

INGLESE MATURITÀ

THE VICTORIAN AGE (1837-1901)

Dickens said that "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times" (from *Tales of two cities*).

Good - scientific, industrial, technological advantages, social reforms, expansion of the British Empire, wealth;

Bad - issues of overcrowding, poverty, vice, hypocrisy.

EARLY VICTORIAN AGE - optimism

Victoria married Albert of Saxe-Coburg. They embodied the perfect numerous family, that was very important, in fact they had 9 children. She restored the reputation of the monarchy and was really close to the people.

With the industrial revolution Britain went from being an agricultural nation to being an industrial one, as power shifted from landowners to capitalists. It was also the age of many social reforms, which were gradually granted to try and avoid a revolution like the french one.

- ★ First Reform Bill - vote to the male middle class
- ★ Chartist movement - driven by the working class, wanted universal male suffrage and a parliamentary reform
- ★ Second Reform Bill - suffrage to workers in towns
- ★ Third Reform Bill - vote to workers in mines and agricultural workers
- ★ Factory Acts - limited working hours, regulated child and female labour
- ★ Education Act - elementary education became compulsory
- ★ Fight for Free Trade - to abolish the Corn Laws (that put an additional tax on corn)

New political parties:

Whigs → Liberal Party - Gladstone for domestic affairs

Tories → Conservative Party - Disraeli for foreign affairs

Trade Unions (sindacati) → Independent Labour Party, they are now legal.

Industrial and technological advance: steam locomotives (instead of coal), railway network, new shipbuilding methods (steam instead of sails, iron instead of wood). Metropolitan Railway, 1st underground railway. Telegraph, Penny Postal System (letters to anywhere in the UK for one penny).

Cities: open fields got closed, people went to the cities to work. Overcrowding, slums, poor sanitation. Tunnel of pipes to direct sewage outside the city. Water, gas, lighting in the houses improved life and death rate decreased. The New Metropolitan Police Force was founded because of the rising crime rate.

1851 Great Exhibition: to showcase British progress to the world. The Crystal Palace displayed objects from half of the contributors from Great Britain or the Empire.

Morality: Middle class (merchants, professionals) were proud of their values. Mentality → wealth and poverty considered as indicators of moral values.

Evangelicalism: derived from Methodism, they were committed to social reform and human welfare. Moralistic and puritanical, embodied moral codes of the middle class.

Utilitarianism: idea that only what's useful is good. Wanted to secure the maximum happiness to the greatest possible number. Was criticised for neglecting emotions, feelings, spirituality in general.

1859 Darwin's "On The Origin Of Species": watershed between Early Victorian Age and Late Victorian Age. Humans and animals share a common ancestry. Law of natural selection (only who's stronger will survive)

LATE VICTORIAN AGE - pessimism

Great success of Britain and the Empire, they were convinced of their superiority and felt the moral duty to export language, culture, traditions to "uncivilized" lands. And additionally, imperial expansion.

The Crimean war: 1854-56. With France, Turkey against Russia. They wanted control over the Dardanelles, that

would give them access to India for commerce purposes. Britain won. 1st media covered war (telegraph).

Seppy rebellion: The Indian Mutiny. Native soldiers of the East Indian Company rebelled against the British commanders, that wanted to destroy the Indian cotton industry to favor the English one. Queen Victoria was crowned Empress of India.

The Opium Wars: 1840-57. Britain illegally exported opium from India to China, so the Chinese government tried to suppress the trade, and war broke out. Britain won, China had to cede some territories.

Colonies: with the purpose of preserving the Empire, it was better to grant the colonies some degree of independence. *Canada, Australia, New Zealand* → colonies of settlement, immigrants from Britain pushed the natives out. The first ones to obtain self-government. *Ireland* → no home rule, devastating famine (because of a failed potato crop). Many emigrated to America and Australia. *Africa* → “scramble” for Africa, they all wanted a piece. Bought many territories of the Suez Canal, which connected the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. They believed they had to introduce commerce, Christianity and civilization. Conquered Egypt, Uganda, Kenya.

The Boer War: 1899-1902. Against the South African Dutch Boers. Some Boers moved northward, established 2 republics, the South African Republic and the Orange Free State. They were found to be rich in diamonds and gold. War broke out, Britain won, had supremacy over the 2 republics.

End of optimism - Trade depression: due to the costs of the Empire. Traditional parties were unsatisfactory, people looked for more radical solutions. *Marx* → socialism, new distribution of wealth; *Fabian Society* → socialist organization but with gradual reforms instead of a revolution.

Victorian Compromise: outwardly, society respected its moral codes, but prostitution, gambling, drugs (ex. opium) were hidden under hypocrisy. Hypocritical coexistence of dark sides and optimistic faith in progress.

