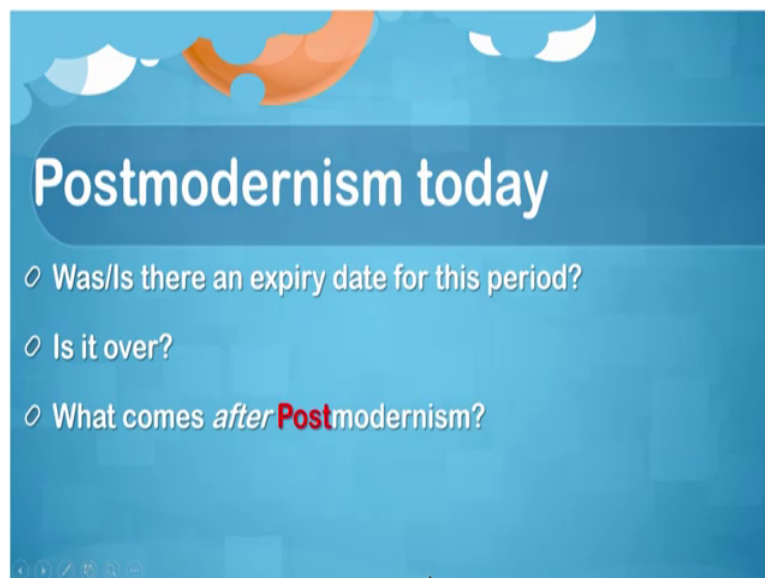


Postmodernism in Literature
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Lecture - 27
Postmodern literature today: Some concluding thoughts

Hello and welcome to the last lecture of the NPTEL course postmodernism in literature. And today session we hope to be able to do a quick recap of our discussions in the last few weeks. And also begin asking these questions about the relevance of discussions related to postmodernism in the contemporary. Much as it is difficult to frame conclusion to our topic as diverse as postmodernism here we began to attend the same.

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When we talk about postmodernism in the contemporary, it is also important to ask, whether there was an expiry date assign for this period?

Many critics have spoken about the beginnings, the starting point of postmodernism which would also perhaps logically expect us to assume that there is an endpoint, there is a an expiry date this a movement which began in the post Second World War period.

And many have also raised this question about, whether the post modern period is already over? And whether we are living in a period which comes after postmodernism?

And if that is the case, it is also important to ask what comes after postmodernism given that postmodernism itself is a phenomenon which came into being after modernism.

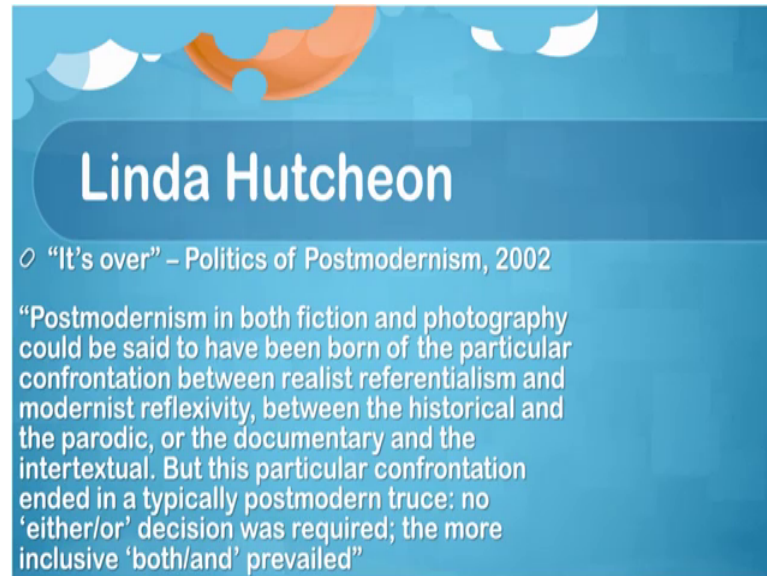
And these are certain challenging questions and these are certain pertinent realities that you also need to deal with any discussion related to postmodernism. And I take you through a set of critics who have ask these questions and we early view with no answer.

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You may recall how Terry Eagleton and some other marks are critics which is James and also argued that postmodernism is a passe and it is phase that is finished and they also looked at postmodernism as a failure and as an illusion and refused to engage with it given that it is also a product and offshoot of the capitalist advance societies.

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And Linda Hutcheon one of the foremost theories of postmodernism, she also came up with the argument in her introduction to 2002 work title Politics of Postmodernism. And she very finally, suggested that it is over that the postmodern phase is over and this is how she builds up her argument and write you and except from the politics of postmodernism.

Postmodernism in both fiction and photography could be said to have been born of the particular confrontation between realist referentialism and modernist reflexivity, between the historical and the parodic, or the documentary and the intertextual. But this particular confrontation ended in a typically postmodern truce; no either or the decision was required; the more inclusive both and prevailed. We also saw in a earlier discussions how the privileging of both and over either or was always seen as a celebratory intervention that post modernism made.

And Linda Hutcheon and many others have also pointed out how this move from the realist modernist phase towards the postmodern phase where are they challenge; the truce about knowledge, about history, about identity. It was found to be more conducive and then limiting rigid frame works that modernity had offer that enlightenment.

