



European Languages and Cultures
Year 1
Summary : Reading Modern Europe
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This summary was based on the course provided in 2017/2018. Readings and details might have changed.

Use this summary as a reference but don't rely on it fully.

Lecture 14-11 - Romanticism

14 November 2017 11:08

We use metaphors all the time, even without realizing it. If we understand where these metaphors come from, what their origin is, we understand better what is going on in the world.

Rationality

The sleep of reason produces monsters - **Goya**. Too much trust in Enlightenment will result in monsters (fears). Turningpoint, in the role of imagination and fantasy. Rationality and reason vs. imagination and fantasy.

Villa Diodati -> bored writers challenge each other to write the scariest story they can come up with -> birth of horror stories such as Frankenstein (**Mary Shelley**) and vampire stories (**John William Polidori: The Vampyre**)

Key concepts

Classicism: Neo-classicism (looking at the past to solve present-day problems) and the Grand Tour. People went to search for Culture of the Antiquity.

Romanticism: Began in Germany and England and is deeply connected to the 19th century politics. Key features:

- Individuality and personal freedom
- Spiritual and supernatural elements -> Religion (?)
- Nature as a teacher
- Interest in the Past/Ancient Greek and Roman elements
- Celebration of simple life.
- Interest in the Rustic/Pastoral life
- Interest in folk traditions
- Idealization of women
- Frequent use of personification
- Examination of the Artist's inner feelings

Ballad

Literary translation

Guest lecture: Alberto Godioli. The myth of originality

We are invited to express our individuality by buying products millions of others will buy to -> **Paradox.**

Romanticism and originality:

- **Romanticism vs the enlightenment**

Universalism is an enlightenment feature that is criticized by Romanticism wanting to express originality. (Fichte: *Only when each people, left to itself, develops and forms itself in accordance with its own peculiar quality, and only when in every people each individual develops himself in accordance with that common quality, as well as in accordance with his own peculiar quality—then, and then only, does the manifestation of divinity appear in its true*

mirror as it ought to be [...]).

Rationalism was another key point of the Enlightenment that was criticized by Romanticism, again because it doesn't allow originality.

- **Romanticism as a reaction to modern society**

Mass-society (Balzac): a society in which everything becomes so much alike that the peculiar characteristics of each individual will be entirely lost. -> Could be the cause of our desire to be original

- **Romanticism originality in to 19th-century novel**

Romantic realism: A mixture of Romanticism and Realism, characterized by certain elements of Romantic literature and elements of Realism. **Types of characters:**

- **The rebel:** the hero feels and think in opposition to their time -> contrast between the uniqueness of the rebel and the sameness of society.

- **The divided misfit:** The hero is generally looked down upon and made fun of because of his eccentricity or absurdity -> also to celebrate uniqueness.
- **Originality vs Uniformity: Ongoing conflict(?)**
Ongoing tensions:
 - a. Does modernity lead us to greater diversity or to standardization
 - b. How can you be original, when originality itself is standardized? Is originality just a (Romantic) cliché? (Hipsters vs. normcore example)

Lecture 21-11 - Realism and Naturalism

23 November 2017 11:13

Industrial age: a period of history that encompasses the changes in economic and social organization characterized by the replacement of hand tools with power-driven machines such as the power loom and the steam engine, and by the concentration of industry in large establishments.

Innovations that powered these changes:

- **Textiles** -> mechanised cotton spinning powered by steam or water greatly increased the output of a worker
- **Steam power** -> the efficiency of steam engines increased so that they used between one-fifth and one-tenth as much fuel
- **Iron making** -> the introduction of charcoal greatly lowered the fuel cost for pig iron and wrought iron production

Lead to new products: Chemicals, cement, gas lighting and new forms of transportation.

The arts were concerned with these innovations and captured their results -> they are romanticized. Literature and culture were influenced by the outcomes of the industrial revolution.

Realism: the accurate, detailed, unembellished depiction of nature or of contemporary life. It rejects imaginative idealization in favour of a close observation of outward appearances. -> opposed to romanticism that focussed on the past

Key features:

- Portrays the everyday life of ordinary people
- Depicts middle-class characters
- Realistic novels used themes like society, social class, mobility, etc.

