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A Review of the Beginnings of 'Metamodernism' in Relation to Other Movements: Are We Ready?

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Abstract

Postmodernism is giving way to its last breath and critical theory has several alternatives to delve into. One of the interesting theories that has a promising future to take the critical scene is metamodernism. The study aimed to give a brief introduction about metamodernism in terms of beginnings and its relation to other movements of the same period. Since metamodernism is not the only critical theory that examines cultural attitudes, we are supposed to ask whether it is distinct from other theories or whether it is comprehensive and accurately captures the spirit of the era. These two become the main questions of this paper. The study found that metamodernism is more relevant to the cultural scene than other movements such as hypermodernism and altermodernism. On a brief note, it also has been found that metamodernism is a synthesis of modernism and postmodernism. This implies that there is a higher probability of it persisting as a crucial representation of critical theory in the times to come. The study recommends a deeper study into metamodernism's characteristics and the cultural impact on literature.

Keywords: Metamodernism, modernism, post-modernism, cultural scene, foreseeing.

الملخص

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تلفظ ما بعد الحداثة أنفاسها الأخيرة، ولدى النظرية النقدية العديد من البدائل للخوض بها، وتعد ما وراء الحداثة من النظريات المثيرة للاهتمام ولها مستقبل واعد في النظرية النقدية، وقد هدفت الدراسة لتوفير تقديم موجزة عن ما وراء الحداثة من حيث البدايات وعلاقتها بالحركات الأخرى في نفس الفترة. وبما أن ما وراء الحداثة ليست النظرية النقدية الوحيدة المتاحة لسبر أغوار المشهد الثقافي، فمن الجائز هنا عن سؤال ما إذا كانت تتميز عن الحركات الأخرى وما إذا كانت تتمتع بالشمولية، وتلتقط روح العصر بدقة وديمومتها؛ وهذان يصحان السؤالين الرئيسيين لهذه الورقة. وجدت الدراسة أن ما وراء الحداثة أكثر صلة بالمشهد الثقافي من الحركات الأخرى مثل الحداثة المفرطة والحداثة البديلة. وفي ملاحظة موجزة، وجد أيضا أن ما وراء الحداثة هي توليفة من الحداثة وما بعد الحداثة. هذا يعني أن هناك احتمالا أكبر لاستمرارها كتمثيل حاسم للنظرية النقدية في الأوقات القادمة. توصي الدراسة بإجراء دراسة أعمق لخصائص ما وراء الحداثة وتأثيرها الثقافي على الأدب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ما وراء الحداثة، الحداثة، ما بعد الحداثة، المشهد الثقافي، الاستبصار.

1. Introduction and Methodology

Although critics keep to the notion of outdated postmodernism, most are inconsistent with the current cultural tendencies or the zeitgeist (Vermeulen & Van Den Akker 2010; Storm, 2021; Van den Akker, Gibbons & Vermeulen 2017). The critical scene is mostly faithful to the postmodern approach. Yet the cultural scene has proved its fluctuant nature as it has always been. "The deconstructive phase of critical thought, which from Heidegger and Adorno to Derrida provided a powerful exit from modernity, has lost its effectiveness (Hardt & Negri (2005)." Scholars are using the flexible nature of postmodernism that has the tendency of not reaching a meaning to explain the current situation. On the other hand, the cultural scene is proving that it is loaded with meaning and is trying new depths. In fact, there is a need to re-think the notion of postmodernism (Vermeulen & Van Den Akker 2010; Bargár 2021; Bolaño-Quintero 2021). Post-postmodernism comes out in papers to indicate the fatality of the previous critical phase, as well as several other names trying to gain popularity among critics. Most prominent movements are; Hypermodern Times; Critical Modernism and Critical Realism; Performatism; Digimodernism; The Altermodern; and Metamodernism. Metamodernism may be a major term in this paper. Following is an attempt to give a preview of the critical attempts of defining the cultural panorama. What characterizes metamodernism is a combination of irony and sincerity, as well as a desire to bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary art forms.

