

**Literary Theory and Literary Criticism**  
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**Lecture - 22**

**Part A**

**Postmodernism**

Welcome back and we continue with our discussion on Postmodernism. Now, we must note that the direct meaning of postmodernism is that, postmodernism comes after the modern. You might recall that at the beginning of my earlier class, I told you that we need to pay greater attention to these suffixes post, p o s t. So, the direct meaning is could be that postmodernism follows modernism, therefore, post.

However, the post denotes something beyond merely the chronological sequence and denotes a general condition of innovation in technology and also in technologies of art and literature. So, this is important to remember that it is not just a chronological sequence, but it also means a condition of innovation. Postmodernism is the state condition or period subsequent to that, which is modern.

Particularly in architecture, the arts, literature, etcetera; it also entails a departure from modernism and is particularly characterized by rejection of ideology and theory, in favor of a plurality of values and techniques. So, this is the key concept here. We have been talking about Lyotard, Jean Francois Lyotard. For him, the postmodern world would be that which in the modern puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself that which denies itself the solace of good forms.

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## Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition*

I have said that narrative knowledge does not give priority to the question of its own legitimation and that it certifies itself in the pragmatics of its own transmission without having recourse to argumentation and proof ... . The scientist questions the validity of narrative statements and concludes that they are never subject to argumentation or proof. He classifies them as belonging to a different mentality: savage, primitive, underdeveloped, backward, alienated, composed of opinions, customs, authority, prejudice, ignorance, ideology ... . This unequal relationship is an intrinsic effect of the rules specific to each game. We all know its symptoms. It is the entire history of cultural imperialism from the dawn of Western civilization. It is important to recognise its special tenor, which sets it apart from all other forms of imperialism: it is governed by the demand for legitimation.

Now, here I would like to draw your attention to this extensive quote from Lyotard's postmodern condition. I have said that narrative knowledge does not give priority to the question of its own legitimation and that it certifies itself in the pragmatics of its own transmission without having recourse to argumentation and proof. The scientist questions the validity of narrative statements and concludes that they are never subject to argumentation of proof.

He classifies them as belonging to a different mentality, savage, primitive, underdeveloped, backward, alienated, composed of opinions, customs, authority, prejudice, ignorance, ideology. This unequal relationship is an intrinsic effect of the rules specific to each game. We all know it is symptoms, it is the entire history of cultural imperialism from the dawn of western civilization, it is important to recognize it is a special tenor, which sets it apart from all other forms of imperialism, it is governed by the demand for legitimation.

For Brian McHale, postmodernism precedes the consolidation of modernism, it is modernism with the anomalous Pavadh is still left in and makes itself available for a later consolidation of the next phase and this process is constant. But, again according to McHale, this operation of constructing modernism by cutting it in half is not the only tendency in the recent literary historiography of modernism.

There is also an opposing tendency towards the assimilation of the whole of modernism to it is Pavagadh half and thus, towards assimilating modernism to postmodernism. So, basically he talks about the assimilation the overlaps of modernism and postmodernism and this is something that you might have noticed, when you read select texts of so called modernism. And select texts from the so called postmodernist period and you will find how they assimilate and how one feeds on the other.

Some more theorists, so they are Ihab Hassan, Charles Jencks, Linda Hutcheon and of course Brian McHale and Lyotard, we have been talking about frequently. And like them, many other scholars attempted to describe the stylistic hallmarks of postmodernism; we have already been talking about a number of stylistic hallmarks and features of postmodernism. There was an increasing concern with the images and circulation in the culture and their recoding, reuse and recycling in art.

Now, we have to remember that unlike the heroic modernist, who created works out of pure imagination, the postmodern artist works with cultural givens trying to manipulate them in various ways. For example, Parody Pastiche Bricolage juxtaposition for various ends and this is something that we have been seeing in detail throughout the course. Now, according to Fredric Jameson in his *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* published in 1991. He gives us some major aesthetic features of postmodernism.

He talks about the erosion of the distinction between high and low culture, this is extremely important, erosion of distinction between. So, there are no more boundaries unlike the modernist. Breaking down of boundaries between different zones of writing so, John define is one key feature of postmodernist within the same text. As we have been seeing a S by Z, it is position or John Fowles, the French Lieutenant's woman, we can see the boundaries are broken down in different John's of writing.

