

Postmodernism in Literature
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Lecture – 1b
Introduction (continued)

Hello everyone, welcome to yet another session of the NPTEL course entitled Postmodernism in literature, in the previous session we are taking a look at how postmodernism could be defined in continuation with modernism or even as a departure from the dominant modernist tendencies. So, today we also try to take a look at what exactly happened in the postmodern period.

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We did look at a range of definitions a range of ways in which a postmodernism could be differentiated from the aspects of modernism, but in the today's session we are also trying to take a look at what exactly happened.

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What may be implications of the postmodern moment in arts literature and in diverse fields of style?

So, the first and foremost one is that the disappearance of the comforting security that reason offered particularly during the modernist fever. If we look at the trajectory of the modernist period the modernist period in terms of the chronological retreat history it comes in right after the Victorian period where there was a dominance of lot of crisis, the crisis of faith and the and the tussle between faith and reason and we also find the during the modernist fitted there is a way in which modernist also find also trying to find a certain kind of a security a comforting security within the aspects of reason within the aspects of rationality. We find a continuation of the enlightenment mode also reaching it is a peak during the modernist period. We find we all trying to be more intellectual and the pursuit of intellect was also seen as a certain are kind of a an anathema a sort of a solution to all the problems of the early 20th century.

But we do know that the project modernity failed after a point and the intellect or the reason or the aspects of enlightenment they provide they may fail to provide any kind of security or any kind of comfort in the face of the world and also the aftermath of the wall. And we also realize that and following this we also see that there is way in which hierarchy and system completely breaks down in the postmodern period, especially after the fifties and 6ties it is very difficult to talk about the privileging of a discipline the privileging of an art form privileging of a journal or even the privileging of any political system so to speak.



And when we look at the cultural and intellectual trends of the postmodern period we also, now find that the implications were very, very edited in particular schools of thought and then particular art forms. Some of the things that would immediately come to our mind would be the theatre of the absurd which became popular in the 1950s and 60s. The most prominent example being waiting of go the where Samuel Becket waiting of go was a play which really talk about the postmodern condition we observe of the postmodern condition without necessarily lamenting the incoherence, but rather celebrating it in a very humorous way in a very nonsensical way. And there was also the emergence of magical realism which could be seen as we perhaps the most defining aspect of the postmodern are narration, the postmodern or will the other the they seminal architects of this appeal (Refer Time: 06:15) Salman rusty kunthet grass etcetera.

And we also have then entire generation being named as the Beat generation and the kind of poetry that generate being know as a Peter poetry you also have the significant political rendition how will happening in the 1960s, which also challenged the entire idea of culture, poetry and finer aspects related to all these renditions. And looking at these various developments which could be label as post modernist we to see that these are all the implications these are all the advantages of having reached the postmodern age the after modern is where one had not have one aware one no longer have to be concerned about the form about the symbols and about the intellectual meanings of various related things as the modernists where very Predominantly concerned about.

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Theoretical frameworks

- **Poststructuralism & Deconstruction** have close contiguities with postmodernism
- Foucault, Barthes, Derrida, Baudrillard, Deleuze, Lyotard, Kristeva
- Discourse, language, semiotic analysis, simulation, hyperreality, rhizomatic systems of knowledge, aesthetics and politics, feminism and abjection

And in terms of theoretical frameworks we do find that the theories and aspects of post structuralism and deconstructions I have close contiguities with postmodernism. And in a number of works where we trying to understand the element of postmodernism when we try to theorize postmodernism; and we try to provide convenient frameworks to access postmodernism we find a continuous discussion and overlapping discussion of post structuralism and deconstruction.

So, in that sense when we try to frame postmodernism as a theoretical as a conceptual a principal as a dominant cultural tendency we will be very generously using the writings of Foucault, Barthes, Derrida, Baudrillard, Deleuze, Lyotard, and Kristeva. Our discussions will not be limited to just a these takes an all these, but we shall also be looking at a range of similar works which were also produced during this similar historical period.

And here how do we make use of these different theories a Foucault as we know was one who spoke extensively about discourse and a Barthes and Derrida had a lot of discussions related language and semiotic systems. And we also have Baudrillard talking about simulation hyper reality in fact when we talk about hyper reality maybe one of the imitate examples that would come to our mind would be the contemporary a movie Inception, where there is a representation of hyperreality through the form of a visual media and that use spoke about rhizomatic systems of knowledge where one cannot privilege one form of knowledge or one form of knowing or are or any a form of dissemination over and the other.

