

Film and Postmodern Culture

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Declaration

This research work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any degree, qualification or course.

Film and Postmodern Culture

Abstract

The relationship between postmodernism and film within the scope of visual culture is threefold: the form and style of a film can be postmodern, the subject matter of a film can be postmodern, and the way of film is interpreted can be postmodern. Films are usually very diverse while delivering any message and a proper film has always something to say. I believe there isn't any postmodern message in a film rather the way of making, the screenplay or the story telling could be a form of postmodernism and that is what I exactly believe as postmodern film. Because my understanding of postmodernism is relatively entangled with postmodern visual culture as I believe postmodernism is a literary and historical movement though by no means an overreaching and unified metanarrative in and of itself.

Postmodern films can detail the functionality of narrative structures by self-reflective commenting on the cinematic form itself and by combining or declining common film genres. They can reject any conventional character types, the screenplay or the story and the structure of telling inter-connected stories that could be fractured in time and space. The content of the films are usually postmodern: films particularly documentaries, in the postmodern period have begun to explore the illusiveness and ultimate relativity of an authoritative truthful account of an issue or event. I will eventually try to explain my thesis in accord with postmodern visual culture, various forms of it and connecting the theory with few famous postmodern films and visual productions that are widely diverse and relatively made in the postmodern era.

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1.0 | Introduction

Postmodernism can be sensed in three different ways or relatively I can say, there are three different senses. Postmodernism can be sensed as a 'cultural dominant' defining a distinct historical era, a philosophical concept marking the end of the ideals of the enlightenment and an art historical concept defining a style of expression. Postmodern films are actually historical transformation of visual narrative forms in terms of challenging logic of binary oppositions and emphasizing on the activity of the spectator that acknowledges cultural and social specificity of the subject. These kind of films usually attracted to the interest in hybrid cinema and identity politics. Even, it can be reformed or explained as popular art or popular culture in many substances. It can breakdown the distinctiveness of the various forms of the media such as film, television, video and even the digital arts.

Postmodernism is the label given to cultural forms since the 1960's that display self-reflexivity, irony, boundaries, nation, gender, race and sexuality. It is a cultural movement that came soon after modernism and is a term applied to a wide-ranging set of developments in critical theory, architecture, art, literature and culture which are characterized as either emerging from or superseding modernism. This style is also characterized by collage, pastiche and irony and often influenced by intertextual references. The postmodern texts deliberately play with meaning and are designed to be read by a literate audience who can

relate to these traits of intertextuality. They are generally considered to be anything which makes little attempt to hide the fact that it is not real as it wants you to know that it has been created and for you to recognize the elements from elsewhere. There are no new or original ideas and everything is usually connected in some way. In order to get inside the variant and diversity and also most importantly the idea, characteristics, ways and style of postmodern films, we need to get inside the core idea of postmodernism and visual culture. Because in a postmodern film, the core object is the content of the film rather than the settings or the making of the film. The common elements that can be identified in a postmodern text include intertextuality, parody, pastiche, homage, bricolage, simulacra, hyper-reality and fragmentation. These are not only in films but can also be seen or heard in TV programs, adverts, graphic designs, visual arts, music and music videos.

For my thesis paper, I am using meta-analysis methodology by finding out different variables and objects on postmodern visual culture and films and elaborating the entitled topic for better understanding.

2.0 | Postmodernism and Visual Culture

The postmodern movement can be depicted as a revolutionary time before modernist traditions were questioned and changed dramatically. Modernists saw it changed in many major global ways. The massive change in human lifestyle began what relatively became the diverse cultural and social condition that was post modernity. These widespread changes of human lives, culture and overall society had an impact on the trend of visual culture as expression and diversity was once again reflected in the arts. Visual culture began to decline modernist trends and started to include the idea of individual thoughts and uniqueness of expressions. Trends started in various forms like new way of typography, new way of graphics, distinctive mannerism, retro design etc. were the main advances of visual culture during the post-modern time. The diversity of the style was widely discovered and continued to grow, develop and challenge the norm therefore inherited the term 'anything goes'. The phrase 'anything goes' may have given birth the 'Me Generation' as the spirit of the 1960's was one of the personal entanglement and the self-absorbed directions of social activism. Postmodern design directly affected this individual involvement by using intuition and chose to place more importance on the right 'feel' rather than communication.

