

Introduction to Film Studies
Prof. Aysha
Department of Humanities and social science
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
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Postmodernism and Cinema

Key Theorists

-Linda Hutcheon

-Ihab Hasan

-Fredric Jameson

Good morning, so we recently finished a new Hollywood period, new Hollywood cinema was skeptical right. A skeptical of American policy is it told us that look, there is something very wrong with the American society, it is politics. And therefore, we need new themes, new way ways of telling stories, new kinds of heroes, but what they did the cinema of 80's do to us; it took us back to pre new way cinema, where we have told that look America is still the super power and the war in Vietnam can is still be won.

And therefore, we have all those Rambo movies and movies like commando where the enemies always the other. Notice the race enemies not within, in new Hollywood cinema enemy is within; did you note that? In new Hollywood cinema, they are not fighting a war against others. Even when they are interrogating the Vietnam War, it is given the perspectives also given from the other point of view; it is not just out and out aggressive American point of view that we are looking at.

But when you look at cinema of Sylvester Stallone or Schwarzenegger or even a film like robot cop, what are they doing that America is taking over the world that is the very strong message that comes across. And after that we gradually so 80's over then we gradually move towards the 90's, so that is the cinema we are interested in the post modern cinema. And then we will also talk about various kinds of cinema not just Hollywood, so please feel free to give your interpretation or opinion as I go on.

So, just revising something that we must have already done, postmodernism root term is of course, modernism where postmodernism, postmodernism literally something which

comes after modernism. I think, when we are doing cinema in modernism; we did talk about all these aspects; so, I would again suggest that you go back to cinema in modernism, and then I will also give you list of readings on modernism, because we cannot be talking in detail today about modernism. By the mid latter mid 60's and late 60's it was felt that modernism has moment was tame and conventional. What Shang then, became very traditional by the late 60's; even in cinema in art, in literature, so in all aspects of art and artistic manifestation.

So, modernism no longer had response to all the questions; to read more about modernism, I will just give you a list of books, and this lead to the growth of postmodernism. Now, this is one book I strongly recommend volcom blackberries and James McPhelan modernism is a 1976 book, I think Ranjith it could be of use to you, it has all aspects of culture. Ramon William, if you are interested in culture study, and then you this book called five faces of modernity, modernism, avagad, deckedance, sktich and postmodernism; this is by Meti Calidisco. The Cambridge companion to modernism by Michael Levinson and Dennis Walder literature in the modernism is an out and out literary book.

But five faces of modernity are important in order to understand, even popular culture and other aspects of art apart from literature. Linda Hutcheon in politics of postmodernism, this is how she defines, postmodernism manifest itself in many fields of cultural and diverse and then she gives us architecture, literature, photography, film painting, video, dance, music and elsewhere.

So, forces of postmodernism can be felt on various walks of life, she goes on in general term it take the form of self conscious, self contradictory and self undermining statements. Please, note down these three terms, self conscious post modern post modern art is highly self conscious, self referential aware of itself, some of the movies that is going to discuss today are extremely self conscious, self contradictory.

So, postmodernism accepts that the world around us is contradictory and fragmented, those are the key features. In fact, if you want to look at postmodernism and spaces. Postmodernism is more centered on fragmented spaces, then fragmented time in a spatial fragmentation is more important, perhaps it could be of use to you David Harvis book is important you know, fragmented specialty.

So, if the literature of realism you know then realism, we are talking about Victorian kind of literature, modernism was a revolt against realism prevailing during the 19th century; so if the literature of realism is the mode of narrative, which is natural and presence of slice of life, the so called verisimilitude closeness to life. Postmodernism, the postmodernist literature is a case against realism; and two terms again those are Bakhtinian terms, that you should know dialogic and heteroglossic, are you aware of that Tara? Dialogic and heteroglossic as opposed to monologic, can anyone explain that to me Sandeep? Bakhtin gives as these term carnivalesque, dialogic, heteroglossic as opposed to monologic.

Mam you have two things, which have which enter into dialogue as suppose just one view. So, both the relationship the relationship that both have with respect to each other, and (()) each other; so if it is a and b, a has affect on b and b also have affect on a.

