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عنوان المحاضرة:

Literary Movements

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Literary Movements

Modernism is a literary and cultural international movement that flourished in the first four decades of the 20th century. It reflects a sense of cultural crisis which was both exciting and disquieting, in that it opened up a whole new vista of human possibilities at the same time as putting into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating new ideas. Modernism is marked by experimentation, particularly manipulation of form, and by the realization that knowledge is not absolute.

Thematic Features:

- Breakdown of social norms and cultural values
- Disillusionment
- Rejection of history and the substitution of a mythical past
- Need to reflect the complexity of modern urban life
- Importance of the unconscious mind
- Impossibility of an absolute interpretation of reality
- Overwhelming technological changes

Modernists:

- Challenged the idea that God played an active role in the world, which led them to challenge the Victorian assumption that there was meaning and purpose behind world events.

- Modernists argued that no thing or person was born for a specific use; instead, they found or made their own meaning in the world.
- Challenging the Victorian dichotomy between "civilized" and "savage," Modernists reversed the values associated with each kind of culture.
- Modernists presented the Victorian "civilized" as greedy and warmongering (instead of being industrialized nations and cash-based economies), as hypocrites (rather than Christians), and as enemies of freedom and self-realization (instead of good patriarchs).

Reasons behind the Appearance of Modernism:

War

WW1(1914–1918) shattered the concept of progress to many, resulting in fragmentation in both content and structure. The ideals of the Enlightenment claimed that new technology would bring progress to humans: technological advances would improve society and quality of life. Yet this was destroyed by WW1, as technological advances simply increased the mass destruction of life. The war resulted in the disillusionment of society and a deep pessimism of human nature; themes picked up by Modernism such as in the poem 'The Waste Land' (1922) by T. S. Eliot. The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement in the 17th and 18th centuries that focused on scientific progress, rationalism, and the pursuit of knowledge.

Industrialization & Urbanization

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Western world was using various inventions of the Industrial Revolution, such as the automobile, airplane, and radio.

These technological innovations challenged traditional notions of what was possible in society. Modernists could see the whole of society being transformed by machines.

Yet the Industrial Revolution and resulting urbanization and industrialization also led to significant social and economic inequalities. Many modernist authors such as Franz Kafka and T. S. Eliot explored the effects of these events on the population and the disillusionment and sense of loss people experienced. The mass urban movement meant that the city became the key context and reference point for both human nature and humans. As a result, the city often starred as the main character in modernist texts.

- Industrialization is the development of economies from agricultural to industrial.
- Urbanization is the mass movement of people from the countryside to cities.

Modernism vs Postmodernism

While some critics argue that we still are in the movement of modernism, others suggest that a new literary movement of postmodernism has evolved since the 1950s. Postmodernism is characterized by fragmentation and intertextuality in a hyperconnected world. Modernist literature rejected previous forms of poetry and prose as it felt that they were no longer sufficient to represent modern life. In contrast, postmodernism consciously used previous forms and styles to comment on intertextuality.

Literary Movements

Naturalism (c. 1865–1900): A literary movement that used detailed realism to suggest that social conditions, heredity, and environment had an inescapable force in

shaping human character. Leading writers in the movement include Émile Zola, Theodore Dreiser, and Stephen Crane.

Postcolonial literature (c. 1950s–present): Literature by and about people from former European colonies, primarily in Africa, Asia, South America, and the Caribbean. This literature aims both to expand the traditional canon of Western literature and to challenge Eurocentric assumptions about literature, especially through the examination of questions of otherness, identity, and race. Prominent postcolonial works include Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*, and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) provided an important theoretical basis for understanding postcolonial literature.

Realism (c. 1830–1900): A loose term that can refer to any work that aims at honest portrayal over sensationalism, exaggeration, or melodrama. Technically, realism refers to a late-19th-century literary movement—primarily French, English, and American—that aimed at accurate detailed portrayal of ordinary, contemporary life. Many of the 19th century's greatest novelists, such as Honoré de Balzac, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Gustave Flaubert, and Leo Tolstoy, are classified as realists. Naturalism (see above) can be seen as an intensification of realism.

Symbolists (1870s–1890s): A group of French poets who reacted against realism with a poetry of suggestion based on private symbols, and experimented with new poetic forms such as free verse and the prose poem. The symbolists—Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, and Paul Verlaine are the most well-known—were influenced by Charles Baudelaire. In turn, they had a seminal influence on the modernist poetry of the early 20th century.