This paper is to give a brief introduction of metamodernism in terms of beginnings and its relation to other movements. There are two questions that the study answered:

1. How does metamodernism stand out from the other theories that test the cultural stances?

2. Does metamodernism have inclusivity, capture the zeitgeist accurately and is consistent?

Rethinking postmodernism is necessary, and numerous terms have emerged to signify previous critical phase's demise or to gain traction among critics. Notable movements include Hypermodern Times, Critical Modernism and Critical Realism, Performatism, Digimodernism, Altermodern, and Metamodernism (Bolaño-Quintero 2021).

Based on the nature of this paper, the nature of the research is qualitative. Hence, the research approach is inductive, which is sound judgment based on evidence. The time horizon is cross sectional. The strategy is based on archival research. For more insight please refer to Figure 1.

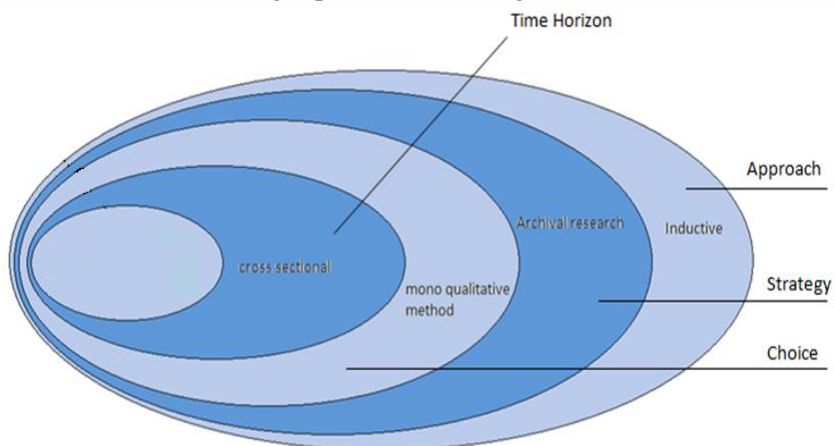


Figure 1: Onion Model that clarifies the research method

This is the best approach to tackle most of a cultural scene. The source of the previous cultural movements in the previous century started in Europe; it is safe to say that the global culture would be prone to a great affect by the same source in the next century or so. The aforementioned critical approaches were studied from different sources and the evidence to explain the current culture has been reviewed. Several databases have been consulted to ensure the best data coverage including Google Scholar, JUSTOR, Serials Solutions, and Elsevier. It is safe to say that the method here (narrative research) is standard procedure for textual phenomena that presents itself in social sciences.

One of the obstacles that faces the narrative research in general and this paper, is the limitation of the text itself in comparison to the wide array of cultural representation in the real world. Yet, with sufficient documented cultural arts on text, the obstacle becomes a fast and easy way of collecting and documenting a phenomenon. Since the postmodern theory has documented a

that imposes solutions upon readers or viewers through coercive means – compelling identification with implausible situations embodied in the creative work.

Prior to that study, Feldman (2005) tackled the idea of metamodernity and its relation to previous critics of the postmodern. This paper contends that the philosophical perspectives of Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, Jürgen Habermas's communicative theory, and Jacques Derrida's deconstruction collectively belong to a single philosophical framework: metamodernism. Distinguished from both modernism and extreme postmodernism, metamodernism features a political puzzle that acts as a crucial element in comprehending the connections among Gadamer, Habermas, and Derrida and in outlining the framework's boundaries. In particular, the political ramifications of the three philosophies are constantly evolving, making it difficult to pinpoint their exact relationship with one another. For example, Gadamer's political stance may appear more conservative than Habermas and Derrida at times, yet it may also fall between or be more progressive than both at different instances. This political enigma implies that typical (modernist) political classifications like liberalism and conservatism inadequately represent the critical viewpoints within metamodernism. Instead, Gadamer, Habermas, and Derrida prioritize elucidating the potential mechanisms for interpretive and social criticism while adhering to the metamodernist paradigm rather than conforming to conventional liberal or conservative political ideologies.