That post enlightenment period had offer while, this is seen as a reason to celebrate while, this could be seen as more liberating and more and living in comparison to the rigid narratives of modernity.

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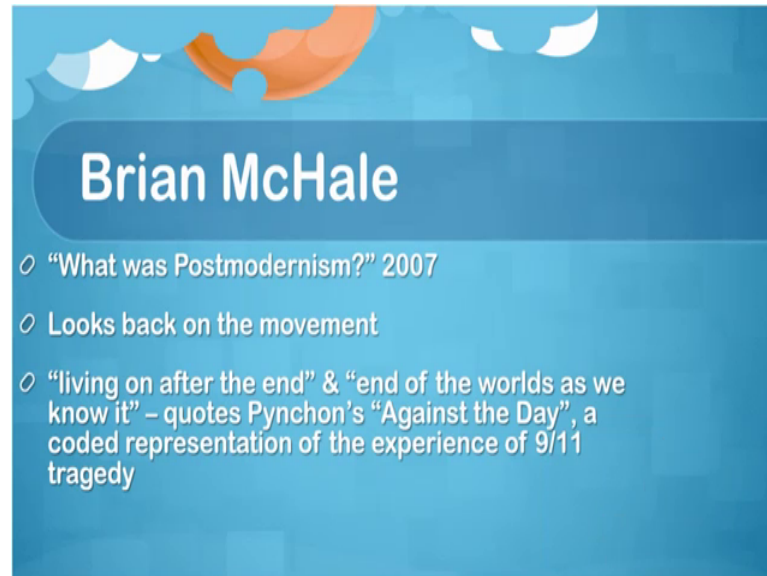


There will also be certain limitations inherent in this rejection of the grand narratives because it is not conducive for identity politics.

Linda Hutcheon has taken this point forward and she also argues that, that very inclusivity which was the catch phrase of postmodernism. It also became the mark of its potentially complicitous critique and beginning of the problems identity politics would have with the postmodern.

We also noted how the postmodern as a category did not really gel well with at least some of the feminist and we also saw how a work as it is, Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* could not really be seen as postmodern because she was also engaging with identity and issues related to the self. And these set of limitations also made postmodern not a viable category for practicing a certain kinds of political subjectivities.

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Brian McHale, another theorist of postmodernism who is often quoted, he wrote in 2007 paper title; what was Postmodernism. The past tense used in McHale's paper was very telling it also drew a lot of attention from the academic community. He chose to look back on the movement from 2007 and his paper also implied that, whatever was designated, whatever was described as postmodern it was already over.

That phase had already come to an end and he also used certain phrases from Thomas Pynchon's, recent novel *Against the Day* and used phrases like "living on after the end" and "end of the worlds as we know it" to talk about a certain period which was post the experiences of 9, 11 tragedy.

McHale also argued that, what will descriptions which had fit the category of postmodernism. It had ceased to make sense after a certain point in history and he also was one among those critics who argue that, if postmodernism had the starting point it also had to have a definite point in history where it would also come to an end.

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Alison Gibbons. 1989.

TLS THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT
The leading international weekly for literary culture

“Postmodernism is dead. What comes next?”

- “the forces that once drove postmodernism seem now to be depleted, however”
- “in place of postmodernism’s cool detachment, its anthropomorphism, realism is once again a popular mode”
- The new dominant cultural logic is emerging; the world - or in any case, the literary cosmos – is rearranging itself

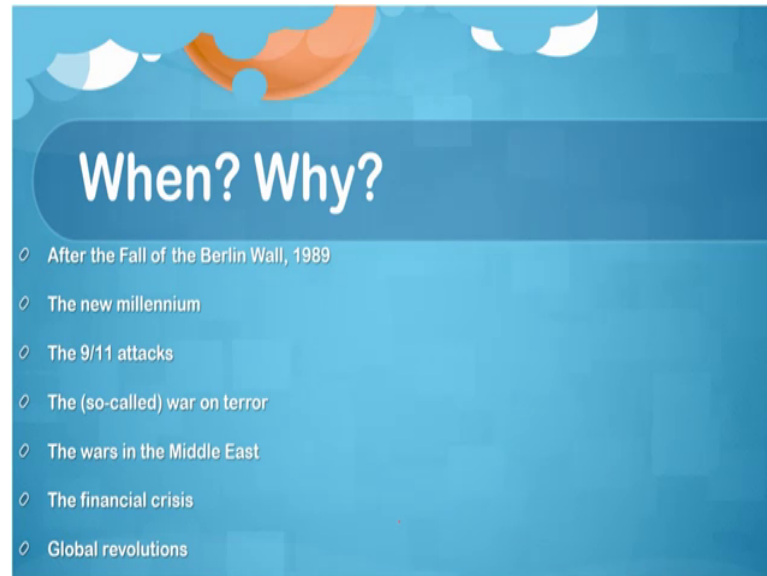
Another significant intervention in this regard was a 1989 essay by Alison Gibbons. It appeared in the times literary supplement and essay was titled Postmodernism is Dead. What comes next?