When discussing postmodernism one must look at its predecessor - modernism. Modernist visual culture was based on the fascination, excessive decoration and therefore all visual culture was stripped to the bare essential focused on the

elements of shape and color. Indeed, this trend created a different way of visual graphics, minimalistic architecture and home decorative items etc. In my understanding, postmodernism gave the life back to visual culture, art and design and inspired to whole generation to enjoy various forms of visual arts in many different ways like films, paintings, television productions, architecture, graphics and more on.

The first ever recorded breakthrough in modern design was super mannerism and super graphics. After the 1960's graphical art was applied to large structures known as architectural masterpieces, this became known super-graphics. Giant shaped letter forms, pictorials and brightly colored shapes that were made geometrically, were wrapped around the corners and installed across the ceiling and onto floors with the deep contrast and elevating space. These typographical structures were used as a deformational tool instead of literary one. The works of Robert Venturi and Barbara Stauffacher Solomon are two examples of the super-graphic application to graphic arts. Typography did only involve in scale but in order as well through the idea of new-wave typography. New-wave typography explains a freedom of thoughts and exploration with text.

I believe postmodernism in visual culture offers a wider and more dynamic understanding of contemporary representation than other accounts to date. Unlike the variation of many structuralist criticisms, postmodernism considers graphical representations like images as they relate to and across each other.

Typography did not only change in size or scale but it also changed the idea of many visual senses and arts. It suggests a freedom and exploration with text. By questioning the absolute order and cleanness of type Wolfgang Weingart believed the international style had become so refined that it had reached an 'anemic' phase. He soon rejected the right angle and worked intuitively with a willingness to explore the untried, therefore causing ideology and rules to collapse against his energetic approach. Weingart listed Bunny type, for the people type, sunshine type, ant type, five minute type and typewriter type as an identity of the typographic design he created. Another designer Dan Friedman explored the idea of legibility and readability. He wanted to create both functional and aesthetically unconventional typography design. His design qualifiers often explored intervals between letters, lines and words and would finish with randomness while holding the original structure of the typography. Friedman's graphical design works were an inspiration postmodern trends as he innovated areas like formal structure against spontaneous expressive forms, texture, surface and creative layering and contrast between shapes and thus he started a new postmodern trend and that new trend followed internationally as designers in Switzerland saw their ideas explored in America. April Greiman's works explored the revolution of space and overlapping forms, geometric lines and the usage of reverse perspective or reflections, visible cast shadows which cause objects to move back and forth from the surface of a printed page. Postmodern graphic designs were inspired by the freedom of expression and personal preferences. It really changed the very

powerful modern trend dominating the early twentieth century. Designers had the freedom to explore as many concepts as they wanted in any volume or scale and the movement was widespread during that era and great advances happened in the field of visual design and concepts. There were no restrictions or boundaries of what anyone can do rather it was like an open canvas to visualize anything.

3.0 | Postmodern Film

Postmodern film is like pushing back and forth inside its own story with a lots of abstract ideas and senses and also many inline linear characteristics all together.

Its unpredictable, noir, dark and even it could be so unpredictable and sometimes completely not understandable. A postmodern film might not even have a message in particular rather different audience can have their own message by themselves. Social hierarchies and statuses are represented truthfully to how they are today. Showing feminism and racial integration are some examples of this.

Postmodernism is irrational, chaotic, fragmented and unscientific. It doesn't have to have a meaning unless that meaning is explored through the individual of which the film is the subject. It doesn't attempt to theorize, instead its ideas are concrete, while at the same time, being arcane. It invites the ironies and contradictions of mass and pop culture. Postmodern films can either be unknown indie films or big blockbusters. There are six different themes related to the subject and cinema of postmodernism; pastiche, hyperreality, more human than human, altered states, time bending, and flattening of affect. Each in its own way is different.