Again, Van Den Akker, Gibbons, and Vermeulen (2017) expound upon the concept of metamodernism, treating it as a profoundly ideological construct. They investigate the emergence of an innovative "regime of historicity" within the cultural landscape and its salient attributes. The tome elucidates that a regime of historicity concerns the specific manner in which individuals discern their existence within the historical narrative, a perception that diverges across temporal epochs and disparate cultural environments. The postmodern regime of historicity, characterized by the belief in the End of History, engendered an impediment to the historical imagination catalyzed by postmodern complacency. As a result, envisaging historical moments antecedent or subsequent to unfettered capitalism became arduous or ostensibly superfluous. Nevertheless, the onset of the 21st century bore witness to the inception of a metamodern emotional framework; within this sociocultural inflection point materialized a concomitant metamodern regime of historicity. The study found that metamodernism is more relevant to the cultural scene than other movements such as hypermodernism and altermodernism. Moreover, this erudite composition delves into the tangible circumstances and ideational ramifications concomitant with the end of history. The volume expatiates on capitalism's penetration into spatial frontiers demarcated by the ascendancy of a globalized

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world market, underpinned by American preeminence. Concurrently, quotidian life transpired within a mass-mediated consumerist sphere propelled by credit-based ideologies which forged an all-encompassing fascination evocative of incessant thematic amusement parks. Utilizing Jamesonian analysis navigating dual chessboards—the global and local—the authors illuminate the manner in which conceptions surrounding the end of history remain unmoored from temporal dimensions and are anchored, instead, within spatial ones. This assertion gains reinforcement from the premise that the ubiquitous sense of a terminal conclusion emanates from dual metamorphoses within the capitalist edifice.

Yet again, Gibbons, Vermeulen, and Akker (2019) explore metamodernism as a fresh cultural approach that integrates aspects of postmodernism while establishing a sense of authenticity. This is accomplished by utilizing methods like depthiness, merging the factual nature of depthlessness with the potential for performance-based depth. The study highlights two genres employing these strategies: autofiction and true crime documentaries. Autofiction blends fact and fiction to engage readers emotionally with real-world issues. *A Tale for the Time Being* by Ruth Ozeki illustrates the adaptation of postmodernist tactics within metamodernism to understand the depth. The book's unique narrative format, real-world text references, and autofictional connections enable readers to deeply encounter complex societal concerns. Likewise, true crime documentaries such as *The Keepers* employ fictional approaches to investigate unsolved cases and organizational dishonesty. The documentary leverages detective fiction techniques for suspense and disclosure while creating an ontological conflict that animates archival content. True crime documentaries transform the genre through postmodernist methods, emphasizing speculation and uncertainty over simply resolving cases. Metamodernism, according to the authors, presents an innovative perspective on reality, using content to obtain a sense of authenticity. By adapting postmodernist approaches, metamodernist works generate profoundness and intricacy that echo the interdependence of human existence and governing structures. This ultimately fosters a feeling of obligation in readers/viewers toward the presented (fictional or fictionalized) reality.

In his 2020 article, Pavol Bargár highlights the advantages of Christian participation in metamodernism, emphasizing its focus on diversity, optimism, and spiritual growth [6]. The article explores three aspects of Christian creativity in relation to multiple perspectives: embracing tradition faithfully, promoting diversity, and fostering hope. While metamodernism signifies a departure from postmodernism, Christians should adopt an affirmative yet critical approach towards postmodern discourse. Informed naivety is advocated within metamodernism's pursuit of transcendence, utilizing worldly knowledge to

reconstruct fragmented myths. Bargár also addresses the possibility of aligning Catholic and social justice principles to combat the detrimental impacts of postmodern elitism on marginalized groups and developing regions. By examining selected topics in metamodernism, the article delves into the transition from postmodernism and its implications for theological anthropology. Additionally, it discusses how the concept of incarnation from Christian teachings can help emphasize the significance of immanence as an element of the divine image. To conclude, Bargár proposes an "informed naivety" strategy for embracing hope, dedication, intention, and foresight amidst a fragmented world.

Collins, Brian and Storm (2022) denote that Postmodernism is often defined by its limited present-focused perspective, disregarding historical context and the potential for future developments. With the emergence of a new cultural paradigm and emotional framework, as many critics contend, a shift in temporal dynamics might also be occurring. This article examines Ben Lerner's 2014 novel *10:04* as a prime example of literary metamodernism, while also referencing Adam Thirlwell's 2011 novella *Kapow!* and Ruth Ozeki's 2013 novel *A Tale for the Time Being*. Primarily focusing on *10:04* as a prototypical metamodernist work, the article identifies and analyzes a metamodern temporality marked by heterochrony, sideshadowing, and the expectation of retrospection. Although this temporal evolution stems from the instability and unpredictability of twenty-first-century experiences, it proposes that anthropogenic climate change has been and continues to be the most significant driving force behind this renewed temporal perception that revives historical awareness and reinvigorates the future as a realm of potential outcomes.