And Lyotard as we know he was someone who also a tried to define the postmodern condition and he spoke about aesthetics and politics in connection with the idea of postmodernity. And in Kristeva we also have a number of discussions related to feminism and abjection. So, following these about texts and writers we shall also try to build up a framework within which we can access different forms of oppose modernisms.

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And the other critical paradigms which would also be used language would be convenient to locate critique and to and to engage with the ideas of postmodernism would be a primarily Marxism and we also have a couple of critiques and writers it is read to Jameson and Terry Eagleton accessing postmodernism trying to critique it within the framework of a Marxist a theoretical principles.

And Kwame Anthony Appiah is one writer who challenges the idea of postmodernism through the lens and framework of a postcolonialism. And we have Patricia Waugh are talking about the need for different feminisms within the post to within the postmodern world and also the absence of certain kinds of gender related issues within these articulations of postmodernism. There also other feminist writers who all who also put forward this idea that perhaps postmodernism is a very male forte, because just when the women writers had began to articulate themselves just when the women writers had begun to acclaim subjectivity for themselves and for their works and for their sites and

for their text. The male writers had decided to entirely forgot the idea of subjectivity the idea of identity and also move on to a very postmodern face.

So, there are these different or challenges within which postmodernism needs to be understood and situated as well. And we also have some writers such as Sara Upstone and Len Platt talking about race and African American writings within a post modern framework. And all of these aspects from Marxism post colonialism or feminisms and race and African American writings we understand that there is no single way of understanding postmodernism but perhaps only postmodernisms.

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To remember:

Postmodernisms?
The possibility of different and many figurations:
French, Canadian, White American, African-American . . .

- Cultural values are local and particular ✓
- NOT universal and eternal ✓
- No linear, progressive trajectory ✓
- Embedded within debates, irregularities, controversies, provocations, contestations ✓

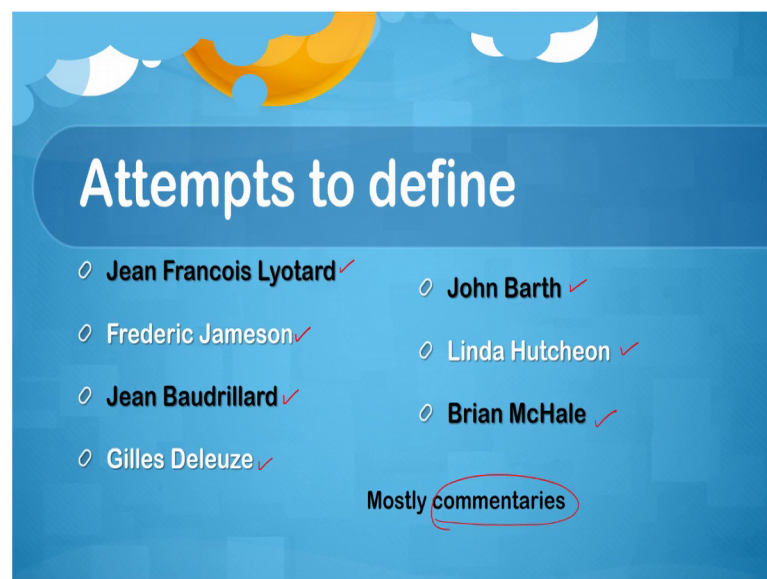
And what is important for us to remember is the possibility of different figurations of postmodernism or it could be French, Canadian, White American, African American the difference could be based on race, gender, the location, the region the nationality the ethnic identities. And unless we take into account the possibility of these different figurations and accommodate these different tendencies these different aspects of postmodernism we would not be doing justice to this very hybrid and to this a very unconventional and very non-linear phenomenon known as postmodernism.

So, in this course though we are trying to frame postmodernism in a very modernist sense within particular schemes within particular systems of thought and within particular critical frameworks; we also try to ensure that there are no overriding principles about postmodernism which are being privileged over the other that we take

into account all forms of available scholarship all forms of available critiques endorsements and all kinds of approaches with respect to postmodernism.

So, we continue to emphasize the idea that cultural values are local and particular and they are not universal and eternal. There is no linear progressive trajectory. So, for this course also even we are trying to trace the genealogy of postmodernism even when we are trying to even when we are trying to delineate a particular trajectory. We also acknowledge that it would be difficult to construct a linear progressive intellectual trajectory. And we also work with this inherent assumption that the idea of postmodernism, the study is on postmodernism all kinds of discourses and discussions and negotiations within the framework of postmodernism will always be embedded within debates irregularities or controversies, provocations and contestations. And in fact, we shall be working with all these challenges and within these ambiguities and along with these ambiguities in order to define postmodernism through perhaps particular works.

