**Dr. S. Chouchane**

**3rd Year Literature Module**

**Groups: A5 and A6**

**Semester 5**

**Academic Year: 2023/2024**

1. **Introduction to Modernism**

**Definition:** Modernism is a large cultural movement that gradually emerged in Europe expressing a sense of modern life through art (in general) as a sharp break from the past, as well as from Western civilization’s classical traditions.

* The first trends of Modernism appeared or were visible at **the close of the 19th C** (most literary historians agree on the period around 1880’s. Modern life seemed radically different from traditional life; more scientific, faster and more technological. Modernism embraced these changes)

**Causes of the modernist temper**

* Modernism is a reaction to WW I.
* It is a response to Urbanization, Industrialization, immigration and technological evolution

**Social picture of the period**  
- Rise of cities and Class structure changing  
- Common sense thinking no longer works/ dehumanization and anonymity of people.  
- Religion, God is dead, everything is meaningless

**Major themes emerging in Faulkner’s, Hemingway’s, Fitzgerald’s and other works of the period:**  
1. Violence, alienation from Society and loneliness  
2. Decadence in moral values  
3. Loss and despair

4. Procrastination (An inability to act)  
5. Fear of death   
6. Inability to feel or express Love

1. **Wallace Stevens’ *The Snow Man* (session 1)**

**Poem explanation**

The title is not *The Snowman;* instead the word snowman is broken up into two words. This implies that the poem must not be talking about an actual snowman that is made from ice and snow, but instead a man whose character, mind, regard, and even heart resembles that of the immobile, non-living creation.

* *The Snow Man* introduces the idea of imagination and reality. **For a snowman the reality of winter is just winter**. Using imagination the readers puts themselves in the snowman’s point of view as it develops senses and feelings to discover reality and accept its surroundings.
* Thanks to his mind of winter, the snow man, who by now becomes the listener, **sees nothing while looking out at a wintry scene**. The snow man/mind of winter/listener sees only what is there—which is nothing—and nothing that isn't there.

1. **Wallace Stevens’ *The Snow Man* (session 2)**

**This poem reflects the ideas of the modernist movement**:

1. It breaks away from traditional poetry with its new ideas, of imagination and reality.
2. **Form**: the poem looks like a long complex sentence, long desperate thought. Written in Three-line Stanzas in Free Verse (No rhyme and no rhythm)
3. **Language and style**: It is a difficult poem to understand from the first reading
4. **Imagery**: The poem creates a unique image of the snow man and winter through its effective imagery which makes the reader use another way of thinking in order to understand the poem

* **The poet appeals to the reader’s visual and auditory senses**

1. **The reader’s role in the story**: Stevens left the readers drawing their own conclusions, by mainly using their imagination to help them figure out how to interpret the poem.
2. **Isolation**
3. **Identity crisis**
4. **Ezra Pound’s *In a Station of the Metro***

**In a Station of the Metro (1913)**  
The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough.

## Summary

In this short poem, Pound describes watching faces appear in a metro station. It is unclear whether he is writing from the vantage point of a passenger on the train itself or on the platform. The setting is Paris, France

## Analysis

The shortness of this poem fits with its topic; when reading the words, the door opens quickly revealing a sea of faces, and then closes again - the faces are gone after a fleeting glance. The poem's length matches the constant motion of a train as it speeds by.

**Pound’s Modernist techniques**

* This poem is a clear example of the **Imagist style**.
* The whole poem contains only **14 words**, with a combination of 8 words in 1st line and 6 in 2nd.
* The poem is free from the traditional grammar to push us in one side or the other. He uses also the new form of verse –the free verse
* Pound's **economical description** of these faces as "petals on a wet, black bough" allows the reader to imagine a scene while reading the lines.
* The poem is structured as **two images juxtaposed**. The reader has to understand that the faces are like petals on a wet black bough, but the word like does not appear in the poem.
* Pound has very deftly **referred to the latest technological developments of the age** through the image of ‘’Metro’’. It symbolizes the rapid pace of scientific progress of the time.
* The Metro station is also supposed to suggest a journey to the underworld
* The poem is also a criticism of the modern man and the modern society