In Doris Mironescu's (2022) examination of modern disability poetics, the focus is placed on Ilya Kaminsky's "Deaf Republic" within the framework of modernism and metamodernism. The initial section assesses the portrayal of disability in modernist poetry in the context of ableist beliefs found in American and Romanian cultures. This analysis reveals the ways in which marginalized disabled poets have artistically and politically countered their exclusion. Deaf poetry or surdism and its associated artistic and societal boundaries are specifically highlighted. The latter portion of the study introduces the idea of metamodern affect, which shapes contemporary disability poetics by transcending the challenges and conventions of modernist literature. This innovative approach offers fresh insights into bodily experiences, power dynamics, and interpersonal connections within disability poetry. Furthermore, it demonstrates how metamodern poetics serves as an effective means to represent disability as a form of societal and political defiance. To reinforce these claims, the article references various works from literary analysis, disability research,



Figure 2: The differences between modernism and postmodernism (Hassan 1982)

The following are the theories that were presented at the turn of the 21st century and how they compare to metamodernism.

4. Hypermodernism Vs Metamodernism

Hypermodernism, or "supermodernism," is an emerging societal mode resulting from technological advancements and the merging of information with materiality. In hypermodernism, objects rather than their functions dictate form, representing a reversal of modernity (Augé 2020). This epoch is typified by heightened individualism and an expanded range of personal choices, setting it apart from postmodernity through its progression beyond ontological voids and embracing contextually practical truths that influence society. Hypermodernism's distinguishing features include the dismissal of essentialism, the prioritization of technology in transcending biological constraints, and its concurrence with postmodernism in discrediting historical context. The touchscreen phone exemplifies supermodernism by integrating pertinent properties of contemporary and postmodern items in real-time. Terry Eagleton's

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After Theory (2004) and Marc Augé's *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (2020) are related works in the domain of hypermodernism. Eagleton's writing examines the potential for a post-ideological era transcending both modernism and postmodernism, while Augé's *Non-Places* scrutinizes the notions of impermanence, uniqueness, and vulnerability in a hypermodern society.

A major distinction between hypermodernism and modernism lies in their focus: individualism for the former and collectivism for the latter. Modernity confined form to restrictive functionality, while hypermodernity posits that continually evolving functionality requires a reorientation towards form itself. This transition to a more individual-centric society bears both advantages and drawbacks, as greater personal choice comes at the expense of lost communal connection and mutual beliefs. Unlike hypermodernism, postmodernity dismissed history for different reasons. While hypermodernism underscores extreme individualism, postmodernity selected aspects from historical items to liberate form from function. In the realm of postmodern thought, truth was fleeting, with an emphasis on evading incontrovertible principles. Postmodernity aimed to demolish modernity's belief in progression and betterment by reinforcing personal empowerment. Contrastingly, supermodernity functions independently of overarching truths by concentrating on extracting applicable attributes from historical artifacts based on current pertinence. Supermodernity is viewed as a pathway to break free from the self-referential loop present in nihilistic postmodern theory by selecting valuable characteristics from modern and postmodern elements. The notion of contextually practical truths is pivotal in this perspective, as properties can be both true and false, rendering truth valuation irrelevant, including falsifiability. Even with Augé attempts at capturing the contemporary tendencies of the consumerist mentality to alleviate Hypermodernity, we can find that metamodernism is closer to the soul of the culture as it strives for meaning in a meaningless world (Vermeulen & Van Den Akker 2010). On the other hand, supermodernity tends to rely so hard on postmodernity that it proves time again that it is but a continuation of the latter more than a contradiction to it or even a development from it.

