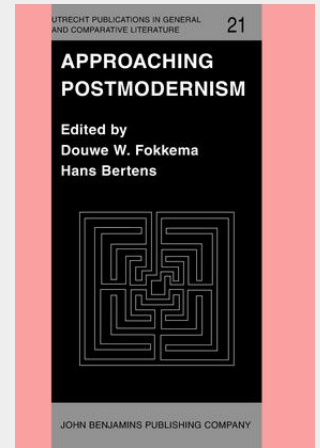


Approaching Postmodernism

Papers presented at a Workshop on Postmodernism, 21–23 September 1984, University of Utrecht

Most of the essays collected in this volume deal with theoretical issues that dominate the international debate on Postmodernism, issues such as the shifting nature of the concept, the problem of periodization and the problem of historicity. Other essays offer readings of Postmodernist texts and relate practical criticism to a theoretical framework. Hans Bertens (Utrecht) sketches the historical development of the concept Postmodernism in American criticism, distinguishing between the various definitions that have been proposed over the last twenty-five years, in an attempt to bring some order to the field and to facilitate future discussion. Brian McHale (Tel Aviv) and Douwe Fokkema (Utrecht) offer models for the description of Postmodernist texts. Richard Todd (Amsterdam) argues convincingly that Postmodernism is much more of a presence in contemporary British fiction than has so far been assumed, and Herta Schmid (Munich) presents a similar argument with respect to Russian avant-garde theater. Elrud Ibsch (Amsterdam) presents a contrastive analysis of Thomas Bernhard and Robert Musil; Ulla Musarra (Nijmegen) writes on Italo Calvino. The relation between Existentialism and Postmodernism is examined by Gerhard Hoffman (Würzburg); Theo D'haen (Utrecht) finds important parallels between Postmodernism in literature and in the visual arts; Matei Calinescu (Bloomington, Ind.) relates literary Postmodernism to a far more general cultural shift, rejecting, however, Foucault's notion of an epistemic break and arguing for both continuity and discontinuity. Finally, Helmut Lethen (Utrecht) and Susan Suleiman (Harvard) sharply question the concept of Postmodernism. Suleiman argues that the supposed Postmodernist reaction against Modernism may well be a critical myth or, if it isn't, a reaction limited to the American literary situation.



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