

Definition of literary movement

A literary movement is a term that brings together authors whose writing style and vision of literature share many common traits. Sometimes, these authors form veritable schools (such as naturalism) with a common project.

Humanism

Humanism, a 19th-century term, refers to a European literary and philosophical cultural movement of the 15th and 16th centuries, corresponding to the Renaissance.

In France, the main figures of humanism as a literary movement are Rabelais (c. 1494 - 1553), Marot (1496 - 1544), Montaigne (1533 - 1592) and the Pléiade poets (see below). The Dutchman Erasmus (1467 - 1536), however, is the author who most embodies, as a symbol, European humanism.

Humanism is characterized above all by the status it confers on ancient sources. The great authors of Greek and Latin antiquity (e.g. Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Plutarch, Homer, Virgil, etc.) became models to be imitated. The study of their texts had not disappeared in the Middle Ages. But the rediscovery and appropriation of these works accelerated.

This "return" to ancient sources was aided by the upheavals in Renaissance Europe, which began in 14th-century Italy. Alongside painters who drew inspiration from ancient mythology, or scholars who sought to renew knowledge, Italian authors (Boccaccio, Dante, Petrarch) initiated this movement of imitation of the "Ancients" in literature (notably Virgil and Horace). Then, around 1450, the German Gutenberg (1400 - 1468) perfected printing by inventing movable metal type, which enabled books, and therefore knowledge, to be much more widely distributed. Finally, the retreat of the Byzantine Empire, heir to the Roman Empire and bearer of its Greco-Latin culture, followed by its final fall when Constantinople was taken by the Ottomans in 1453, encouraged the transfer of ancient knowledge to Italy and thus to Europe.

Humanists became familiar with ancient texts in their original language. They learned Latin, the scholarly language of the day, as well as Greek and Hebrew. They translated texts and sought to rediscover their original form. They went straight to the source, sometimes discarding the commentaries and mistranslations of the Middle Ages. The latter was seen as a repulsive factor. The myth of the Middle Ages as barbaric, Gothic and dark was born.

This back-to-basics approach served an ideal: the centrality of human beings in scholarly thought. Humanism comes from the Latin *humanus* meaning "human", and *humanitas* meaning "culture". The intellectual effervescence of the humanist age is reflected in a general optimism and faith in man's ability to improve through education. People were concerned about their fate and happiness. The Englishman Thomas More (1478 - 1535) invented Utopia (1516), a project for an ideal, well-ordered city.

The "discovery" of America fueled European intellectual renewal. Europe's literati were fascinated by the travel accounts of colonists and explorers. The figure of the Amerindian, the "good savage", raised questions about the Other, the man preserved from the vices of civilization, and about the Same, the humanity that binds us to this man (Montaigne's Cannibals).

This questioning is critical of society: Montaigne's *Essais* contain a subversive dimension. This is also the case with Rabelais, who mocks the society of his time in *Pantagruel* (1532) and *Gargantua* (1534). In his *Discours sur la servitude volontaire* (1576, posthumous), Montaigne's friend Étienne de la Boétie (1530 - 1563) formulated one of the first major modern critiques of power.

Finally, humanist Europe is a Christian Europe. The same approach, applied to the texts of the Ancients, was used for the biblical text: the aim was to return to the original text and free oneself from traditional readings. This trend coincided with the development of the Protestant Reformation, which many humanists felt close to. In France, Lefevres d'Étaples (1460 - 1536) translated the Gospels from the Latin Vulgate, with the help of Greek corrections. In Germany, Martin Luther (1483 - 1546), in 1522, produced the first German translation of the Bible from the original texts.

Works include *Éloge de la folie* (Erasmus, 1511), *L'Utopie* (More, 1516), *L'Adolescence clémentine* (Marot, 1532), *L'Heptaméron* (Marguerite de Navarre, 1539), *Élégies et Sonnets* (Louise Labé, 1555), *Pantagruel* (Rabelais, 1532), *Gargantua* (Rabelais, 1534), *Tiers Livres* (Rabelais, 1546), *Quart Livre* (Rabelais, 1548), *Discours de la servitude volontaire* (La Boétie, 1574), *Essais* (Montaigne, 1580-1595).

The Pléiade

The Pléiade is a circle of 16th-century French poets. The Pléiade poets are Jean-Antoine de Baïf (1532 - 1589), Rémy Belleau (1528 - 1577), Joachim du Bellay (1522 - 1560), Étienne Jodelle (1532 - 1573), Pontus de Tyard (1521 - 1605), Jacques Pelletier du Mans (1517 - 1582 or 83 (replaced by Jean Dorat [1508 - 1588]) and Pierre de Ronsard (1524 - 1585), who is its "leader".

This circle, first called "La Brigade", was named after a group of Greek poets from 3rd-century BC Alexandria. The Greeks named pleiades, Πλῑ αἰδες, the daughters of Atlas transformed into a constellation of seven stars.

The Pléiade authors, steeped in humanist culture, didn't form a school or current of thought, but shared a conviction: the French language needed to be "amplified", i.e. enriched, invented new turns of phrase, new words and created memorable works in imitation of the Greek and Latin authors of antiquity. Indeed, for these authors, the French language is a worthy one, and it is in this language that we must write, and not in the ancient languages, since we will never be able to equal the Greek and Latin authors in their languages.