Social Darwinism: Darwin's law of natural selection applied to humans. “inequality and poverty were natural”, destiny determined by biology, no need of intervention

Feminist question - Suffragettes: *Early V.A.* → women only seen as mothers, wives (either “angel in the home” or “fallen women” - unmarried). *Late V.A.* → aimed at getting better education and the right to vote.

American Civil War: millions of immigrants from Europe, moved to the West.

North → modern, free labour, industry, abolitionists.

South → large farms, slavery as the main labour force. “Underground railroad” → network of people who helped escaped slaves reach the Northern States or Canada.

LINCOLN → anti-slavery, republican party, became president in 1860, so the Southern States seceded from the Union, and created the independent government of the “Confederate States of America”, with *JEFFERSON* as their president. 1861-65 Civil War. North won, better arms, industrialized states. Lincoln assassinated in 1865.

New president Andrew *JOHNSON*. *Reconstruction Acts* readmitted the Southern States to the Union.

14th Amendment gave citizenship to former slaves, *15th Amendment* gave the right to vote to black men.

After the war many moved to the west, to the Great Plains, but there lived the Native Americans, who were dispossessed from their territories.

Gilded Age: peace, flourishing industry. Production of iron and steel, mines of gold and silver, oil.

WESTMINSTER PALACE

Houses of Parliament → where the House of Lords and the House of Commons meet. Where laws governing Britain are debated and passed. In 1834 a fire destroyed much of the medieval palace, that was rebuilt in the Gothic style, which the Victorians thought it represented the perfect union of spiritual and artistic values. Largest Gothic Revival building in the world.

The Lords Chamber: members are called peers, 800 including bishops and archbishops of the Anglican church. Most of them are appointed by the Queen, on advice of the Prime Minister. Red associated with Royalty, symbol

The Commons Chamber: rectangular shape allows that the Government and the Opposition face each other. Green is the traditional color.

Role of the Parliament: Britain doesn't have a codified constitution, but an unwritten one known as the Law and Custom of Parliament. Parliament made up of 3 elements: House of Commons (elected members for 5 years), House of Lords (not elected, often appointed for their lifetime for their services to the nation) and the Monarchy.

It examines the work of the government, makes new laws and changes existing legislation. The party that wins the most seats at the General Elections takes charge of the Government for 5 years. The leader of the winning party is appointed as prime minister and chooses other party members to work as cabinet ministers and junior ministers. The largest non-government party in the house of commons becomes the Official Opposition that questions the prime minister.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

Victorian Compromise → authors aim to instruct and entertain readers without criticising the world they belonged to. Characterised by a strong belief in scientific progress, human nature, social and economic development. Attempt to combine a realistic representation of the problems of society with an adventurous tone and moral aim. Hypocritical coexistence of dark sides and optimistic faith in progress.

Anti-victorian Reaction → strong critic against Early Victorian novelists. Influenced by Darwinism, Realism and Positivism - to represent life in an objective and non-idealised way.

THE NOVEL: more and more people able to read, books less expensive, circulating libraries, episodic publications in newspapers (engaging to the audience). *Features* → entertaining but also made people reflect, moral aim, realistic representation of human condition, complex plots, 3rd person omniscient narrator (who was the spokesperson of the author)

Early Victorian novelists → realistic portrait of society. not critical, wanted to educate readers, make them aware of social evils. (*Dickens* - novels initially as instalments in magazines, tragicomic, tragic tone and happy ending. *Emily Bronte* - *Wuthering Heights* is a narrative experiment, elements taken from Frankenstein's gothic tradition. *Charlotte Bronte* - *Jane Eyre*, theme of womanhood and sisterhood)

Late Victorian novelists → strong criticism, realism more evident. In prose, to denounce the evils of society without any reticence. Duality of the human nature. Meaning of life, moral values, colonisation. Pessimistic point of view, aestheticism. Didn't accept victorian compromise and hypocrisy anymore.

EMILY BRONTE

Life: short and uneventful life, didn't receive a formal education. During her childhood she liked inventing stories with her siblings.

Wuthering Heights

→ it's the retrospective narration of Lockwood, a visitor who tells the story of 2 households on the Yorkshire moors, Wuthering Heights (home to the Earnshaws) and Thrushcross Grange (home to the Lintons). 30 years earlier Mr Earnshaw finds a homeless gipsy boy and adopts him (Heathcliff). His daughter Catherine grows attached to him, but his son Hindley, when he dies, sends Heathcliff to work in the fields as a servant (ill-treated). Catherine decides not to marry him (she would have been degraded), he runs away, but then she marries Edgar Linton from Thrushcross Grange and Heathcliff comes back as a rich man. Catherine dies and Heathcliff leads a tormented life. When Heathcliff dies too, their ghosts are seen walking together on the moor.

