

Postmodernism

*postmodernism refers to the theories, the trends, and the philosophical , intellectual, literary criticism and artistic schools which appeared to **reject** and destroy some concepts as **language, identity, origin, voice and mind**, ...and for that, it uses the mechanisms of **scepticism, difference and alienation**. The philosophy of postmodernism is linked with **chaos, nihilism, disassembly, non-sense and non-order** (Hamdaoui 2011. p: 12-13).*

Features of Postmodernism as an Intellectual Thought

- A change in the thought from ethical and individualist existentialism towards more sceptical and anti-humanist attitudes.
- Postmodernist philosophers took side with the subordinated and the marginalized against those with power.
- Universal truths is impossible and relativism is our fate. In fact, relativism comes at the heart of Derrida's deconstruction, that is the truth is relative to the differing standpoints.
- Derrida's scepticism allowed his followers to attack philosophy, science, the novel and history, because they contend that they cannot be true.
- The Philosophy of Nihilism: The postmodern philosophies are chaotic and nihilistic based on the absence of the meaning, attacking the mind and logic, order and harmony. In addition, they are against the idea of wholeness, and in return, they call for variety, difference, disorder and deconstruct all what is ordered and agreed on.

- Dominance of the Image: The development in mass media continues to appear from modernism to postmodernism. Thus, the language is no longer the only means by which man's life is ordered, but the image becomes the basic total to knowledge accumulation and truth.
- Destruction of the Central Big Ideologies: Through questioning and criticism of some concepts as essence, truth, existence, identity, ...through anatomy, deconstruction and delay.
- Openness: The modern structuralism believed on the philosophy of the structure, internal closeness, non-openness on meaning and the external and referential contexts whereas postmodernism took openness as a means to interact, understanding, coexistence and tolerance. And intertextuality is one of the means of openness, in addition to the consideration of external contexts is another proof of this pluralistic openness.
- The postmodern philosophies aim to free man from the oppression of the institutions which own discourse, knowledge and power, and also to free him from the illusions of ideologies, and the philosophy of the centre, and works on enlightening him about the philosophies of margin, causal and popular.
- Obscurity and ambiguity are the most characteristics of the postmodern discourse; they have no definite, or singular meaning/reference. In fact, there are only different and paradoxical connotations as is clearly seen in the writings and the deconstructive perspective of Derrida.
- The postmodern philosophies deny the existence of a constant unchangeable truth. As with Jean Braudillard who denies the truth and considers it as illusion. He connects the truth with the media which uses the language of deception and dilution and exaggeration

Leading Figures of the Postmodernist Thought

- - Jean Braudillard.
- - Jacques Derrida.
- - Jean Francois Lyotard.
- - Michel Foucault.
- - Roland Barthes
- - John Barth

Some Prominent Postmodern Theories

- *Deconstruction.*
- *Interpretive Semiotics.*
- *Cultural Criticism.*
- *Feminist Criticism.*
- *Dialogic Criticism.*
- *Post-colonial theory.*
- *New Criticism.*
- *New Aesthetics.*
- *Reception Theory.*
- *Pragmatic Criticism.*

Techniques/ Characteristics of Postmodernism

1. Intertextuality

Intertextuality is a word coined in late 1960s (1966) by the Bulgarian-French philosopher and psychoanalyst **Julia Kristeva**.

intertextuality is “a **mosaic** of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another”.
(*Word, Dialogue and Novel*).

William Irwin wrote, the term "has come to have almost **as many meanings as users**, from those faithful to Julia Kristeva's original vision to those who simply use it as a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence. (228)

- **Bakhtin's Dialogism**

The theory suggests a continual dialogue with other works of literature and other authors—and his examination of the multiple meanings, or "**heteroglossia**", in each text (especially novels) and in each word.

- **intertextuality as a recontextualization**

Linguist Norman Fairclough states that:

intertextuality is a matter of recontextualization" recontextualization is therefore a "dynamic **transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context ... to another**". Recontextualization can be relatively explicit—for example, when one text directly quotes another—or relatively implicit—as when the "same" generic meaning is rearticulated across different texts.

Types of intertextuality:

Intertextuality can be divided into three types: obligatory, optional and accidental (Fitzsimmons, 2013). These variations depend on two key factors: the intention of the writer, and the significance of the reference.

1. Obligatory intertextuality occurs when the writer deliberately **invokes a comparison or association between two (or more) texts**. Without this pre-understanding or success to 'grasp the link', the reader's understanding of the text is regarded as inadequate (Fitzsimmons, 2013). Obligatory intertextuality relies on the reading or understanding of a prior **hypotext**, before full comprehension of the **hypertext** can be achieved (Jacobmeyer, 1998).
2. Optional intertextuality has a less vital impact on the significance of the hypertext. It is a possible, but not essential, intertextual relationship that if recognized, the connection will slightly shift the understanding of the text (Fitzsimmons, 2013). Optional Intertextuality means it is **possible to find a connection to multiple texts of a single phrase**, or no connection at all (Ivanic, 1998). The intent of the writer when using optional intertextuality, is **to pay homage to the 'original' writers**, or to reward those who have read the hypotext. However, the **reading of this hypotext is not necessary** to the understanding of the hypertext.