Postmodern cinema has emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as a powerfully creative force in Hollywood filmmaking, reflecting and helping to shape the historic convergence of media culture, technology, and consumerism. It corresponds to the post-Fordist, globalized phase of capitalist development typified by increasing

class polarization, social atomization, urban chaos and violence, ecological crisis, and mass depoliticization. Departing from the modernist cultural tradition grounded in the enlightenment, norms of industrial society, and faith in historical progress, postmodern cinema is characterized by disjointed narratives, a dark view of the human condition, images of chaos and random violence, death of the hero, emphasis on technique over content, and dystopian views of the future.

While postmodern directors such as Woody Allen, Oliver Stone, Robert Altman, Quentin Tarantino, the Coen Brothers, Mike Figgis, and John Waters produce films that are often highly original and even subversive, their departure from conventional Hollywood formulas and motifs that define the studio system - their pronounced cultural radicalism - is rarely associated with any sort of political radicalism even where a harsh social critique might be visible. Postmodern cinema helps reproduce the very popular mood of anxiety, uncertainty, fear, and cynicism that it mirrors in the general society.

4.0 | Characteristics of Postmodern Film

There are several certain characteristics in postmodern films. Most of them are often scattered away or even connected to each other. A single postmodern film might not have all the characteristics of postmodernism again, on the other hand, a film which is not postmodern, may import some particular characteristics of postmodernism to deliver its idea.

Intertextuality, self-referentiality, parody, pastiche, and recourse to various past forms, genres, and styles are the most commonly identified characteristics of postmodern cinema. These features may be found in a film's form, story, technical vocabulary, casting or some combination of these. Postmodernism can even be found in the form of cinematography or directional style of the film or even some small or minimal senses like hair-styles, costumes, set-designs and many other things that could be just simple elements of a film.

Intertextuality

It is an important element of postmodernism with its acknowledgement of early literary works. It usually refers to meaning something by some other thing – in a very easy word. It could also mean translation in various segment of visual media. “The Mentalist” is a famous American TV series currently being broadcasted over US TV Networks. In one of its episode (EP 06) of season 2, where it is seen that the main character who is a consultant for CBI (California Bureau of

Investigation), trying to hunt down an old enemy “Red John”, who is the main villain of the drama series. “Red John” uses some symbols every time he kills someone and he draws the symbol on the wall with blood. By doing this, he is always referring the crime he did against the main character by killing his wife and daughter many years back and was directly attacking the main character psychologically. This is an example of intertextuality.

Metafiction

An attempt to make the reader aware of its functionality and sometimes, the presence of the author in writing, many postmodern authors feature metafiction, which is writing about writing. Authors sometimes use this technique to allow for flagrant shifts in narrative, impossible jumps in time, or to maintain emotional distance as a narrator.

Irony

For many postmodern authors, using irony in postmodern writing, became the hallmarks of their style. For example, in a horror film, the character walks into a house and the audience knows the killer is in the house. This builds tension and excitement among the audience and the way of making makes it deliberate.

Another postmodern film’s irony-example could be like – two people are engaged to be married but the audience knows that the man is planning to run away with

another woman. This kind of scenario is a very common practice in postmodern film

Pastiche

Combining or pasting elements of previous genres and style of literature for creating a new narrative voice or commenting on their contemporary writing, postmodern authors used it. Most of the literary works by Thomas Pynchon are detective fictions, science fictions and war fiction this characteristics often found in different shape even sometimes in the form of parody.

Temporal distortion

To explain this characteristics in the easiest possible way, I can use a line – ‘what you see is real, but you cannot see it in this way with the naked eye’ or I can even say ‘what I see is not always what I think it is’. This technique is frequently used in literature, but it has become even more common in films.

Technoculture and hyperreality

Frederic Jameson in his essay of the same name called postmodernism the ‘cultural logic of late capitalism’. According to his 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 that mirror

actual advertisements, or by placing their characters in situations in which they cannot escape technology.

Paranoia

Many postmodern authors write under the assumption that modern society cannot be explained or understood. In the French movie *Lucy* – the main character (female) suffers from a serious kind of paranoia but it doesn't seem so in the beginning or throughout the movie. It is being seen as some kind of erotic thoughts throughout her plays in the film but at the end when she ends up in an island lying down on the beach with another man, she tends to discover that she was indeed in a state of paranoia all of her life. This is a very deliberate characteristic of postmodern film and indeed, the movie *Lucy* is a very good example of postmodern film.

