

## REALIST, MODERNIST AND POSTMODERNIST TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

(Soňa Šnircová, *Realism, Modernism, Postmodernism: Five Modern Literary Texts in Context*. Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, 2015. Online edition.)

The organizational structure of the manuscript *Realism, Modernism, Postmodernism: Five Modern Literary Texts in Context* is focused on the presentation of five modern literary modes of writing – the realistic, stream of consciousness, absurdist, magical realist and metafictional modes – thus enabling the readers to perceive, understand, compare and ponder on the main postulates of the Realist movement, modernist and postmodernist literary trends, respectively. Initially straightforward in its form, the structure of the manuscript is further enriched with complex, practical and rather fruitful academic insights into each literary mode previously mentioned. Namely, each mode is represented by prominent literary texts simultaneously demonstrating its formal aspects and thematic concerns. Thus, realism is depicted through Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, modernism through Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Samuel Becket's *Waiting for Godot*, and, finally, postmodernism through Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Milan Kundera's *Immortality*. Each individual chapter of the manuscript is divided into three sections: 1. an outline of the historical, cultural and philosophical contexts of a literary mode; 2. close reading analyses of short passages from the chosen texts; 3. a series of study questions followed by a list of suggested further reading particularly encouraging the readers' interpretations of the selected texts. The length of the given manuscript is quite adequate for the ambitious creative goals that Šnircová has aimed to accomplish.

The main theoretical issue of this manuscript is rather universal in its scope; namely, it focuses on the relationship between the literary text and human reality. The readers are inspiringly invoked to contemplate complex relationships between the mind, language and the world thereby inevitably linking the contemporary theoretical insights from psychology, linguistics and the philosophy of language. Owing to the textbook's interdisciplinary approach (i.e. the author's combining the fields of literary history, literary criticism and literary theory), the readers are strongly invited to consider the given texts not only as exemplary representatives of historically specific literary movements, but also to "explore our own perception

of the interaction between the subjective world of our mind and the objective world in which we all exist.” (Šnircová 2015, 3)

Although the main purpose of the textbook is explanatory, Šnircová’s intent in writing this manuscript has profoundly been concerned with enabling students “to develop their own explorations of the possibilities and limitations which each text embodies in its representation of the human experience of reality” and, ultimately, “to encourage us to participate in the ongoing human dialogue about the epistemological, ethical and metaphysical aspects of our individual and social existence.” (Šnircová 2015, 3) Thus, the manuscript validly illustrates not only the continuing academic, but also the genuine pedagogical interests of the author. The mere fact that both relevant aspects – academic and pedagogical – are equally combined in the manuscript argues in favour of its praiseworthy quality.

The additional strong points of Šnircová’s manuscript are definitely the utmost clarity in the presentation of complex ideas (quite adequate and appropriate for genuine target readers), concise, consistent and coherent style of writing, exceptional linguistic quality of her written English, constant usage and frequent reference to up-to-date literary terminology and, last, but not least, versatile quality of knowledge presented.

The manuscript *Realism, Modernism, Postmodernism: Five Modern Literary Texts in Context* meets all the significant criteria of academic excellence: the author’s sound critical thinking, actuality of the chosen literary texts, innovative and creative literary analyses, remarkable linguistic expression and structural clarity. This volume has primarily been designed as a supporting material for the postgraduate course on modern trends in European literature, as Šnircová herself claims in the introductory section. Thus, the primary target group of readers is (master) student-oriented; however, this publication is warmly recommended as a textbook to the teachers of literature running similar academic courses at the University level, as well as the wider reading audience with a keen interdisciplinary approach to literary texts. Namely, the chosen texts in this publication are adequately placed into the broader historical, philosophical and cultural contexts thereby providing “the background knowledge necessary for a deeper understanding of their formal and thematic aspects” (Šnircová 2015, 3). These broad insights, highly appreciated in a serious scholarly research, testify to the validity of current trends in literary studies regarding the indispensable research of both literary texts and contexts.

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