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series shares many similarities J. R. R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy.

3. Accidental intertextuality is when readers often **connect a text with another text, cultural practice or a personal experience, without there being any tangible point within the original text** (John Fitzsimmons). The writer has **no intention** of making an intertextual reference and it is completely upon the reader's own prior knowledge that these connections are made (Wöhrle, 2012).

Reading Herman Melville's 'Moby Dick', a reader may draw deep connections to the Islamic allegory Jonah and the Whale, simply from the mention of a man and a whale. Whilst it was not Melville's intention to create these links, the readers have made these connections themselves.

The Process of Intertextual

Intertextuality is the shaping of a text's meaning by another text, either through deliberate compositional strategies such as quotation, allusion, calque, plagiarism, translation, pastiche or parody or by interconnections between similar or related works perceived by an audience or reader of the text.

Allusion

It is a figure of speech, in which one refers covertly or indirectly to an object or circumstance from an external context. It is left to the audience to make the connection where the connection is directly and explicitly stated.

Parody

Linda Hutcheon states: it "takes the form of self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement" (Politics 1). one can create this **double or contradictory stance** on any statement is the use of parody: citing a convention only to make fun of it.

It is rather like saying something whilst at the same time putting inverted commas around what is being said. The effect is to highlight, or "highlight," and to subvert, or "subvert," and the mode is therefore a **"knowing" and an ironic.** (Linda Hutcheon)

So, Parody is to mimic something in order **to comment or to critique it.**



Pastiche

According to Fredric Jameson, parody has, in the postmodern age, been replaced by pastiche: "Pastiche is, like parody, **the imitation** of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. **But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter**" (Postmodernism 17).

In such a world of pastiche, we **lose our connection to history**, which gets turned into a series of styles and superseded genres, or simulacra

So, pastiche is to mimic something **just** to mimic. The purpose is not commentary.



2. Metafiction

The term 'metafiction' was coined in 1970 by William H. Gass in his book *Fiction and the Figures of Life*.

“Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality.” Patricia Waugh

It is a narrative technique in which the work self-consciously calls attention to itself as a work of fiction. Metafiction is created in many different ways but always includes an awareness within the fiction that it is indeed just that, a work of fiction.

Common techniques of metafiction include:

- ▶ ∅ addressing the reader
- ▶ ∅ a story **within** a story
- ▶ ∅ a story **about someone** reading or writing a book
- ▶ ∅ characters that are **aware** that they are taking part in a story
- ▶ ∅ commenting on the story while telling it, either in **footnotes** or within the text
- ▶ ∅ a story with a narrator that **exposes** himself **as both** a character and the narrator

Lost in the Funhouse (1968) by American author John Barth.

3. Historiographic metafiction

- ▶ It is a term coined by literary theorist Linda Hutcheon in the late 1980s. It incorporates three domains: **fiction, history, and theory**. The term is used for works of fiction which combine the literary devices of **metafiction** with **historical fiction**.

- Works regarded as historiographic metafiction are also distinguished by frequent allusions to other artistic, historical and literary texts (i.e. **intertextuality**) in order to show the extent to which works of both literature and historiography are dependent on the **history of discourse**
- According to Hutcheon, in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, works of historiographic metafiction are "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages (Hutcheon 5).

This is proven in the genres that historiographic metafiction parodies, which it uses so that **each parody constitutes a critique in the way it problematises them**. This process is also identified as "**subversion**" for the purpose of exposing suppressed histories to allow the **redefinition of reality and truth**.

Literary scholar Bran Nicol argues that Vonnegut's novel features "a more directly political edge to metafiction" compared to the writings of Robert Coover, John Barth, and Vladimir Nabokov.

4. Faction

Faction is very similar to historiographic metafiction, in that its subject material is based on actual events, but writers of faction tend to blur the line between fact and fiction to the degree that it is almost impossible to know the difference between the two, as opposed to metafiction, which often draws attention to the fact that it is not true.

5. Technoculture and hyperreality

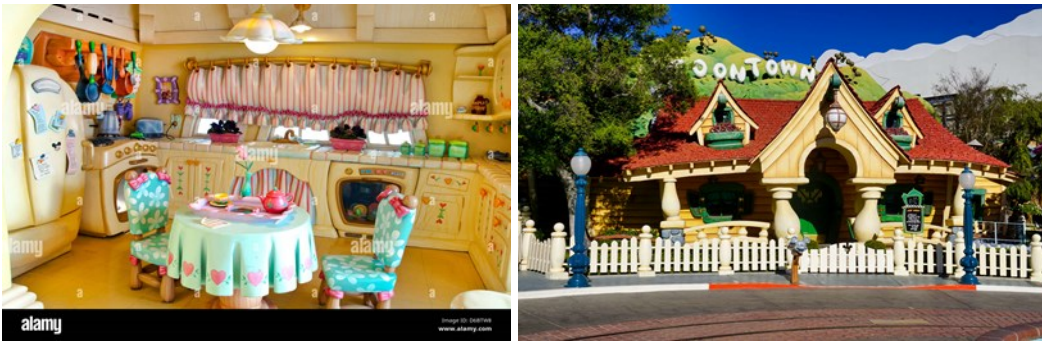
Frederic Jameson defined postmodernism as the "cultural logic of late capitalism."