En d'autres termes, les poètes de la Pléiade veulent **rendre prestigieuse la langue française**, c'est-à-dire la mettre sur un même pied d'égalité avec le latin ou même l'italien, dont la réputation a été élevée par Dante, Pétrarque et Boccace. Le français est d'ailleurs, depuis **l'ordonnance de Villers-Côtterets**, prise par François Ier (1515 – 1547) en 1539, la langue officielle des actes administratifs du royaume.

This project is set out in the first literary manifesto for the French language, du Bellay's *Défense et Illustration de la langue française* (1549).

For these humanist authors, the Middle Ages were a repudiation. The Pléiade poets rejected medieval poetic forms (chansons, ballades, rondeaux). Inspired by Horace and Pindar, they renewed poetry by taking up the genres used by ancient poets: the eglogue, elegy, epigram, epistle and satire. They also practiced the ode, the epic (Ronsard's *Franciade*, unfinished) and, above all, the sonnet, brought over from Italy and first used in France by Clément Marot (1496 - 1544, not a Pléiade poet), which they combined with the alexandrine.

Works include: *Défense et Illustration de la langue française* (Du Bellay, 1549), *Les Amours* (Ronsard, 1552), *Continuation des Amours* (Ronsard, 1555), *Les Antiquité de Rome*, *Les Regrets* (Ronsard, 1558).

Baroque (literary movement)

Baroque", a modern art-historical term, is a European artistic trend of the late 16th and early 17th centuries that affected painting, architecture, sculpture, literature and more.

The main Baroque authors in France are Agrippa d'Aubigné (1552 - 1630), Honoré d'Urfé (1567 - 1625), Théophile de Viau (1590 - 1626), Marc-Antoine de Saint-Amant (1594 - 1661), Vincent Voiture (1597 - 1648), the Pierre Corneille (1606 - 1684) of *L'illusion comique* (1636, later a classic), Madeleine de Scudéry (1607 - 1701), Paul Scarron (1610 - 1660), Cyrano de Bergerac (1619 - 1655).

Abroad, we find William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616), Pedro Calderón (1600 - 1681) and Baltasar Gracián (1601 - 1658).

This artistic movement was first and foremost a response by Catholic Europe to the progress of the Reformation. Baroque is the style of the Counter-Reformation. It opposed the austerity of Protestantism with profusion, rich ornamentation, irregular shapes and a multiplication of curves. This exuberance was particularly evident in architecture (St. Peter's Basilica, the Church of Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza and the Church of the Gesù in Rome) and painting (Caravaggio, Rubens, etc.). It was intended to arouse religious fervor and serve the propagation of the faith.

However, Baroque was not confined to the borders of Catholicism, affecting the whole of Europe. In fact, this sensibility, demonstrative and overflowing, in reality seeks to capture the image of life, moving and unstable. Baroque reflects a changing world, impossible to grasp, made of illusion: Life is a dream (*La vida es sueño*, 1635), as the title of a famous play by Calderon puts it.

Baroque also reflects a violent world. Death is omnipresent. One of the great pictorial themes of the Baroque is the *vanitas*, an allegory of death and the emptiness of life. The antagonism between Catholicism and Protestantism gave rise to violent and deadly conflicts. Agrippa d'Aubigné begins his *Tragiques* (1616) with a raw, vivid allegory of a France just emerging from the tug-of-war between Catholics and Huguenots (Protestants):

I want to paint France an afflicted mother,
Who, in her arms, is burdened with two children.
The stronger, proud, grasps both ends
Of the nurturing teats; then, by dint of blows
With fingernails, fists and feet, he breaks the division
Which nature gave his besson;

On another level, the development of the heliocentric theory by Nicolas Copernicus (1473 - 1543) and Galileo (1564 - 1642) overturned man's representation of the universe. He is no longer at the center, as in Christian discourse.

In short, the world is disorderly, in motion, and traditional landmarks are lost.

As a literary movement in France, the Baroque is characterized by a taste for emphasis (hyperbole), images (metaphor) and imagination (personification, see Cyrano de Bergerac's *États et Empires de la*

Lune [1657]), the loss of self in illusion (the mythical figure of Narcissus) and the complexity of plots (Corneille's *L'illusion comique*), particularly in roman à clef (*Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus* [1649] by Madeleine de Scudéry, the longest novel in the French language). The Baroque loves theater (Shakespeare, Calderon, Corneille), which offers great freedom (in contrast to classical rationalization, see below).

The Baroque is subdivided into two literary movements.

The first is précieux, whose refined, sophisticated style embodies the heroic and gallant ideal. It is represented in the poetry of Voiture and the novels of Madeleine de Scudéry, notably *Clélie*, *l'histoire romaine* (1660). This trend was mocked under the classics, notably by Molière (1622 - 1673) in *Les Précieuses ridicules* (1659).

Then there was burlesque, which, in reaction to preciousness, played on the illusion produced by appearances, avoided the display of grand sentiments and sought to show everyday life, as Scarron did in *Le Roman comique* (1651 - 1657), in which we follow a troupe of comedians.