Gibbons made this very powerful argument that the, forces that once drove postmodernism seem now to be depleted; however, and in the place of postmodernism Gibbons also argued that in place of postmodernisms, cool detachment and its anthropomorphism, realism had once again become the popular mode.

If you recall some of our discussions in the previous session, we made it very clear that postmodernism always made at deliberate to move away from the conventions of realism. Even while realistic techniques were used it was only to subvert certain historical artefacts related to realism and its narrative techniques.

And here we have Gibbons arguing that, realism is once again becoming a popular mood because postmodernism has been again in a sense of cyclical history blindly placed by realism. And he also pointed out that, in this process and new dominant cultural logic was emerging.

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And the world, if not the entire world at least he says a literary cosmos we was rearranging itself and it is important then to ask when and why these moves and these shifts happened, the move away from the postmodern moment. Taking off from Alison, Gibbons essay certain other critics have asked about, what made such a move pertinent and a move away from postmodernism?

And many have given a diverse set of characteristics, diverse set of historical events in some of the important ones are being. The fall of Berlin Wall, which happened 1989, the new millennium which also brought in a set of new changes along with it, the 9, 11 attacks which really change the current defining political elements and also brought in newer kinds of identity crisis and they also called a war on terror, which is still ongoing; The ongoing wars in the Middle East, the financial crisis which is interrupted in different parts of the world and also global revolutions to which, the world still does not seem to have any kind of resolution.

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The slide features a blue background with a decorative header containing a stylized sun and clouds. The main title is 'There IS more!' in white text. Below the title is a list of four bullet points, each preceded by a white circle icon. In the bottom right corner, there is a small video feed of a woman with glasses and a patterned top.

There IS more!

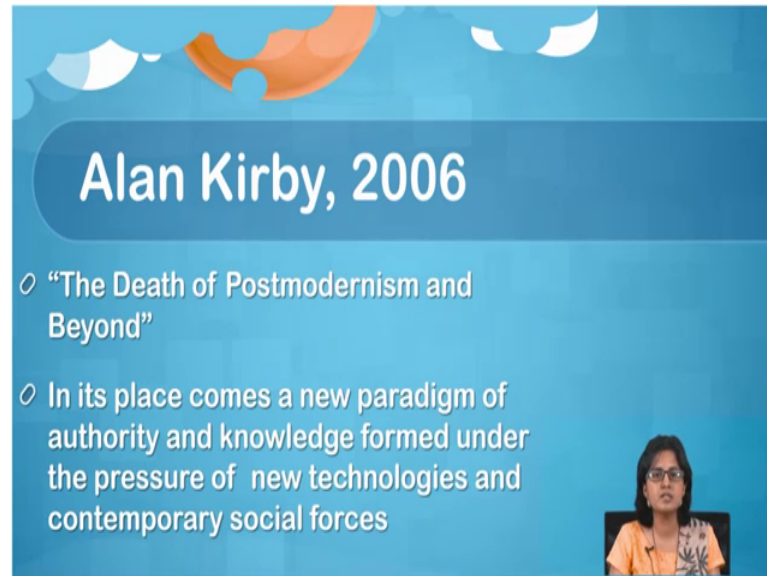
- The failure and unevenness of global capitalism
- The disillusionment with the project of neo-liberal postmodernity
- The political splintering into extreme Left and extreme Right
- The hyperanxiety brought about by 24 hour

And more things are being cited such as the failure and unevenness of global capitalism which incidentally even the Marxist critics have pointed out in their discussion on postmodernism and also the dissolution with the project of the new liberal post modernity.

Just like a sense of dissolution man had come in at the wake of modernity with the disillusionment, with the enlightenment projects we find the similar kind of happening in the turn of the century. And the political splintering of the entire political world into extreme left and extreme right also had led to the aggravation of the sense of the disillusionment.

And some of them also talked about the hyper anxiety, which the 24 hour news has brought about.

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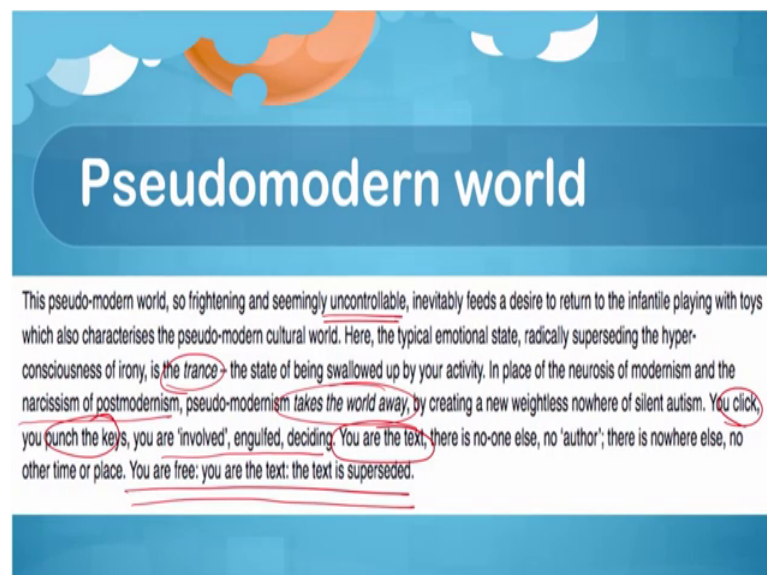
Alan Kirby, 2006

- “The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond”
- In its place comes a new paradigm of authority and knowledge formed under the pressure of new technologies and contemporary social forces

Video inset: A woman with glasses speaking.