Postmodernist artists cannot invent new perspectives according to Jameson, a new modes of expression. Instead, they operate as Bricolage's and if you may recall in one of our earlier classes, we had already talked about the concept of Bricolage; that is recycling previous works and styles. So, Pastiche, Bricolage, intertextuality, Parody, taking all these forms and creating a new whole from something that already exists.

So, resisting creating something altogether new, but rather depending on something, that already exists. So, Pastiche is a Parody that has lost its sense of humor, according to Jameson, and then Jameson also talks about the incorporation of material from other texts. Now, to continue with Jameson, he sees the reliance on the styles of the past as an indication of the particular kind of Nostalgia.

Nostalgia is a key feature, key element of postmodernist discussion by Fredric Jameson and he sees it as one of the defining characteristics of postmodern art. And he says, random cannibalization of all the styles of the past, reduces the past to a series of spectacles, a collection of images disconnected from any genuine sense of historical process. Jameson also talks about the psychic fragmentation or schizophrenia, you know schizophrenia having sort of blurring of identities or fragmented identities, which he elaborates as an experience of the isolated disconnected, discontinuous material.

Signifiers which fail to link into a coherent sequence, the schizophrenic does not know personal identity in our sense. For Jameson, the postmodern has two main characteristics. Firstly, he believes that the postmodern is directly influenced by the negation of its previous yepok, modernism and in order for something to be postmodern. It emerges as a specific reaction against established forms of high modernism. This means that there will be as many different forms of postmodernism as there were high modernisms in play.

Since, the former are at least initially specific and local reactions against those models. And secondly, a key feature of postmodernism is that the lines between high and popular culture are gone or at least beginning to fade. This incorporation of high and mass culture can also be seen in other areas of discourse from philosophy to literature, where normal discourse theory has been replaced by a kind of writing simply called theory, which is all or none of those things at once.

Jameson considers this phenomenon, which he calls theoretical discourse to be assigned a postmodernism and an example of the merging cultures. Another major characteristic of the postmodernist thought and condition is unfinalizability, it is defined as the opposite of closure and an integral aspect of Bakhtin's ideas. According to which it is impossible to have the last word, no one can have the last word, any more, no one can have the final word and have closure anymore.

Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, according to Bakhtin. The world is open and free everything is still in the future and will always be in the future. Texts with multiple perspectives reflect the non closure of and lack of finality of human motivation. A major theorist of a postmodern thought is Ihab Hassan, who wrote the seminal, the dismemberment of Orpheus published in 1971.

So, the title invokes the image of Orpheus, the divine singer tone to pieces in Hades as he looks for his wife Eurydice, but whose yet continues singing his although his lyre is broken into 100 pieces by his side. Now, why use such kind of an imagery at the title of your book. So, for Hassan modernism was essentially rational, unlike the heroic modernist, who created workout of imagination, the postmodern art is given with or worked with cultural givens. So, therefore, Ihab Hassan gives us a list of modernism and postmodernism and here is a list, I would like to draw your attention to it.

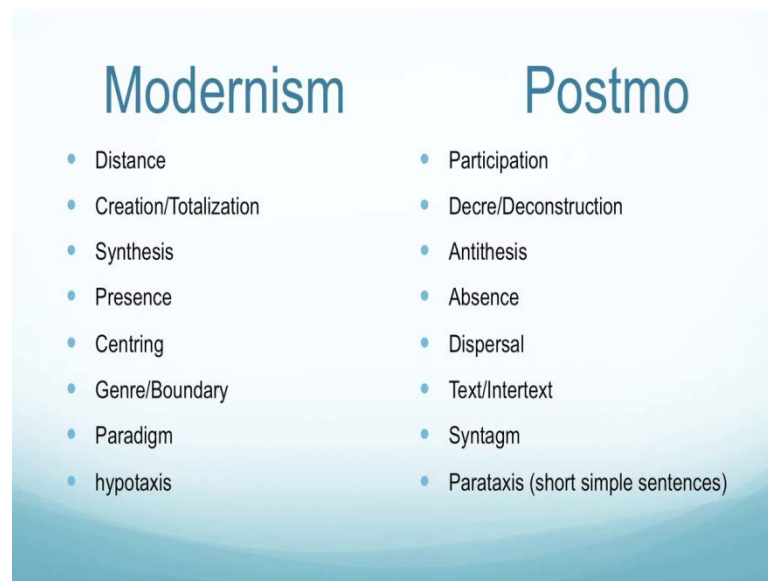
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Modernism	Postmod
• Romanti/symbolism	• Pataphysics/dadaism
• Form	• Antiform
• Purpose	• Play
• Design	• Chance
• Hierarchy	• Anarchy
• Logos	• Silence
• Mastery	• Exhaustion
• Finished Work	• Performance/Happening