So, mono - single, it is a single perspective, single tongue, single word as opposed to dialogic, so it is not, it is literally having dialogue, it there has to be two or more than one person to have a dialogue; how to do, many tongue, many words, multiple perspective in other words. So, there is a necessity for having dialogic heteroglossic perspective as opposed to monologic discourse; and carnival, what is the carnival according to you? So many things come together, so you know it is like a (()) of many thing. So, again this is the term bakhtin gives as, you can look this term up.

So, why is postmodernism literature a carnivalist literature, because it brings together many tongues, many perspectives, many cultures; and by culture, we mean hybro and as well as so called lowbro (No audio from 08:51 to 09:05). Now, historically the setting point for postmodernism is 1968 at least in literature, although it must have made its presence well even earlier, but then more forcefully we realize, we have looked, we recognized the exact period as 1968, when Stephen Spender called it the year of the young rebels.

So, postmodernism is often considered the nemesis of modernism, signifying a break from the earlier moment and deliberate fracturing. Now, you look at cinema of the mid 60's, late 60's, 68 you know all these things you know, major films made in that period do not you, you also know made cinema during the so called modernist period, can you take a moment and think about those film which are made during the so called modernist

period? And then look at the cinema of 60's, late 60's whatever they making in 68, the year of the young rebels, easy rider the break through movie Bonnie Clyde.

And then subsequently all those films that we have been talking about. Remember the list, can you just help me recall Sandeep?

The list

The list

Easy rider Bonnie Clyde China town, (()) town

So, 68 to 78 we had that kind of moment, the graduate dark day afternoon, think of all those Roman Polanski films, rosemary's baby the exists French connection, we are looking at William Friedkin, we were looking at Cupola's conversation; all these movies they together constitute the period of young rebels. So, there is a thematic connection between the postmodernist literature, as an artistic moment and also how you can connect it thematically, artistically, technically to cinema as well.

Think about all these things, there is pattern that emerges, Fredric Jameson another very influential cultural critic, theoretician in his book the the postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism, which was written in 1991, defines postmodernism as an erosion of the distinction between high and low culture; this is important, all of you should know that. Erosion between high and low culture and I am going to give you several examples, from movies that we are going to do today, erosion of boundaries between high and low in cooperation of material from other text.

I will give you some time to think about that, and you will come and I am sure you will have your own interpretation of this postmodernism from according to Fredric Jameson signifies breaking down boundaries between different John's of text or writing. Text could be cinematic text also, postmodernist artist cannot invent new perspective, and new modes of expression instead, they operate as bricoleur, this is a nice word what does it mean, putting together several things.

So, there is something you know if modernism is a building and then postmodernism comes and takes that building apart, and whatever is left of the (()) of the rebels of the building, they are used to create something else all together; that is bric, bricolage. And

the person who does it is bricoleur, is a French term. Look it up; it is very interesting to understand. So, postmodern postmodern artist in other words is bricoleur, who puts together fragments of different narratives.

Can you, if you look at all these examples and coating from different text, would you call Tarantino or bricoleur? Cinema of tarantino, a kind of bricolage; how many of you remember the opening scene of reserva dogs? Tell me, what is it about? What are they talking about, high culture, low culture?

They talk about about American culture and how like you know tipping and their restaurant system works, and how people earn money through tips and

Tipping the waitress that is one thing; another and Sandeep do you remember something else, they talk about.

They talk about pop culture, about that song of Madonna

Which song is that?

Madonna like a virgin, and then they deconstruct the entire song, discussing totally deconstructing a Madonna song; for no reason is just a couple of guys sitting together talking and the camera pans around them. So, what is Tarantino doing there? Referencing a pop culture certain key cultural aspects of American society and bringing everything together, there is a one point, when there is Mexican standoff, remember that is Tarantino favorite device.

In every movie of his, he uses that Mexican standoff scene, a short is always there, especially, I think he follows perhaps the other way round, John Woo follows him, so in every John Woo movie there is a Mexican standoff scene; this is standard shot in Tarantino as well. So, Michael Maxis character, if I remember it correctly he calls Harvey Keitel, that is the Lee Marvin character. I do not know how many of you remember that, but I watch the movie quite recently and Michael Maxis calls Harvey Keitel, this is a Lee Marvin again among us guys. And you remember, what is Lee Marvin known for? Lee Marvin is known for playing those tough mucher kind, hyper masculine kind of that, so there is the so reference is to popular culture. We will look at

other movie, some other films also, where there is mix of both high as well as pop culture.

