

Post-1950 poetry compared to postmodernism

Literature



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Elizabeth Bishop's "Lullaby for the Cat," Robert Lowell's "For the Union Dead," and Sylvia Plath's "Kindness" differ from postmodernism by using autonomous narrators and clear representation, as well a lack of irony and self-reference. In terms of style, Bishop's work is the most conventional, with a strict meter and rhyming scheme, while Lowell and Plath use free verse; there is no dissonance or pastiche in any of them. Also, they use no obvious symbols and do not convey irony; Bishop tells her cat, "Happy days are coming soon --/Sleep, and let them come... ", while Plath muses, "Kindness glides about my house.

Dame Kindness, she is so nice! " (PoemHunter. com) Both narrators here appear earnest, and nothing else in the poem seems to contradict this tone. Their themes and topics also vary from postmodernism because all three poems use a single subjective narrator reflecting on some aspect of their personal surroundings. Bishop's short ode to her cat and Plath's celebration of domestic happiness are deeply personal, while Lowell contrasts Boston's monument to the 54th Massachusetts regiment to the urban decay surrounding it. In postmodernism, the themes would be less personal and subjective, and the topics would be less clear and coherent.

Again, there seems to be nothing ironic here, and nothing that conveys fragmentation or incoherence; all three narratives take a clear look at their topics and their feelings are not ambiguous. Postmodern poetry and prose both reject traditional ideas of form, incorporating pastiche and fragmentation; in particular, postmodern poetry tends to reject traditional rhyming verse. They sometimes blur together, since traditional formal

boundaries blur in postmodern literature, though the individual line retains more importance in poetry than in prose.