**A Comparative study: An example**

**Introduction:** Modernism may converge with other literary movements most importantly those which preceded or succeeded it like Realism and Post-modernism. In this lecture we will have a look first at differences between Realism and Modernism and illustrate using different literary texts belonging to both movements. Moreover, we will summarise a short comparison between the two modernist novels: *The Great Gatsby* (1925) by Scott Fitzgerald and *The Sun also Rises* (1926) by Ernest Hemingway.

**1/Modernism vs. Realism**

Before an indulgence in the world of comparison let us take a look at the characteristics of both movements. The following table will guide you:

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| Movement | Modernism | Realism |
| Characteristics | - It is new (in form and content),  -It is an Avant Garde,  -It is anti-realism as although it depicts real life but not as the 19th century form of realism where only the superficial aspects of life are depicted (Subjective instead of objective),  -It portrays reality of life in pessimistic tone(unlike Romanticism and the Victorian Literature),  -It reflects variety and complexity in writing,  -It focuses on the inner self rather than the outer world,  -It raises questions about existence (especially about God in the West),  -Stories carry multiple perspectives and experiences (in narration, plot, and characterisation),  -It uses techniques like “stream of consciousness” and “multiple narration” for the representation of the inner mind,  -There are no sequential and logical connected events in modernist literature (use of flashbacks or open endings),  -It questions the isolation of the individual in the modern age,  -It tackles themes of fragmentation, disillusionment, and lack of communication that resulted from the horrors of WWI and as a result of Capitalism,  -It is autobiographical,  -It is experimental (in language and form),  - | -It portrays reality of everyday life people especially middle class,  -It is a rejection to Romanticism’s artificiality and ignorance,  -It focuses on the quality of the individual, this is why characters or a realism novels are more important than the plot,  -No poetic or romantic language is used in realists’ writings (unlike Romanticism),  -The tone is either comic or sarcastic,  -The plot follows a reasonable structure,  -Avoidance of the dramatic and the sentimental,  - Decorative language is almost absent from the characters’ speech, to the narrators’, to the plot exposition (luck of ornamentation). |

**2/ A Comparative Reading of Two Modern Novels *The Great Gatsby* and *The Sun also Rises***

Both novels are read as modernist novels for many purposes which will be summarised bellow in the table. The first thing to keep in mind is that both novelists are products of Western society (America) at the post WWI, they are Lost Generation, they witnessed the rise of the Industrial Revolution, and were affected by the time philosophical theories like Psychoanalysis, Marxism, Existentialism, and the New Woman question. The gritty realism of the 19th century, hence, was too limited to permit them to portray war aftermaths, the Jazz Age, and the new industrial society. Modernism provided them with a new style and sum of techniques which allowed them to describe the recklessness of the 1920’s.

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| **writer** | **Scott Fitzgerald** | **Ernest Hemingway** |
| **novel** | The Great Gatsby (1925) | The Sun Also Rises (1926) |
| **genre** | Romance  Novel of Manners  Autobiographical | Travelogue  Roman à clef  Autobiographical |
| **plot** | Starts with Nick’s backgrounds and shifts to Gatsby’s story. | Starts with Cohen’s story and shifts to Jake Barnes’. |
| **Narration** | Narrated in the ‘modified’ first point of view  (Nick not Gatsby narrating, use of flashbacks, unreliable narrator, shift in narration occurs) | Narrated form first person point of view (Jake Barnes’ as we see the whole story from his eyes) |
| **Characterisation** | Protagonist: Jay Gatsby but Nick, Tom and Daisy are all important characters. | Protagonist Jake Barnes but Cohen and Brett are equally important. |
| **Focal Themes** | The Decadence of the American Dream  Both stories tell stories of impossible love, luck of communication, disillusionment, war aftermaths, false friendships, the new woman, criticism of the American society, but also keep open window for hope (Nick and Jake) | The Lost Generation  //////////////////////////////////////////////////////// |
| **Tone** | Ironic, critical, and pessimistic | Ironic, critical, nostalgic, and pessimistic |
| **Techniques** | Intertextuality, Different perspectives (filling the gaps of narration), Use of setting for social class recognition, symbolism. | Intertextuality, Iceberg theory, use of symbolism. |