5. The Altermodern Vs Metamodernism

In 2009, Nicolas Bourriaud introduced "Altermodern" during an art exhibit, a concept that opposes cultural uniformity and mass-production. Going against nationalism and cultural relativism, this notion allows artists to operate within cultural gaps. Cultural translation serves as a fundamental principle, enabling artists to traverse various cultures and create new connections. This demands "mental nomadism," smoothly transitioning between cultural symbols while generating unique expressions influenced by them all (Bourriaud 2009).

Rather than linear progression, Altermodernism embraces the idea of time as multiple. Artists are urged to explore history and global time zones, connecting distinct cultural occurrences and developing artwork with diverse influences. Simultaneously, original paths are emphasized to merge fiction and documentary. The term "docufictional" refers to the examination of the past and present in creating expressions that challenge traditional truth and authenticity concepts (Bourriaud 2009).

Emphasizing process and dynamic rather than one-dimensional objects, Altermodern art encourages viewers to perceive things differently. This philosophy addresses globalization challenges by engaging with cultural inconsistencies and creating complex art that reflects our world (Wallace 2012). Rejecting cultural standardization, advancing cultural translation, and practicing mental nomadism enable Altermodern artists to generate innovative, thought-provoking pieces.

Whereas altermodernism verges on the notion of the avant-garde in an extreme form, metamodernism strives on rewriting cultural narratives rather than creating a mishmash of cultural experimentation that might lead to confusion and misrepresentation and cultural identity loss. Metamodernism strives to be inclusive as preserving the uniqueness of both the majority and the minority of culture (Storm 2021). Altermodernism might lose its validity as it verges on indefinites and confusion that might be derived from an artist's unique point of view and unacceptable representations.

6. Critical Modernism and Critical Realism Vs Metamodernism

Both these names are used interchangeably but the first is most prominent in literature. There is insufficient presence of critical modernism in development research and proposes ways to modernize it for present-day studies. Critical modernism encompasses a broad range of concepts centered on power structures that influence developmental procedures and results (Jencks 2007). It aims to change power dynamics to enhance developmental outcomes, paying attention to underrepresented and marginalized voices. Distinct from structuralist critical theory, critical modernism integrates post-structuralism to recognize the significance of discourse and ideas, employing additional analytical perspectives besides class.

The methodological development emphasizes the importance of being receptive to all experiences – not just those from marginalized groups but also those within powerful institutions. Active listening is vital, while not blindly accepting everything said by both the influential and the powerless (Peet & Hartwick 2015). The critical aspect of critical modernism highlights that the issue does not lie within capitalism itself but rather in some of its specific manifestations. It asserts that capitalism has contributed to material improvements in the global south over recent years. Capitalism should be

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considered a fallible form of modernism rather than an inherently corrupt one. The paper recommends focusing on alternative approaches to handling capitalism instead of seeking alternatives away from it.

Critical modernism upholds modern values such as reason, democracy, progress, science, and technology while adhering to scientific methods and evidence-based conclusions (Jencks 2007). By including post-structuralist elements and various analytical approaches besides class, such as feminist perspectives that acknowledge patriarchal power structures, critical modernism should aim to modify power distribution to benefit the less powerful. It is employed to understand worldly events by examining hidden causal mechanisms. The incorporation of post-structuralism into critical modernism acknowledges the influence of discourse and recognizes the world's inherent subjectivity. Marxism, alternatively, seeks to instigate change by scrutinizing current circumstances and exploring potential improvements.

Critical modernism might be the closest in spirit to metamodernism in terms of inclusivity, yet it fails to find supporters and critics to adopt it in writing as it proved hard to be backed up by research. It is also more of a revival of modernism and a continuation of it rather than a new thought. Unlike metamodernism that revives the life of modernism in terms of depth with the aid of the postmodern scrutiny.

7. Performatism Vs Metamodernism

Performatism is a cultural response to postmodernism, replacing its irony and skepticism with artistically driven faith and transcendence without endorsing organized religion or esoteric beliefs (Eshelman 2000). It is a distinct epochal shift, separate from both postmodernism and modernism. It employs formal techniques to encourage belief in positive values such as love, beauty, and transcendence, which creates a tension between embracing these values and the manner in which they are conveyed. Nevertheless, performatism's focus lies in scrutinizing art, literature, film, philosophy, and architecture rather than economics or politics (Ammar & Ahmad 2022). Resources for those curious about performatism are a video introduction by Brendan Graham Dempsey and a comprehensive video lecture by Eshelman.