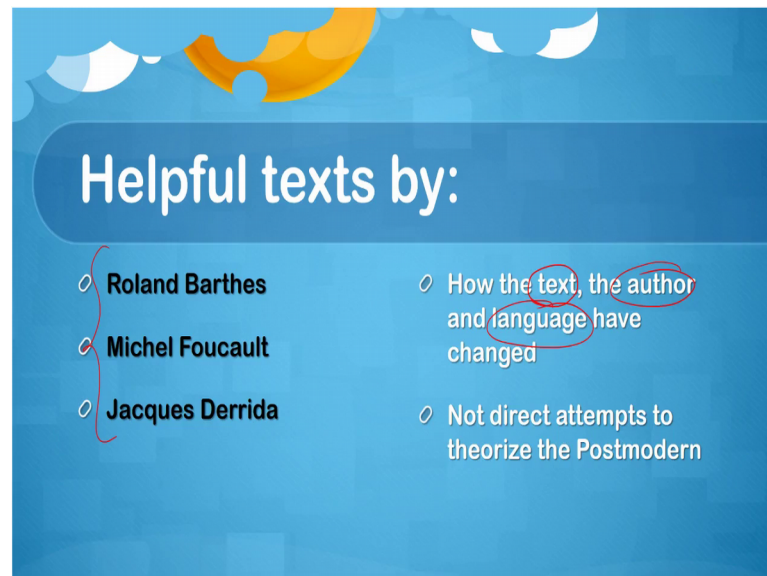
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So, this focus on particular works becomes very important because it also gives a structure to our thought and also enhances our scholarly understanding about what has been written about postmodernism related to postmodernism, what where the theories and the theorists used to talk about postmodernism, and why has postmodernism been defined in the way or has not been defined in the way it is seen today. So, in that sense

we shall be primarily looking at Lyotard attacks and Frederic Jameson writings, Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, John Barth, Linda Hutcheon and Brian McHale though these texts cannot reader texts cannot be seen as works per se to define postmodernism. We find that these are mostly commentaries and it is very useful to understand the notion of a postmodernism.

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And we also will be taking at look at a few helpful texts by Roland Berthes, Michel Foucault Jacques Derrida though these were these authors these theories and philosophers now not directly attempted to define our theorize postmodern. We find that they talk about the ways in which the text the author and language have changed have moved away or perhaps even the idea of the text of the author and the language of entirely disappeared in the postmodern agents in some form of the other.

So, these the close reading of some of these works would also help us to form our own opinion our own critical judgment about; whether postmodernism is or was or whether postmodernism is yet to be or whether postmodernisms not there at all whether this is an extension of post extension of modernism or a complete rejection of modernism. So, these are close reading perhaps my hope is that you would be able to make your own critical evaluation and judgment about the phenomena of postmodernism.

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I also try to wind up today's lecture by referring to a particular work by and John McGowan, he had published a book in 1991 about postmodernism and its critiques.

So, it is also useful for you us to remember that postmodernism is not a movement not an intellectual paradigm accepted by one and all. It also has it is share of critiques and in also a number of critiques who even argue that postmodern face is not there at all that we only have an extension of the modernist period. So having said that: John McGowan in his book has identified 4 different distinguishable cans to talk about the theories later postmodernism: first of all he talks about poststructuralism and in the post and among the poststructuralist we have and among the poststructuralist we primarily have Derrida and Foucault.

Then he talks about the literary left that mean the a second a camp where he talks about the works by Jameson and Terry Eagleton. He identifies a third camp as being new pragmatism, where he chooses discusses he chooses discuss the works by Lyotard and Rorty. And a fourthly he talks about a feminism rather feminisms, but however, he does not choose to delve deeper into it because he thinks it is also a part of the new pragmatic approach towards postmodernism.

And in that sense, when he talks about Derrida and Foucault, Jameson, Eagleton and Lyotard and Rorty; we get a sense of how in different camps postmodernism operates willing not necessarily by John McGowan arguments or his postulates about the existence of these 4 different camps, but nevertheless it is an interesting way to look at different

ways in which a postmodernism has been framed. And in connection with this discussion McGowan also talks about the precursors of the postmodern moment and he identifies particularly Kant, Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche.

And in the context of this it is also important to recognize that the way McGowan presents postmodernism he even identifies the precursors to a much earlier period the, romantic period and he says that it is only a way in which all of these things get and he argues that all the postmodern items all the postmodern and modernist tense trends could be seen as being foreshadowed from the romantic period onwards. So, he dates back the precursors to the 90th century in support of his argument.