Magical realism

On the contrary, magical realism is the most important postmodern technique which 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.

Unpredictability

Being uncertain about the whole story or the end of the story – is another main characteristic of postmodern film. This is also a very famous technique in the current media world to keep the audience attached to the visual production. This is indeed a key player of many successful visual production. Films like *The Departed* (2006), *The Sixth Sense* (1999) or *Memento* (2000) are great example of this characteristic. This also proves that postmodernism is still alive in the films of current days in many ways and shapes. In general human psychology, anything unpredictable creates a tension and excitement and sometimes a dark-noir theme for a film. In the western film *A Fistful of Dollars*, actor Clint Eastwood ends up leaving the town after he killed the main villain of the story. It was not unpredictable to me while I was watching the whole film because the main character seems to build a world of his own in the film while he appeared as a stranger. But at the end, he leaves the town and started another journey to the unknown.

5.0 | *Blue Velvet*: A Postmodern Film

To me, postmodernism is one of the most challenging concept to grasp in philosophy, so one of my primary reason to bring *Blue Velvet* as an example of postmodern film is to develop clearer understanding of postmodernism characteristics in postmodern film. I felt that by engaging with quite a renowned film and by responding to Denzin's analysis of *Blue Velvet* I could show the postmodernism in films in a much wider and practical way.

Blue Velvet (1986) shows abstract features of postmodernism in its illusive story, the differences between good and evil, the gap between different social hierarchies and an open question to the world and self. Looking deep into the story of *Blue Velvet*, one can easily find some of the very common postmodern features like the dark theme, unrepresentable sexual violence, brutality, masochism and wild ways of expressing the story. To me, *Blue Velvet* is no doubt a very good and concrete example of postmodern film, having all the postmodern elements from beginning to end of the film. *Blue Velvet* exposes a very dark and violent side of life that the audiences are drawn to. The difference between the good and evil is one of the most important depiction of this postmodern film. From my understanding, postmodernism is the classification for the film, because of its construction, not reception. My aim is to show how Lynch constructs a postmodern commentary on society and arrives at a need for transcendental

meditation in which one attempts to reach a state of pure contemplation, rather than a withdrawal into fantasy.

The nostalgic mixture of time periods in *Blue Velvet*, is a deliberate construction by Lynch to express the illogical and absurd manner of existence. There is a faded boundary between the past and the present exists in *Blue Velvet*. The starting frames of *Blue Velvet* tells us about a world that takes shelter in the past. When the credit flashes in the screen in front of the heavy curtains made of *Blue Velvet* with the classical background music by Angelo Badalamenti, it deliberately establishes a new-noir theme. Throughout the film, the score of many sequences ends up with 50s and 60s rock and roll music that introduces us to a theme of time and decades and let us feel the atmosphere in a more nostalgic sense. The same theme continues when the school children appears in the sequence that are dressed in clothes that are characteristics of a spread of decades while a 40s fire engine appears with a fireman waving in slow motion throughout the neighborhood. This opening sequence shows us a safe community of the past. Children going to school, a fire engine waving etc. shows a simple image of a peaceful neighborhood which is merely a constructed image of Lynch reveals the misguided devotion to a signs of a past time when Americans felt safe in their community.

Immediately after the opening sequence, the scene changes to a darker side of the so-called pleasant life. A middle-aged man is watering his garden on a sunny day.

Right after that, with a very short sequence of a little accident of a water tap escaping water at a very rapid rate and later tightly tangled up, securely strangles a branch in the garden and resist the man's pull, illustrates that there is a violent side in every single thing. The way camera moves in the scene in a rapid pace with many sequence is a deliberate attempt to build tensions along with a feeling of panic. At the end, the man collapse, possibly from a heart-attack and fell on the ground while the hose continues to spurt. Later a dog appears to be playing with the hose while barking, the collapsed man is also just there and with all of it, the scene becomes blurry or out of focus slowly with slow motion. This slow motion footage of the dog barking highlights the animalistic and primitive nature. When the camera moves down to the grass, the background score ceases and an ambient atmosphere starts up. A loud, scratchy sound streaked with alien screeches accompanies an extreme close up of black bugs violently digging up the ground. This deliberately expresses the idea of the ugly side of the society hiding underneath the beauty part of the society. The white fence symbolizes the will to protect that elaborates the middle class dream. The middle class members of Lumberton acknowledge the existence of an underworld however communally situate this evil safely on the other side of their neighborhood; Jeffrey's Aunt is quick to make sure he is not going down by 'Lincoln'. Implicit in the characters' purposeful attempts to sustain the illusion of safety, is the allegiance to a societal divide and hierarchy. The separation between a faux safe, middle class

community and an evil underworld that exists across the road is strongly acknowledged in *Blue Velvet*.