Themes: contrast between life and death, nature of human passions, relationship between human beings and the landscape (symbol of the protagonist's untameable) nature, meaning of life and existence of a world after death, relationship between marriage, love and money. Heathcliff seen as a romantic hero, Catherine is a modern figure torn between social conventions and wild instincts.

Style: crude realism, symbols and symbolic elements, ambiguous atmosphere, idiomatic language.

Not in chronological order, lots of flashbacks and flashforwards. Complex narrative technique, 2 main narrators, Mr Lockwood, external observer, and Nelly, internal character.

CHARLOTTE BRONTE

Life: short and uneventful. In her childhood she loved inventing stories with her siblings. She worked as a teacher for some years

Jane Eyre

→ is an orphan, gets an education and becomes the governess of Adele, Mr Rochester's illegitimate daughter. Mr Rochester falls in love with her, but she discovers that he's married to a Creole woman, Bertha Mason, who is held prisoner in a room at the top of the house. Jane runs away, but then she hears Rochester's voice, returns to the house and finds it destroyed by a fire. His wife died, they get married.

Themes: moral journey from poverty through hardship to happiness, education as a means to improve one's life, role of the supernatural - gothic element, role of women in society and their search for independence, critique of the role she had in the Victorian society, contrast between reason and passions. Horror, madness, passions, dreams.

Style: 1st person narrator, gives unity to the novel, revolves around a female character, has autobiographical elements.

COLLECTION OF POEMS: the 3 sisters adopted the pseudonyms Currer/Charlotte, Ellis/Emily and Acton/Anne Bell.

SHIRLEY: social novel set in Yorkshire

VILLETTE: autobiographical novel based on Charlotte's experience in Brussels.

CHARLES DICKENS

Life: received a short formal education and had a difficult childhood. Began to write as a journalist in 1833, became popular thanks to his novel *The Pickwick Papers*. Got married and had 10 children.

Style: characters with very peculiar traits, represented all social strata, often caricatures representing some vices or virtues. Adventurous plots, with an episodic structure - effect of serial publication. Grotesque and humorous tone.

Themes: indignation and criticism against social injustice. Conditions of life of the poor, child exploitation, cruelty of the workhouses, evils of the industrial revolution.

Oliver Twist

→ he's an orphan who works in a workhouse, in very poor conditions. One day he asks for more food and provokes a furious reaction from the officials. He's sent to work as an apprentice, but he runs away to London, where he becomes involved with a gang of thieves, led by Fagin. On his 1st mission Oliver gets arrested but then rescued by Mr Brownlow, the victim of the theft. After a series of difficulties, he finds his half brother and receives a share of his father's fortune.

Style: adventurous plot, originally published in instalments, has a happy ending

Themes: criticism of hypocrisy of the middle class, love and charity can lead to salvation, criticism of the Victorian view of poverty, seen as a sin. social criticism against the Poor Law which introduced Workhouses where children were exploited.

Hard Times

→ Set in a fictional town called Coketown. Thomas Gradgrind is an advocate of Utilitarianism and believes in "hard facts", concrete opportunities that can benefit him. Doesn't believe that love should be at the basis of

marriage so he has his daughter Louisa marry an old factory owner. Her marriage turns out to be extremely unhappy and her father realises his mistakes and prejudices. At the end of the novel Gradgrind is a different person, as he helps the poor.

Style: satirical tone, use of symbols, strong sense of humor, mix of pathos and realism

Themes: criticism of the evils of Victorian age, representation of the conditions of life of the poor, contrast between the rich and the poor, attack against Utilitarianism, that is a materialistic philosophy.

THE PICKWICK PAPERS: lively and entertaining novel, published in instalments and had success, Mr Pickwick and his friends on a scientific journey to discover England.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL: a ghost story

DOMBEY AND SON: attack against greed and money

DAVID COPPERFIELD: autobiographical and coming-of-age novel

BLEAK HOUSE: represents the evils of the industrial revolutions and child labour and exploitation

GREAT EXPECTATION: a coming-of-age novel

LEWIS CARROLL

Life: studied mathematics, photography, and writing - became famous for the “nonsense verse”. Loved to entertain children. Had the ability to see the world through the eyes of a child, but fantasy was also a way to escape the contradictions of Victorian society.

Alice’s adventures in Wonderland

→ the novel tells the story of Alice, a little girl who falls into a rabbit hole and discovers a fantastic world, where strange characters live, for example the Mad Hatter, the White Rabbit, the Queen of Hearts, and many unusual talking animals. All free of common sense and mad. Happy ending - Alice wakes up, it was just a daydream

Themes: Victorian world upside down - rules of logic, science, physics are subverted, disordered, disobeyed. Time and space are relative. Political point of view - the irrational Queen of Hearts is the opposite of the much-admired queen Victoria. Restrictions and rules are no longer valid, land of freedom. Questions of growing up, games with the meaning of words and math and logical problems. Difference with appearance and reality. Nonsense - techniques to disrupt meaning, by inverting the logic and the language and creating unexpected contrasts. Wonderland is a land of absurdity where the traditional notions of logic, identity, sanity, space and time are ridiculed.