Eshelman also wrote a book that contains performatist examples in various art forms, while the bibliography offers further reading on interpreting works through the performatist lens (Eshelman 2015). It explores the significance of 'performatism' and how it varies from other contemporary cultural theories. It briefly outlines the history of literary evolutions and how posthistorical thought neglects to differentiate between distinct stages of historical growth. It also posits that performatism strives to revive the kind of thinking that avoids overly broad cultural terms. Additionally, it compares

performatism and postmodernism's distinguishing attributes. Performatism counters postmodernism by using formal methods to communicate positive values instead of irony and skepticism.

Performatism is another valid rival for metamodernity in terms of scope and definition. Yet from its definition, it is mainly concerned solely with the performative arts. Thus metamodernism is rendered the most inclusive for representing the cultural phenomena.

8. Digimodernism Vs Metamodernism

Alan Kirby (2009) argues that digimodernism owes its emergence and preeminence to the computerization of text and the unique characteristics of this new form of textuality. In his book of the same name as the theory, he discusses the emergence of a new cultural paradigm in the late 1990s which displaced postmodernism as the dominant cultural force field. The book identifies the hallmarks of digimodernist texts as "Onwardness", "Haphazardness", "Evanescence", "Reformulation and intermediation of textual roles (ibid)", "Anonymous, multiple and social authorship", and "Electronic-digitality" (Kirby 2009). Digimodernist texts are found across contemporary culture, ranging from "reality TV to Hollywood fantasy blockbusters, from Web 2.0 platforms to the most sophisticated videogames, and from certain kinds of radio show to crossover fiction (Kirby 2009)." Digimodernism enables participants to interact textually and physically with content, contributing visibly or shaping narrative progression.

The term 'digimodernism' is derived from "digital modernism," as it assigns the role of the people in shaping the texts in discussion; they use their fingers "digits" to contribute to a whole ongoing narrative. Their act is obscure or partial yet effective (Kirby 2009). Kirby affirms the similarities between digimodernism and postmodernism and heavily quotes Fredrick Jameson on it. While digimodernism emerges as a successor to postmodernism, it is also a reaction against postmodernism. Moreover, certain characteristics of digimodernism resemble a repudiation of typical postmodern characteristics. Furthermore, certain aspects of digimodernism can be seen as a rejection of typical postmodern traits. He asserts that digimodernism arises socially and politically as a natural result of postmodernism—indicating controlled continuity rather than a radical breakage. Digimodernism does not represent a new historical phase; instead, "postmodernism's insistence on locating an absolute break in all human experience between the disappeared past and the stranded present has lost all plausibility (Kirby 2009)." It is just another stage within modernity, a shift from one phase of its history into another. Still, Alan Kirby takes a cultural critic's perspective, focusing on the new cultural climate thrown up by digitization, rather than exploring how digitization works technically or its industrial consequences.

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Digimodernism finely defines the digital age that we live in and the various stances of the digital culture and its implication or effect on our daily life. Yet it lacks representing life away from the digital phenomena. It is safe to say that the digital age will persist for a long time to come. Yet this theory fails to include culture on hand. Metamodernism might be more capable of giving more validity to both worlds, the digital and the real through its tendency to being an inclusive theory with high tolerance to diversity.

9. Conclusion

From the previous definitions and comparisons, we can reach infer that metamodernism proves every time its more accurate representation of this period of cultural history. This means that it is more likely to continue representing the critical theory for the future. It is also noted that most of the dates of publications for the other theories are roughly in the first decade of this century. While metamodernism started its name at the second decade of the century and is rapidly gaining momentum in the critical theory.

Metamodernism has proven to be the future of critical theory for culture. Although it is yet to be tested by the times; it is here to stay for a while. This status was secured for it is a combination of the best of both modernism and post-modernism, as it holds a critical eye for both. It also has the tendency to be widely inclusive and historically flexible as well as having deeper drenches. And further investigation needs to be done in that area of research, as well as giving more specific insight into international literature. Metamodernism is the future of theoretical research.

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