which was originally published in 1979. The book presents arguments about knowledge and information. Lyotard aspires to destabilize the paradigms of scientific knowledge. He calls for a rearrangement of information in a new and unpredictable manner. Accordingly, "postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable" as Lyotard himself proclaimed (P. XXV). This notion encourages escapes from the already established paradigms or dominant forms of thought. Knowledge will surely become accessible to the majority. In this sense, the postmodern age is the age of knowledge production; it does not claim to grasp 'the truth'. On**

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
**the contrary, postmodernism looks for the realization of heterogeneity and plurality of arguments.**

**This argument is reinforced by Fredric Jameson. In his "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", Jameson exposes the dilemma of contemporary social life with "each group coming to speak a curious private language of its own, each profession developing its private code or dialect, and finally each individual coming to be a kind of linguistic island,... " (Jameson's "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", P. 114). To Jameson, contemporary social life lacks a systematic framework. However, features of postmodern culture are offered instead; namely, pastiche, multiplication and collage of styles as well as absence of the unified self. Jameson stresses the same precept in *The Seeds of Time*. He says:**

... : the very framework itself is an argument, and was designed to show that the rich plurality of styles that postmodernism often enough celebrates about itself can be sorted out into tendencies that

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
form a system.... (Jameson's  
*The Seeds of Time*, P. 129).

On the other hand, Jean Baudrillard's theories transcend signification. According to Baudrillard, signs no longer suggest any truthful or accurate communication with the world they avowedly represent. He uses a system that is simultaneously motivated by the awareness of destruction and discharged of power by the persistent sovereignty of simulation. By postmodernist standards, Man is debunked; he is exposed to the sham and falseness of postmodernity. Aspects of society are now based upon constant symbolic contact. Values of hardwork, loyalty and commitment are substituted by extreme individualism, acquisitiveness and self-promotion. Baudrillard expresses this same assumption in the following remark:

... the signified and the referent  
are now abolished to the sole  
profit of the play of signifiers, of  
a generalized formalization in  
which the code no longer refers

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
 back to any subjective or  
 objective 'reality', ...  
 (Baudrillard's *Mirror of  
 Production*, P. 127).

**Baudrillard's theories extend even to film production. For example, The Terminator is a postmodern science fiction film that presents a world in which signs have a reality of their own. The film was made in 1984 starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. Schwarzenegger comes from the future and plays the role of a cyborg that is concealed under a superficial, nightmarish appearance. So, 'the terminator' is linked to a hostile space environment; he is a pseudo human figure. This fading away of boundaries between present and future and between machines and humans are among the basic notions of postmodernism. The terminator 'signifies' the sense of loss and suppression that fatal forces have - a sense that the forces that control life exist almost everywhere. Steven Connor summarizes the aforementioned postmodern theories. He writes: -**

In Lyotard's aestheticization of  
 knowledge via the agnostics of

language – games, in Jameson's anxious awareness of the loss of critical distance between culture and theory and, at its most extreme, in Baudrillard's adaptive transformation of theory itself into the condition of simulation that it theorizes, what began as an attempt to specify the relationship between the fixed and distinct poles of postmodernity in social and economic life and postmodernism in cultural life ends by dissolving the boundaries between the two realms.... (Connor, P.61).

Following the previous exposure of some postmodern theories, a work of art may contain a variety of threads. At the end, it is presented as a novel mixture displaying great diversity and consisting of dissimilar ingredients. The work of art passes through a process of modification. This cultural modification of the work is accomplished by prolonged or continuous

Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization interaction, involving interexchange and borrowing with a different culture.

Thus, the process of imitation is sometimes shown to be justified. For instance, it remains true that whatever arouses the personal and academic interests of the youth comes from the United States. They often regard their local milieu narrow and limited as compared to America, which they find as open and promising. American cultural forms are transmitted to the world by various agencies and organizations like the USIA (the U.S. Information Agency). Other affiliated American Studies Institutes are like (Amerika Hauser in Germany and Austria) and the Fulbright Exchange Program. Other American institutes are founded in Great Britain (Nottingham, Keele), Poland (Warsaw) and most recently, Denmark (Odense). They are effective media through which U.S. popular culture is expressed. In general, American culture is transmitted abroad through exhibitions, films, music, fashion, advertising, tourism or even business corporations.