Fredric Jameson says that postmodernist recycled previous works and styles, recycling of previous works and styles, there will be blood; it is a recycling of what, what John?

(Audio not clear)

Typical western, but is this western hero the John John Wayne kind of hero no, there is a reinterpretation of the western with no. So, there is the recycling Johns, recycling previous styles, no country for old men again reworking of a western John, have you watched the movie, no country for old men, please do watch it as you are essential viewing.

(Audio not clear. Refer Time: 17:26)

More like a pastiche, it works more like pastiche, but no country for old men and there will be blood, a more serious political look at the John of western after a what is western all about, western is of the, western you know the typical, strong individualistic American hero. And how it triumphs over the so called other in all his films, you watch a movie like Shane, George Steven Shane such as, John Ford's such as.

Now, what happens? The hero is always victorious alone ranger, but emerges victorious in the end, rides away into the sunset, he is essentially alone ranger, but how do these two men end up? Daniel plain view in in there will be blood, yes.

Antiheroes

Antiheroes, they are not the triumphant individualistic heroes they are, they known as yes, they are highly ambitious individualistic yes, but are the film makers glorifying them no, so that is what we mean by reworking of the previous style, previous honour.

Now, we are also told that there is category of pastiche, which is a parade according to Fredric Jameson that has lost its sense of humor, so is is not a spoof, now you look at out and out spoof; Johnny English is a spoof of James Bond John that spy, the detective thriller kind of films. So, Johnny English functions very well as a spoof naked gun series, this functions superbly as spoofs of the detective John, so those are spoofs parade

something else. Parade is not out and out spoof, parade is a or other pastiche is a kind of parade, which is not intended to create humor or cause humor spoof yes, does the main purpose of spoof. This is another key theoretician who you should know about Ihab Hassan and his seminal book the dismemberment of Orpheus of 1971, it has been reprinted several times. The most definitive work on postmodernism, the title is itself evokes the myth of Orpheus, the man who went to the Hades in search of his dead wife Eurydice.

And he is once he is able to rescue his horse not to look back you know the legend but, he cannot resist the temptation he looks back and then his head is you know severed off but, the head continues singing while his lair is in thousand pieces by his side. So, there is a, so why do we why why should Ihab Hassan used the title like dismemberment of Orpheus or a book on postmodernism, breaking down fragmentation, breaking down of the central stable figure, but fragments are still important never the less.

Modernism was essentially rational, postmodernism unlike the heroic modernist and why do we call the, call him the heroic modernist the artist in from modernism has the heroic modernist, because he created works out of pure imagination. However, the postmodernist artist works with cultural events, trying to manipulate them in various ways and what are those various ways using parade, pastiche, collage, juxtaposition for various ends.

Ihab Hassan gives us a definitive list, where he distinguishes between modernism on ones hand and postmodernism on the other; so it is a long list, perhaps you would like to look at it, I can give you a very few point from there for example, he calls modernism, characterized by romanticism and symbolism whereas, postmodernism is more dadaist more anarchy.

This form in modernism whereas, postmodernism is antiform that is designed in modernism whereas, postmodernism happens by chance, that is the idea given; logos words is important in modernism postmodernism characterized by silence, you read Samuel Beckett works, and you will find how silent his plays are. I am not just talking about waiting for godot; there are other plays also. Harold Pinter is a master of silence, he has even written a play called silence, because they nothing left to say anymore. Postmodernism believes in anarchy whereas, in modernism we had hierarchies,

modernism believed in having a finished work, complete work whereas, for postmodernism everything is a work in progress, think a movie like synecdoche in New York is very abstract, who directed it?