It is in this context that a recent article by Alan Kirby published in 2006 title, The Death of Postmodernism in beyond assumes a special significance. Kirby talks about, what gets to replace postmodernism? And he argues in its place, comes a new paradigm of authority and knowledge formed under the pressure of new technologies and contemporary social forces.

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Pseudomodern world

This pseudo-modern world, so frightening and seemingly uncontrollable, inevitably feeds a desire to return to the infantile playing with toys which also characterises the pseudo-modern cultural world. Here, the typical emotional state, radically superseding the hyper-consciousness of irony, is the trance - the state of being swallowed up by your activity. In place of the neurosis of modernism and the narcissism of postmodernism, pseudo-modernism takes the world away, by creating a new weightless nowhere of silent autism. You click, you punch the keys, you are 'involved', engulfed, deciding. You are the text, there is no-one else, no 'author'; there is nowhere else, no other time or place. You are free: you are the text: the text is superseded.

Accordingly he also refers to a word that he proposed to call as pseudo modern. This is also been known as the Digi Modern world. He talks about the pseudo modern world

dominated by the powers of internet and he also goes on to argue towards the end of his paper. This pseudo modern world so frighteningly and seemingly uncontrollable, inevitably feeds a desire, to return to the infantile playing with toys which also characterizes the pseudo modern cultural world.

Here, the typical emotional state radically superseding the hyper consciousness of irony is the trance, the state of being swallowed up by your activity. In place of the neurosis of modernism and the narcissism of postmodernism, pseudo modernism takes the world away, by creating a new weightless nowhere of silent autism.

You click, you punch the keys, you are involved engulfed deciding. You are the text, there is no one else, no author, there is nowhere else, no other time or place. You are free; you are the text; the text is superseded. This is the pseudo modern world that Alan Kirby talked about and this happens when the postmodern phase itself is passe.

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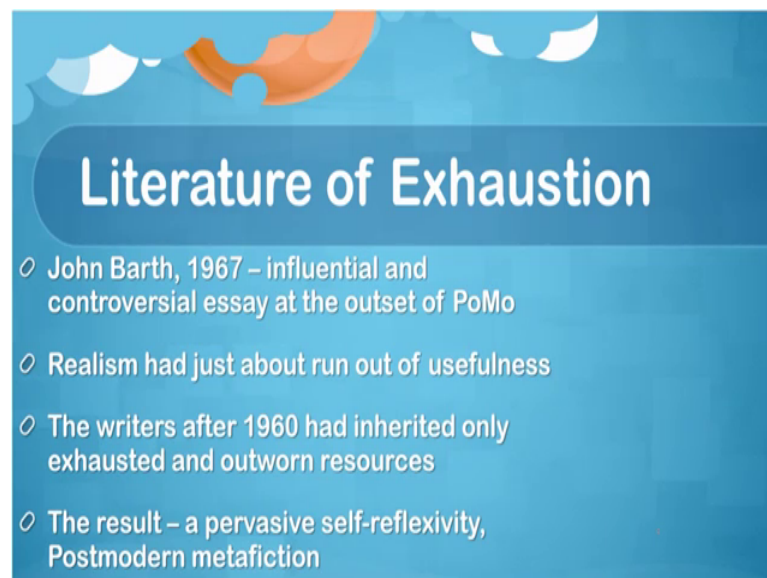
This also a new term which is being used post postmodernism and it refers to a wide ranging set of development, which are emerging from and reacting to postmodernism. He be also find a certain kind of pattern being replicated in these theoretical formulations just like postmodernism, responded and reacted to the limitations of modernism.

We find post postmodernism responding and reacting and also emerging from certain limitations which are there in postmodernism and this is also when the result of the belief

that postmodernism has now gone out of fashion and what follows is also a series of proposed designations and none part of mainstream usage yet.

So, accordingly we do not have a particular term to refer to, when we are talking about post postmodernism. We only have a series of proposals and a series of scattered discourses to refer to.