1. **William Faulkner’s *A Rose for Emily* (session 1)**

**Summary**

* This short story contains five sections. In the first section, it **is the time of Emily`s death** and the attendance of the townspeople to the funeral. The narrators talks about the conflict between Emily and the “new generation” on the tax notices they send and she is not willing to pay due to the Colonel Sartoris, the town’s previous mayor who suspended Emily`s tax after her father`s death, because once he had loaned to the city.
* In the next section, we go thirty years ago, to the time when her father is already dead and she has just been abandoned by her beloved man.
* In section three and four (after her father`s death, the summer after), Emily was sick for a long time. The streets were being paved by new contracts with a northerner, Homer Barron who was Emily`s beloved, she poisoned and murdered him. Many years pass until her death.
* And in the last section, the funeral ceremony is taking place and later Emily’s secret is revealed after forty years.

1. **William Faulkner’s *A Rose for Emily* (session 2)**

**Elements of Modernism in William Faulkner`s *A Rose for Emily* (1930)**

1. Fragmentation
2. Stream of consciousness
3. First person narration
4. Contradiction and disillusionment
5. Alienation and isolation
6. Pessimism
7. Modern themes: Industrialization and capitalism are highly recognized in this era.
8. **F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (session 1)**

**Summary**

The Great Gatsby is a story about the impossibility of recapturing the past and also the difficulty of altering one’s future. The protagonist of the novel is Jay Gatsby, who is the mysterious and wealthy neighbor of the narrator, Nick Carraway. Although we know little about Gatsby at first, we know from Nick’s introduction—and from the book’s title—that Gatsby’s story will be the focus of the novel. As the novel progresses and Nick becomes increasingly drawn into Gatsby’s complicated world, we learn what Gatsby wants: Daisy, Nick’s cousin, the girl he once loved. Anything and anyone that stands between Gatsby and Daisy becomes an antagonist. Although Daisy’s brutish husband Tom is the most obvious antagonist, a variety of more abstract concepts—such as class difference, societal expectations, and Gatsby’s past lies—can also be considered antagonists. The most powerful antagonist is time itself, which prevents Gatsby from recapturing what he lost.

Nick moves to New York and becomes Gatsby’s neighbor. Gatsby is wealthy, with a mysterious past that is the subject of much speculation. After meeting his neighbor at a party, Nick learns that despite Gatsby’s success, he longs only for Daisy. Gatsby’s central aim through the novel is to see Daisy again and recaptured their shared past. On a trip to the city with Tom, Nick meets Tom’s mistress, Myrtle. In the rising action of the novel, Nick arranges a reunion between Gatsby and Daisy, and Jordan tells Nick about Daisy and Gatsby’s history. Gatsby and Daisy fall back in love, and Gatsby tells Nick one version of his life story. Many of the stories Gatsby tells about himself turn out to be lies or half-truths. The fantastic nature of his stories gives Gatsby’s history a mythical quality, which reinforces the sense of him as a tragic hero.

Gatsby and Daisy are briefly happy together, and Nick gets drawn into their romance, even though the outlook for the couple’s future seems hopeless, largely because of Gatsby’s inability to separate his dreams from reality. Both the reader and Nick can see the disparity between Gatsby’s idealized image of the Daisy he knew five years earlier, and the actual character of Daisy herself. Fitzgerald presents Daisy as a shallow, materialistic character, reinforcing the sense that Gatsby is chasing a dream, rather than a real person. On an outing into the city, Gatsby erupts and tells everyone in the room that he and Daisy are in love and are going to run away together to marry. However, Tom says Daisy will never leave him, and Daisy is unable to tell Tom she never loved him. Here, for the first time, Gatsby must confront directly the possibility that his dream cannot be attained, and see Daisy as she currently is, rather than his idealized remembrance of her. Even at this point, however, he remains convinced she will ultimately choose him over Tom.

