Construction of Self and Post-Modern Consumerism in Richard Matheson’s Button Button

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Abstract

The present study’s focus rests upon analyzing Richard Matheson’s short story Button Button, (1970) an American postmodern literary text, with respect to Jean Baudrillard’s concept of the ‘system of needs’ as presented in his work, The Consumer Society: Myths and Structure (1970) with special emphasis on deciphering the socio-economic dynamics of the post-modern civilized man’s never ending pursuit and hunt for both material and monetary gains resulting in the ignorance of moral considerations accompanied by deconstruction of the sense of Self. In this connection, the consequences of the degeneration of human set of moral values have been examined with particular reference to Man’s Race Against Himself and Entropy of Feeling, two deadly sins discussed in Konrad Lorenz’s (1974) “Civilized Man’s Eight Deadly Sins”. The study finds out that the female protagonist stands out as the epitome of a typical hollow, post-modern self as she is blinded by greed and competition to supersede in the social hierarchical structure where self-imposed individual preferences outdo the collective benefit or welfare. Having similar priorities on a macro level, the consumer society engulfs individuals by compelling them to make choices (deadly sins) that are potentially destructive forces for an ideal survival in a consumedly entrenched post-modern society.

Keywords: Consumerism, post-modern, self, seven deadly sins, entropy of feeling.