Naturalism: literary movement that emphasizes **observation** and the **scientific method** in the fictional portrayal of reality.

Key features:

- Use of scientific techniques to depict human beings
- Deterministic view of character's actions and life. Determinism vs. Free will -> every human being acts as a result of certain set of factors -> **no free will**
- Natural forces predetermine character's decisions (determinism)
- Naturalist writers focus on: misery, corruption, vice, disease, poverty, prostitution, racism
- Naturalist writers understand the novel as an experiment where it is possible to discover and analyse the forces (emotion, heredity and environment), or scientific laws that influenced behaviour. -> Goal of literature: uncover the forces that control human behaviour -> literature as a natural science.

Guest lecture: Sander Brouwer

How do we describe reality?

Human thinking: our mind transforms our perceptions into ideas by way of association. Association of two things can take place via two routes: connect them on the basis of their **similarity** (/contrast) or of their **contiguity** (a motivated relation between A & B -> they are adjacent, for example: causality).

Similarity (/contrast): two things have a relation of equivalence, they are unrelated but are like each other -> **basis for metaphor**.

Contiguity: Two things have a motivated relation, they are closely related -> **basis for metonymy**

Types of metaphors

- **Metaphor proper:** He's a fox. **Simile:** He is LIKE a fox.
- **Homeric simile:** Her [Penelope's] mind is in torment, wheeling like some lion at bay, dreading the gangs of hunters [the suitors] closing their cunning ring around him for the finish.
- **Personification:** "The grey-ey'd morn smiles on the frowning night"

- **Dead metaphors:** the foot of the hill; leg of the chair; eye of the needle; neck of the bottle

Types of metonymy

- **Container-contained** -> he has drink three glasses
- **Cause-effect** -> have you lost your tongue
- **Producer-product** -> we are reading Shakespeare
- **Part-whole (Synecdoche)**
 - Pars pro toto (High five!)
 - Totum pro parte (England leads with...)

Romanticism: is dominated by thinking in terms of equivalence -> mainly use of metaphors.

Similarity relations:

- Characters form pairs: they are comparable/contrasted
- Between inner life and outer appearance
 - Symbolic signifiers (black Nazgul vs. white Gandalf)
 - Animal world stands for human world (personification)
 - Acts can be undertaken by something supernatural (not belonging to the world in which the act takes place)
- Metaphorical relation between the world and how it is seen/represented (fairy tales, imagination, deliberate attempt at fictionalizing/mythmaking)

Realism: is dominated by thinking in motivated relations -> mainly use of metonymy

Motivated relations:

- In time: causal relation between an act and the mind of its actor -> psychological motivation can be complicated by social factors, cultural background, genetic code etc.
- Between character and environment
 - His/her setting (appearance, housing, social context) is an index of his/her innerlife
 - He/she is representative of a larger group (**synecdoche**)
- Causal relation between the world and how it is seen/presented: the way the world is represented in art is motivated by how that is in itself

Lecture 28-11 - Fin de siècle

14 January 2018 12:59

Fin de siècle:

- Refers to the end of the 19th century
- Period of degeneration
- Also period of Hope for a new beginning
- Cynicism and pessimism: widespread belief that civilization leads to decadence

Max Nordau -> one of the people that made that analysis of degeneration in society. -> Society and human beings themselves are degenerating, and this degeneration is both reflected in and influenced by art

Art Nouveau -> ornamental style of art that flourished between 1890 - 1910 throughout Europe and the US. Characterized by its use of a long sinuous, organic line (**Idealizing nature**) and was employed most often in architecture, interior design, jewelry and posters/illustrations. Deliberate creation of a new style, free of the imitative historicism that dominated much of the 19th century.