ROBERT L. STEVENSON

Life: born in Edinburgh, took a degree in law, travelled across Europe. After his father’s death he went to the US with his wife

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

→ the novel is set in London, with fog and dark corners, perfect worrying environment for such a story (setting as a symbol). Protagonist has 2 identities, Dr Jekyll - a doctor, rational and moral, good; and Mr Hyde - dominated by instincts and sensuality, depraved, irrational, evil. With a potion he transforms himself. Commits lots of ferocious crimes, but escapes detection as a 2nd dose of potion transforms him back into Jekyll. The story ends with Mr Hyde’s suicide.

Themes: dangers of scientific and technological progress. The divided/split self, the double. Pessimism and anxiety vs progress and civilisation (also in the victorian compromise).

It belongs to the genre of detective novel, it is based on epiphanies.

Dr. Jekyll is a sort of Victorian Faustus.

Gothic elements: the night, London in fog, supernatural events and elements

Style: story is told from multiple perspectives, misleading effect on the reader, who is lost in horror (perspectives of Mr Utterson, Dr Lanyon, the maid, finally Jekyll with a letter with his own confession).

Many elements belong to the genre of detective fiction (unsolved crimes, scattered clues, mystery and suspense) and the gothic tradition (ex Frankenstein), but more accurate attention to psychology and morality.

TREASURE ISLAND → considered a boy's novel, tale of historical adventure.

OSCAR WILDE

Life: He was a brilliant student, studied in Dublin and Oxford. Married, had 2 children. His works were attacked as immoral, but they were very successful (again, hypocrisy of Victorian middle class). Became involved in a legal case related to a homosexual affair, was imprisoned for 2 years, when he was released he was a broken man and spent the rest of his life in France.

The Picture of Dorian Gray

→ he's a young, attractive, rich man who has a portrait of himself made by Basil Hallward. He makes a pledge, sells his soul to the devil so that he can maintain his youth and beauty forever. Under Lord Henry's influence he leads a hedonistic life of pleasure, sin, crime, corruption. His physical appearance remains young but the portrait (representing his conscience) becomes old and ugly as he commits sins. At the end he's responsible for the death of an actress and Basil (that saw the disfigured painting), Dorian stabs the portrait and is found dead, transformed into a horrible old man beside the beautiful portrait.

Themes: the double, contrast between good and evil, and between appearance and reality, Aestheticism typical cult of beauty, that serves no moral, political or didactic purpose.

Style: combination of supernatural elements, Gothic elements and French decadent fiction. Unobtrusive 3rd person narrator.

The Importance of Being Earnest

→ AAA

ALFRED TENNYSON

exaltation of the British Empire, even if it's in decline.

Ulysses

→ main sources are Homer's poem Odyssey and Dante's Inferno. Tennyson's monologue refers to the point where Odysseus is told by the fortune teller Tiresias that a gentle death will come to him from the sea. He imagined a hero who, being used to an exciting life becomes bored with his sedentary existence. In the poem we meet Ulysses after he's returned to his kingdom, and says that he must use the time he has left to seek new experiences and forms of knowledge.

Style: dramatic monologue, written in blank verse - unrhymed iambic pentameter.

Themes: Heroism in a weaker and more realistic way, simply an attempt to change things, even if it may fail → futile heroism. courage and obstinacy, one should behave in a heroic way even if the consequences are disastrous.

WALT WHITMAN

American. Wrote in a newspaper *The Brooklyn Freeman*, where he took part in the debate about slavery was a man of strong opinions and held radical position on subjects like women's rights and immigration started a newspaper called the brooklyn freeman in which he debate about slavery

Leaves of Grass

→ collection of poems, 300, many different editions. Gave voice to lots of americans. Celebrates the mechanic, the carpenter, the woodcutter, the shoemaker.

Themes: himself or america (boundless admiration for his own land- individual voices that were brought together in harmonic unity- the whole is made up of individuals).

Style: Free verses, except the poem *O Captain My Captain*, slang expressions and everyday speech.

MODERNISM

one of the most productive yet shocking age of all times.

all the aspects belonging to Victorian literature were swept away:

Einstein's theory of relativity→ destroyed faith in objective reality

Freud's psychoanalysis→ unveiled unconscious and inner world

WW1→ inaugurated era of anxiety and uncertainty

all those things were reflected in the production of that time:

- technical and stylistic experimentalism
- literature to explore inner mind of the modern man
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the break with the 19th century and the outburst of modernism

born in the 20th century, this movement reacted against late 19th century values.

