

Literary Theory and Literary Criticism
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Lecture - 22

Part A

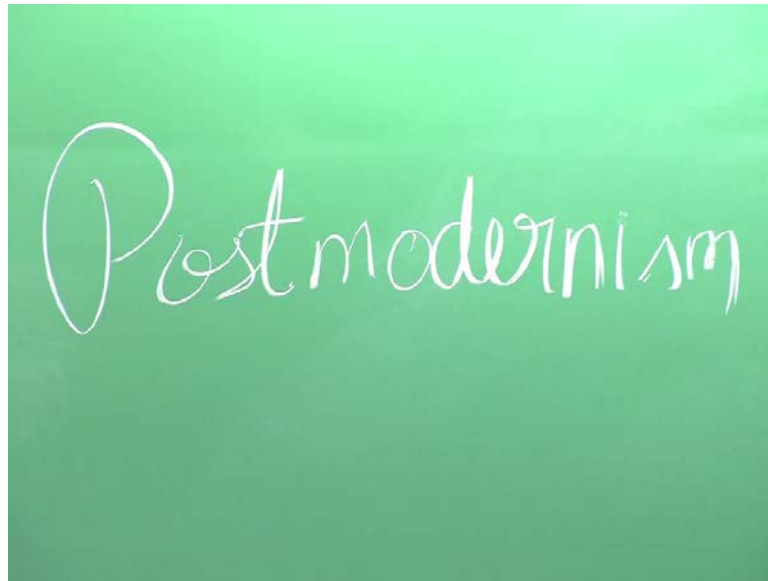
Postmodernism

Good morning and welcome to this lecture on Postmodernism. Now, what comes to your mind, when we talk postmodernism, you have been introduced to a variety of theories so far, including structuralism, post structuralism, semiotics and others. So, my question is that, what comes to your mind immediately, the moment you hear the word postmodernism.

What is it post high end modernism or is it single word postmodernism and are these two entities any different, what do you understand by that. Generally, speaking we understand postmodernist literature has something that embodies that case against realisms. Now, you see many of these movements is started as a sort of cotton coat revolution or rebellion protest against realism, the so called realistic mode of representation.

And post modernist literature embodies and encourages that dialogic as oppose the monologic closer and debate in a verity of ways by, these are the words that you should by now be familiar with. What is dialogic having more than or having at least two words or to extended, rather than monologic which is a single voice. So, dialogic and monologic can be also have multiplicity or plurality of discussion and also language and words.

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So, that is the idea that literature should function and representation should be more dialogic as opposed to monologic. Now, this antirealist revolution is intended to function as a descending art form that challenges the unreliability of realism. So, this is important unreliability realism, what we see is not always, what we get, so unreliability of realism, distress of realism, which is a positive thing.

Postmodernism is a term used to refer to changes developments and tendencies, which have taken or taking place in a various art forms, such as literature, art, music, cinema, philosophy. We cannot exactly pinpoint the exact period of its commencement, but generally it is regarded as the late 40's and the 50's and reached its peak, during the 60's and 70's.

Disarticulation and fracture are the ways postmodernist take to go beyond modernism or postmodernism are also very sceptical of anything that is so called that is termed as rational, something which the modernist are insistent upon. So, this is our point of departure. Now, a couple of definitions, for example, Linda Archangel and she famously asserts that postmodernism manifests itself in many fields of cultural endeavour, including architecture, literature, photography, film paintings, video, dance, music and elsewhere.

In general terms, it takes the form of self-conscious, self-contradictory and self-undermining statement. Our major theories of postmodernism is the French critic John

French Lyotard, who wrote the influential book *The Postmodern Condition* published in 1979 and he gives us the key term called which is a popularly known as the metanarrative.

Metanarrative indicates the overarching mythic narratives, which individuals and societies tell in order to situate their particular time and place within the context of a larger society, thereby giving it a deeper significance. A metanarrative locates a current situation within a larger narrative structure; these narratives are contained in or implied by major philosophers as such as Kant Hegel Marx.

We have been doing these thinkers during discourse and the idea is that, these narratives are a sort of metanarratives and it took explain it further. The two main narratives the Leautaud attacks are Christian redemption to Marxist Utopia and the Triumph of Science. The postmodern condition is one in which there is an increasing distrust towards metanarratives. So, these are the important concepts that Leautauds attack, the concepts of Christian redemption and Marxist Utopia.