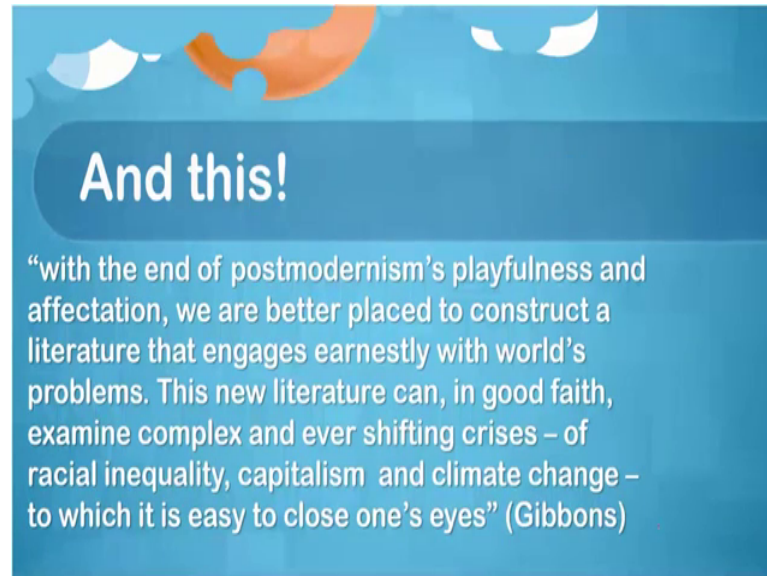
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I consider as extremely useful to revisit and older essay a 1967 essay by John Barth title Literature of Exhaustion. We have already referred to this a couple of times earlier and this essay was up in very influential and controversial essay at the outset of the postmodern phase and this also had was useful and defining and redefining the tenets of modernism and postmodernism in the 1960s. Barth made this very controversial argument that realism had just about run out of usefulness and the writers after 1960 had inherited only exhausted and outworn resources.

As a result of this exhaustion, that a new kind of postmodern metafiction had come into place, a pervasive self reflexivity was an offshoot of this exhaustion which had come about in the 1960s. It will be a useful exercised to try and see how John Barths 1967 essay Literature of Exhaustion also gives an entry point to talk about Gibbons essay.

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When Gibbons talks about the end of postmodernism, he is also referring to a certain way in which some of the devices which postmodernism had offered, had become outdated and had become not so useful in the last few decades. To quote from Gibbons essay, with end of postmodernism playfulness and expectation, we have better place to construct a literature that engages earnestly with worlds problems.

This new literature can, in good faith, examine complex and ever shifting crises of racial inequality, capitalism and climate change to which it is easy to close ones eyes. Just like Barth had drawn her attention to the outworn resources of realism in the 1960s, we have Gibbon now drawing our attention to be out wornness of playfulness affectation which also characteristic of much of postmodern writings.

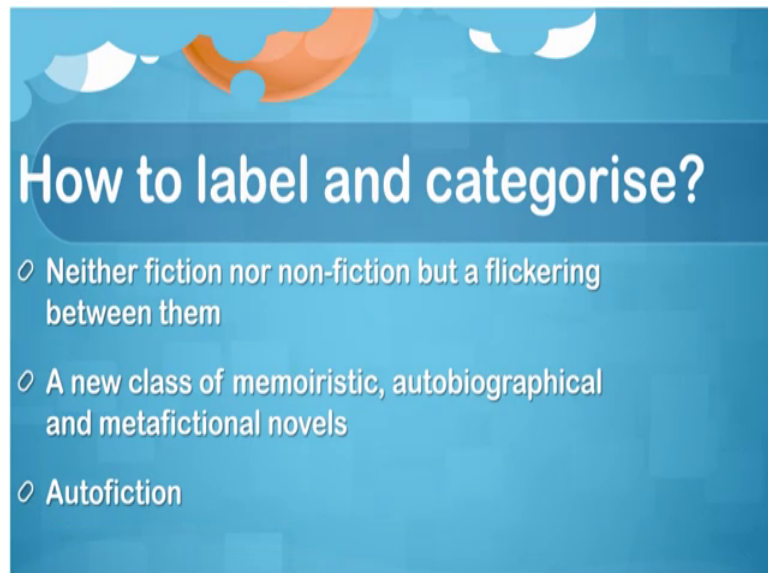
And he also points out that, maybe we need to move away towards a different kind of narrative, towards a different kind of a framework itself to engage earnestly with worlds problems such as other ones related to race, capitalism and also about environmentalism.

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Having said that, it would be appropriate to talk about two major novels, which were published in the year 2014 one by Ben Lerner, an American novelist; The novel was titled 10 4 and the other one by Nell Zink, yet another American writer and her novel was titled the Wallcreeper. Ben Lerner's Novel 10 4 spoke about ecological disaster.

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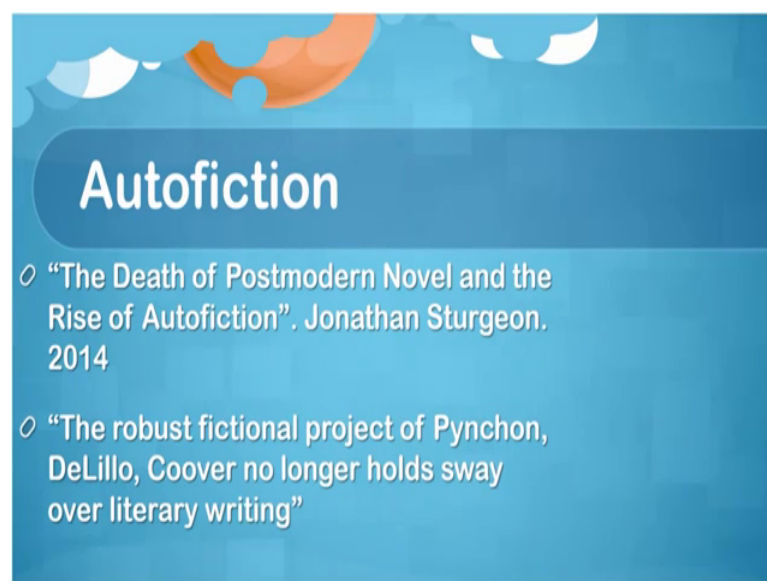


And Nell Zink spoke about environmental terrorism and both these novels also vigorously reassert the idea of the self which is gone out of work in the postmodern writings. And a most of the review was and the critics were at a loss as to how to label

and categories these two novels. Ben Lerner's *10 4* and Nell Zink's *The Wallcreeper*, that kind of novel that they wrote was neither fiction nor nonfiction.

