

POSTMODERNISM



World War II-?



Modern trends continued:

- experimentation in form and subject
extremes appear
- alienation \ solipsism:
individually and societally
- attack on materialism
coupled with the spread of socialism
- attention to realism
explicit\graphic



Contextual Factors

1950's...

World War II and the atomic bomb
-subsequent nihilism \ pessimism

Growth after World War II:

-economic and physical: "Baby Boom"

Conformity in U.S. :McCarthyism

Cold War- "The Iron Curtain"

Distrust of Authority

1960's...

Cuban Missile Crisis

Civil Rights issues\protests; MLK

Vietnam Conflict\protests

Nixon and Watergate

On the Homefront: A Rejection of Tradition

Women's Lib - "bra-burning"; "the Pill"
-the sexual revolution

Racial Tension: Riots-Watts

Drug Usage: the Beat movement-50's
-"the psychedelic 60's"-Leary

Postmodern Elements

Modern desire to create order from chaos led to a rejection of all forms

in the Postmodern world...

- a denial of order and significance
- a highly fragmented universe
- phenomenology: a philosophical system that focuses on the meaning that results from the interplay between any object and the human consciousness

Rejects any teleological framework for humanity

Rejects the “sovereign autonomous individual” with an emphasis on the collective

Focuses on the relative truths of the individual, as certainty is impossible and reality is relative

Postmodern works are...

introspective: finding chief value in an exploration of self rather than society

They portray uncertainty, revolt, and cynicism

playful; making fun of everything

characterized by complete freedom of language, ideas, form, topic, and time

EXISTENTIALISM

-only mere existence is possible; essence and quality, impossible



-human reason is incapable of explaining the enigma of the universe; this creates a sense of meaninglessness, which, in turn, produces discomfort, anxiety, and loneliness, and even a sense of absurdity at the incongruity of striving to exist in a world so inexplicable

-human are free but wholly responsible for what they become

-meaning is a product of an individual's bestowal of meaning

DECONSTRUCTION

-Seeks to break down a text into systems and parts (semiotics)

-everything is a construct in relation to something else

-denies authorial intention; no true meaning

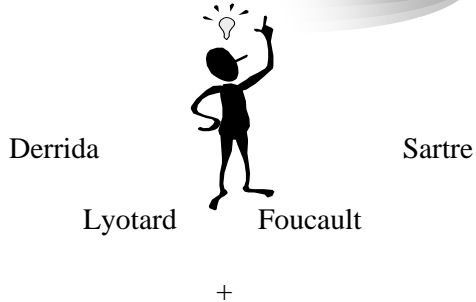


On Authorial Intent

- A work is definitely not the form of expression of a particular individuality. The work always implies, as it were, the death of the author. One only writes in order to disappear at the same time. The work, in a way, exists on its own as the bare and anonymous flow of language... The work is composed of certain relations within language itself. It is a particular structure in the world of language, discourse and literature.

-Foucault

Postmodern Thinkers...



reveal the binaries that support dominance of one position over another, especially in language and authority

Ex: Male Female the Other
Youth the Elderly the Middle-Aged
White Black ?

On Binaries

- 'Power relations are extremely widespread in human relationships. Now this does not mean that political power is everywhere, but that there is in human relationships a whole range of power relations that may come into play among individuals, within families, in pedagogical relationships, political life etc... Liberation is sometimes the political or historical condition for a practice of freedom. Taking sexuality as an example, it is clear that a number of liberations were required vis-à-vis male power...But this liberation does not give rise to the happy and full essence of a sexuality in which the subject has achieved a complete and satisfying relationship. Liberation paves the way for new power relationships, which must be controlled by practices of freedom. -Foucault

Attempt to reveal the ideological forces which control human perception



Seek to demonstrate how language frames our vision of the world



Questions cultural codes

NEW FORMS

the Anti-Novel:

- emphasizes fragmentation and dislocation
- describes life without social or moral superstructures

the Antihero:

- the protagonist who is graceless, inept, stupid, dishonest, physically unattractive

Magical Realism: conventional frame with elements of the supernatural, dream, myth, or fantasy

-Pynchon, Borges, Eco



the Nonfiction Novel: fictionally embellished historical event \nonlinear time sequence, inner state of mind

-Capote, Mailer

The Self-Reflexive or Self-Conscious Novel one in which the author openly ponders the direction and content of the narrative with the audience

[metafiction: a testing of fiction itself]

-Barth, Knowles

Other experimental forms:

-all dialogue

-an increase of satire and black humor

-the "theater of the absurd"

The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner

-Randall Jarrell

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

Where do we go from here?