Examples of works: *Hamlet* (Shakespeare, 1600), *L'Astrée* (Urfé, 1607 - 1627), *Don Quichotte* (Cervantes, 1614), *La Vie est un songe* (Calderón, 1635), *L'illusion comique* (Corneille, 1636), *Le Roman comique* (Scarron, 1651 and 1657), *Clélie, histoire romaine* (1654 - 1660), *Histoire comique des États et Empires de la Lune* (Bergerac, 1657).

Classicism

"Classicism" is a modern art-historical term applied in France, above all, to the architecture and literature produced during Richelieu's reign as prime minister (1624 - 1642) under Louis XIII (1610 - 1643), and under Louis XIV (1643 - 1715).

Classics used to refer to the great writers of antiquity. But historians have called "classical" those authors who belonged to a literary movement that, in a way, was set up as a new model. These authors, who, like the humanists, wanted to imitate the masterpieces of Antiquity, are far more famous than those of the Baroque period: They include the famous Pierre Corneille (1606 - 1684), François de La Rochefoucauld (1613 - 1680), Jean de La Fontaine (1621 - 1695), Molière (1622 - 1673) and Madame de Sévigné (1626 - 1696), Jacques Bénigne Bossuet (1627 - 1704), Madame de La

Fayette (1634 - 1693), Jean Racine (1639 - 1699), Nicolas Boileau (1636 - 1711) or Jean de La Bruyère (1645 - 1696) and Fénelon (1651 - 1715).

These writers didn't "know" themselves to be classics, but they did constitute a kind of canon in later times.

The period of production of these writers corresponds to the time of France's preponderance in Europe. It was a time of "glory" and reference in French history, at least in the "national novel", a kind of "golden age". Royalty's growing mastery of the country was reflected in its literature. After the turmoil of the Wars of Religion, under Henri IV, Louis XIII, Richelieu and Louis XIV, there was a desire to return to domestic peace, order and stability.

The writing of the classical literary movement, unlike that of the Baroque, is characterized by a taste for regularity. It follows rules, loves order and symmetry, and seeks formal perfection. In his *Discours de la méthode* (1637), René Descartes (1596 - 1650) proposes a method, i.e. a rational way of conducting thought, to achieve all forms of knowledge.

It seeks to instruct man through beauty, to "reform" him, i.e. purge him of his passions (the Greek catharsis) and subject him to reason. Thus, each of La Fontaine's fables ends with an edifying moral.

In the theater, this classicism is reflected in the famous rule of the three unities:

unity of action: a single plot (whereas the Baroque preferred complex plots);

unity of time: the plot unfolds over the course of one day;

unity of place: the plot takes place in a single location.

Examples of works: *Le Cid* (Corneille, 1637), *Sermon sur la mort* (Bossuet, 1662), *L'École des femmes* (Molière, 1662), *Maximes* (La Rochefoucauld, 1664-1678), *Dom Juan* (Molière, 1665), *Andromaque* (Racine, 1667), *Fables* (La Fontaine, 1668-1693), *Le Tartuffe* (Molière, 1669), *Britannicus* (Racine, 1669), *Pensées* (Pascal, 1670), *Art poétique* (Boileau, 1674), *Phèdre* (Racine, 1678), *La Princesse de Clèves* (Madame de Lafayette, 1678), *Caractères* (La Bruyère, 1688), *Lettres* (Madame de Sévigné, 1696 for the first letters), *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (Fénelon, 1699).

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment refers to a vast cultural movement in 18th-century Europe, the "spirit of a century", from the death of Louis XIV (1715) to the French Revolution (1789). This was the "Age of Enlightenment".

France's leading Enlightenment writers and philosophers were Marivaux (1688 - 1763), Montesquieu (1689 - 1755), Voltaire (1694 - 1778), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 - 1778), Denis Diderot (1713 - 1784) and Beaumarchais (1732 - 1799). Abroad, of course, we find the Scottish Enlightenment represented by David Hume (1711 - 1776) and Adam Smith (1723 - 1790), the Aufklärung in Germany whose great figure is Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804), Benjamin Franklin (1706 - 1790) or Thomas Jefferson (1743 - 1826) in the United States, Cesare Beccaria (1738 - 1794) in Italy, etc.

The Enlightenment was heir to the classicism of the Grand Siècle, the 17th century, Le Siècle de Louis XIV (1751), the myth of which was created by Voltaire. In the classical age, reason was consecrated and placed at the service of moral perfection. The Enlightenment directed reason, the driving force of history, against the obscurantism represented by religious power (in France, by the Catholic Church). Voltaire concluded some of his letters with the famous phrase "Écraser l'infâme" ("Crush the vile"), referring to superstition and fanaticism. The same Voltaire became publicly involved in certain controversies based on religious intolerance, such as the Calas affair (1761 - 1765), in which a Protestant was accused of murdering his son, who had converted to Catholicism.

The Enlightenment also directed its efforts against the arbitrariness of a royalty considered tyrannical. Against the abuses of power, Montesquieu developed the idea of a balance of powers in *De l'Esprit des lois* (1748). The century was marked by a strong Anglomania (witness Voltaire's *Lettres philosophiques* [1734]), i.e. a systematic, even excessive, admiration for a parliamentary England, held up as a model of freedom. They advocated limiting power through texts and laws: in Italy, Beccaria founded modern criminal law with *Des Délits et des Peines* (1764), Rousseau proposed his draft constitutions to Corsica and Poland, and so on.