The modernity depicted in the film, the so-called perfect town of Lumberton, can be viewed in the first shots of the film; a town with perfect firemen and their Dalmatian, smiling and waving as they take care of Lumberton's citizens. However, Lynch contrasts this modernist interpretation with his next succession of shots that portrays the small bugs that creep and crawl through the sub-strata and eat away at the earth's crust. These shots, postmodern in their ideological undertaking, mirror the town of Lumberton itself as a town that might look ideal on the outside, but has a rot underneath. This rot becomes manifest in the character of Frank Booth. The postmodern ideology of the film counters the modernity often visually depicted. There is no general truth, just like there are no easy answers, especially in a postmodern landscape. In the postmodern years after WWII, society in general began to question the horrors of Nazi Germany. Societies the world over began to question racial injustice, colonialism, and issues of equality as the fetters of modernity – regulations, laws, and the like were beginning to loosen or be moved to the background in terms of importance. But with this loosening of laws and regulations also comes with a loosening of morals. The character who is able to emerge from this postmodern landscape is Frank Booth. Even as he pines nostalgically for the times of old, mainly through his fetishistic infatuation with the song *Blue Velvet* and his love of

Pabst Blue Ribbon over Heineken, he embraces his new postmodern world by dealing drugs and using amyl nitrate through his own personal tank and mask set-up. What is real and what is simulation is a vital factor in this film. The film itself could be seen as a parody of several genres, a simulation if you will, including film noir, horror, and the melodrama. But there are other instances of real and simulation. Jeffrey's relationship with Sandy might be seen as a simulation; the ideal couple for the ideal town. Yet, the reality of Jeffrey's life is that he needs to find out more concerning Dorothy Vallens. Lynch gives no reason for this behavior in the narrative; in relation to Jeffrey, this lack of exposition mirrors the fluidity that Bauman alludes to in his theories – in the postmodern landscape, there are no easy answers. The semiotics attached to what an ideal young man of the 1950s should be: handsome, hardworking, and honest, are destroyed as the spectator travels with Jeffrey into the seedy underworld that has invaded Lumberton. Other instances include the fact that Dorothy must simulate and act when she performs at the club she sings at, even as her personal life and world have been destroyed by Frank Booth. Frank also engages in blending the line of real and simulation in his sexuality and how he satisfies it as he drifts between the worlds of 'daddy' and 'baby'.

Lumberton is portrayed as a hyper real version of America that represents a closed reality, which is in a consistent struggle to exclude anything that threatens to undermine its constructed reality of safety. Lynch also denotes power to the

observer, first Jeffrey, then Dorothy and Frank. The objectification in the act of looking produces the observed as the object of the observer's knowledge. In what could be considered a postmodern treatment, the observer imposes their vision onto the observed and from this obtains power. Frank is used to epitomize the primitive force that serves as the motivation for all acts. The shocked and disgusted responses to the surreal brutality Frank exhibits arise from the recognition of this chaotic savagery as a result of the struggle between unrestrained assertions of the will. Lynch's deliberate deconstruction of modern dichotomies reveals a suspicion, typically postmodern, toward the idea of ultimate truths and separate entities of good and evil. From its deliberate construction, *Blue Velvet* is a postmodernist film.

In conclusion, the film *Blue Velvet* delves into a world that is not so easily defined by the signs and symbols that are presented to the spectator. It is the journey of the film's characters and the spectator himself or herself, that reveals the true conditions of the film's narrative; the fact that the ideal situation, or in this case, the ideal small town in America, is never easily defined or understood.