According to this logic, 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
Jean Baudrillard claimed postmodernity was defined by a shift into hyperreality in which simulations have replaced the real

Example:

Both Umberto Eco and Jean Baudrillard refer to Disneyland as an example of hyperreality. Eco believes that Disneyland with its settings such as Main Street and full sized houses has been created to look "absolutely realistic", taking visitors' imagination to a "fantastic past".



6. 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 will often **treat very serious subjects**—World War II, the Cold War, conspiracy theories— from a position of **aloofness and coldness**, and will choose to depict their histories ironically and humorously.
- So, Black humor is a kind of comedy that jokes about serious or depressing topics, such as hopelessness, suffering, or death.
- The black in black humor refers to the dark or depressing subject matter that is central to such comedy. Similar terms are black comedy, dark humor, and gallows humor.
- Sometimes black comedy is used as a way to point out or reflect on the **absurdity of life**— or, more specifically, of the dark aspects of life.

Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961) is a notable example, in which Captain Yossarian battles the horrors of air warfare over the Mediterranean during World War II with hilarious irrationalities matching the stupidities of the military system.

Other novelists who worked in the same vein included Kurt Vonnegut, particularly in *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969), and Thomas Pynchon, in *V* (1963) and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973).

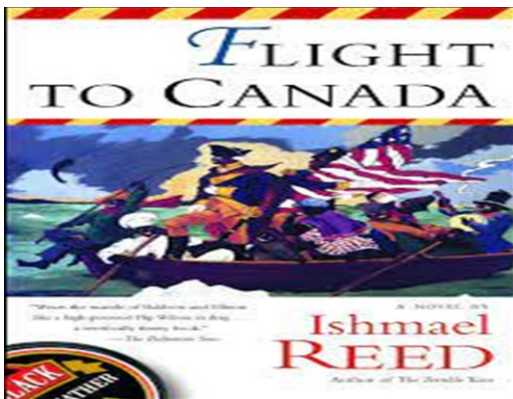
A film exemplar is Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), a comedy of militaristic errors that ends in global nuclear destruction.

7. Temporal distortion

- ▶ It is changing a **person's perception** of time.
- ▶ Temporal distortion is a literary technique that uses a **nonlinear timeline**; the author may jump forwards or backwards in time, or there may be cultural and historical references that **do not fit**.
- ▶ Temporal distortion is employed to create various effects: irony, parody, a cinematographic effect, and the effect of computer games. The use of this technique **is not fixed**; it is related to what it is suitable for the situation or the literary work.

Example:

“Abraham Lincoln uses a telephone”
died in 1865/ telephone was invented in 1876.



8. Magical realism

- ▶ Magical realism is the introduction of fantastic or impossible elements into a narrative that is otherwise 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.

- Many critics argue that magical realism has its roots in the work of Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez, two South American writers, and some have classified it as a Latin American style.
- Within a work of magical realism, the world is **still grounded in the real world**, but **fantastical elements are considered normal** in this world. magical realism blur the line between fantasy and reality.

The Characteristics of Magical Realism

- Realistic setting: All magical realism novels take place in a setting in this world that's **familiar** to the reader.
- Magical elements: From talking objects to dead characters to telepathy, every magical realism story has fantastical elements that do not occur in our world. However, they're **presented as normal** within the novel.
- Limited information: Magical realism authors deliberately leave the magic in their stories **unexplained** in order to normalize it as much as possible and reinforce that it is part of everyday life.
- Critique: Authors often use magical realism to offer an implicit **critique of society**, most notably **politics** and the elite. The genre grew in popularity in parts of the world like Latin America that were economically oppressed and exploited by Western countries. Magic realist writers used the genre to express their distaste and critique American Imperialism.
- Unique plot structure: Magical realism **does not follow a typical narrative arc** with a clear beginning, middle, and end like other literary genres. This makes for a more intense reading experience, as the reader does not know when the plot will advance or when the conflict will take place.

Examples:

- Beloved by Toni Morrison (1987). A novel about a former slave haunted by an abusive ghost
- Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie (1981). A novel about a boy with telepathic powers because he was born at midnight the same day India became an independent country.
- Matigari: A Novel (1986), written by Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong'o, centers on Matigari, a mysterious figure who survives his country's war for independence and emerges from the mountains making strange claims and demands. While searching for his family, he begins a quest for peace and justice and battles the forces of corruption, fear, and misery that have taken over his country. As rumors spread that he has unique, supernatural abilities, people start to debate whether he could be the resurrection of Jesus in Africa.