The Enlightenment was subversive: it sought to overthrow a rigid, self-assured society. One of the most famous phrases of the Enlightenment, "How can one be Persian?" found in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721), mocks the intolerance of Parisians and their ethnocentrism. Centuries-old playwrights denounced a rigid class hierarchy (the society of order) and called for greater freedom of expression. Social criticism, still timid in Marivaux's *L'Île aux esclaves* (1725)...

La différence des conditions n'est qu'une épreuve que les dieux font sur nous: je ne vous en dit pas davantage becomes more frank in Beaumarchais :

Without the freedom to criticize, there is no flattering praise.

The Marriage of Figaro, 1784

The ideal of the Enlightenment is autonomy, i.e. man's ability to emerge from childhood, to make his own laws. It was formulated by the German philosopher Kant in *What is Enlightenment* (1784):

What is Enlightenment? The emergence of man from his minority, for which he himself is responsible. Minority, i.e. the inability to use his understanding (the power to think) without the guidance of others, a minority for which he is himself responsible (fault), since the cause lies not in a defect of understanding, but in a lack of decision and courage to use it without the guidance of others. Sapere aude! (Dare to think) Have the courage to use your own understanding. That's the motto of the Enlightenment.

The work that best embodies the Enlightenment enterprise is L'Encyclopédie (1772) by Diderot and d'Alembert (1717 - 1783), a work that aims to bring together all human knowledge. Enlightenment writers were often polygraphs: they were interested in and wrote about a variety of subjects without regard for academic divisions. They could be scientists or historians. Rousseau, for example, was interested in botany and music, as well as literature and philosophy.

The civilization of the European Enlightenment (according to the title of a book by historian Pierre Chaunu) is a civilization of salons. A certain sociability developed: thought spread through conversation, in which women played an important role. The Enlightenment also spread through academies, newspapers, treatises, letters and so on. Voltaire produced a number of philosophical tales, such as Zadig (1747) and Candide (1759), which widely disseminated critical ideas, especially as they were short and easy to read.

The libertine spirit of the 18th century is also evident in the libertine novel, represented for example by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos (1741 - 1803) or the Marquis de Sade (1740 - 1814), which is anticlerical and erotic, attacks moral propriety and fights against established beliefs.

Examples of works: Les Lettres persanes (Montesquieu, 1721), L'Île aux esclaves (Marivaux, 1725) Lettres philosophiques (Voltaire, 1734), Zadig (1747), L'Esprit des lois (Montesquieu, 1748), Lettre sur les aveugles (Diderot, 1749), Encyclopédie (1772), Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes (Rousseau, 1755), Candide (Voltaire, 1759), Du contrat social (Rousseau, 1762), Des Délits et des Peines (Beccaria, 1764), Dictionnaire philosophique (Voltaire, 1764), L'Ingénu (Voltaire, 1767), Les Liaisons dangereuses (Laclos, 1782), Le Mariage de Figaro (Beaumarchais, 1784), Qu'est-ce que les Lumières (Kant, 1784), Jacques le fataliste et son maître (Diderot, posthumous, 1796), Le Neveu de Rameau (Diderot, posthumous, 1891).

Romanticism

Romanticism refers to the artistic movement that emerged between the 18th and 19th centuries.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the precursor of Romanticism in France. After him, the main representatives of Romanticism in France were : Madame de Staël (1766 - 1817), Benjamin Constant (1767 - 1830), François-René de Chateaubriand (1768 - 1848), Charles Nodier (1780 - 1844) Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1786 - 1859), Alphonse de Lamartine (1790 - 1869), Alfred de Vigny (1797 - 1863), Alexandre Dumas (1802 - 1870), Victor Hugo (1802 - 1885), George Sand (1804 - 1876), Gérard de Nerval (1808 - 1855), Alfred de Musset (1810 - 1857). Abroad, the greatest exponents of Romanticism are the Germans Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 - 1832), Friedrich von Schiller (1759 - 1805) and Heinrich Heine (1797 - 1856), the Englishmen Lord Byron (1788 - 1824) and Mary Shelley (1797 - 1851), the Scotsman Walter Scott (1771 - 1832), and others.

The term "Romanticism", of English origin, was introduced into French by Madame de Staël, who wanted to open France up to German literature (*De l'Allemagne*, 1813). Germany was producing its classics (Goethe, Schiller, Novalis, Lessing, etc.). Romanticism was particularly prevalent in Germany and England (in the poetry of Byron, the historical novels of Walter Scott or the Gothic novels of Horace Walpole [1717 - 1797] or Shelley [*Frankenstein*]).

Romanticism was a reaction to 18th-century classicism and rationalism, and a revolt against society. Indeed, the Romantics were disenchanted beings who felt stifled by the rules and conventions of society. Chateaubriand, the archetypal melancholy writer, escaped to the wilds of America. These were children affected by the "mal du siècle", analyzed by Musset in *Confessions d'un enfant du siècle* (1836). These authors sought to escape society through the power of literary creation.