It was influenced and it included many artistic movements, such as:

- futurism
- cubism
- expressionism
- surrealism

even though it was heterogeneous, it had common features:

- fragmentation of the point of view and of the plot→ multi layered narration
- time and place are represented as subjective, rather than as dimensions
- experimental narrative techniques to show the processes of a working mind
- no traditional grammar or punctuation→ new forms of expression
- free verse in poetry
- complex vocabulary or concepts
- human mind is at the centre of the writers' scrutiny.
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britain and modernism

in Britain the main Modernist authors were *T.S Eliot*, *Woolf* and *Joyce*.(between 1920-1925). they tried to represent the unconscious using the "stream of consciousness" technique→ to express the complexity of the human mind.

the modernist poets such as *W.H. Auden* and *Dylan Thomas*, were influenced by the historical events of the time such as the spanish civil war and the great economic depression that followed, the expansion of nazi power.

WAR POETS

The War Poets :Brooke, the last idealistic poet and the 'young romantic hero' who did not live long enough to experience trench warfare and to become disillusioned, Sassoon with his bitter anger and the shocking realistic details, and Owen and the 'pity' of war as a warning to future generation. Their can be considered MODERN POETRY because their subject matter - the war - forced them to find new modes of expression

RUPERT BROOKE

The first War Poet to die, in 1915, at the age of 28, of blood poisoning on the Greek island of Skyros. His early death and the publication of his *Collective Poems* in 1918 made him immensely popular and turned him into a new symbol if the “young romantic hero” who inspired patriotism in the early months of the Great War.

In his war sonnets he advanced the idea that war is clean and cleansing. He was traditional, not only in form, and his poems were the last to express idealistic patriotism also because he did not experience the horrors of trench warfare.

With the exception of Brooke, the War Poets’ realistic accounts of trench warfare ended the style of ‘futile heroism’ which had been an integral part of English culture since Alfred Tennyson. Their work marked a break in the lyrical tradition and paved the way for the self-consciously difficult poetry of the Modernists.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON

A resolute pacifist, he was the first to portray the truth about the war. He recreated the physical horror of the war through anger and satire with the bitter spontaneity of shocking and realistic details. His poetry is centred on the negative emotions: horror, anger, disgust.

Sassoon’s fame as a writer rests mostly on his poems written during the First World War. In these poems he attacks the atrocity and the futility of war in a savage, bitter and satirical way. They are the cry of indignation of a pacifist who was shocked by the world tragedy and protested against those who did not wish to put an end to the massacre.

WILFRED OWEN

Owen died in action in 1918, only one week before the Armistice. From a draft, found in his papers when he was killed: “Above all I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity.” Owen once wrote: “All a poet can do today is warn. That’s why the true poet must be truthful.”

He produced his best poems after meeting Sassoon in a war hospital where they were both recovering from shell shock. His poems are almost unbearably painful in the quite accurate accounts of gas casualties, men who have gone mad or who are only clinically alive although their bodies have been destroyed

Dulce et Decorum Est

on the poet’s experience of the horrors of war in the trenches, the poem is an attempt to communicate the “pity” of war to future generations. The Latin title which means “It is sweet and honourable”, is a quotation from the Latin poet Horace (1st century BC), who borrowed the line from the Greek poet Tyrtaeus.

Anthem for Doomed Youth

In this sonnet Owen stresses the violence of death at the front. The poem is a sequence of vivid compressed images, conveyed through a careful choice of words which often have a onomatopoeic effect. We are confronted with rituals of horror and of private loss.

JOSEPH CONRAD

life: he was born in **Poland** but his family was forced to leave the mother country because of his father's political ideas.

in 1880 he became an officer of the British merchant navy → he travelled widely and **his nomadic's life on the sea was his main source of inspiration for his books**. in 1886 he obtained British citizenship.

he was a prolific writer of short stories. Financial success from his writing didn't come until 20 years later.

Heart of Darkness was a novel based on his experiences of a journey to the Congo.

paradoxically financial success came with *Chance*, one of his lesser novels, in 1913 → he became to enjoy a life of comfort and companionship with friends such as James, Russel,...