But a flickering between them as Ben Lerner would call it and some review was also were of the opinion that, this was an emergent to new class of memoiristic, autobiographical and metafictional novels and they also some of them also chose to label it as Autofiction. It is important to reiterate that, their assisted to be categorised as postmodern.

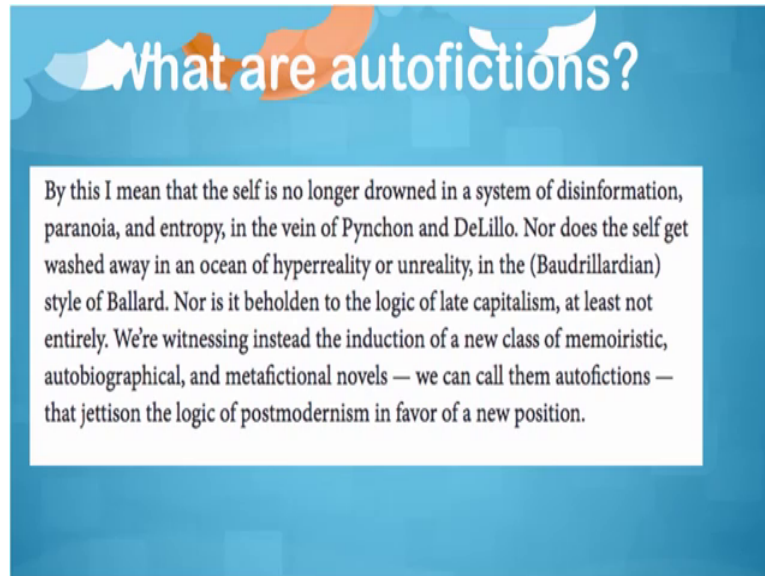
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And that is also the interesting turning point that postmodernism has reached today. And what is autofiction in Jonathan Sturgeon's 2014 paper, *The Death of Postmodern Novel and the Rise of Autofiction*. He tries to give a kind of definition to autofiction and he also begins with this disclaimer that the robust fictional project of Pynchon, DeLillo, and Coover no longer holds sway over literary writing.

So, he begins by just like the postmodern project had begun by a completely displacing the grand narratives associated with a modernism, here we find the postmodern autofiction beginning to displace certain authorities quite held sway over literary writing in the postmodern space.

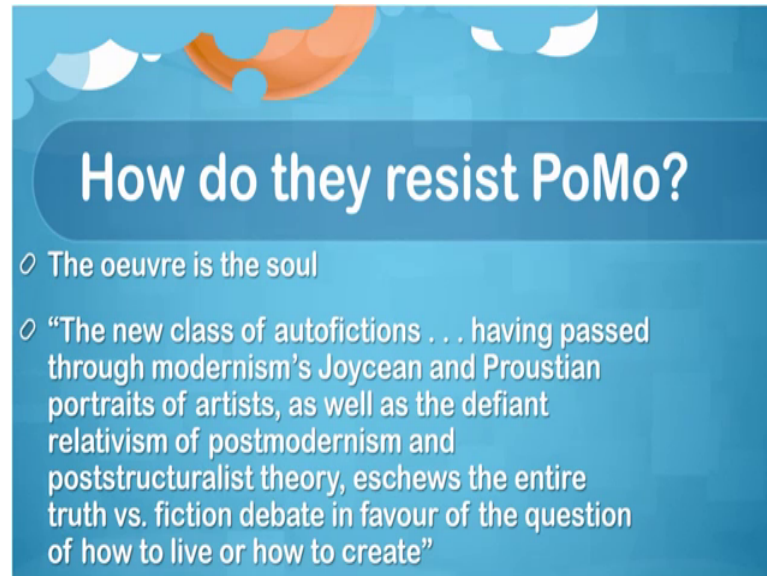
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Jonathan Sturgeon is also attempts to define autofictions. According to him, by this I mean that the self is no longer drowned in a system of disinformation, paranoia, and entropy, in the vein of Pynchon and DeLillo. Nor this is self get washed away in an ocean of hyperreality or unreality, in the Baudrillardian and style of Ballard.

Nor is it be hold into the logic of late capitalism, at least not entirely. We are witnessing instead the induction of a new class of memoiristic, autobiographical, and metafictional novels we can call them autofictions that jettison the logic of postmodernism in favour of a new position.

