

**A Research Article on
SALIENT FEATURES OF ENGLISH LITERARY MOVEMENTS**

To be presented at

**One-Day International Inter-Disciplinary Seminar on
'Socio-Economic, Historical, Political, Commercial,
Managerial, Environmental and Literary Movements '**

Organized by

**Swami Vivekananda Education Society's
VIVEKANAND COLLEGE, KOLHAPUR**

☺ Name of the Author ☺

MR. VINODKUMAR ASHOK PRADHAN
Asst. Professor,
Department of English,
Sadashivrao Mandlik Mahavidyalaya, Murgud.,
Tal.: Kagal, Dist.: Kolhapur
(Affiliated to Shivaji University, Kolhapur)
pradhanvinod99@yahoo.com
9960733174

SALIENT FEATURES OF ENGLISH LITERARY MOVEMENTS

Mr. VINODKUMAR ASHOK PRADHAN

Assistant Professor, Department of English,

Sadashivrao Mandlik Mahavidyalaya,

Murgud., Tal.- Kagal, Dist.- Kolhapur

pradhanvinod99@yahoo.com

9960733174

ABSTRACT:

English literature today is not an overnight accomplished in the way it is. It has to refine, polish, reconstruct, and reshape itself through various periods, movements, criticism and so on. Many poets, authors, critics, essayists, dramatists and novelists have contributed it by their masterpieces. It was possible because the kings and queens gave patronage to the art of those writers. Coffeehouses in those days also have their own share as writers of same age used to come together to exchange their art to each other. Thanks to the age in which there were such social conditions that made the writers to produce their wonderful literature. Thanks to those favourable and unfavourable social circumstances that made the writers of high intellect to produce satires. This is why each literary movement is known either by the name of the then King or Queen and writer.

The literary movements have their remarkable features which made them to sustain their value and impression even today. This paper is an attempt to refocus them and drag attention of today's upcoming writers to contribute and continue the tradition of those literary movements and create new horizons too.



INTRODUCTION

‘Literature is the mirror of society.’ English literary movements have added their flavour to the literature produced in it. Though some writers were imitators of foreign art, literature and culture, they started their own style of writing that used to be liked by the readers of their age. According to the utility theory in economics, each interest has its limit. Hence, something used to become old and new introduced. We can have example of decline of drama and rise of novel. The social circumstances and interest of people are the two fundamental factors that were catering the writers their material to create something new for their people and period. Every literature could be understood only

under the light of the age in which it is produced. This paper gives a scenario of literary movements with its features and angles to go through.

What is a literary movement?

‘Birds of same feathers flock together.’ This saying is perfectly suitable for a movement is a group of writers who have same aim of writing, having approximately same years of publication and have equal base of operation. The artists of equal taste of writing and ideas come together and they create something which can bring the favourable change in the society. Literature is a powerful weapon in the hands of writers who can bring it to its effect by using their sharp wit. It is a mute conflagration that needs a spark to eradicate evil from the society.

Metaphysical Movement

This movement took birth in 17th century. The literature produced under this moment exhibits meditations of the themes such as love, death, God and human frailty. This literature was much more realistic one. The word is divided into two – meta (beyond) + physical (understanding). The poetry, especially, was beyond the understanding of common man. It was too difficult for them as they were full of obscurity.

✓ Features:

- The literature was full of irony, wit and was highly paradoxical
- The writers were masters in the use of conceits (an elaborate poetic image or a far-fetched comparison of very dissimilar things)
- The writers were handling subject matter with ease to prove their point
- These pieces of writing are highly philosophical

Authors:

John Donne the writer of ‘A Valediction Forbidding Mourning’, ‘The Sun Rising’, ‘Death Be Not Proud – Holy Sonnet X’, ‘Woman’s Constancy’ and ‘Love’s Alchemy’ proved to be master of this movement. George Herbert contributed with his

‘Easter Wings’, ‘The Collar’ and ‘The Windows’. Andrew Marvell’s ‘The Mower’s Song’, ‘The Mower to the Glo-Worms’, ‘The Mower Against Gardens’, ‘The Garden’ and ‘To His Coy Mistress’ brought up Metaphysical literature to its maturity.

Augustan Movement:

This was a highly satiric movement. It was rich in using heroic couplets. Iambic pentameter was dominating. The poets of this movement imitated Greek and Roman epics and also translated them into English but in heroic couplets and in the classical form.

