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|  | **Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra** |  |
|  | **Faculty of Letters and Languages** |  |
| **Module: British Literature** | **Dept. of Letters and Foreign Languages** | **Lecturer: Mr A. Boulegroune**  |
| **Level: Master 2 (Lit. & Civ.)**  | **English Division** | **Academic Year: 2020-2001** |

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| **Lecture 02: Postmodernism**  |

**Introduction**

Post-modernism is the term used to suggest a reaction or response to modernism in the late twentieth century. So, postmodernism can only be understood in relation to Modernism. At its core, Postmodernism rejects that which Modernism champions. While postmodernism seems very much like modernism in many ways, it differs from modernism in its attitude toward a lot of these trends. Modernism, for example, tends to present a fragmented view of human subjectivity and history, but presents that fragmentation as something tragic, something to be lamented and mourned as a loss. Postmodernism, in contrast, doesn't lament the idea of fragmentation, provisionality, or incoherence, but rather celebrates that.

**Characteristics of Postmodern Writing**

**a) Irony, playfulness, black humor**

Postmodern authors were certainly not the first to use irony and humor in their writing, but for many postmodern authors, these became the hallmarks of their style. Postmodern authors are very frustrated for World War II, the Cold War, conspiracy theories. They try to amalgate it from indirect way so, irony, playfulness, black humor comes.

**b) Pastiche**

Related to postmodern intertextuality, pastiche means to combine, or "paste" together, multiple elements. In Postmodernist literature, many postmodern authors combined, or “pasted” elements of previous genres and styles of literature to create a new narrative voice, or to comment on the writing of their contemporaries.

**c) Intertextuality**

Intertextuality is the shaping of texts' meanings by other texts. It can include an author’s borrowing and transformation of a prior text or to a reader’s referencing of one text in reading another. An important element of postmodernism is its acknowledgment of previous literary works. The intertextuality of certain works of postmodern fiction means the relationship between one text (a novel for example) and another or one text within the interwoven fabric of literary history. Critics point to this as an indication of postmodernism’s lack of originality and reliance on clichés. Intertextuality in postmodern literature can be a reference or parallel to another literary work, an extended discussion of a work, or the adoption of a style.

**d) Metafiction**

Many postmodern authors feature metafiction in their writing, which, essentially, is writing about writing, an attempt to make the reader aware of its fictionality, and, sometimes, the presence of the author. Authors sometimes use this technique to allow for flagrant shifts in narrative, impossible jumps in time, or to maintain emotional distance as a narrator.

**e) Historiographic Metafiction**

This term was created by Linda Hutcheon to refer to novels that fictionalize actual historical events and characters. [Linda Hutcheon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linda_Hutcheon) coined the term "historiographic metafiction" to refer to works that fictionalize actual historical events or figures. In regard to critical theory, this technique can be related to "[The Death of the Author](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Death_of_the_Author)" by [Roland Barthes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland_Barthes).

**f) Temporal distortion**

This is a common technique in modernist fiction: fragmentation and non-linear narratives are central features in both modern and postmodern literature. Temporal distortion in postmodern fiction is used in a variety of ways, often for the sake of irony. In this literary the author may jump forwards or backwards in time, or there may be cultural and historical references that do not fit.

**g) Technoculture and hyperreality**

Society has moved beyond capitalism into the information age, in which we are constantly bombarded with advertisements, videos, and product placement. Many postmodern authors reflect this in their work by inventing products that mirror actual advertisements, or by placing their characters in situations in which they cannot escape technology. The [cyberpunk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyberpunk) fiction of [William Gibson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Gibson), [Neal Stephenson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neal_Stephenson), and many others use science fiction techniques to address this postmodern, hyperreal information bombardment. [Steampunk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steampunk), a subgenre of science fiction popularized in novels and comics by such writers as [Alan Moore](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Moore) and [James Blaylock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Blaylock), demonstrates postmodern pastiche, temporal distortion, and a focus on [technoculture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technoculture) with its mix of futuristic technology and Victorian culture.

**h) Paranoia**

Paranoia, which is the belief that there's an ordering system behind the chaos of the world, is another recurring postmodern theme. For the postmodernist, no ordering system exists, so a search for order is fruitless and [absurd](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absurdity).

**i) Magical realism**

Arguably the most important postmodern technique, magical realism is the introduction of fantastic or impossible elements into a narrative that it seems real or normal. Magical realist novels may include dreams taking place during normal life, the return of previously deceased characters, extremely complicated plots, wild shifts in time, and myths and fairy tales becoming part of the narrative.

**Conclusion**

Modernism and Postmodernism are almost inseparable as both the movements consisted of similar interests with authors focusing on different/unique styles in contrast to the preceding literary movements. However, one can observe the uniqueness of postmodernism by the use of these styles with a lot of variation and distinctive employing in comparison to modernism.