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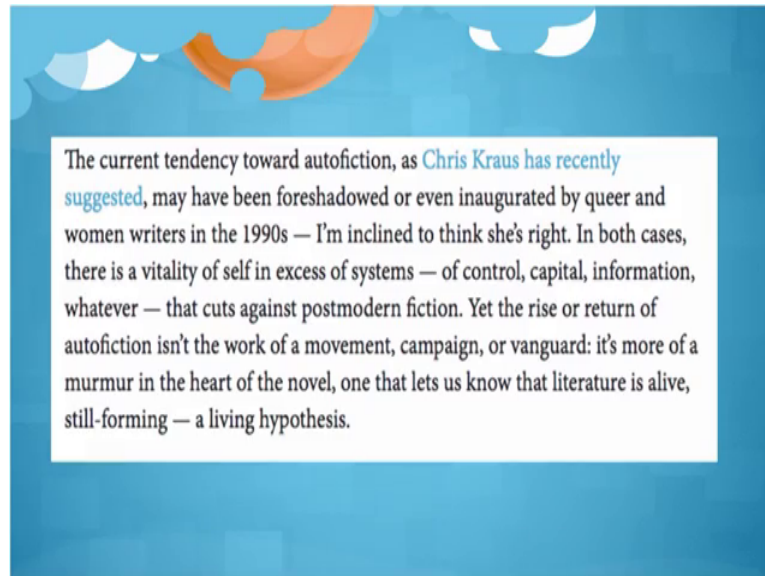
To see how the level of postmodernism is not apply to these two novels, it also important to know how they resists being postmodernist. According to Sturgeon again in these novels, the oeuvre is the soul and we also have seen how the self makes a comeback in these writings, how the self is being privileged over all the other things.

And I can reach you from Sturgeon, the new class of autofictions having passed through modernisms Joycean and Proustain portraits of artists, as well as the define relativism of postmodernism and poststructuralist theory, eschews entire truth versus fiction debate in favour of the question of how to live or how to create.

We find that the very set of thing that postmodernism resisted makes comeback in these contemporary affection. There is also are going back or reclaiming of the self or going back to the soul and while they continue to experiment with the narrative techniques, they also reject the models which were made available to them through the phases of modernism and post modernism.

And one of them also had pointed out that, (Refer Time: 17:43) also had gone out of work in the contemporary because they no longer find it important to rely on the previous techniques even to parody or subvert.

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While one cannot categorically state that the moment of post modernism has already gone by or it has been displaced by other kinds of writing, it also important to know the scope and relevance of autofiction and the contemporary. I read to you again from the essay by Sturgeon, the current tendency toward autofiction, as Chirs Kraus has recently suggested, may have been foreshadowed or even inaugurated by queer and woman writers in the 1990s, I am inclined to think she is right.

In both cases, there is a vitality of self in excessive systems of control, capital, information, whatever that cuts against postmodern fiction. Yet the rise of return autofiction is not the work of a movement, a campaign, or vanguard; it is more of a murmur in the heart of the novel, one that lets us know the literature is alive, still forming a living hypothesis.

There was a point in time when there was a concerted effort to cut against modernist fiction. We find the same getting replicated at least minimal ways in certain parts of the western world in the contemporary.

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Postmodernism

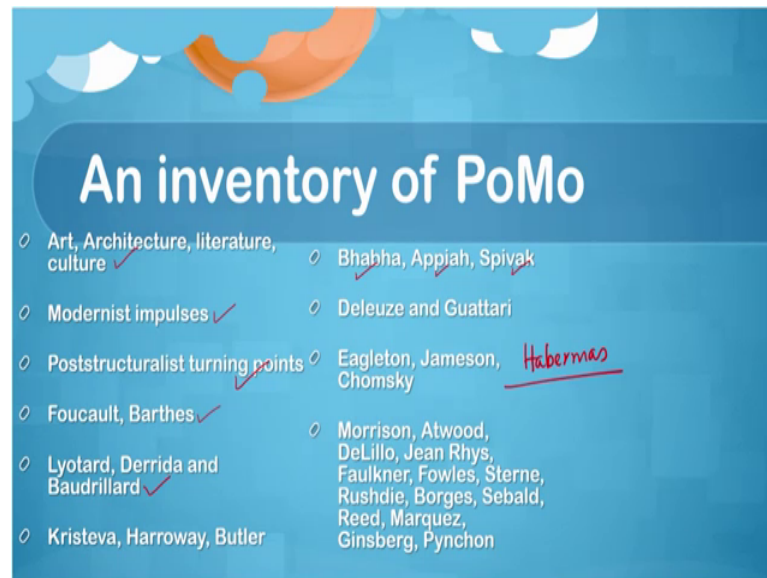
- No consensus
- Cultural logic of late capitalism OR loss of historicity OR subversion of metanarratives OR fascination with the ontological OR the celebration of fragmentation and multiplicity

As we begin to wind up this concert, it is also important to recall some of the seminal foundational aspects related to post modernism, that there is no consensus about what post modernism means or what it does and this is something that we have been noting right from the outset of this course that this is a concept that this is a phenomenon which defines all kinds of definitions and presses all kinds of categorisation. The absolute absence of any kind of consensus is also an interesting problematic, which would not allow us to conclude the event of post modernism in any which way.