The authors of this literary movement turn to the self, exalting inner sensibility, following the movement initiated by Rousseau in the first great modern autobiography, *The Confessions* (1782). Lyricism, the simple expression of subjectivity, was in vogue at the time: Lamartine expresses his joys and sorrows as a young poet in his *Méditations poétiques* (1820). Marceline Desbordes-Valmore produced poetry that exuded spontaneity and sincerity. The Romantics gave free rein to their passions, rather than repressing or controlling them. Constant's *Adolphe* (1816) follows the long outpourings of a young man afflicted by a love he no longer wants.

Romanticism seeks escape. In the past first: the romantic age is the age of the emergence of the historical novel (Scott in Scotland, the novels of Dumas in France, *Cinq-Mars* de Vigny in 1826, *Notre-Dame de Paris* by Victor Hugo in 1831). The Middle Ages, erected in repulsion by humanists, is revalorized. In nature then, place of solitude, far from the constraints of society (*Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* de Rousseau, 1782), and whose power fascinates. In religion too, after an 18th century and an anticlerical French Revolution: Chateaubriand's *The Genius of Christianity* (1802), published in 1802, will have a huge influence on his century marked by the return to the faith. In the dream and the imagination finally, as evidenced by the development of fantastic literature (in Nodier or Mérimée for example).

This escape marries, paradoxically, with commitment: the romantics are creators who believe in their power to change society. Both Chateaubriand and Hugo led political careers with varying degrees of success.

Finally, the romantic authors emancipate themselves from the decency and measurement of the classics. Hugo mixes the theatrical registers which gives rise to an aesthetic «battle», the famous battle of Hernani (1830), named after his play.

Examples of works: René (Chateaubriand, 1802), Faust I and Faust II (Goethe, 1808 and 1832) Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (Byron, 1812 – 1818), Méditations poétiques (Lamartine, 1820), Hernani (Hugo, 1830), Notre-Dame de Paris (Hugo, 1831), Lorenzaccio (Musset, 1834), Les Nuits (Musset, 1835 – 1837), Confessions d'un enfant du siècle (Musset, 1836), La Vénus d'Ille (Mérimée, 1837), Mémoires d'outre-tombe (Chateaubriand, 1848), La Petite Fadette (Sand, 1849), Les Filles du feu (Nerval, 1854), Les Contemplations (Hugo, 1856), Les Destinées (Vigny, 1864),

Realism (literary movement)

Realism is a literary movement of the nineteenth century, almost contemporary with Romanticism.

The main representatives of realism in France are Stendhal (1783 – 1842), Balzac (1799 – 1850) and Flaubert (1821 – 1880). George Sand or Victor Hugo (the Misérables for example) produced realistic novels.

Realist writers seek to transcribe in their books the real life of the beings who animate society, the ordinary situations that punctuate their lives. They do not forbid themselves to write about the «low classes», the «working classes», what is usually called by the word «people».

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the acceleration of the industrial revolution and the emergence of democracy, with the social and intellectual transformations they engender, refocused attention on society. Thus, realism wants to «describe society as a whole, as it is» (Balzac, in his preface to Les Employés, 1838) with a clinical, almost objective view. They emancipate themselves from decency. To their readers, realists do not want to hide the fate of prostitutes, thugs, criminals, workers, peasants from remote and forgotten regions, petty officials or misguided bourgeois. Balzac once again declared that he wanted to “compete with civil status”. His work, the Comédie humaine, stirs up the destiny of more than 2,000 characters.

Realism is also the current that has consecrated the novel, almost exclusive support of his project, as the main literary genre.

Realism is a reaction to romanticism, even if the two currents mix (Balzac himself wrote fantastic novels, such as La Peau de chagrin [1831]). It is above all a criticism of the lyricism considered excessive by the romantics. Madame Bovary (1857) is, for example, a scathing mockery of the romantic dreams of her heroine, which confuses fiction and reality.

Realism produces a literature that is anchored in a historical context, an era, and an environment, as is for example *Sentimental Education* (1869) in the events of the 1848 revolution, of which Flaubert made a famous account.

Of course, this description of society is not neutral. On the contrary, behind this lucid look at men hides a critique of the state of social relations, through the treatment of typical themes: the failure of a social ascent, the impossibility of love, the confrontation of classes, etc. *Les Misérables* (1862) de Hugo is, for example, an indirect plea for improving the lot of the poorest.

Examples of works include Balzac's *La Comédie humaine* (e.g., *Eugénie Grandet* [1834], *Le Père Goriot* [1835], *Illusions perdues* [1837]), *Le Rouge et le Noir* (Stendhal, 1830), *Madame Bovary* (Flaubert, 1857), and *Les Misérables* (Hugo, 1862).

Naturalism

Naturalism was a literary movement in the mid-19th century.

The figure of Émile Zola (1840 – 1902) dominates naturalism, but other authors were influenced by his enterprise, notably the brothers Edmond (1822 – 1896) and Jules (1830 – 1870) de Goncourt or Guy de Maupassant (1850 – 1893).

This literary current is a formalization of realism, a more trench version, more severe, pushed to the end of its logic.

While no major writer claimed «realism», naturalism is a real movement with a leader, Émile Zola whose *Rougon-Macquart* is the great work. He regularly invited writers to his property in Médan, in the Yvelines (see the collection of six short stories, *Les Soirées de Médan*, published 1880).