Leautaud argues that metanarrative are replaced by a proliferation of small stories, little stories and the term he gives us is *petit recits*, small stories as opposed to the grand stories as given to us by the concept of Marxist Utopia and Christian redemption. So, these small stories draw attention to particular and not universal and also, they embody local events and personal individuals experiences, but most importantly, heterogenic of ideas and other practices that may not fit within a larger universal metanarrative.

Another interesting concept in Leautaud is performativity. The idea of performativity is a quantifiable major of efficiency, which has become the dominant form of legitimation in postmodern society. Here, information is power, the more information one has the greater performativity one can achieve and the increasing amount of information, we gather through digital forms and databases. The question of the ownership and accessibility to them has become much more urgent.

Now, coming to the major features of postmodernist ideas, so apart from the concepts of performativity and metanarrative, there are also certain key features. One is deconstruction that we have been talking about, all along the roots of deconstruction can be found as you know in the works of Saussure semiotic theory of language. Deconstruction is hold the view that truth itself is always relative to different points of

view. Therefore deconstruction denied the final definition of anything or truth or the ultimate closure.

The term was introduced in literary criticism by the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida as you already know and it points to the fact that the relationship of language to reality is not given or even reliable. Since, all language systems are inherently unreliable. Derrida also talks about the false logocentric dependence on language is the mirror of nature. He interrogates the western traditions which in his belief that falsely suppose, but the relationship between language and world was well founded and reliable.

For Derrida difference is the groundlessness of language, the word that actually he gives us difference. So, it is the sphere of linguistics indeterminacy, this is important and this indeterminacy and instability of language and it is defines of meaning, it all leads to deconstruction, which discloses the literary text as a dissemination of contradictions of. Literary text should be a mass, a bundle of contradictions and not just giving you a universal truth. This is the idea, basic idea of deconstruction.

We have also being familiar with the concept of The Death of The Author, Roland Barthe's idea that language and conventions of text become something to play with. Theorist such as Roland Barthe and Michael Foucault was it that authors intension should not be you know authorial intension, they need not be trusted more than realism. Attention to meanings, intended by an author while reading a text is an example of the logocentric privileging of a particular set of meanings.

We are also given another key term in postmodernism; that is concept of defamiliarization, we have been doing this. Since, we did a class of formalism especially you may remember Russian formalism Viktor Shklovsky, who given the concept of defamiliarization or making something strange. The terms suggest that the function of literatures is to make the familiar and unfamiliar and renew a perception that promotes a new awareness of the already familiar work.

The core characteristics of postmodernist literature are undesirability that suggests the impossibility of deciding between two or more competing interpretations, this invoice celebration of multiplicity, heterogeneity and differences. We are also given a term called apocryphal history, where history is just a narrative and rather subordinate to it is myths, metaphors and rather grand inheritive.

So, apocryphal history contradicts the official history by in one way; that is it is supplement the public record or it displaces the official history all together. The idea is to demystify the traditional version of the past, revisit the past. So, we are also familiar with Chinese box structure of a narrative, basically it means a distorted narrative, which are subject to certain shifts and transformations and have a kind of ambiguities about it. These suspend normal categories of time and space and which is another important feature of postmodernism.

Just the way Mezzo bean is an important part of postmodernism, which involves the paradoxical reproduction within the fictional world of a fictional world itself is literal meaning is thrown into the abyss, so fictional world of the fictional world, so fiction within fiction and multiplicity of fiction. So, there is plenty of ambiguity and again, the same idea, no definite closure and absolute indeterminacy and as it opposes the very concept of logo centrism.

Past issues is yet another feature of postmodernist fiction and criticism, when is ourselves to make distinction, but not choices between high and low art. So, remember this is difference, this is important; you need to know the distinction. But, we need not basically choose, what is high art and low art. So, blurring the boundary between the so called distinction, the category, high art, low art, popular culture, high culture, etcetera.

And a good example of this would be Umberto Eco, the novel, *The Name of the Rose*, which brings together elements of high culture as well as popular detective culture and all set in a monastery, where a murder has been committed. So, in one of our earlier classes especially in when we are discussing symbiotic, we have already discussed the novel.

So, what is the purpose of mixing cultures is ideas to create a sort of hybridity that challenges the traditional notion of uniformity in literature. For postmodernism, this world is very important, hybridization which is a radical intertextuality a mixing Johns and convention and John becomes explicitly unstable and basically, mixing of high culture, low culture and challenging the establish norms of realism.

