



## POSTMODERN DETERMINISM AND JERZY KOSINSKI'S NOVEL *PINBALL*

**DR.S. KARTHIK KUMAR**

Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
Annamalai University  
(TN) INDIA

**MUZAFFAR MAQSOOD**

Ph.D. Research Scholar  
Department of English  
Annamalai University  
(TN) INDIA

### ABSTRACT

*Dissociative identity disorder or alter ego which means 'the other' explains exactly what modern man widely suffers. Modern man realizes that the floor on which he stands is about to collapse down and under which there is nothing but darkness and madness. Therefore he creates an apollonian world that veils Dionysian pit. He disguises himself in other identities, other characters, which he creates, not to cease to exist. When his apollonian world collapses, modern man is aware of what is broken is not the mirror but his fragmented 'self'. This study aims to reveal the Dionysian madness of Domostroy behind the mirror analyzing the lives of the characters in Jerzy Kosinski with the help of various terms. Moreover the title 'Pinball' is a nice metaphor for the events in the lives of the characters in the novel bouncing and reversing identities and partners like a ball in a machine. He doesn't hit it on the head too hard or lean on it more than it's able to support, and it works.*

**Keywords:** Detective, fiction, postmodern, self, masks, postmodern deculture, determinism.

### INTRODUCTION

As a philosophical concept, determinism' has been defined as the belief that every act, event, and decision is the inevitable consequence of antecedents, such as physical, psychological, or environmental conditions that are entirely independent of the human will. Postmodernist typology of literature which swept across various genres of creative writing---fiction, poetry, drama, criticism, etc produced a kind of fracture, a decreative application of deterministic thought, as a role-playing matrix in diverse literature. In this context, the instance of the novel written in the United States during the 1970's, the '80's and the '90's becomes quite pertinent.



This paper attempts to take an analytical look upon the very well known and widely read work of postmodernist American fiction: Jerzy Kosinski's *Pinball* (1982).

As a repertoire of ideas and a constellation of values, postmodern determinism filters across every page of Jerzy Kosinski's *pinball* in a more striking and disruptionist manner. The "politics of parody, text/ image border tension" (Linda 1993), crystallizes into a decentering, modeling, contextualizing and historicizing determinism as a shaping force in the sensibility of the writer, be it any American writer particularly Kosinski.

Jerzy Kosinski's *Pinball*, illustrates a perfect creative use of postmodernist deculture through an ironic and self-reflexive application of the doctrine of determinism. The action of the entire novel hinges around sex, violence and disguises as the ravages of a detotalizing culture and society. However like Kosinski, the hero of the novel James Osten assumes a false identity, the identity of Goddard, "in order to combat an expected intrusion of society upon the self" (1991:68). Goddard has become a rage, a Michael Jackson type of celebrity among the masses, but none has ever seen him or met, only his records and apes (music albums) drive his fans crazy. *Pinball* gravitates around the world of music and structurally and thematically, the novel reflects the illusory security of wealth and the mirage of success. Three aspects of modern and obsolete determinism apply to the events and personages of *Pinball*: *chaos theory*, *unpredictability*, and finally, *randomness*. Randomness, however, as far as Kosinski's novels are concerned, bears no direct relation to classical-deterministic chaos. As in any other Kosinski work, *Pinball* reflects a Kafkaesque canvas of happenings, relationships and manipulations effected through sex, music, disguise, and violence, simply to bring home to the reader the cardinal fact that modernist or postmodernist determinism is no more than "the principle according to which identical causes necessarily produce identical effects in identical circumstances" (2001:243). A brief mention of the principal personages and happenings in *Pinball* will authenticate the above assumption.

The action is presented in four parts. In the first part we have Patrick Domostroy, once a celebrity as a music composer and performer, and a voluptuous tantalizing female, Andrea Gwynplaine. They indulge in sexual orgies. Andrea's existential credo is one of sheer demonic determinism: she uses Domostroy in order to execute a game-plan for entrapping Goddard and thereby expose the real identity of this man who has already become a living legend. Domostroy initiates the action by writing letters to Goddard in the name of a lady who dotes upon the enigmatic celebrity and his music. The letters are written in stolen white house stationery. The second part of the action reveals that Goddard is Jimmy Osten, a remarkable young man whose public image is that of a literature student but who secretly writes and records the best-selling songs of Goddard. In the third part Domostroy becomes involved with Osten's former girlfriend, Donna Downes, a black beauty and an expert pianist. Eventually, Domostroy succeeds Osten as Donna's lover, forming another lie



between himself and Goddard. In the fourth and final part, predator and prey finally meet face to face in a bizarre shootout in the empty ball-room of the Old Glory, Domostroy's dwelling place. As a perfect instance of demonic determinism, Domostroy learns that he is victim of a larger plot hatched by Andrea and her boyfriend, Chick Mercurio, a failed and disgruntled rock star. After the mindless shootout only Domostroy and Osten, now allied in their common status as victims, survive. Each comes to know now the identity of the other. And each has had a glimpse into the other's well-spring of creativity.

Music, sex, violence, and disguise, the four principal weapons used by the central protagonists in pinball to churn out a demonic paste of cultural degeneration, finally turn out to be an example of reductionism as a derivative of determinism. The two heroines of the novel, Andrea and Donna Downes, practice in true postmodernist fashion the objectivity of the material world, "of its *knowability* and of determinism" (ibidem:247). As a stinging slap on the face of determinism in its traditional doctrinated sense, Osten tells Andrea: Genius and Chaos can somehow be reconciled only through sex, and that sexual promiscuity, by combating isolation, timidity, and emotional routine can actually engender creativity" (83). These words strongly embody the typical Kosinski ideology of postmodernist detotalized and fractured determinism, as a specimen from late modern epistemology in which "classical-mechanical physical determinism", as enunciated by Laplace, holds no longer true. At least three out of the four central characters in pinball: Osten, Andrea, and Donna, work out their respective plans of action and attainment in a deterministic and "mystical fusion of sounds, place and distance, of mood and emotion" (ibid 10). Finally, it would be right to conclude that in pinball, Kosinski has brilliantly and even creatively exemplified and contextualized the postmodern decreative and anarchic determinism through a bewitching and heady-mix of excessive sex, innovative disguise, and above all an obsessive charm of music that not only 'seduces' but also 'deconstructs' and 'destabilizes' the human self.

Thus Kosinski's pinball qualifies as a postmodernist work, in which what the reader gets is not a palatable or enjoyable dish of determinism as used in creative literature, but a technoscape in which fiendish application of deterministic thought becomes a final homecoming to a 'room' where one witnesses a "negative space", a "pure implosion" and even a "body without organs".



## WORKS CITED

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Barbara Tapa Lupack (editor). *Critical Essays on Jerzy Kosinski*. Macmillan Library Reference. 1998.

Hutcheon, Linda. 1993. *The politics of postmodernism*. London and New York: Routledge.  
Hutcheon uses these terms to denote the postmodernist rupture of textual determinism as a part of 'decentred textuality'.