Influenced by Claude Bernard (1813 – 1878), founder of experimental medicine, but also by Hippolyte Taine (1828 – 1893), a scientist and positivist philosopher, Zola wanted to apply the scientific method to literature. In particular, he set out his ambition in the preface of *Thérèse Raquin* (1867), his first novel, and his book *The Experimental Novel* (1893). He wants to describe nature through the novel, as science does with its own language. Zola's writing is therefore marked by a profusion of scientific details.

The society described by Zola is composed of characters determined by two types of laws dictating their behavior: physical heredity (their nature) and the economic and social context. The subtitle of the *Rougon-Macquart* states this configuration: Natural and social history of a family under the

Second Empire. Thus, Zola follows the experimental protocol described by Claude Bernard: he starts from an initial situation, and makes the characters evolve according to the laws of their nature, describing the process step by step.

The milieu in which Zola's characters evolve is not a neutral milieu, but one that has its own characteristics and particular determinisms: he wants to make the novel of the Second Empire, «he wants to personify the time». No subject is dismissed in favor of decency. Thus, the Rougon-Macquart go through the world of the mine proletariat (*Germinal*, 1885), that of prostitution (*Nana*, 1880) or that of bistros, in which alcoholism wreaks havoc (*L'Assommoir*, 1876). The critical dimension of these paintings is of course paramount («Close the bistros, open the schools!»).

Examples of works: *Les Rougon-Macquart* (Zola, for example *L'Assommoir* [1877], *Au Bonheur des Dames* [1883], *Germinal* [1885], *La Bête humaine* [1890]), *Germinie Lacerteux* (Frères Goncourt, 1865) *Bel-Ami* (Maupassant, 1885),

Le Parnasse

The Parnassus is a circle of poets (like the Pleiade) of the nineteenth century that gave birth to a literary movement. Its main representatives were Leconte de Lisle (1818 – 1894), the “leader”, Théophile Gautier (1811 – 1872), Théodore de Banville (1823 – 1891) and José-Maria de Heredia (1842 – 1905).

The term Parnassus comes from Mount Parnassus, a Greek mountain where Apollo and the nine muses live.

This trend developed in reaction to the poetic lyricism of the romantics, considered excessive and worn out. The Parnassian poets want to symbolically bring poetry back to Mount Parnassus from which Lamartine, the first accused, descended it, that is to say, return its superb to poetry.

To the effusions of the romantics, they oppose impersonality, objectivity, the suppression of the «I» and the primacy of description. It is a poetry that wants to be neutral, and it is in this, like naturalism, influenced by the scientific model. Indeed, for the Parnassians, art does not have to be embodied or engaged, art justifies itself by itself. They thus make «art for art», as theorized by Gautier in his preface to *Mademoiselle Maupin* (1835).

Parnassian poetry thus removes subjectivity to focus on form and style: language is a raw material that, like the stone of the sculptor, must be chiseled by hard work. There they celebrate the beautiful and beautiful actions (such as Heredia in *Les Trophées*, 1893), reconnecting, for example, with the myths of antiquity (*Les Poèmes antiques* de Leconte de Lisle, 1852), or by celebrating nature, exoticism, etc.

Examples of works: Enamels and Cameos (Gautier, 1852), Ancient poems (Leconte de Lisle, 1852), Trophies (Heredia, 1893),

The symbolism

Symbolism is primarily a literary and pictorial movement, extending from the second half of the 19th century to the early 20th century. By convention, it dates its birth to the literary manifesto published by the poet Jean Moréas (1856 – 1910) in the newspaper Le Figaro on September 18, 1886.

However, symbolism manifests itself before this date. Charles Baudelaire (1821 – 1867), the precursor of symbolism, first published the Flowers of Evil in 1857.

After Baudelaire, the great poets who came together as symbolists were Stéphane Mallarmé (1842 – 1898), Paul Verlaine (1844 – 1896) and Arthur Rimbaud (1854 – 1891), to whom we can add Gustave Khan (1859 – 1936), René Ghil (1862 – 1925), Émile Haevenren (1855 – 1916), etc.

The poets of this literary movement, however, are not a school. Verlaine, in response to a question from the journalist Jules Huret (1863 – 1915) on the definition of symbolism, replied: "Symbolism? Don't know! It must be a German word!" But these poets share certain sensitivities.

Symbolists are, in a way, esoteric poets. To realism and its naturalistic maximalisation, to the approach of the Balzac, Flaubert or Zola to leave a literary testimony of the society as it is, the symbolists oppose a mystical poetry, a writing which, through the intermediary of language, tries to transcribe the hidden meaning of things, which wants to reveal the enigma of the world.

This explains why we use the term "symbolists". The symbol is a sign that refers to another reality. In this symbolic configuration, the poet is the one who deciphers the «forests of symbols» or creates new ones. These are the "correspondences" that Baudelaire seeks to highlight in his poetry:

Nature is a temple where living pillars
Sometimes leave out confused words;
Man passes through forests of symbols
Who observe it with familiar looks.

Like long echoes that from afar merge
In a dark and deep unity,
Vast as the night and as the light,

Scents, colors and sounds respond.