So, hybridity also leaves to a mixing up, for example, mixing up a poems with a little critical analysis and political thrillers. For example, we have John Fowles, the *French Lieutenant's woman*, which uses history textbook. We tell us a love story and then you

also as by its positions, which makes history and myth and literature and romance. Carnival is yet another feature of postmodernism given to us a particularly Mikhail Bakhtin, who uses the term carnival to suggest a defiance of any official closure on the authority of a single fixed sense of any kind.

The term is also used to expose the violence, fallacies and inventions of official institutions, practices and prescriptions. During carnival time, official life comes to a temporary halt and in inversion of high and low takes place. This provides for subversion of sensibility a denial of closure and then we have the idea of intertextuality, which is the shattering of text.

And meanings by that text, it can be referred to an author's borrowing and transformation of a prior text or to our readers referencing of one text in reading. Another term intertextuality has been particularly coined by post-structuralist scholar Julia Kristeva in 1966, where she channels Saussure's structuralist semiotics and Mikhail Bakhtin dialogism.

Simulation is another term associated with postmodernist criticism and if you remember, it was Plato who argued that, painters, actresses and dramatists, the producer representations on imitations of the real world. This way of thinking has given rise to a hierarchical opposition between the real and the copy. The postmodern; however challenges such hierarchies and shows, how the set of values associated with this opposition can be questioned.

Even, nature in this postmodern reversal is subject to change and the representation can be more real than the real itself. And another way of thinking about this phenomenon is to use your Baudrillard's term simulation or also about similar, which means that, where Baudrillard tries to tell us that will you in times, which are saturated images on the internet, television, advertising holdings, magazines and where not.

So, the real becomes thinkable without the copy. In other words, simulation involves the disturbing idea that copy is not something real. The real is cannot be divorced from the significance and effects of the copy and this supports Baudrillard's notion of hyper-real in which reality is created by technology.

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Baudrillard's The Precession of Simulacra (1981)

- Hyperreality and simulation are deterrents of every principle and every objective, they turn against power the deterrent that it used so well for such a long time. Because in the end, throughout its history it was capital that first fed on the deconstruction of every referential, of every human objective, that shattered every ideal distinction between true and false, good and evil, in order to establish a radical law of equivalence and exchange, the iron law of its power. Capital was the first to play at deterrence, abstraction, disconnection, deterritorialization, etc., and if it is the one that fostered reality, the reality principle, it was also the first to liquidate it by exterminating all use value, all real equivalence of production and wealth, in the very sense we have of the unreality of the stakes and the omnipotence of manipulation. Well, today it is this same logic that is even more set against capital. And as soon as it wishes to combat this disastrous spiral by secreting a last glimmer of reality, on which to establish a last glimmer of power, it does nothing but multiply the signs and accelerate the play of simulation.

Now, here I would like to draw your attention to Baudrillard's concept of simulacra, which is taken from his work, the precession of simulacra. I will read you the court; Hyper reality and simulation are deterrents of every principal and every objective. The turn again power, the deterrents that it use so well for such a long time. Because in the end throughout it is history, it was capital that first fed on the deconstruction of every referential of every human objective.

That shuttered every ideal distinction between true and false, good and evil, in order to establish a radical law of equivalence and exchange the iron law of it is power. Capital was the first to play at deterrents, abstraction, disconnection, deterritorialization, etcetera and if it is the one that foster reality. The reality principle, it was also the first to liquidate it by exterminating all use value or really equivalence of production in wealth. In the very sense, we have the unreality of the stakes and the omnipotence of manipulation.

Well, today it is the same logic; that is even more set against capital and as soon as it wishes to come with this disastrous spiral by secreting a last glimmer of reality on wish to establish a large glimmer of power, it does nothing but multiplies the science and accelerates the playoff simulation. And then we have another concept; that is we have been talking about, which is given to us Leautaud, the notion of petty and grand narratives.

And where, grand narratives are notions that as I have already told to Christianity, Marxism and enlightenment that attempt to provide a framework for everything, such narrative follow a movement towards of equality and justice. After the last judgement, the revolutions, social scientific conquest of nature, etcetera and then how all these things will end in irrationality or in justice in society that the idea.

Leautaud position is that the contemporary world view is governed by small stories and western discourses. Characteristically unstable fragmented and does not appropriate a world view at all, where is little narratives present local explanations and are fragmentary. And therefore, important, because they are non totalizing, thus Leautaud argues that in the west grand narrative have lost the efficacy that the legitimacy and the powers of legitimation have been disbursed. Legitimation is now plural local and contingent, because there is no supreme authority which can sit in judgement and by supreme authority is we mean Marx Hegel or even the power, the unseen supernatural pass. So, we continue with our lecture in our next class.

Thank you very much.