✓ **Features:**

- ✓ This literature is remarkable for its brevity, wit, paradox and irony
- ✓ These are actually observation with sharpness
- ✓ The mocking tone is used to reflect human frailty
- ✓ The writers used to comment with comic effects
- ✓ The writers used satire to improve society

Poets:

John Dryden is the foremost name who wrote ‘Mac Flecknoe’, ‘Marriage a-la-mode’ and ‘Absalom and Achitophel’. Alexander Pope is the name who ‘The Rape of the Lock’, ‘Windsor Forest’, ‘Epitaph on Sir Isaac Newton’ are the milestones in the genre. John Gay, the playwright, wrote ‘A Beggar’s Opera’ which is best example of Augustan movement. Similarly, Jonathan Swift’s ‘Gulliver’s Travels’ and ‘A Modest Proposal’ are the next few examples.

Romantic Movement:

It is a literary movement of the 19th century. This literature is produced in common man’s language and about common life of them, unlike metaphysical movement. It is highly emotional and enthusiastic in expression. Human imagination is reflected through it. Forces of nature are effective at large in it.

✓ **Features:**

- Natural imagery is used
- It empowers human imagination to escape for society’s strictures, established authority and even from the fear of death.

- There is an impressive, obscure and scarce descriptive mode which is different than merely beautiful as in Elizabethan age

Poets:

William Wordsworth contributed with his 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud', 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge', 'Lucy', 'My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold' and 'Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey'. P. B. Shelley's 'Ozymandias', 'Ode to the West Wind', 'Adonais – An Elegy on the Death of John Keats', 'The Cloud' and 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' fall under this category. The trend was continued by John Keats with his 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'When I Have Fears that I May Cease to Be', 'To Autumn', 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and 'Ode to a Nightingale'. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman were the American poets who shared the movement with their poetry too.

The Symbolists' Movement:

A movement associated with a group of French writers during c. 1880-95. It may be seen as a reaction against dominant realist and naturalist tendencies in literature generally and in the case of poetry, against the descriptive precision and 'objectivity' of the Parnassians. The symbolists stressed the priority of suggestion and evocation over direct description and explicit analogy. Symbolist writers were particularly concerned to explore the musical properties of language, through the interplay of connotative sound relationships, but were deeply interested in all the arts and much influenced by the synthesizing ideals of Wagner's music dramas. Other influences on the movement were the mystical writings of Swedenborg, and the poetry of Nerval, Baudelaire and Poe.

✓ **Features:**

- This movement is supposed to be a link between romanticism and modernism.
- The writers in it yearn for transcendence – but they are more decadent and sensual
- Works in this movement seem obscure in the beginning but contain deep symbols and intuitive associations
- It deals with the dusk and dawn and with the time between waking and sleep
- Dreams or dream states figure prominently in many of the symbolist art
- Synaesthesia (using one sense to describe another) proved to be a favourite mode

- Especially the French symbolists were adept at using words with three or four simultaneous meanings, creating a resonance among groups of these words.

Authors:

Generally associated with the symbolist moment are: the poets Mallarmé, Verlaine, Rimbaud, and Laforgue; the dramatists Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and Maeterlinck, and the novelists Huysmans and Edouard Durjardin. The moment exercised and influence on painting and on a wide range of 20th century writers including Pound, T. S. Eliot, W. Stevens, Yeats, Joyce, V. Woolf, Claudel, Valéry, Stefan George, and Rilke. It was the subject of A. W. Symons's 'The symbolists Movement in Literature' (1899) and played a part in the development of the Russian symbolist movement and of the *modernista* movement in Latin America.

Modernism:

In British Modernism may be seen as a literary movement spanning the period from 1890 to the start of the Second World War. It may also be viewed as a collective term for the remarkable variety of contending groups, movements, and schools in literature, art, and music throughout Europe over the same period. The period was a time of confrontation with the public, typified by the issuing of manifestos, the proliferation of 'little magazines', and the rapid dissemination of avant-grade works and ideas across national borders or linguistic barriers.