Kaufman brothers

Kaufman brothers I mean authors, the signature style is all over the movie you do not even have to look for the name of the authors there, you know that it has to be brothers Kaufman at work here, synecdoche in New York. So, its long list where Ihab Hassan talks about the major distinction between postmodernism and modernism, the key words as we have already seen and you must remember, modernism is focused on determinacy give, trying to give some stability some meaning whereas, postmodernism talk about indeterminacy.

That brings as to the category of the postmodern cinema and basically is characterized by delegitimation of authority, which leads to indeterminacy and again erosion of central idea of stability of a structured order, key features of postmodern cinema, fragmented editing style. See, Godot is started it, when he gave us the idea of jump cut; and jump cut was, so well suited to the fragmented times that by the time we came to easy rider and Bonnie Clyde.

And other movies of that period it had become derring of that period, so fragmented editing style, now it has become all faddish very fashionable, mtv style cutting, but there is no sub text, there is no political sub text, there is just like we were it is a fade, you know it gives an impression of phase, everything is moving very fast therefore, we need that kind of cutting. So, it is a fashionable trend, it has nothing to say about your society or about your cultural scene.

Non-linear narrative another important feature of postmodernist cinema, think modernism, think giga worth of cinema remember a man with a movie camera, he is on the streets taking but, you know he looks at some kind of a period morning to night. So, there is a sense of linearity, Charley Chaplin cinema, there is a plot there is a serious linear coherent plot whereas, all that is all that goes for a task in postmodernist cinema.

Hyperlink and hyperlink stories hyperlink can you give me some example of

Amores Perros

Let them here

Amores Perros

Amores perros are you familiar with this, who directed it?

(Audio not clear from 27:06 to 27:20)

Would you call Babel, a hyperlink cinema, so Babel is a hyper link cinema.

Magnolia

Magnolia good, Magnolia.

Crash.

Crash, which crash are you talking about, the Canadian crash?

No, (())

So, all these are examples of hyperlink cinema, a parallel stories seemingly unrelated, but everything has a point, but may not necessarily be connected to one another. Fluidity of identity we are looking very skeptically at the concepts of Johns, what are Johns? I mean, I am going to do pulse fiction with you soon. And then I will ask you a question does this movie have a John we have something like bending and John blending does this pulse fiction has a John, that is your homework, do it for tomorrow.

Then intertextuality we have already talked about elusion and quotation, postmodernist cinema encourages multiple reading of course, literally celebrates anarchy perfection it celebrate anarchy, I mean we route for the antihero, we root for those people who are completely out of the box. And they resist exclusion no country for old man, what happens to Sheogorath he walks away, but not into the sunset is that kind of a western hero, just limbs away and does not gloriously ride away, limbs away with a broken body, perhaps he may continue murdering people senselessly, meaninglessly or he may meet his own end, who knows? There is no sense of closure there.

And I mean more relevant example, would be the way serious men ends quien brothers, are you familiar with an serious men? Please watch it, it ends with the wimp, tremendous movie, hilarious it have wonderful lines magnificently acted, but when it ends, you feel ah, I mean we would not expecting this resist closure completely.

So, watch it serious a man like the quien brothers, I mean quien brothers Tarantino, Wall Thomas Anderson, you can look at these name as key people, where the sphere added the movement of postmodernism, atleast contemporary postmodernism, the way we understand it today. This is another concept that you should be familiar with Chinese box structure in postmodernist text, the focus is on squid and distorted narratives, subject to abrupt shifts and transformations and ambiguous about its boundaries think of the big lebost, if you have not already watched the movie and it fits all these characteristics.

So, Chinese boxed structure in text suspense normal categories of time and space social and rational categories, which are built up in everyday architecture and behavior to become irrational and quite literally impossible to figure out (No audio from 31:30 to 31:38). You were just talking about pulp fiction; this pulp fiction satisfies satisfy all these categories complete erosion of boundaries, defying jonner, defies rational temporal spatial categories.

Now, there is novel by Umberto Eco, I have referred to it in one of my earlier classes, the name of the Rose, which brings together the element of the popular detective John, the devil history, life in a monastery, philosophy and theory of semiotics. So, now what is pastiche now? If you look at pastiche, so pastiche is nothing but bringing together of the high as well as the so called low art; so if detective John is the so called popular art. Theory of semiotic, theology and philosophy, these are high culture decidedly. Umberto Eco who is known semiotician anyway, he writes the novel the name of the rose and shows us, how a work of art function as a pastiche. And it is a supreme example of pastiche, nothing is better than that, so bringing together of dispirit elements.

