



INTRODUCTION TO MODERNISM

Recapitulation session - Lecturer: Miss BENIA

INTRODUCTION

“Modernism is a response by clusters of intellectuals and artists to the converging process of industrialization”

- **Modernism is a trend of thought seen in arts and literature, that affirms the power of human beings to create, improve, and reshape their environment with the aid of scientific knowledge, technology, and experimentation.**
- **It started at the end of the 19th Century and lasted throughout the first half of the 20th Century**

- It has mainly sought to break free from traditions, and it is considered a reaction against established religious, political, and social standards and viewpoints.
- Most Modernist artists and writers seek to find new forms of expression and reject traditions or ideas that are held as true. They also questioned the morally upright victorian image as false and flawed, and they held the view that morality was not as simple as black and white.
- Additionally, they question the nature of truth, and this has been an influence from Philosophers Nietzsche and Schopenhauer.
- Generally speaking they are interested in the place that human beings occupy in this new and changing world, therefore, their interest in the human is central.
- This idea originates from Renaissance Humanism.
- The movement has also been influenced by other schools of thought, especially Psychology and the works of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung , the philosophies of Empiricism, and art schools such as Impressionism, in addition to the revolutionary theory of Charles Darwin.

“What can be safely called Modernism emerged in the middle of the last century—and rather locally, in France, with Baudelaire in literature and Manet in painting, and perhaps with Flaubert, too, in prose fiction...”

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Modernists were called *avant-garde* and society was hesitant to embrace the movement’s sometimes brash and aggressive stance to promote its philosophy. People still wanted to embrace what was familiar and reassuringly traditional.



LITERARY MODERNISM

- It is hard to put a specific date on when exactly literary modernism started, but it was a dominant movement between the two World Wars in America (1914-1946). In Europe it started a little earlier.
- It highlighted innovation in literary form and language, especially in poetry.
- Modernist Literature reflected both the times as well as looked forward fearlessly into a future filled with possibilities both positive and negative.
- Writers and poets such as T.S. Elliot, D.H. Lawrence, Franz Kafka, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, and Virginia Woolf are some of the main figures in this movement. They have sought to portray the human condition both at its best and at its worst.

THE LOST GENERATION

- This term refers to a group of writers and individuals who came of age during the 1st world war. Most of them were expatriates (to Europe), and were led by Gertrude Stein. They have established their reputation during the 1920s.
- They were lost in the sense that they were disoriented, wandering aimlessly. They were spiritually alienated from American standards, and they have suffered disillusionment after WWI.
- The most famous members were Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and T.S. Elliot.
- *“Ours was a generation grown up to find all gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken...”* Fitzgerald.



FAILURE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

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- **What is the American Dream?**
- Aspects of the American dream include: The pursuit of happiness, fulfilling success and cumulating wealth at a young age, freedom and control over one's decision, the pursuit of material gain.
- In *The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald*, the author criticises the American Dream and eventually, we perceive that the dream has failed and that material acquisition may bring ruin and despair. No happiness achieved.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS IN LITERATURE

- **Experimentation:** Modernist writers broke free from traditional forms of writing. they experimented with both form and content. For example, in poetry they have abandoned the tradition rhymed scheme and opted for the free verse. They have used new techniques of Narration such as stream of consciousness. The works became more open ended, and language was highly symbolic.
- **Fragmentation:** both stylistic and thematic. It reflected the fragmented state of world during the two WW. this can be seen in the non-linear plots and the mental fragmentation of the character.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS IN LITERATURE