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Moving on even when part of as part of this course we shall be very briefly taking a look at some of the precursors of postmodern moment. A beginning from Lawrence Sternes Tristram Shandy published as a range of texts from 1759 to 67 Emmanuel Kant Friedrich Hegel, Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jacques Lacan. We may not be going into the details of the works of these particular theories and writers, but we shall be looking at how their thought process how their intellectual trajectories were also contributing directly to the figuration of the postmodern in the contemporary in the poster 1960s.

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Charles Jencks

The origins of the term

- 1870s ✓
- Before 1926 ✓
- 1917
- 1960s - The 'Posties'
- 1970s - Deconstructive Pomo
- 1980s - constructive, ecological, grounded, restructive Pomo
- The postmodern condition, reactionary postmodernism, consumer postmodernism
- The co-existence of the information age, the Pope and Madonna

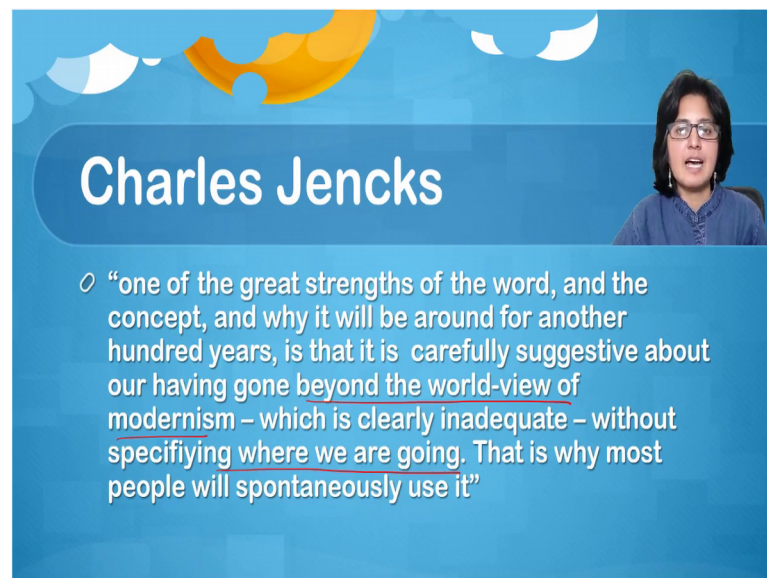
So, as we wind up we also take a brief look at Charles Jencks, ideas about the origins of the term this is a very useful for us to construct a genealogy with the term postmodernism. according to Charles Jencks, Charles Jencks is also someone who had originally extensively about postmodernism in a very lucid way which was also quite friendly to the Layman. So, Charles Jencks writing about the origins of the term he tries to trace a genealogy from the 1870s onwards. And he says there are instances of the term being cited though in various contexts 1870s and much before the 19 26 and there is also a particular reference that he talks about which came out in 1970. And 1960s he continues to argue that this is the time of the posties that is a lot of discussion about post christianity post of religion, post industrialization and those were not always seen in a positive light it was also about initiate it was also about the breakdown of structures systems and are not of a negative aspects related to it.

But in according to that by the 1970s we also have a sort of a for grounding of a deconstructive pomo, and keeping in it is keeping in tune with the various ways in which many dominant ideas and ideologies of the previous eras previous decades where entirely getting deconstructive, but with the 80s James argues that we also reach a more constructive ecological and grounded and restructive postmodernism, and which also continues to become the more the most dominant form of articulation of postmodernism. And today when we look back James argues that the postmodern condition reactionary postmodernism and consumer postmodernism the all dominate almost simultaneously

and following which we also have the coexistence of these varied aspects this varied item such as the information age, the Pope and the Madonna.

So, we also see that it is an fact a coexistence of multiple things there is a mixing of genres happening there any aspects of hybridity that we can see. So, this work that we shall come back to a little later is a useful framework for us to look at the genealogy of postmodernism.

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Charles Jencks

o “one of the great strengths of the word, and the concept, and why it will be around for another hundred years, is that it is carefully suggestive about our having gone beyond the world-view of modernism - which is clearly inadequate - without specifying where we are going. That is why most people will spontaneously use it”

To some of this lecture a quote by Charles Jencks would be very appropriate and useful, he writes one of the great strengths of the word and the concept and why it will be around for another 100 years is that it is carefully suggestive about our having gone beyond the world view of modernism, which is clearly inadequate without specifying where we are going that is why; most people will spontaneously use it. So, Jencks talks about the ambiguities within which the term is a placed, and it is within these ambiguities and uncertainties that we would also continue to operate, and make sense of the idea of postmodernism, and the aspects and the manifestations and the various forms of representations in literature.

Thank you for listening. And, we look forward to seeing you in the next session.