So, mixing of levels of culture creates a kind of hybridist, so this is another key term that all of you should remember, postmodernist text is hybrid is fragmented, as a Chinese boxed structure is heteroglossic. So, creates a high kind of hybridity that challenges, the traditional notions, and then you think we were just referring to scenic dog in New York.

And also film like inception, how does it close, how does it ends, Ranjith can you tell me, how does the movie end?

The movie ends with him spinning the top ya and they show the top spinning and movie ends in that.

And people had done, so much of research on spinning of top, what does it suggest does he live on or is he dead, how many of you think that the Caprio character is alive at the end?

And half of you think that may be you did not watch the movie at all, is very ambiguous.

(Audio not clear from 34:30 to 34:36)

So, there is some kind of ambiguity, so what we are saying is it requires multiple viewing of the movie, so that is what a postmodernist text is all about. Now, we will talk about Chinese boxed structure, narrative fragmentation as well as pastiche with reference to a list of films, Monagoss the German movie run Lola run, zelig by Woody Allen, Memento fight club, Requiem for a dream these are the movie that we will be discussing with reference to fragmentation and pastiche.

So, Moulin rouge is the movie made by Australian director Baz Luhrmann, what is he making currently? The great gatsby based on Fitzgerald novel, so Moulin rouge is one movie where song and dance sequence all those stage sequences are done in a very fragmented mtv style, editing pattern. So, movie is basically very self conscious and its truly, and globally postmodern skeptical, now why do we call it global phenomenon, you look at the director himself he is an Australian, the hero Ewan McGregor he is Irish, Scottish raced in England, a major British actor who also occasionally flirts with Hollywood cinema.

New, the Nicole Kidman born in Hawaii, but raced in Australia; now she is a major Hollywood actor; so a film, which has an international a sum large of people of artist to say. Now, musical styles which are extremely identified at identifiable in Moulin rouge; one is European Ward will, you know pieces one acts Ward will, cabaret culture of course, stage shows, comic operas, pop songs she even does like a virgin at one point, if

you remember and some of the Italian style mellow dramas, the operas also they also refer to the Bombay cinema also, when she performs to chama chama.

So, now, nostalgia this is a favorite term of postmodern critics nostalgia is a prevalent mode in postmodernisms, and you can look at the list of movies David Lynch is blue velvet, what is it all about yes (O)?

Sabbia

Sabbia ya and what happens? Who?

(Audio not clear. Refer Time: 38:16)

So, the idea let me tell you that, David Lynch in blue velvet interrogates the so called myth of the calm pleasant American subout, the small town decency, generally we are told you know popularly, the popular perception it that the rotten is and the corruption these are the attribute of city life, country side everything is antibody.

People are good, people are essentially honest, people are essentially they prefer to live in harmony with each other, but the people David Lynch in blue velvet tells at that behind or beneath the venire, we mean the fazath of decency and harmony there is a rot, that exists. And this nothing, this is not something David Lynch actually gave us Hitchcock is already done this in one of his earlier films, where he showed us the corruption of rural life, the country side which appears very different on the outside.

But, what lies beneath is a different story altogether which movie yes

Psycho.

Not psycho exactly, psycho fall somewhere you know on the road side motel and some but

(Audio not clear. Refer Time: 39:57)

No, no, rear window is out and out city movie, I am talking about a film called Shadow of a doubt, please do watch it shadow of a doubt Joseph Cotton, so in treks and manipulation of a small town in country side life. Now, Cry baby, what is cry baby? It is a 90 movie 1990, so back to Elvis Presley times, please do take it down and watch it, is

way to all the kind of film for your generation; stars are very young Johnny Depp doing an Elvis Presley honor.

