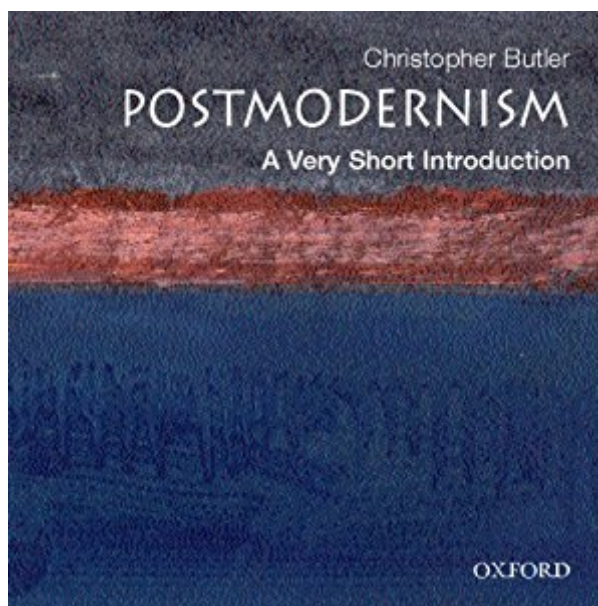


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Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

Postmodernism has been a buzzword in contemporary society for the last decade. But how can it be defined? In this Very Short Introduction Christopher Butler challenges and explores the key ideas of postmodernists, and their engagement with theory, literature, the visual arts, film, architecture, and music. He treats artists, intellectuals, critics, and social scientists 'as if they were all members of a loosely constituted and quarrelsome political party' - a party which includes such members as Cindy Sherman, Salman Rushdie, Jacques Derrida, Walter Abish, and Richard Rorty - creating a vastly entertaining framework in which to unravel the mysteries of the 'postmodern condition', from the politicizing of museum culture to the cult of the politically correct. About the series: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These audiobooks are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly listenable.

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Customer Reviews

When the title says A Very Short Introduction they are not kidding. Nonetheless, Christopher Butler has done an outstanding job of boiling down the essence of Postmodernism. In fact, he has done so well I would direct anyone to this book who wanted a good foundation in the subject before reading further. Even if you know the subject of Postmodernism this is a good read because it is so well written. While supporters of the ideology may quibble over the critique I don't think they could

complain (reasonably) about the presentation. It is clear, concise, and very insightful. The author has managed to zero in on the essence of the subject and then explain that core belief system accurately and clearly. If you want an introduction to Postmodern thought this is the book to read. Extremely straightforward, no guff or misdirection, no unnecessary discussion of anything out of the mainstream. I've now read several titles in the Very Short Introduction series and every one of them has been good to outstanding. AD2

Very helpful. After studying postmodernism years ago, this summary clearly organized the knowledge I had gathered and clarified some confusion. There are still some points evading understanding not because of the author's presentation, but because postmodern thought is not always coherent. Postmodern architects could not translate literary theory directly into steel, plaster, and glass. I will refer to the book in future.

Wonderful "handbook" on this period. Astounding that the author could condense so much information. Cecilia

i found this very well written, clear, and thankfully a bit more challenging than some other titles in this series. great introduction to an interesting topic.

This is an excellent well balanced introduction to material most people consider tough. Visual artists may be disappointed because the emphasis is on literary criticism, but that would be nit-picking. The underlying concepts are identical and understanding the basic concepts will make it obvious how to apply them appropriately. Back to this book, it presents the material clearly and without the preciousness or pretense, and with opposing view points and weaknesses too. If you want a solid working introduction to the material and a great reference guide once you master it, this is a can't beat purchase for the money. It's also really well made and bound. As for students, if you only have time for one introduction and need one book that might get you through a tough lit. or art history course, this will do the job perfectly.

This is a superb account of one tenth of the postmodern pie - the linguistic slice, originating with Saussure and flowering after WWII in the work of Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Debord, Baudrillard and Yank-Yale Lit Crit proponents of the textual-semiotic thread. This is a myopic understanding of postmodernism and leads to anomalies such as Robert Venturi (the

godfather of postmodern architecture according to Charles Jencks) declaring "I am not a postmodernist". All of Butler's remarks regarding discontinuities in postmodern music can be traced to a myopic and very common misreading of noontime post WWII - mid-1960s post-colonial philosophizing as the dawn patrol. Professor Butler fails to see the much larger forest of postmodernism origins ca 1912 (Titanic sinking symbolizing the de-throning of The Enlightenment Project). Postmodernism's origin was a colossal culture-wide phase change beginning with the paradigm shifting work of Wilbur Wright (pitch, roll and yaw) Frank Lloyd Wright (dynamic symmetry) Schoenberg (atonalcomposition) Cezanne/Braquasso and the deconstruction of the 450 year narrative paradigm in painting, Isadora Duncan dismantling baroque conventions in dance, Einstein rethinking Newtonian physics, Tesla-Mieles-radio-motion pictures accelerating all media, and Ferdinand Saussure's reconceiving linguistics from its linear historical (diachronic) approach to the lateral, structural relationship heuristic of sign and signified (synchronic). The prevailing Kool Aid (1955-1985) would have one believe that the Saussure-inspired tribe of post WWII invented all of postmodernism from whole cloth and that when their weltanschauung evaporated at 9-11 that all of postmodernism had breathed its final breath. Postmodernism is alive and well as The Enlightenment's new dance partner as they have finally merged with the development of the digital-cyber-social media rhizome mat characterized by self absorption and the 8 minute attention span. Secret: Postmodernism is a manifestation of neocortical hardwiring, with us since we learned to use our outsize neocortex 50 thousand years ago. PoMo precepts will be with us as long as there are left-brain and right brain humans. All of the extant human world and all of human history is subject to the spotlight as it swerves from here to there from Mo to PoMo to UltraMo and back in fresh epistemic expression defined by new technologies. This spotlight shines upon Enlightenment weltanschauung for a couple hundred years then it shines on our PoMo and now UltraMo tendencies but it's all here all the time. Professor Butler successfully wrestles his 1960s alligators but is ignorant of the scale of the swamp he has chosen to drain. Parodic pastiche-collage are secondary signifiers. The great PoMo originators were synthesizers and true inventors not parodists and pasticheurs: self-conscious, self-advertising meta-commentators. Parody is a quality of second generation or third generation PoMo. Once Postmodernism was established by Braquasso et al, parody, pastiche and snark along with gender politics and women's lib were simply piling on the rapidly accelerating bandwagon. The 20th Century iteration of Postmodernism was launched in 1912 not in 1955 or 1965 and 100% of Butler's manifesters of the movement, whether in literature, philosophy, music or painting can easily be traced to one of the 1912 circle of genuine paradigm-shifting genius. As long as ailerons and rudders control aircraft we will be swimming in

Wilbur water. For the whole story watch my 6-hour lecture "The History of Postmodernism on vimeo @ my blog: theblissengine.com

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great!

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