So, this is Hassan's list, modernism and postmodernism the one on the left is are the features of modernism and on one on the right are the characteristics of postmodernism. You may take a look, modernism is romantic, whereas, postmodern is Dadaism, modernism is has form, postmodernism does not have a form. Modernism has purpose, postmodernism has a sense of play, modernism has design, postmodernism works on chance.

Modernism is characterized by hierarchy, whereas for Hassan, postmodernism is characterized by anarchy. Modernism has a logos, has logos believes in words, postmodernism believes in silence, modernism believes in mastery and postmodernism believes in exhaustion. You may refer to John Barthe's seminal essay, literature of exhaustion. Modernism talks of finish work and postmodernism talks about performance and happening.

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Modernism	Postmo
• Distance	• Participation
• Creation/Totalization	• Dece/Deconstruction
• Synthesis	• Antithesis
• Presence	• Absence
• Centring	• Dispersal
• Genre/Boundary	• Text/Intertext
• Paradigm	• Syntagm
• hypotaxis	• Parataxis (short simple sentences)

Modernism is about distance, postmodernism about participation, more mixing, carnival's, modernism is about totalization, postmodernism is about decreation and deconstruction, modernism is about synthesis, postmodernism antithesis. There is presence, centering and genre and paradigm and hypotaxis in modernism. There is absence dispersal intertextuality, syntagm and parataxis; that is short simple sentences in postmodernism.

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Modernism	Postmo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Metaphor</li><li>• Selection</li><li>• Root/Depth</li><li>• Interpretation/Reading</li><li>• Signified</li><li>• Lisible (Readerly)</li><li>• Narrative/Grand Histoire</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Metonymy</li><li>• Combination</li><li>• Rhizome/Surface</li><li>• Against interpretation/Misread</li><li>• Signifier</li><li>• Scriptible (Writerly)</li><li>• Anti-narrative/Petit Histoire</li></ul>

Modernism thrives on metaphor, selection, root, interpretations, signified, lisible; that is readerly and grand history and grand narrative. Postmodernism thrives on metonymy, combination, rhizome, against interpretation, which is also the title of Susan Sontag work, misreading, signifier, writerly and petit history, petit histoire and his anti narrative again.

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Modernism	Postmo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Master code</li><li>• Symptom</li><li>• Genital/Phallic</li><li>• Paranoia</li><li>• Origin/cause</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Idiolect</li><li>• Desire</li><li>• Polymorphous/Androgynous</li><li>• Schizophrenia</li><li>• Difference-Difference/Trace</li></ul>

This is the last line modernism thrives on master codes, symptom, phallic paranoia and origin. Whereas, postmodernism derives from idiolect, desire, androgyny and is more

polymorphous, rather than phallic centric, it is schizophrenics rather than paranoid and thrives on difference and difference.

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Again modernism is about metaphysics determinacy and transcendence, postmodernism plays on irony, indeterminacy and immanence. Now, Simon Malpas in the postmodern talks about the definition and he tries to interpret the postmodern condition, where he says post modernity marks the transformation that has taken place in society, during the last few decades with the rise of new forms of capitalism

The development of communication technology such as the internet, the collapse of the soviet union and the emergence of voices, from different cultures to disrupt the traditional white male. So, multi ethnicity, multi culturalism, those are the features that postmodernism plays on, rather than accepting the traditional hegemony, the traditional white male.

So, therefore, we are we go back to our premise the post in postmodernism is not just about a chronological historical sequence. It is more much more than that, I will take you to another quotation by another great postmodernist thinker, John Bordula and his the Gulf war did not take place published in 95.