✓ **Features:**

- We find illusion dominating over the literary productions
- It reduces human experiences into fragments
- It is mainly influenced by cubism i.e. the reduction and fragmentation of natural forms into abstract, often geometric structures usually rendered as a set of discrete planes
- The writers in this movement tried to see the world from as many points of view as possible at the same time
- This movement is concerned with how an individual relates to their environment or how the environment helps to create the individual
- It focuses on machines or other inanimate objects rather than nature or humans

Authors:

- ✓ **Wallace Stevens'** 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird', 'The Snowman', 'Peter Quince at the Clavier' and 'Anecdote of the Jar' started the movement.
- ✓ **William Carlos Williams** accelerated with his 'Red Wheelbarrow', 'This is Just to Say', 'Danse Russe', 'Spring and All', 'The Great Figure', 'The Yachts', 'Desert Music' and 'The Descent'.
- ✓ **Hilda Doolittle**, American poet, wrote several volumes of poetry, from her first, 'Sea Garden' (1916), to her last, the quasi-epic 'Helen in Egypt' (1961), shows a deep involvement with classical mythology, a sharp, spare use of natural imagery, and interesting experiments.
- ✓ **Marianne Moore**, American poet, wrote her first volume, 'Poems' (1921), was followed by 'Observations' (1924), 'Selected Poems' (1936), 'Collected Poems' (1951). Her tone is characteristically urbane, sophisticated, and conversational, her observations detailed and precise, and her poems are composed for the page with a strong sense of visual effect.
- ✓ **T.S. Eliot**, a major figure in English literature since the 1920s. His poetry represented the main stream of the modern movement in poetry in England: from this time he was regarded as a figure of great cultural authority, whose influence was more or less inescapable. His 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', 'Ash Wednesday' are famous contributions to the movement.
- ✓ **E. E. Cummings**, American poet, his first book 'The Enormous Room' (1922), an account of his three-month internment in a French detention camp in 1917, won him an immediate international reputation. 'Tulips and Chimneys' (1923) was the first of 12 volumes of poetry. 'Eimi' ((1933), and 'Complete Poems: 1910-1952' (1980) are his other famous works.

Besides the prose writers contributed to this movement with their masterpieces. They are- James Joyce's 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man', Virginia Woolf's 'Mrs. Dalloway', William Faulkner's 'As I Lay Dying' and Kate Chopin's 'The Awakening' are the best examples.

Harlem Renaissance Movement

This is a remarkable movement that took birth in the first half of the 20th century i.e. after World War I, during the movement of African Americans to northern industrial cities. It is also famous as the Great Migration in the history.

✓ Features:

- Literature of this movement is directly related to African American concerns and issue of the time
- Many writers rely on repetitive structure similar to blues lyrics or on fragmented structure similar to jazz improvisations
- Several of the poets of the movement consciously sought new American idioms alongside other African American artists such as blues singer Bessie Smith
- Other poets combined European forms like the sonnet with a content and tone more related to African American concerns

Authors

- Paul Laurence Dunbar a powerful writer who contributed for this movement through his 'Frederick Douglass', 'sympathy' and 'We Wear the Mask'.
- Claude McKay followed the tradition of Paul by writing 'If We Must Die', 'The White House' and 'The Tropics of New York'.
- Langston Hughes is the name under this movement that has kept the essence of writing started by earlier writers through his 'I, Too Sing America', 'The Negro Speaks of Rivers', 'Theme for English B' and 'Montage of a Dream Deferred'.
- Countee Cullen a young poet of the movement kept the tradition of writing contributed with his 'Incident', 'For a Lady I Know' and 'Yet Do I Marvel'.

The prose writers also have their share to support the movement which was a kind of history in itself as the blacks were not allowed to live normal life like other human beings on the earth. The writers and their works are as given further: Zora Neale Hurston's 'Their Eyes Were Watching God', Nella Larsen's 'Passing', Richard Wright's 'Black Boy and Native Son' and Ralph Ellison's 'Invisible Man'.

Postmodernism:

It is the term applied by some commentators since the early 1980s to the ensemble of cultural features characteristic of Western societies in the aftermath of Modernism. Accordingly, 'postmodernity' asserts itself from about 1956 with the exhaustion of the work of Beckett among others, and the huge cultural impact of television and popular music. Many disputants maintain that literary works described as 'postmodernist' are really continuations of the Modernist tradition, but some general literary features of the period have been identified as typical, including tendencies to parody, pastiche, skepticism, irony, fatalism, the mixing of 'high' and 'low' cultural allusions, and an indifference to the redemptive mission of Art as conceived by the Modernist pioneers. Thus, postmodernism favours random play rather than purposeful action, surface rather than depth. The kinds of literary work that have been described as postmodernist include the Theatre of Absurd and some experimental poetry.