Style: he used a fictional sailor and narrator, Marlow, in many novels, as a framing device. stories of maritime → philosophical depth in their reflections on truth and falsehood. AND represent a single human being facing the need to make important decisions after **traditional values have collapsed**.

multiple narrator and points of view → complexity of human experience and the difficulty of judging men's actions.

he has been praised for his experimentations and his analysis of colonialism

Heart of Darkness

he is one of the greatest 20 century novelist known for his mastery in creating atmosphere, his dramatic realism, extensive use of the theme of the double and complicated and rich language as most of Conrad's novels, it is strongly autobiographical and in particular drew on his four month experience in Congo which left him devastated. it is often regarded as the first modern novel for the controversial image given of western civilization. the novel depicts capitalism as a source of exploitation and evil, a daring move at the time as most people would have shared the view of Conrad's contemporary. the journey is into the heart of darkness of exploited, yet untamed Africa, as well as an inner journey into human consciousness.

plot → nightmarish journey into the "heart" of Africa told by a sailor named Marlow. the novel opens in London, where he starts telling the others about the time he spent in the Belgian Congo in search for a man called Kurtz → the journey is an occasion for Marlow to see the brutality of European imperialism in Africa.

when Marlow reaches Kurtz he discovers that he is seriously ill and has become a cannibal, but doesn't want to go back to Europe to be cured. Marlow eventually convinces Kurtz to return to the ship but he is too ill to endure the travel and he dies.

"The Horror, The Horror" are Kurtz's last words → Kurtz's final judgement on his actions and on imperialism in general.

crude representation of colonization → his novel is a crude representation of colonization → **monstrosity and cruelty of the colonizers**. it affects both sides: the natives are enslaved and dehumanized and the colonizers' souls are corrupted by the desire of power.

corruption of European civilization → European civilization is damned and corrupt. European cities' wealth depends on the exploitation of colonies. for Conrad **the light hides in the darkness of corruption and the death of any moral value**. he questions the very idea of colonialism and its positive values.

dualism of darkness and whiteness → the novel is based on the contrast between "darkness" and "whiteness", which sustains the whole novel

- darkness → Africa's unexplored regions, "blackness" of its people, mystery of the human's soul,...

- whiteness→ apparent European civility, ivory,...

it can be a moral, anti colonial and allegory of colonization

narrative technique. → 2 narrators: one is **an anonymous passenger** (frame narrator), the other is Marlow, who tells the story from his own partial point of view→ ambivalence

JAMES JOYCE

Life: He was born in **Dublin** and he studied at University College. Then he moved to Trieste to work as a language teacher and became friends with intellectuals such as **Italo Svevo**. In 1914, when the war broke out, he moved to Zurich and met the poet Ezra Pound.

Style: The first part of his production is marked by a **realistic** approach. His plots are rather linear, language is controlled and syntax is logical. He uses powerful symbols. The second part of his production is more **experimental**. He uses the **stream of consciousness** technique to represent the uncontrolled flux of thoughts of the human mind.

Themes: **Ireland**, with whom Joyce have a double relationship: he **abandons it**, but he **sets all of his main works there**. He represents it as a country dominated by stagnation and stasis.

Paralysis of the modern world

Lack of heroism in the modern world. He uses **ancient myths** to draw parallels between the contemporary world and the ancient past (Ulysses).

Dubliners

→ It is a collection of short stories about the **people of Dublin**. The city of Dublin is seen as a static and provincial town that gives its inhabitants no chance to grow and develop their own potential.

The stories can be divided in three groups:

stories about childhood (sense of disillusionment and failure)

stories about adulthood (impossibility to escape, frustration, lack of freedom)

stories about the relationship between the Irish people and their institutions (paralysis and lack of life)

Themes: the most important one is the **paralysis**, that is both a physical impossibility to escape and a spiritual stagnation of the self.

Style: The narrative technique is only apparently traditional:

use of internal perspective

rejection of the Victorian omniscient third-person narrator

mix of realism and subjective perspective

use of free direct thought and free speech

Ulysses

→ The novel is set in Dublin on one single day (16 June 1904) and it doesn't have a conventional plot. Joyce focused on the actions of three main characters: Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom and Molly, Bloom's wife.

Style: It is an epic novel that uses multiple styles, with a strong experimentation with words, styles, techniques.

Use of the

. It reflects the workings of the minds of the characters. Thoughts are represented freely, without filters and there is no logical or rational organisation of thoughts, no traditional punctuation. Constant references to Homer's Odyssey. This gives universality to the events narrated.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Life: She was born in London and was the daughter of Leslie Stephen, a Victorian intellectual. She did not go to the University but she was surrounded by intellectuals and artists.

When her mother died at the age of 49, she had a mental breakdown.

In 1904 she moved to Bloomsbury where she founded the "Bloomsbury Group", a group of artists. In 1912 she married Leonard Woolf and founded the Hogarth Press. She committed suicide in 1941.

Woolf's novels are like mental voyages focusing on the contrast between internal and external reality.

Style: It has no traditional plot or style.

Use of the interior monologue to render the workings of the minds of the characters.

She had a preference for a poetic and lyrical style.

Frequent use of symbols.