6.0 | *Blade Runner*: Another Postmodern Film

To determine the characteristics of a postmodern film, I will get deep inside of another famous postmodern film *Blade Runner*. I will try to point out the postmodern characteristics of the film throughout the story of this particular film in different segment and criteria.

Blade Runner was filmed during 1982. The major character played by Harrison Ford as Rick Deckard an ex-policeman from the *Blade Runner* Unit.

Blade Runner is an exemplary postmodern text in the sense that it both represents the conditions of the post modernity and employs elements of the postmodern condition to texture its narrative. In its form, content and ideological center *Blade Runner* explores and utilities the strategies of quotation, recycling, pastiche, hyper reality and identity crisis.

In *Blade Runner* there is an overreaching and insipid postmodern identity crisis that seems to touch everything and everyone in the film. Los Angeles 2019 is in a state of perpetual crisis. Composed of patchwork of styles and fade it has no geographical center, no 'original' past to refer to, no secure history to be bound to and no concrete present to allow communities to foster. In one sense, this is why the replicants, including Deckard, are drawn to its quarters they share, imitate, and can plug into its schizophrenic state. But the relationship correspondence is one

borne out of the most despairing search of wholeness – all anyone (good) really wants in the film is a place, a history, a biography to call their own.

The story plot is set in 21st century L.A., a former cop (Ford) is recruited to track down androids who have mutinied in space and made their way down to Earth loosely based on Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

After the recruitment Deckard must kill the androids. Deckard meets Rachel who is a part of an experiment producing replicants who were given memory implants and believed that they are human. Deckard falls in love with Rachel and refuses to retire her. Throughout the film the other four replicants are retired. Three are shot (by Deckard and by Rachel) and one dies at the end of his four year life span.

Deckard returns to Rachel and they leave her apartment. The director's cut ambiguously ends here, but the original sees them escaping to the contrastingly tranquil countryside.

The postmodernism is a rebellion originating in the realization that in the past sixty years everything has changed in the world of social relationships and production; that industry has undergone radical transformations, and the energy crisis has once more uncovered problems that had been thought to be solved for some time.

To find out why this film is a postmodern film, we can look at few features and elements of this film. The first one is the blurry ideas between past and present. It means the audience can never certainly tell the timeline or time-set of this particular film. There is no actual reference of connected history of the film-set. Although we are told that *Blade Runner* is set in November 2019, there are many contradictions to this information. For example, the appearance and style of the characters, their clothing, and their hairstyle mostly looked like eighties and even the technology they showed inside the film seems to be outdated. Definitely the making of the film had a great effect on elaborating the time-set but overall there is no actual time-set that any audience can really find out which is a very strong evidence of this film being a postmodern film.

The terror that is found in this film is the future. It nostalgically refers to the past while showing a dystopian view of the future which is a very important issue in postmodern cinema. Films that portray the future seem determined to warn us of the dangers around the corner. We are constantly being shown futures where machines have as much power as humans, where machines have taken over humans, and in this film where machines are humans.

Postmodernity is wary of the future and seeks shelter in the past. This is why there are signifiers of the past in *Blade Runner*.

Another significant characteristic of postmodern films is pushing the boundaries of the present further into the future where the unreal is real and not just a possibility. As *Blade Runner* is a sci-fi movie, it tends to show what the future will actually be like. Cars fly through the air, humans can build mechanoids that think for themselves as in artificial intelligence, and indeed they can even plant memories and emotions in these machines. This is a perfect example of the unreal being made possible.

A bold characteristic of a postmodern film is unrepresentable visual elements. In *Blade Runner* there are many graphic scenes, we see two women get shot dead, a male replicant kissing a man and then breaking his neck with his bare hands, and occasional bad language.

Wild Sexuality is one of the major elements of postmodern film. There is one love scene in *Blade Runner*. Rachel runs from Deckard when he kisses her, but he closes the door in front of her and will not let her leave. He kisses her again telling her to say “kiss me” and “I want you”. This is an instance of Deckard trying to make Rachel more human. She is a machine but he believes that if he makes her feel real human emotions then she will become more human. The force he uses to make her kiss him and to show emotion can be equated with rape which is the height of sexual difference.