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### The Gulf War Did not Take Place (1995)

- "Americans can only imagine and combat an enemy in their own image. They are at once both missionaries and converts of their own way of life, which they triumphantly project onto the world. They cannot imagine the Other, nor therefore make war upon it. What they make war upon is the alterity of the other, and what they want is to reduce that alterity, to convert it, or failing that to annihilate it if it proves irreducible (the Indians)." (37)
- "This is the rule of the American way of life: *nothing personal!* And they make war in the same manner: pragmatically and not symbolically." (39)

Now, here is what he says, Americans can only imagine and combat an enemy in their own image, they are at once more missionaries and converts of their own way of life, which they triumphantly project onto the world. They cannot imagine the other nor therefore, make war upon it, what they make war upon is the alterity of the other and what they want is to reduce that alterity to convert it or failing that to annihilated.

If it privies irreducible, for example, the Indians and then second quotation, this is the rule of the American way of life, nothing personal and they make war in the same manner, pragmatically and not symbolically. Bordula wrote this piece concerning the first gulf war in 1990 to 1991, the thrust of the pieces the difference between modern day warfare and the battles of the past. The idea of the work emerged out of his concern with the notions of simulation and simulacra, we have already seen that.

Bordula observes that the Gulf war was fought from a far as important decisions were made in pentagon board rooms, information was sourced from maps and satellites, images and military strategies give advice without even ever visiting the middle east. Again, targets for air strikes were located from cockpits, using computer screens. Bordula questions how we know that the war in the Gulf ever took place, when there was no actual contact with the enemy.

The collision army fought the war the way we play interactive games on our personal computers and other video games. Bordula also turns his attention to the media and it is

role in the invasion, he observes that the sensationalist style of reporting was again to the spectacle scene in mainstream film productions, you know the blockbuster kind of films, where you have all these great wars scenes.

So, it almost felt like watching a movie a greater spectacle not just a real war and also understand the way or the number of Iraqi civilians and Iraqi soldiers were killed in this war. Whereas, the number of casualty on the collision side was much more fewer. So, where is a comparison that is the question, he also commented on the way that television images of the Gulf war were heavily edited for effect that they bow to resemblance to the actual events.

So, an edited war, a kind of war, where images were projected and screened for popular mass consumption and to make people see, what the coalition force the superpowers wanted to see, so again proving the cases that the war was a simulation. Now, Habermas is a German sociologist and philosopher, he is also well known for his critic of postmodernism. He suggests that the term post modernity indicates a failure in modernity and it speaks for modernity, which is still has credentials intact as a way of understanding culture.

The Pavagadh understands itself as invading unknown territory exposing itself to the dangers of sudden shocking encounters, conquering and as yet unoccupied future. The Pavagadh must find direction in a landscape into which no one seems to have yet ventured which and this is what Habermas says in modernity versus post modernity an essay published in 1981.

So, to sum up, what are the characteristic features of postmodernism, it is a literal and cultural phenomenon, characterized by delegitimation and dedifferentiation. It leads to indeterminacy and erosion of authority, it thrives on fragmented narrative style, it has non-linear narrative. It has hyperlink or parallel stories, short stories running parallel to each other, it is characterized by schizophrenia and is marked by fluidity of identity.

It structurally it is more intertextual and is full of illusion and pastiche, it encourages multiple readings and encourages anarchy. Postmodernist challenge the distinction between high and low culture, they reject grand narratives and question originality. They propose that reality is replaced by simulation that is what Bordula tells us and supports the structures of intertextuality, hybridity and non-linearity.

Some of the great postmodern novels of our times are the unnamable by Samuel Beckett, house of leaves by Mark Danielewski, Slaughterhouse Five by Kurt Vonnegut, Labyrinth by George Bernard, Gravity's Rainbow by Thomas Pynchon naked lunch by William Burrough. Some of the post modernist films that resist closure are pulp fiction, the blade runners, natural born killers, inception many words from contemporary Iranian cinema and also contemporary Chinese cinema, particularly the films directed by Wong Kar Wai.

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Now, here is your bibliography, please take a quick look at it.

Thank you very much.