And he is the tritler cry baby, he cries and then drop of a hat, what he is giving as is a mish mess of all those Elvis Presley movies, then James dean whether without a cause as well as John Travolta, his Dennis Seare persona from Greece is a highly elusive extremely referential movie to these great films of the 80's and 60's even. Then you have a hairspray, you are aware of that pleasant way, Edward Scissorhands again is a very nostalgic film, what is the idea about, see there are two kinds of film that exists, two kind of period that existing in Edward Scissorhands. One is the castle which very gothic, Vincent Price is the crazy scientist who creates this beautiful robo, but the robo cannot be completed, because of the scientist's premature death.

Now, at the same time you have the interrogation of the American sabbia, so look at the movie carefully; and if you look at the way Tim Burton creates the setting for the American sabbia, houses are all in tendy flaws pestle shades. So you have those the mint green, the pink, the very pleasant yellows all over the place; the idea is that country side the suburbs are clam pleasant places, but are they Edward Scissorhands, who epitomizes everything that is beautiful and innocently literally driven away, by the manipulation of the so called innocent sabbin forks.

The two men show and then you have pastiches of Hitchcock films, even other day we were talking about how people like Brian De Palma, now you understand pastiches is not necessarily a spoof. Then Brian De Palma refers to, make a reference to Hitchcock's rare window in body double or even in (()) not spoofing them, these are leading to them. When Brian De Palma again refers to (()) order size step scenario in the Untouchables and also to an extent in Carlito's Way. Remember, we were talking about Carlito's Way it is not a spoof, it is a pastiche. Fragmented psyche, it is a skids of rania and dilution; it is a skids of rania is an integral part of postmodernist literature, think all David Lynch's films do you agree with me, that Mulholland drive is essentially about characters with fragmented cycles, exception.

Dead ringers by David Cornenberg, Als, he is a Canadian filmmaker also watches crash therefore, I got confused when you said crash, there are two crashes David Cornenberg crash, came in 86 86. The Hollywood crash was may be the 2000, yes Eternal sunshine

of the spotless mind, being John Malkovich a serious man we have already talked about, Shutter island, Inception the list goes on, postmodern cinema also resist closure. Then you have several examples, Pulp fiction, the Blade runner, we really do not know Harrison ford character is a robo or not.

What is the term that they use? Replicant, is he a replicant or not? You are not very sure Natural born killers, Run Lola Run how does it end, they are told it is a happy ending, but is it, because it gives us different endings different end, and gives us so many endings is up to us to choose. So, when it ends happily, on happy note, we are still left skeptical about it, is it really happening? It was just an M Tv video we watched; all Iranian cinema you know there are fans of Iranian cinema in this class, most of these films, they do not have a satisfactory conventional closure.

Cinema Wong Kar Wai, except the mood for love, most of this movie do not have a closure. Think Fallen angels and Fallen angels is also good example of hyperlink cinema, have you watched Fallen angels? Chungking express yes, watch Chungking express and watch Fallen angels, is a pity act a cause is coming to an end, I would not be able to do Chinese cinema for you. But it was very much in pipeline, but do not worry we are going to have web course also; apart from the video module, we are going to have web course also I will try to include Chinese cinema, I will definitely include Chinese cinema, Iranian cinema in that module.

So, postmodernist cinema another key feature is self conscious and self referential; it alludes to itself, Woody Allen Zelig played Sam, the purple rose of kairo all films by Woody Allen, stardust memories, Fellini's eight and a half, Wet the dog, how many of you have watched Wet the dog. Please do watch Wet the dog, Natural born killer, but in fig are you familiar with the Tim Burton's Ed wood, what is about why do we call it is self conscious cinema?

It is about the movie director 15th and 16th Ed wood and it is basically his efforts to make the movie, it has been called the worst movie, the cost...

Is he consciously trying to make a worst movie ever mean, no

(O)

He believes in his genius, and that is that memorable sequence when he bumps into the great

Awesome Wells

Awesome Wells; that one point Awesome Wells says that you know keep on doing what you are doing, you are good at and he takes it as a big sign of hope and encouragement, the cinema commenting on itself; that is self referential cinema. Film makers extremely conscious of the art of making films, Truffaut's Day for night, Day for night is another excellent example, you must watch it, Truffaut's Day for night. And Nicole Kidman starting to die for, she is literally dies for 15 minutes of him, so we will continue with a postmodern cinema tomorrow, thank you very much.