The climax of the novel comes when the group is driving back from New York in two cars, and Myrtle, Tom’s lover, mistakes Gatsby’s car for Tom’s and runs out into the street and is hit and killed. The car that kills Myrtle belongs to Gatsby, but Daisy is driving. After this, the action resolves quickly. Gatsby takes the blame in order to protect Daisy, and Myrtle’s husband, George, kills Gatsby (and then himself) as revenge. Gatsby has already died a symbolic death at this point, when he realizes that Daisy will not call him and is not going to run away with him after all. His dream is at last obliterated, and he heads into the morning of his death facing reality for the first time. Nick describes the world as Gatsby now sees it as unbearably ugly: “he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass.” In contrast to the previous obsession with the past, the final passages of Gatsby’s life are concerned with newness, creation, and the future – one which, lacking his dream of Daisy, he finds hideous.

In the final falling action of the book, Nick must also confront reality, as he realizes his glamorous, enigmatic neighbor was the poor son of farmers who got mixed up in criminal activities and had no true friends besides Nick. Nick tries to arrange a funeral for Gatsby, but none of the guests from his lavish parties come. Daisy and Tom leave town, and Nick is left alone with Gatsby’s father, who reveals the truth of his son’s humble beginnings as “James Gatz.” After the funeral Nick decides to return to the Midwest, where he is from, feeling disgusted by the “distortions” of both the East and the West.

1. **F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (session 2)**

**Modernist devices in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby***

1. Break with traditional themes and subjects

* Materialism
* Loss of moral values (love, friendship, fidelity, honesty)
* There is no God

1. Isolation, pessimism, no hope and no resolution
2. Narration: subjective, all knowing
3. Contradiction and disillusionment:
4. Stream of Consciousness
5. Imagery
6. Irony
7. Fragmentation
8. **Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* (session 1)**

**Summary**

* In Act one of The Crucible, Arthur Miller exposes flaws in religion through the character of Parris. Parris is the reverend of Salem's only church, and he is portrayed as a villain, a narcissistic man, who cares more about his reputation than the well-being of his child. This act is directly related to the Red Scare in the sense that Joe McCarthy is more concerned with ridding America of Communists and taking the glory for himself, rather than expunging Communism. Parris and McCarthy are extremely similar in this act because they are both willing to do what is necessary to keep suspicions away from themselves.
* During Act II Elizabeth Proctor represents an innocent person being accused of witchcraft. This mirrors how during the Red Scare, innocent people were accused of communist beliefs. This Act also shows how one person’s personal hatred for an individual can create a feeling of mob mentality. The Red Scare and The Salem Witch hunt were both Rampant fear based on pure prejudice and lack of understanding, trumped up charges, trials and effective punishment without any due process and in both cases people were offered a chance to save themselves if they offered up other targets for the hunt.
* During Act III, Miller focuses his attention on showing how the court system, in both events, is corrupt. He does this by showing what evidence is used in the Salem witch Trials, and what evidence is not.  **That the government and courts were corrupt, wishing only to keep power.**
* **The conclusion of the *The Crucible* shows how during times of crisis, lies become more important than the truth. John Proctor has to lie in order to live; much like how during the Red Scare people had to lie in order to protect themselves from persecution. Arthur miller shows us that through mob mentality innocent people were accused and killed which parallels what happened in the Red Scare.**

1. **Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* (session 2)**

**John Proctor as a Tragic Hero**

* John Proctor is the embodiment of a tragic hero within the parameters set by Arthur Miller.

***The Crucible* as a Modern Tragedy**

* Classical tragedy preserves the unities -- one timespan, one setting, and one story. It also defines a tragic plot as one with a royal/ highborn character losing everything he has gained (kingdoms, life …)
* Modern tragedy redefines the genre, with ordinary protagonists, realistic timelines and settings, and multiple/sub plots.

***The Crucible* as an Allegory**

**Arthur Miller uses allegory in his play to show the similarities between the Salem witch trials and the Red Scare/ McCarthy era (after World War II, about 1947 to 1957).** Miller found in the witch trials a compelling vehicle for discussing modern events.