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Modern Poetry

Imagism

The main representative is Ezra Pound; this movement was considered the first real modernist poets.

The main features are:

- They focused on a single image, object, scene
- They felt completely free in the choice of subject matter
- They made use of a clear, precise and concise language
- Their poems were usually very short
- Their aim was to reach the truth of objects, precision
- They rejected the conventions of the past, and for instance they adopted free verse: they didn't follow a metrical regularity: some of these features were to become characteristic of the whole Modernism

Symbolism

The main representative was the American poet T.S. Eliot and the Irish poet W.B. Yeats.

It was a loosely [vagamante organizzato] organised literary and artistic movements which originated with a group of French poets around the end of the 19th century. The main representative French symbolist was Baudelaire

The main features are

- The main focus was symbol: the symbolists preferred to evoke rather than to state and for this reason they made use of a suggestive and evocative language. They preferred to use indirect statements instead of direct
- Their poetry might seem hermetic, because each poet somehow invented his own symbolic system
- They wanted the reader to attribute their own meanings to the poems: they had to personally interpret the poems

Oxford Poets

In the '30s another group of poets came on **PAROLA MANCANTE**

Their name came from the fact that each of them studied at Oxford.

They were politically active on the left, and their main themes were social, justice, sense of community: they were socially and politically committed.

Their main focus was that of communicating with their fellow men, and in fact their style was simpler in comparison to the style used by the symbolists. They were afraid of the tyranny of fascists.

They wanted in their poems to point out a sort of moral course of actions: they wanted to highlight a moral course of actions that completely contrasted those tyrants.

Their main representative was the British Auden

New Romantics

In the '40s there was another group of poets. Their name came from the fact that they rejected the intellectualism of the symbolists and the social and political commitment of the Oxford poets.

Their focus was about emotions. The main themes were

- Love
- Birth
- Death
- Sex

That's why they were labelled **New romantics**.

Modern Novel

WWI signalled an epochal break with the past. The novel was essentially *bourgeois* in its origin: this means that when the novel emerges as a new literary genre it was meant as a mirror of society.

In the 18th century there was the rise of the novel, and the main focus was representing society; novel as a mirror of society. The main theme was **social mobility**, either upwards and downwards

Usually the novels had a linear structure, with a chronological sequence of events and their plots were well structured.

With the Great War, which shattered people consciences, the modernists could no more represent society, since it was difficult: all the pillars on which society were based on totally collapsed.

In this contest of unrest and turmoil they were somehow forced by the circumstances to focus on their inner world instead of the outer world; they emphasise subjectivity; in this regard they were deeply influenced by Freud's theories about the unconscious; they were very interested in the existence of different levels of consciousness and unconsciousness.

They were interested in how past experiences influences the adult behaviour.

In order to deal with subjectivity they rejected the narrative techniques of the past: they were casually forced to do that, since it was impossible to represent the mind using the narrative techniques of the previous century.

The technique used in this period, to represent the constant flow of thoughts feeling and emotions, was the interior monologue. The interior monologue was the stylistic translation of the psychic phenomenon called *stream of consciousness*.

This phenomenon is based on the idea that thoughts bounds from past to present and future in the same time in our mind. There is a mixture of different temporal dimensions.

As a consequence the modernists rejected linear plots in their novels, and the events are not narrated according to a chronological order; they didn't adopt a linear sequence of events in their novels. Since they focus on subjectivity and on the workings of the mind, in order to represent this unspoken activity of the mind, they were forced to mix past present and future: they couldn't follow a chronological order in their novels; the easiest way years to translate this psychic phenomenon in their novels was the adoption of the *interior monologue*.

There are different types of interior monologue

- **indirect** interior monologue: we still have the guiding presence of a narrator; in the past the narrator played a key role in the development of the novel; here instead rejected the use of a third person omniscient narrator; even when we talk about the indirect interior monologue, and we actually have a narrator, this is a neutral presence, who filters the thoughts of the characters, with some introductive comments and explanations
- **direct** interior monologue: the character's thoughts are given directly to the reader, without any filter.