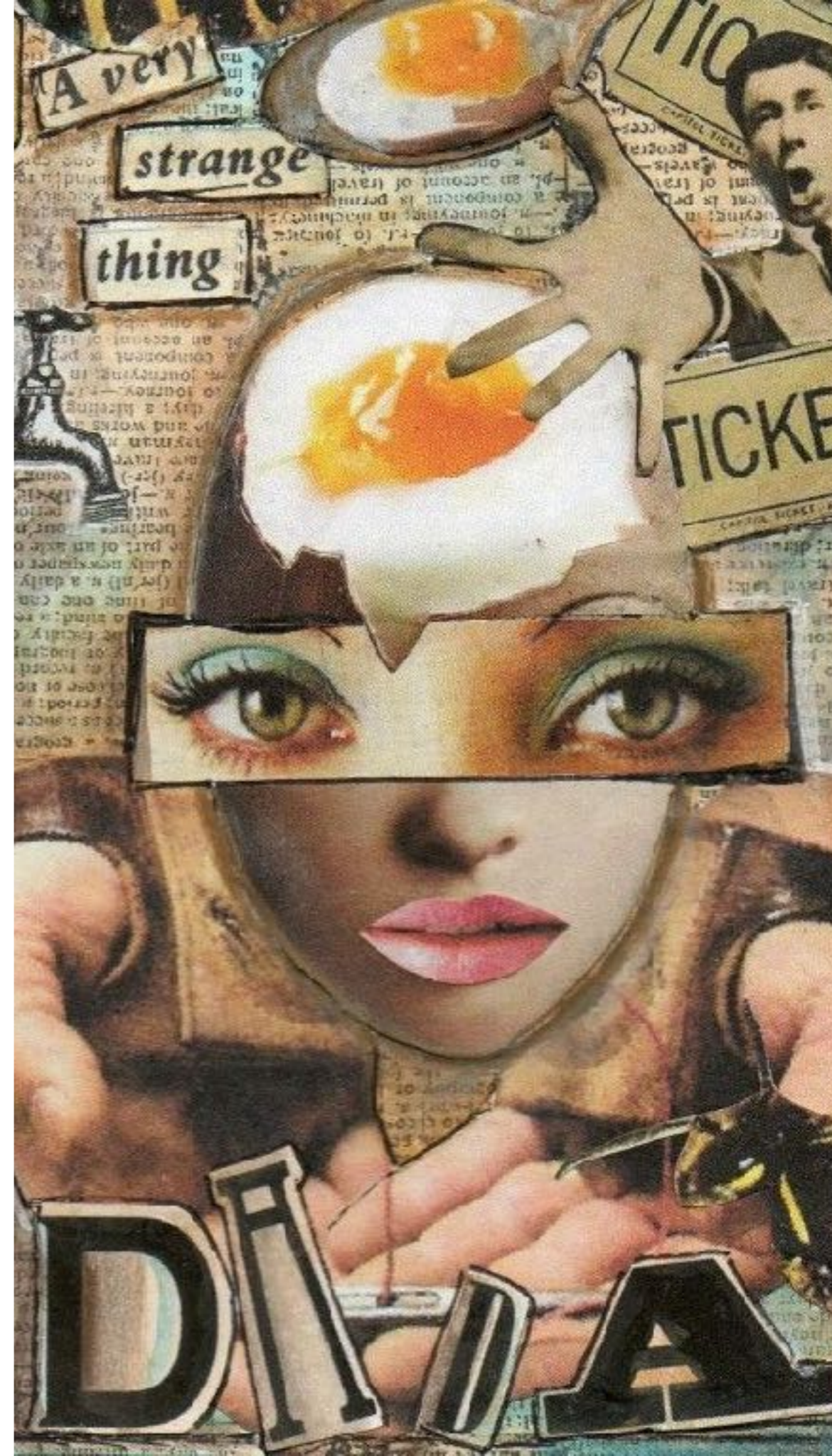
- **Individualism:** The individual becomes more interesting than the community and this can be seen in the complex characterisation and focus on the internal state of being rather than the plot and events. Writers presented the world and society as a challenge to the integrity of their characters.
- **Stream of Consciousness:** It is a narrative technique often associated with modernism. This technique gives the reader access to the flow of thoughts in the mind of a character.
- **Example:** William Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury*.

Characteristics of Modernism

- Intentional break with tradition
- Against established religious, social, and political views
- Believes that “the world is what we say it is”
- No such thing as absolute truth
- Celebrates inner strength of the individual
- Concerned with the sub-conscious

MODERNISM IN ART

- Dadaism
- Cubism
- Surrealism
- Futurism



Modernism in Art

- ❑ **Cubism:** *cub·ism*, 'kyoo,bizəm/ noun: **cubism**; noun: **analytical cubism**; noun: **synthetic cubism** an early 20th-century style and movement in art, especially painting, in which perspective with a single viewpoint was abandoned and use was made of simple geometric shapes, interlocking planes, and, later, collage.
- ❑ **Dadaism:** **Dada** /'dɑ:dɑ:/ or **Dadaism** was an art movement of the European avant-garde in the early 20th century. Many claim Dada began in Zurich, Switzerland in 1916, spreading to Berlin shortly thereafter but the height of New York Dada was the year before in 1915
- ❑ **Surrealism:** *sur·re·al·ism* [*suh-ree-uh-liz-uhm*]; *noun* a style of art and literature developed principally in the 20th century which developed from dada and stressing the subconscious or nonrational significance of imagery arrived at by the exploitation of chance effects and unexpected juxtapositions.
- ❑ **Futurism:** *fu·tur·ism* [*fyoo-chuh-riz-uhm*] *noun* **1.** a style of the fine arts developed originally by a group of Italian artists about 1910 in which forms derived chiefly from cubism were used to represent rapid movement and dynamic motion.

Cubism



Surrealism



Futurism