The next point is concerning the portrayal of women. According to Denzin, there are only two categories of women portrayed in postmodern films, the good (middle-class respectable housewife), and the bad (overtly sexual and disrespectful femme fatale). This is especially apparent in films such as *Fatal Attraction*. These have also been described as red and white women. In *Blade Runner* there are only three female characters, and all three are replicants.

The first one, Pris, is a replicant prostitute. She is also the lover of fellow replicant Roy Batty. She is a red woman. She is sexually active, strong, and attractive and makes things happen rather than waits for them. The second replicant, Zhora, is an erotic dancer. She is also a red woman. She uses Deckard out as a *Blade Runner* and although she is eventually shot, she assaults Deckard first, forcing him to chase her through the busy streets.

Last one, Rachel (white) appears very much the middle-class respectable, well-spoken woman. Although she seems quite in control of herself, she is dominated by Deckard and cries quite easily. She is portrayed as vulnerable and needs to be protected. Although not quite as clear as the other two, Rachel is not completely a white woman. When she finally realizes that she is in fact a replicant, there is a change in a manner and her appearance.

Nostalgia also signifies postmodern films. Remnants of the past are used to represent the 'safe' and the 'unsafe'. In one scene, Rachel talks of a spider who

gives birth to many baby spiders who then eat her. This can also be linked in to the utopian versus dystopian theories mentioned previously.

The margin of violence can also widely elaborate the nature of postmodern film. Post-modern films tend to place our worst fears into everyday society; murderers arrive with smiles and become our friend before they execute our entire family. In “The Hand Rocks the Cradle”, The Hand that the female killer becomes the baby-sitter to the family she wishes to infiltrate, leaving her with full charge over their six year old daughter.

In *Blade Runner* the replicants are openly on earth and are deemed extremely dangerous. Only the *Blade Runner* unit can save the world and the public is helpless. The replicants could be anywhere (they look entirely human), and they could kill anyone.

The most obvious message behind *Blade Runner* is that the future is ‘doomed’. Like many films from this era about the future, it is shown as industrial and dark (both visually and metaphorically). Film makers seem convinced that the future is doomed and the race and our technology is progressing things that can only get worse. *Blade Runner* is no exception. The raining weather and the almost permanent night setting reflects the dark setting of the future, and perhaps creates the moody atmosphere. Technology has progressed rapidly, but there are still the

problems of today with homelessness, disease and poverty. The rich are still as rich as ever.

Other meanings behind the film include the theory that the replicants are representations of present-day people. One theory says that they are the race minorities that are discriminated against. In the original version the added voice-over actually gave the audience a verbal parallel between the two, with the Deckard's comment on his chief. This voice-over, I think, makes the film less high culture and less postmodern as the subtlety is lost, but in the director's cut the voice-over being left out means the metaphor is again covert. The replicants themselves could not be black as they are made to resemble their creator and a change of race would change the story significantly.

However, the way the replicants are treated is surely meaningful of how the Serbs are 'ethnically cleansing' the Ethnic Albanians. The fact that their execution is called 'retirement' is a significant one. Is this not another unpleasant example like ethnic cleansing?

The film is a prime example of a post-modern film. It contains instances of violence to signify freedom, the future is uncovered and it portrays a time where the unreal is real, and violence is moved into everyday life. The effect that this postmodern style has is quite vast. The fact that it deals with the human spirit and the direction that it is taking means that it goes beyond its medium. The

cinema/video is a popular culture medium and although there is usually a message behind each narrative, postmodernity brought it a step further. Before this most films had entertainment value only. Through this change films are becoming 'deeper' and are containing more than entertainment.

7.0 | Postmodernism in Television and the Internet

TV Media

Postmodern elements are not only in films but also in television programs. One being “Flight of The Conchords” (TV Series), this particular program is self-reflexive. On a number of occasions, Jermaine and Brett make direct address to the camera which is an example of breaking the fourth wall and adding an element of humor because it shows that they are emphasizing that it is just a program and they are involving the audience. Quirky style graphics are also used in the parodies which is another example of a postmodern element. There are also intertextual references made to Prince, “The Pet Shop Boys” (music band), “Shaggy” and “Daft Punk” (musical duo). A Prince parody is shown in the program which adds humor and almost humiliates and embarrasses him.