Albert Kahn -> in a moment of decline he invested all his fortune into the creation of a photographed encyclopedia that meant to record different cultures before they declined. (**Les Archives de la planète**)

Symbolism -> sought to express individual emotional experience through the subtle and suggestive use of highly symbolized language. -> symbolism didn't want any social commitment for art (Art of the sake of Art)

Key features:

- International arts movement
- Origins in France, Belgium and Russia
- Emphasis on emotions, feelings and ideas
- Rejection of naturalist and realist aesthetics
- The artist as a spiritual leader
- Religious mysticism
- Evoking intuitions
- Interest in the occult, imagination, dream world and melancholy
- Revealing the mystery of nature through free and personal use of metaphors

Free association of concepts and ideas

Decadence -> Aspired to set art and literature free from the materialistic preoccupations of industrialized society, and the freedom of morals.

Key features:

- Aspired to set literature and art free from the materialistic preoccupations of industrialized society
- Decadent praise artifice over nature
- Sophistication over simplicity
- Defied contemporary discourses of decline
- Embraced subjects and styles considered morbid and overly refined
- Evil and Death (Gothic tradition)
- Negativism

Synaesthesia -> neuropsychological trait in which the stimulation of one sense causes the automatic experience of another.

Guest lecture Sutherland: Gender and Symbolism

Masculine and feminine roles are not biologically fixed, but socially constructed (**Butler**)

Gendered Archetypes:

- The idealised mother -> symbol of nature and self-sacrifice
- The muse -> symbol of objective desire and a conduit for artistic expression.
- The virgin -> symbol of chastity, purity and innocence
- **Femme Fatale** -> expressing the corruptive nature of women

The Cult of Genius -> A woman who created was faced with a double bind: either to surrender her sexuality (become a surrogate male), or to be feminine and female and not count as a genius.

Modernismo

- Strongly influenced by European Symbolism
- Commencement with the publication of *Azul* by Rubén Darío
- Had a profound impact on the European cultural sphere, particularly in Spain
- Reaction against positivism and Catholicism
- Sought escapism and re-enchancement through art and beauty
- Characterised by **sensual language** and themes, use of classical **mythology**, evocation of **synesthesia**, precise poetic form, rejection of the quotidian, pursuit of **erotic mysticism**

Lecture 05-12 - Modernism and Avant-Garde

15 January 2018 10:53

Modernism -> a general term applied retrospectively to the wide range of experimental and avant-garde trends in literature (and other arts) of the early 20th century, including Symbolism, Futurism, Expressionism, Imaginism, Vorticism, Ultraismo, Dada and Surrealism

Key features:

- Rejection of 19th-century traditions and of their consensus between author and reader
- Modernist writers tended to see themselves as an avant-garde disengaged from bourgeois values, and disturbed their readers by adopting complex and difficult new forms and styles. In fiction, the accepted continuity of chronological development was upset by Joseph Conrad, Marcel Proust, and William Faulkner, while James Joyce and Virginia Woolf attempted new ways of tracing the flow of characters' thoughts in their stream-of-consciousness styles.

Avant-Garde

The French military and political term for the vanguard of an army or political movement, extended since the late 19th century to that body of artists and writers who are dedicated to the idea of art as experiment and revolt against tradition. Ezra Pound's view, that 'Artists are the antennae of the race', is a distinctly modern one, implying a duty to stay ahead of one's time through constant innovation in forms and subjects.

Key features ->

Surrealism -> An anti-rational movement of imaginative liberation in European (mainly French and Spanish) art and literature in the 1920s and 1930s, launched by André Breton in his *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (1924) after his break from the Dada group in 1922

Key features:

- The term *surréaliste* had been used by the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire in 1917 to indicate an attempt to reach beyond the limits of the 'real'.
- Surrealism seeks to break down the boundaries between rationality and irrationality, exploring the resources and revolutionary energies of dreams, hallucinations, and sexual desire.
- Influenced both by the Symbolists and by Sigmund Freud's theories of the unconscious, the surrealists experimented with automatic writing and with the free association of random images brought together in surprising juxtaposition.

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Dada -> An avant-garde movement of anarchic protest against bourgeois society, religion, and art, founded in 1916 in Switzerland by Tristan Tzara, a Romanian-born French poet. From 1919 the Dadaist group assembled in Paris, issuing nihilistic manifestos against the culture which had been discredited by the 1914-18 war, and experimenting with anti-logical poetry and collage pictures and sculptures.

