

postmodernity

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 17 Dec 1999

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Jonathan Laidlow — 17 Dec 1999, 11:28

Jeremy wrote:

"While I'm looking at Jim, I have to disagree with this wretched label "postmodernity" again and always, I think certainly Foucault would have a problem with that label, as do I. According to Perry Anderson (the Thunderbirds guy, no not really) the first idea of a postmodernism arose in the 1930s in Hispanic America (Federico de Onís; Borges was an "ultramodernismo"), and has had many incarnations since then, none of which have ever circulated around F. I can handle poststructuralism since that's at least historically accurate. (Bit tetchy about this as just came from weekend meeting in downtown DC where all sorts of critical theory was starred and dismissed as bugaboo pomo.)" I dunno - sounds a bit reactionary just to dismiss the whole shebang. I think it's worth remembering the root of the phrase: post-modernity, and recognising its roots as a reaction against modernism. And then to recall that there is a difference between Modernism (capital 'M') and modernism. The former describes a specific type of artistic production mostly in the first half of the century which presented itself as a reaction against prior forms of representation. The latter is similar except we are allowed to have multiple modernisms - all of them reactions against the old and finding a way of representing something 'new' in our culture. I know there was one around the beginning of the eighteenth century (probably more).

I think Foucault feeds into post-modernist thought, but that post-modernist thought too often descends into plurality and indecision. P/m does, after all, tend to describe certain aspects of late 20th century life rather well. I like Jameson on changes in art based on changes in late capitalism, Baudrillard is wordy but interesting on simulations and changes in the nature of what we define as 'real' and how we represent it. Note that I'm not trying to follow the argument that reality itself has changed in some ineffable way, but that our methods of representing it have. The most important theme for me is the way that p/m allows plurality, and for repressed discourses to have their own space and identity. Many would doubtless disagree with me.

Fave excellent post-modern novel: Don DeLillo, White Noise. Read it.

Not likely to suggest that Wolfe is post-modern. But William Gibson is.

Jonathan

Visit Ultan's Library - A Gene Wolfe web resource

<http://members.tripod.co.uk/laidlow/index.htm>

Jonathan Laidlow

University of Birmingham, UK