Bricolage can also be identified as the program has elements from sitcoms, musicals, music videos and dramas. Another postmodern aspect of the program is its semi episodic structure. For example there is a scene which says ‘5 minutes later’. Other elements of parody and pastiche include the range of music genres they cover - music video conventions. It is set in New Zealand and is very stereotypical and the cult of the celebrities. For example, the band only has one big fan which is Mel who is obsessed with them. Other intertextual references include Daryll Hall who was in an 80’s pop duo called “Hall and Oates”. ZZ Top’s “Legs” (music video) was also mentioned and Donovan’s “Hurdy Gurdy

Man” (music video). “The Male Gaze” (TV Series) can also be applied to this episode as Brett and Jermaine argue over a threesome with the girl so it shows how little respect they have for women and how they look at them.

“The IT Crowd” (TV Series) is another postmodern television program. The theme tune to the program is significance of Gary Numan’s work such as the 1980’s synth pioneer and sounds like computer games from the 80’s. The use of 8bit music is relevant to the program because it is based around technology. There is a hyperreal aspect to the program as the characters have almost created their own ‘comedy universe’. Parody is also used at the start as they remake the piracy advert and make it sarcastic which adds an element of humor. Intertextual references to the Soviet scenes are also made and are taken as far as possible. The Russian accent is exaggerated and the music and lighting changes to enhance this hyperreal image. Another postmodern element is the use of stereotypes. The German cannibal has stereotypical characteristics such as his outfit and the food he mentions. For example “Schweinefleisch”. Other examples of intertextuality include *Hannibal Lector*, *Moorcambe and Wise*, *Fine Young Cannibals*, *The Pink Windmill Kids*, *Gorky Park* and *Oceans 11*.

Internet

We can see postmodernism even in the internet and various online networks.

There are thousands of websites that publish articles and stories in a postmodern way. In fact, the outlook of the websites are designed in a postmodern way.

Though it might be questionable whether internet can be postmodern but I believe it is as long as the content of the website is postmodern.

There is another trend of observing postmodern visual content over the internet which is various social video website. For example, “YouTube” is the largest online video network where millions of postmodern contents (videos / images) can be found within the click of a button.

8.0 | Conclusion

Conclusively, postmodernism is an individualized movement without any single inherent truth. All the interpretations and truths are feasible therefore it has such a transient definition. We know that most 'isms' have a bad reputation, so does postmodernism. Actually, it has no life of its own and that is why, it is attempting to question everything. Postmodernism has spread its wings in every sectors like in our culture, literature, art, philosophy, history, economics, architecture, fiction, literary criticism and so on which is somehow directly or indirectly connected with our everyday life; film is something among them. As we know visual culture is related with visual events which convey information, meaning or pleasure by the consumer through visual technology. This propagation of visibility has made postmodern film very unique than other films of any era. So there is no doubt that postmodern film is a visual form of media in the postmodern world. Postmodern film is very interesting for the element of its duality and for its covering a large space in film. These films are quite comfortable in terms of mixing different kinds of films such as the styles, genres and the narratives as well as the way of filmmaking together into one film. Moreover, the idea of self-reflexivity in postmodern film is quite noticeable as it makes the audience aware of the fact that they are watching a film. Thus both film and visual culture are complementary with each other in postmodernism.

From my own understanding, in this era seeing is more important rather than believing. Actually we believe what we see. It has not just become a part of our everyday life, it is everyday life. Now human experience is more visual and visualized from the satellite pictures to medical images of the interior part of the human body. It is quite understandable fact when the things are visualized in front of our eyes, this is why visual culture is a viable tendency to picture and visualize existence. Though the various visual media have been studied but there is now a necessity for the interpretation of the postmodern globalization of the visual as everyday life. Therefore, postmodernism is not only a visual experience thus it connects with so many things and so many disciplines at the same time. We have come to know that postmodernism has often been known as the crisis of modernism. In this context, this denotes that the postmodern is the crisis caused by modernism and modern culture opposing the breakdown of its own strategy of visualizing.

To bring to an end, what I have understood about postmodernism is that it is a throw-away word which holds a meaning of everything and nothing. As a result, different people use it in different ways. It is like throwing a stone (postmodernism) into the dark (obscured space) that can be picked by anyone (interpretations).

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