Personification -> A figure of speech by which animals, abstract ideas or inanimate things are referred to as if they were human

ALLEGORY VERSUS METAPHOR	
Allegory is a piece of literature where characters, images, and/or events act as symbols.	Metaphor is a literary device that makes a comparison between two unrelated things.
Allegory adds a hidden meaning to the text.	Metaphor compares two unrelated things.
Allegory makes use of symbolism.	Metaphor makes use of imagery.
Allegories have a hidden meaning.	Metaphors do not have a hidden meaning.

ALLEGORY VERSUS METAPHOR

Allegory is a piece of literature where characters, images, and/or events act as symbols.

Allegory adds a hidden meaning to the text.

Allegory makes use of symbolism.

Allegories have a hidden meaning which relates to morality or politics.

Metaphor is a literary device that makes a comparison between two unrelated things.

Metaphor compares two unrelated things.

Metaphor makes use of imagery.

Metaphors do not have a hidden meaning.

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Lecture 12-12 - representing catastrophe

16 January 2018 12:39

Key term: **Empathy**

How are we going to remember things like the holocaust if all survivors are dead -> literature is a way to understand the experience of catastrophes which helps us to develop empathy.

Guest lecture: Ruby de Vos

Slow Violence -> a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space.

From trinity to trinity -> an example of how literature portrays slow violence, and of how literature can help people deal with trauma.

Synecdoche -> figure of speech in which a word or phrase that refers to a part of something is substituted to stand for the whole, or vice versa.

The definition of synecdoche requires the substituted term to be either a part of the whole or a whole standing in for a part. Metonymy, on the other hand, can refer to the substitution of a term that is connected in any way to the original concept.

-> Metonymy is a much broader concept -> synecdoche is a form of metonymy (?)

Lecture 17-12 - post modernism

18 January 2018 13:18

Post modernism: movement characterized by broad scepticism, subjectivism or relativism; a general suspicion of reason; and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power.

General features:

- There is no absolute truth
- Truth and error are synonymous
- Self-conceptualization (representation of the 'I') and rationalization
- Traditional authority is false and corrupt
- Disillusionment with modernism (loss of faith in the projects of modernity)
- Morality is personal -> relativize morality
- Globalization

Key features in Postmodern Culture

- Extreme self-reflexivity
- Irony and parody
- A breakdown between high and low cultural forms
- Retro
- A questioning of grand narratives -> For example, questioning the Enlightenment narrative.
- Visuality and the simulacrum (representations/ideas that look real, but are not) vs. temporality (deny linearity of events)
- Late capitalism
- Disorientation
- Secondary orality

Key characteristics of postmodern fiction:

- a **preoccupation** with the viability of **systems of representation**;
- the **decentring of the subject** by discursive systems, and the inscription of multiple fictive selves;
- **narrative fragmentation and narrative reflexivity**; narratives which double back on their own presuppositions;
- an **open-ended play** with formal devices and narrative artifice, in which narrative self-consciously alludes to its own artifice, thus challenging some of the presuppositions of literary realism;
- an **interrogation** of the ontological bases of and **connections** between **narrative** and **subjectivity**;
- an **abolition** of the cultural divide between high and popular forms of culture, embracing all in a **mélange**;
- an **exploration** of ways in which narrative mediates and constructs history;
- the **displacement of the real** by the simulacra, such that the original is always already linguistically constructed: novels incorporate 'historical' fictions as fact.

Key feature of post-modern literature

- A denial of the centrality of the individual artist as expressive genius
- A deconstruction of the poetics of presence invested in poetry's traditional reliance on the spoken word, and a concomitant devaluation of the oral in favour of the written word.
- An interrogation of language's convention of communicative transparency
- Complementary development of poetic practice and theory

Lecture 20-12 - Neo-realism

18 January 2018 14:10

Neo-Realism -> any revival of realism in fiction, especially in novels and stories describing the lives of the poor in a contemporary setting.

Faction -> A form of writing or filmmaking that treats real people or events as if they were fictional or uses them as an integral part of a fictional account