One is still wondering whether post modernism can be defined as the cultural logic of late capitalism or as the loss of historicity or as a subversion metanarratives or the fascination with the ontological or even the celebration of fragmentation and multiplicity. And all of these definitions all of these concepts do together also referred to this mega event, this mega phase known as post modernism.

A brief discussion may not perhaps be enough to state whether the moment of post modernism is over or we are still living in the post modern phase or not.

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And, I also take this opportunity to take a quick inventory of the various ways in which post modern debates have been a shaped up through a discussion of different genres, different theories and also different kinds of literature.

In the beginning of the course, we spoke about intersections between art, architecture, literature and culture and how they continue to inform each other in the, especially in the postmodern phase. We spoke about the modernist impulses, which also had a bearing on the way postmodernism began to emerge and we noted the poststructuralist turning points which where exemplifier in the works of Foucault and Barthes and later we also took a look at the influences a from the western theories particularly the ones by Lyotard, Derrida and Baudrillard.

They also spoke about the incredulity toward metanarratives, about the construction and also about hyperreality. Those were also useful concepts to talk about postmodern literature and also post modern culture as we have noted and we engaged with the ideas for grounded by Julia Kristeva, Donna Harroway, Juliet Butler.

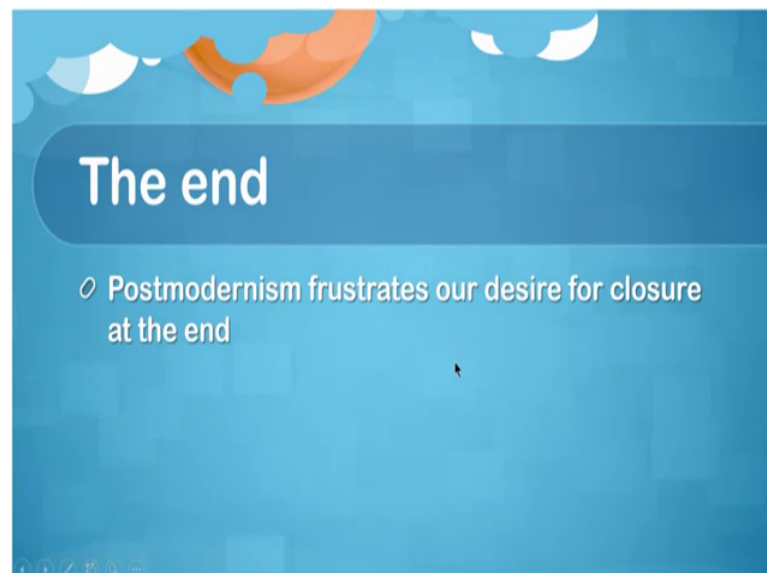
We also so how gender and feminism can also be incorporated as one of the elements in our discussions of post modernism, though there were also critics which was widely prevalent.

We also spoke about how the postmodern moment can be redefined when intervention of the postcolonial criticisms be engaged with Bhabha, Kwame Appiah and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and we also a look at how the construction can be employed in certain literary text. Deleuze and Guattari discussions on a minor literature and what (Refer Time: 21:51) may useful in engaging with certain text. At the same time we also and did see how Eagleton, Jameson and Chomsky offered very radically, a different critique of post modernism.

Here we also need to mention Habermas, who also argued that the project of modernity has not yet been over and post modernity needs to be accessed, needs to be talked about in keeping that in mind I am talking about the postmodern literature, we took a look at our range of a text written by different literary icons ranging from Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood, Don DeLillo, Jean Rhys, William Faulkner, John Fowles, Laurence Sterne, Salman Rushdie, Borges, W G Sebald, Ismail Reed, Marquez, Allen Ginsberg and Thomas Pynchon.

Though this is not a very comprehensive, extensive list we did try to engage with the idea of post modernism as it is reflected and literature in rather in depth ways.

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As we come to the end of this course, it also becomes very important to reiterate it this idea that post modernism frustrates our desire for closure at the end and for the same reason we do not attempt to the same for this course either.

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Matthew Mullins

If the open-endedness of these conclusions is effected in language that is resolutely material, then what becomes clear is that we are left not with some precocious ambiguity or lack of direction but with the materials we need to account for the ongoing formation, reformation and transformation of the networks formed through reading.

MATTHEW MULLINS
POSTMODERNISM
IN
PIECES
MATERIALIZING
THE SOCIAL
IN U.S. FICTION

I also leave you with a very useful observation made by Matthew Mullins and his 2017 work *Postmodernism in Pieces*.

He makes this very insightful observation, if the open endedness of these conclusions is affected in language that is resolutely material, then what becomes clear is that we are left not with some precautions ambiguity or lack of direction but with the materials we need to account for the ongoing formation, reformation and transformation of the network formed through reading. I hope this is useful for us to evaluate and to access post modernism even when historically the period is passe or even on historically the period is over as some of them argue it to be.

And on that note that opens up multiple possibilities for reading and interpretation, we also begin to rap of this course post modernism and literature. I hope this NPTEL course *Post Modernism and Literature*, did offer a great learning experience and opportunity for you.

Thank for listening and thank for being a part of this course.