Themes: "Moments of Being": the moment in which a certain spiritual truth is revealed.

Womanhood

the passing of time: the difference between subjective and objective time

Mrs Dalloway

→ The story takes place on one day in one single place, London. Mr Dalloway is a middle-aged woman who is organising a dinner party. The narration follows her as she wanders through London. She has a male counterpart, Mr Septimus, who wanders through London too. Eventually, he commits suicide. The news of his death reaches Mr Dalloway at her party.

Themes: contrast between life and death

the complexity of every ordinary character on the most ordinary day

fragmentation of the self and of outer reality

Style: Woolf uses the stream of consciousness technique in a very poetic way

She never abandons the stability of syntax and used a third-person omniscient narrator

To the Lighthouse

→ In the first part of the novel, Mr and Mrs Ramsay spend their summer on a remote island with their children. James, the youngest of the children, wants to go to a lighthouse but his father says no.

In the second part, time passes and Mr Ramsay dies.

The third part opens 10 years later. The living Ramsay take their trip to the lighthouse.

Themes: Dichotomies: male vs. female, light vs. darkness, inner world vs. outer world

Womanhood: Mr Ramsay is the centre of the novel and is represented as a woman, mother and wife

Style: Use of the interior indirect monologue, which renders the character's thoughts understandable.

Symbols, such as the lighthouse, create a sense of narrative unity in the novel.

SAMUEL BECKETT

life→ **1906 in Dublin.** he studied at Trinity College and later on he went to Paris to teach english, and there he became **assistant to James Joyce**. Ireland was a neutral country during WW2 → he was allowed to stay in France and there he fought with the **French Resistance** until 1942.

after that he decided to stay in Paris where he wrote *Eleutheria*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and the novels *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable*, *Mercier and Camier*.

waiting for Godot was his biggest success.

1960 → Beckett led a career as a **Theatre director** and in 1969 → **Nobel Prize for literature**.

he died in 1989 after 9 years of illness which caused him to live in a nursing home.

waiting for godot → "**Tragicomedy in 2 acts**" where basically nothing happens

Endgame → in a post-atomic bunker. inability of humanity to overcome existential loneliness

Krapp's last Tape → monologue where a man listens to his own record telling him about when he was happy.

happy days → long monologue where a woman buried up to her waist/neck remembers her happy days.

after this play his plays became more and more essential (**silence and stillness**) → **existential void of modernity through theatre**

Beckett's plays → **Theatre of the Absurd genre** → it rejects any notion of logical plot to show the absurdity of human existence.

common features:

Absence of a proper plot, Mix of comedy and tragedy, lack of proper "action", a pervading sense of meaninglessness of life.

Themes:

negation of time → timelessness and an endless present

perception → characters sure of their existence only if someone perceives them → **fear of non-existence**

imprisonment → repetition of actions → life is like a prison

"theatre" itself → reflection on human life which is portrayed in a realistic way.

language → has the power to convey meaning. all expressive possibilities. (repetitions, silence, well-known phrase, ..) → **language is meaningless = meaninglessness of life**. he wrote in both english and french → language is a veil, a mask that has to be torn apart.

Waiting for Godot

Plot → Vladimir and Estragon Are waiting for a man called Godot near a tree. two men enter: Pozzo, who stops to talk with them, and his slave Lucky, which entertain them by dancing. a boy brings the message that godot will not come that night, but the night after. end first act.

act two: vlad and estr wait by the same tree but the same people arrive → pozzo has become blind and lucky stupid and they don't remember meeting them the night prior, same goes for the boy that brings the message telling that godot will not come that night, but the night after he surely will. end.

it is a **tragicomedy in two acts** → tragic because life is an endless wait for something to happen, comedy because of the gags the two characters enact to kill time.

no plot, essential, passing of time and meaning of life, fragmented and broken language.

who is Godot? → nobody will ever know. he could be God (humanity waiting for god) or an event, a person that gives life a meaning.

PARALYSIS, IMPRISONMENT, AND EPIPHANY

paralysis common nature of failure that they experience. They have a desire of fulfillment, but ultimately surrender because they don't have the will to transform their desire in action. Spiritual stagnation of the self, lack of growth.

One way to escape from that is epiphany, the realisation that they are paralyzed, they become aware of that.

The dead → Gabriel and his wife Gretta have come back from a party. There she heard an old Irish song that reminds her of her first love, Michael Furey, that probably died for her. Gabriel asks her why she looks thoughtful and she tells him. He has his epiphany. He's never had an important role in his wife's life. He's never loved anyone the way Gretta and Michael Furey had loved each other. (passage)

Ulysses → 1st part - young Stephen Dedalus, intellectual, teacher, parallelism with Telemachus. the Telemachiad
2nd part - the odyssey, urban wanderer Leopold Bloom, middle aged Jewish advertising salesman. anti-hero, very ordinary man, heroism disappeared and sterility dominates.