✓ Features:

- Parody, irony and narrative instability often inform the tone of the literature of this movement
- Allusions are just as likely to be made to popular culture as they are to classical learning
- Ideas that spread across a spectrum predominate
- There is no real center as internet has decentralized
- The surface is often more interesting to postmodern artists than any deep ideas

Authors:

Most commonly, it is prose fiction that is held to exemplify the postmodernist mood or style, notably in works by American novelists such as Nabokov, Barth, Pynchon, and Vonnegut; and by British authors Fowles, Carter, Rushdie, Barnes, Ackroyd and Winterson.

The Beats Movement

The term 'Beat' was first used by Herbert Huncke (1916-96) to describe his own state of anomic drifting and social alienation. 'Beat' was quickly picked up by Kerouac

as a triple entendre – an epithet that brought together a sense of being ‘beaten’ with the state of being ‘beatific’, as well as suggesting the pulse and ‘beat’ of music.

✓ **Features:**

- It is a post-World War II phenomenon
- It used different settings over the years to practice their brand of hallucinogenic, visionary, anti-establishment art.
- It shared a sense of personal frankness with the confessional poets and a sense of interdisciplinary energy with the New York school
- Buddhism was important to many members
- It has deep connection to nature
- It could be in satirical, angry and ranting as well tender and meditative tone

Authors:

The pioneers of the moment were Ginsberg, whose book ‘Howl’ (1956) protested that America had seen ‘the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness’, and Kerouac, whose ‘On the Road’ (1957) reinvented a mythic landscape of highways, bars, and Gregory Corso and W. Burroughs, the Beats developed an aesthetic based on the spontaneity of jazz, Buddhist mysticism, and the raw urgency of sex. Lawrence Ferlinghetti has contributed to this movement by his ‘A Coney Island of the Mind’, ‘The Changing Light’, ‘Vast Confusion’ and ‘Wild Dreams of a New Beginning’. Gary Snyder is following the movement who has produced ‘Four Poems for Robin’, ‘For All’ and ‘Hay for the Horses’.

Confessional:

It is a term principally applied to the self-revealing style of writing and use of intimate subject matter adopted and pioneered in America. A new wave of confessional writing in prose occurred in the 1980s and 1990s when a vogue for autobiographical material, family history, and frank memoirs coincided in Britain with a new sense of male interest in domestic and psychological matters hitherto regarded as predominantly female terrain.

✓ **Features:**

- This type of literature uses I, me, my like pronouns seriously and explored intimate content
- Love affairs, suicidal thoughts, fears of failure, ambivalent or downright violent opinions about family members, and other autobiographically sensitive material moved to the front and center.
- They ‘pried open’ their innermost thoughts and opened them for the entire world to see, even if it meant sharing one’s troubled feelings or mental health issues.
- Literature under this movement revealed the doubts and anxieties of suburban America
- Authors of this movement had to invest a great deal of time and efforts into their craft, constructing verse that paid careful attention to rewritten prosody (the science or study of poetic meters and versification).

Authors:

John Berryman is the foremost writer of this movement who began it with his ‘Dream Song 1’, ‘Dream Song 4’ and ‘Dream Song 29’. Robert Lowell next to Berryman contributed with his ‘Skunk Hour’, ‘For the Union Dead’, ‘Memories of West Street and Lepke’ and ‘Home After Three Months Away’. Among the women confessional writers Anne Sexton wrote ‘Wanting to Die’, ‘The Truth the Dead Know’ and ‘For My Lover, Returning to his Wife’. Last but not least in the movement is Sylvia Plath who expressed herself through ‘Daddy’, ‘Lady Lazarus’, ‘Balloons’, ‘Ariel’ and a prose- ‘The Bell Jar’.

Conclusion:

Thus, literary movements have brought drastic changes in the form and style it had begun with. Today the readers have an ocean of written books to dive in. Reading is at challenge nowadays due to the media that is trying to trespass the territory printed books. But books have their own standard and value one cannot deny. It will be important assets of not an age but of all ages.



References:

- *Drabble, Margaret and Stringer, Jenny, The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature, Oxford University Press, third edition 2007*
- <http://chintanmahida.tripod.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/document1.pdf>
- http://www.mrsmelaniemietrich.com/uploads/4/2/2/0/42204131/literary_movements.pdf
- *Microsoft Encarta Britannica, 2008*