It is fresh perfumes like flesh of children,
Sweet as oboes, green as meadows,
'And others, corrupt, rich and triumphant,
Having the expansion of infinite things,
Like amber, musk, benzoin and incense,
Singing the transports of the mind and the senses.

The symbolism derives from Parnassus but tries to escape its «cold» descriptions and its scientific prism. Rather than describe, the symbolist authors want to suggest. They seek the musicality of the language, which they reach through the use of free verse.

Examples of works: *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Baudelaire, 1857), *Poèmes saturniens* (Verlaine, 1866), *Complaintes* (Laforgue, 1885), *Tête d'Or* (Claudel, 1889), *Poésies* (Mallarmé, 1899).

The Dada or Dadaism

Dada, or Dadaism, is an artistic movement, which has manifested itself in literature, painting and plastic arts. He was born in 1916 in Zurich.

The main animator of Dadaism was the Franco-Romanian writer Tristan Tzara (1896 – 1963). His movement brought together the principal authors of what would later be known as surrealism (Breton above all, see below), and attracted artists such as Francis Picabia (1879 – 1953), Jean Arp (1886 – 1966), Man Ray (1890 – 1976) and Marcel Duchamp (1887 – 1955).

Dadaism was born as a revolt against civilization, reason and the humanistic claims of a Europe occupied with annihilation during the First World War (1914 – 1918). Tristan Tzara wants to destroy the legacy of conventional art, and opposes it a comic art full of derision, which seeks scandal and protests.

The work of art must not be beauty in itself, for it is dead.

1918 Manifesto

The name Dada was chosen at random, because it evoked nothing but something childish and naive.

Tzara thus produces poems voluntarily meaningless, in which a liberated language flourishes. He seeks spontaneous associations and the expression of the unconscious, inspiration that is prolonged by the surrealist authors. He uses the technique of “collage”, explained in this poem:

To make a Dadaist poem

Grab a journal.

Grab some scissors.

Choose an article in this journal that has the length you intend to give to your poem.

Cut out the item.

Then carefully cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.

Shake gently.

Then take out each cut one after the other.

Copy them conscientiously in the order they left the bag.

The poem will look like you.

And here you are an infinitely original writer with a charming sensibility, although misunderstood by the vulgar.

To make a Dadaist poem

However, Dadaism suffers, after the war of dissensions, and its project, nihilistic from a certain point of view, tires some of its bearers, who want to move to a stage of creation.

Examples of works: The Seven Dada Manifestos (Tzara, 1916 – 1924)

Surrealism (literary movement)

Surrealism is an artistic movement born in the 1920s, and whose existence extends throughout the life of its main animator, André Breton (1896 – 1966).

The term surrealism was coined by Guillaume Apollinaire (1880 – 1916), who inspired the movement. Many authors have passed through this literary movement, without having been surrealists all their lives: Louis Aragon (1897 – 1982), Paul Éluard (1895 – 1952), Philippe Soupault (1897 – 1990), René Char (1907 – 1988), Jacques Prévert (1900 – 1977), Robert Desnos (1900 – 1945), Francis Ponge (1899 – 1988), etc. The movement is very fertile in the visual arts, thanks to Giorgio De Chirico (1888 – 1978), Salvador Dalí (1904 – 1989), Joan Miró (1893 – 1983), etc.

This movement was born out of Breton's break with Dadaism. In his 1924 Manifesto of Surrealism, he described surrealism as follows:

Surrealism, n. m. Pure psychic automatism, by which one proposes to express, either verbally, in writing, or in any other way, the real functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, apart from any aesthetic or moral concern.

– Encyclical Letter Philos. Surrealism is based on the belief in the higher reality of certain forms of associations neglected up to him, in the omnipotence of dreams, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to permanently ruin all other psychic mechanisms and replace them in solving the main problems of life.

Inspired by the work of Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1936), the founder of psychoanalysis, traumatized by the horrors of the First World War, who ruined Europe's certainties about itself, discredited humanism and traumatized an entire generation, the surrealists seek to liberate society and art from the rationalism and shackles of the bourgeoisie, through the «omnipotence of the dream» (Freud's most famous work is the Interpretation of dreams, published 1900).

Surrealism is thus, like the Dadaism from which it comes, a movement of revolt. Thus, according to Breton:

«Transform the world», said Marx; «Change life», said Rimbaud: these two watchwords for us are one.

Political Position of Surrealism, 1935

But unlike Dadaism, Surrealism does not want to be mere nihilism. It wants to be positive, that is, creative. Surrealists strive to free language, and therefore words, from the empire of reason, so that it expresses something new, pure thought, the unconscious, testifying to the existence of a hidden but superior reality.

Surrealists practice the technique of automatic writing. The writer, instead of thinking his text, abandons himself to his unconscious and lets the sentences be linked without controlling the

coherence. The collection *Les Champs magnétiques* (1919), by Breton and Soupault, is a collection of poems «of automatic writing».

Prévert and the painter Yves Tanguy (1900 – 1955) invented the exquisite corpse, defined as:

Folded paper game that consists of composing a sentence or a drawing by several people, without any of them being able to take into account the collaboration or previous collaborations. The example, now classic, which gave its name to the game, lies in the first sentence obtained in this way: The corpse-exquisite-will-drink-the-wine-new.