3rd part - Nostos, Leopold goes back to his loving but unfaithful wife Molly, parallelism with Penelope. Molly's monologue is a direct interior monologue → free-flowing stream of consciousness, unpunctuated sentences.

Mrs Dalloway → lives her being a mother and a wife as a limitation of her freedom, but not able to express her feelings spontaneously and so self-imposes restrictions on her liberty just because she feels weak and imperfect.

Clarissa - desire to celebrate life and attraction towards death - also Septimus.

Septimus commits suicide, she understands that death is part of life and decides to live on.

→ **Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde (?)** it is based on epiphanies.

PREJUDICE (RACISM-COLONIALISM) EXPLOITATION

Dickens, child exploitation, prejudice → poor represent the bad side of society, poverty was seen as a sin and poor people could only receive assistance if they worked → workhouses, Charles D. himself had had personal experience of poverty and child labour and thought Oliver Twist expressed living conditions of the poor and iniquity of the poor law of 1834 which dictated that public charity was to be administered through workhouses. Testo: Bleak House, Dickens believed in the ethical and political power of literature and in this novel gives a powerful description of slum housing, property speculation, overcrowded urban graveyards, neglect of contagious diseases.

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Verga prejudice and exploitation, Rosso Malpelo

Victoria Age: The Victorians believed it was their duty to export their language and cultural supremacy, feelings of the power, optimism and confidence characterised the Victorian age. They were convinced of their superiority → Africa: from exploration to colonisation/exploitation, the 19th century European scramble of Africa was a period of rapid colonisation of the African continent by European powers. It was preceded by the exploration of Africa, the most famous explorer was Livingstone who was a missionary and anti-slavery campaigner and believed that the only way to liberate Africa from slavery was to introduce the 3 C: commerce, Christianity and civilization. But it didn't happen. In fact, the British government bought the majority of shares of the Suez Canal and conquered Egypt 1899-1902 the Boer War, war with the South African provinces, the Boer who refused to live under British and so they declared war but it gave Britain supremacy over them.

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Conrad, exploitation of colonies, prejudice. I like to start with the theme of exploitation, in particular I like to talk about colonialism and the critique of colonialism. Joseph Conrad starts to represent in his novels for the first time criticism of colonialism. As most of Conrad's novels, it is strongly autobiographical and in particular drew on his four-month experience in Congo which left him devastated. It is often regarded as the first modern novel for the controversial image given of Western civilization. The novel depicts capitalism as a source of exploitation and evil, a daring move at the time as most people would have shared the view of Conrad's contemporary. The journey is into the heart of darkness of exploitation **crude representation of colonization** → his novel is a crude representation of colonization → **monstrosity and cruelty of the colonizers**. It affects both sides: the natives are enslaved and dehumanized and the colonizers' souls are corrupted by the desire of power.

corruption of European civilization → European civilization is damned and corrupt. European cities' wealth depends on the exploitation of colonies. For Conrad **the light hides in the darkness of corruption and the death of any moral value**. He questions the very idea of colonialism and its positive values.

dualism of darkness and whiteness → the novel is based on the contrast between "darkness" and "whiteness", which sustains the whole novel

- darkness → Africa's unexplored regions, "blackness" of its people, mystery of the human's soul,...
- whiteness → apparent European civility, ivory,...

it can be a moral, anti colonial and allegory of colonization

. He denounced the brutalism of european colonizer but he's also accused because he had a vision of africa that is still near to the european vision of africa ,we can see in his masterpieces Heart of Darkness that his vision is represented also in the protagonist that yet he considered himself and a part of his crashes forced last man to do meaningless thing.We analyzed the text in which Marlow arrives to a place in were there are building a railway and they were are typical man and the work they are doing is useless and he pronounced some ironical sentences ,he said that is a sort of philanthropic desire of colonialism to force them to do something to keep them busy because there is only a ironical way to explain this.The theme has also a double keys because colonialism is bad for the africans and also to colonizer because european soul are debated their wet is based on the exploitation of people ,and these is a fake . This dualism of darkness and whitness is also in the title because the heart is the heart of africa but also the darkness is can refer to european society.

Whitman he took place in the debate about slavery American. Wrote in a newspaper *The Brooklyn Freeman*, where he took part in the debate about slavery

was a man of strong opinions and held radical position on subjects like women's rights and immigration started a newspaper called the brooklyn freeman in which he debate about slavery

Racism in **Charlotte Bronte's** Jane Hare ,victorian prejudice →it is to depict Bertha Mason,a creole woman,like mad,ugly and even assimilated to an animal

disprezzo verso:contempt for