**Nevertheless, there is an increasing sense in Europe that the predominant global presence in culture would be disputed. In most cases, imitation has also fearful consequences. To a large extent, the negative side to imitation is that it wipes out national culture. To quote Raoul Granqvist: -**

One of the most complex issues in any colonial or postcolonial structure is, then, the question of imitation. It defines the very fiber of the relationship of the dominant culture and the Other. Traditionally, the concept of imitation in a colonial context, refers to a situation where a culture in formation seeks to formulate a competitive course based on principles inherited from the dominant one....  
(Granqvist, P. 18).

**Globalization's risks of inequality are likely to be greatest in the next decade. The world is decomposed by imperialism and the magnificent position of Man is**

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Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
**trivialized and marginalized. Man is decentralized, decontextualized, deconstructed, or disenchanting. Due to this constant process of 'becoming' or development, one's 'being' is reduced to 'non-being'. Robert Young gives credit to this opinion in the following lines:-**

..., the centrality of 'Man' dissolved at the end of the eighteenth century as the 'Classical Order' gave way to 'History', today at the end of the twentieth century, as 'History' gives way to 'Postmodern', we are witnessing the dissolution of 'the west'. (Young, P. 20).

Needless to say that globalization speculates on how 'change' might transform individual perception of human fate. Again, globalization involves the interaction of social and environmental problems at local and global levels. Paradoxically, powers of making individuals parts of the entire world system could also foster greater separation and alienation among people.



Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
**In his "Four Faces of Global Culture.", Peter Berger expresses his fear of cultural globalization. He writes: -**

But there is also fear attached to the prospect of cultural globalization, fear of a worldwide 'airport culture' in which the rich diversity of human civilizations will be homogenized and vulgarized.... But the desire to preserve distinct cultural traditions and a distinct cultural identity in the intense economic and political pressure cooker of the new Europe is not silly at all. The fear, like the hope, is not without foundation. (Peter Berger Online).

**Preferably cultural globalization should help create a more serene and tranquil world untouched by conflict and devoid of violence. It is fairer to articulate between the global and the national tendencies. Globalization must undergo a process of selection and appropriation. This struggle between the national and**

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Dr. Manal Y. Eissa \_\_\_\_\_ A Study of the Cultural Features of globalization  
**the global is finally reconciled by Donald Janelle through "Adhocracy" (P. 47). Adhocracy encourages self-governing and self-directing freedom and especially cultural independence of individuals. Through adhocracy, persons are free to unite with others into a whole for a common purpose. Janelle says: -**

Within the context of adhocracy, global interdependence offers hope of independence for individuals and localities. However remote the dream, it is this prospect for freedom that underlies the emergent reconciliation of locality and globality. (Janelle, P. 48).

**Therefore, powers of cultural resistance are skeptical of all established assumptions and suspicious of all corresponding images of reality. Social movements around the globe constantly express their sincere concern to think and act independently for themselves. They aspire to face life as creative movements, capable of changing this life. Jim George asserts this fact: -**

The significance of these movements is that while they are inevitably part of a global struggle in one (interdependent) world, they represent also a politics of difference,...  
(George, P. 212). -

In the light of the previous study, I am led to the conclusion that the quest to understand a contradictory world has become not a luxury but an urgent necessity, posing questions about how to maintain one's identity. This leads to a re-evaluation of existing disciplines and implementation of new ones that could respond to global needs. After all, the central aim of 'cultural globalization' is to provide unique opportunities to open and expand wider intellectual horizons. Doreen Massey summarizes the whole issue in the following comment: -

In fact, there is not just one history, one grand inevitability. There are multiple stories and multiple temporalities. And it is that multiplicity, itself dependent on spatiality, which guarantees the openness of the future. (Massey, P. 12).

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