Breton, *Dictionary of Surrealism*, 1938

The surrealist novel, for example *Le Paysan de Paris* (1926) or *Nadja* (1928), tries to mix literary genres and wants to escape the traditional chronological plot.

Surrealist authors want, like romantics, to be creators who help transform society. Expression of this commitment, Breton, Éluard and Aragon joined the communist party in 1927.

Examples of works: *Les Champs magnétiques* (Breton and Soupault, 1919), *Manifeste du surréalisme* (Breton, 1924), *Le Paysan de Paris* (Aragon, 1926), *Capitale de la douleur* (Éluard, 1926), *Nadja* (Breton, 1928), *Corps et biens* (Desnos, 1930), *Le Marteau sans maître* (Char, 1934), *L'Amour fou* (Breton, 1937).

The absurd and the theatre of the absurd

The reflection on the absurd, from the absurd Latin (which seems to mean «dissonant», which shocks reason), is ancient. However, the so-called “absurd” literary movement began in the 20th century and developed after the Second World War (1939–1945).

Albert Camus (1913 – 1960) is the leading theorist of the absurd. The theatre of the absurd was represented in France by two great playwrights, the French-speaking Irishman Samuel Beckett (1906 – 1989) and Eugène Ionesco (1909 – 1994). We can also cite Arthur Adamov (1908 – 1970), or Jean

Genet (1910 – 1986), who can approach it through his criticism of Western society. The Englishman Harold Pinter (1930 – 2008) is the greatest representative of the absurd outside France.

The absurd is that individuals in Western society no longer perceive meaning in their lives and therefore see it as vain. We are alone in navigating like strangers in a disenchanted world (the world of Bardamu, character of Céline in *Voyage au bout de la Nuit* [1932]) which seems incomprehensible, like the Meursault de Camus (in *The Stranger*, 1942). The question of suicide then arises, which is treated philosophically in another book of Camus's «cycle of the absurd», *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942).

This problem, or this absurd sensitivity, gives rise to a theatrical current that stages this tragic condition of modern man. Ionesco and Beckett produce plays without intrigue, in which the characters, who seek to escape boredom and repetition, are shadows with barely sketched psychology (two tramps in *Waiting for Godot* [1953]). The temporal sequence is unknown and the dialogues are broken up into unintelligible and irrational sequences. *La Cantatrice chauve* 1950), which has no figure of a bald singer, is a subtitled «anti-pièce».

The nonsense of the dialogues, either erratic (Pinter uses to multiply for example the sequences silence) or abundant and confused, leaves all the place to the staging which takes an importance until never occupied, by the multiplication of the didascalies, by the central place given by an element of the decor (*Les Chaises*, 1951).

Unlike the classics, these playwrights do not seek plausibility, but to maintain a distance with the spectator, who witnesses a play that baffles him by the staging of insignificance.

The theatre of the absurd can however be engaged. Ionesco, in *Rhinoceros* (1959), gradually transforms his characters, acquired in totalitarianism, into rhinoceros whose thought has been abolished.

Examples of works include *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Camus, 1942), *The Stranger* (Camus, 1942), *Caligula* (Camus, 1945), *The Bald Singer* (Ionesco, 1950), *Waiting for Godot* (Beckett, 1953), *Ping Pong* (Adamov, 1955), *Endgame* (Beckett, 1957), *Rhinoceros* (Ionesco, 1960).

The New Novel

The New Novel is a literary movement that lives in the 1950s and 1960s.

This qualifier brings together the works of various authors who wrote for the Minuit editions: Nathalie Sarraute (1900 – 1999), Alain Robbe-Grillet (1922 – 2008), Michel Butor (1926 – 2016) and Claude Simon (1913 – 2005), to which can be added Claude Ollier (1922 – 2014), Robert Pinget (1919 – 1997), Jean Ricardou (1932 – 2016) and the novel by Samuel Beckett.

These authors, whose idea is mainly exposed in three works (Sarraute's *Age of Suspicion* in 1956, Robbe-Grillet's *Pour un nouveau roman* in 1963 and *Essais sur le roman* de Butor in 1964), seek to deconstruct the traditional novel. They substitute works in which the identity of the characters is reduced to the maximum (shadows, consciousnesses, they are sometimes only pronouns), and in which the plot is divided between a past and a present that intermingle. This is a deepening of the inspirations of great authors of the first part of the 20th century: the Frenchman Marcel Proust (1871 – 1922), the Irishman James Joyce (1882 – 1941) and the American William Faulkner (1897 – 1962).

The Nouveau Roman departs from the commitment of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 – 1980) and Camus, and refuses to be the bearer of an ideology or a vision of the world. Beyond the novel of individuals who make the world, he describes, with a sober and cold writing, the objects that surround us (like Robbe-Grillet's *Gommes* [1953] or later, *Les Choses* [1965] by Georges Perec), in the age of consumer society.

According to Jean Ricardou, the new novel is «the adventure of a writing».

Examples of works: *Les Gommes* (Robbe-Grillet, 1953), *La Modification* (Butor, 1957), *Moderato Cantabile* (Duras, 1958), *Le Planétarium* (Sarraute, 1959), *La Route des Flandres* (Simon, 1960).