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From Classics to Modernity: Perspectives on The Literary Canon

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Abstract: This article examines the transformations of the literary canon from classical works to contemporary texts. The author analyzes how the perception and evaluation criteria of literature change depending on cultural and social contexts, as well as the influence of new literary movements on the understanding of classical works. Special attention is given to the relevance of classic literature in the modern world, its ability to captivate new generations of readers, and its role in shaping literary taste.

Keywords: Perception, classics, moral responsibility, new authors, relevance, media format, platform.

Introduction: Classic literature has always held a prominent place in humanity's cultural heritage and has formed the foundation of literary norms. However, in the 21st century, the perception of classics and their role in modern literature have significantly changed. Along with social transformations, new authors and themes have emerged, and the canon continues to evolve, raising important questions about its inclusivity and relevance.

Modern writers, inspired by classical works, tend to critically analyze them and explore how classical texts support or challenge traditional norms and perspectives. They take a balanced approach to characters, plots, and themes, often highlighting cultural and historical "blind spots." For example, while classical tragedies focus on themes of betrayal and fate, contemporary writers examine the influence of social media on personal relationships and the complexities

of identity in a multicultural society. Such works generate a new wave of interpretations, including contemporary debates on feminism, racial justice, and environmental issues.

New media formats, such as podcasts and self-publishing platforms, not only expand access to classical works but also foster interdisciplinary discussions about literature. This allows writers to incorporate classic themes and motifs into new contexts, creating a more inclusive and representative literary space. A crucial aspect of this process is that classical works serve as a platform for experimentation, enabling modern writers to engage freely with texts, rework, or adapt them to contemporary demands.

This interaction not only keeps classical works alive but also helps young people connect more deeply with their literary heritage through new interpretations.

Thus, classic literature remains not only a source of inspiration but also a significant element in discussions on culture, identity, and social change. This multi-layered approach to classics highlights their enduring influence on the present and opens new horizons for understanding the evolution of cultural identity and literary norms.

Changes in the perception of classic literature can be examined through the classic works of authors such as Fyodor Dostoevsky, Lev Tolstoy, William Shakespeare and Jane Austen, which have long been indicators of artistic excellence and a deep understanding of human nature. Although their works are considered iconic, in the contemporary context they are sometimes perceived as outdated or insufficiently diverse.

For instance, Dostoevsky's «The Idiot» explores inner turmoil and moral responsibility, while Jane Austen's «Pride and Prejudice» analyzes social status and relationships.

With each new generation of readers, classical literature is reinterpreted. Postcolonial and feminist criticism, as well as a move toward broader representation, open new perspectives for interpreting classical texts, emphasizing their polyphony and diverse meanings.

The reaction of 21st century writers to classical works can be seen not only as a continuation of tradition but also as a critique that rethinks the legacy of the classics. Their work covers a wide range of themes and genres, often focusing on pressing social and political issues.

Drawing inspiration from classical literature, contemporary writers critically analyze it and explore how classical texts uphold or challenge traditional norms and perspectives. This is achieved through a thoughtful approach to characters, plots, and themes,

often highlighting cultural and historical "blind spots."

For example, just as classical tragedies address themes of betrayal and fate, contemporary writers explore the impact of social media on personal relationships and the complex questions of identity in a multicultural society. This literary evolution sparks new waves of interpretation, engaging with modern discussions on feminism, racial justice, and the climate crisis.

Additionally, new media formats such as podcasts and self-publishing platforms allow authors to experiment with formats and reach diverse audiences. This expands access to classical works and encourages discussions about their significance in the modern world. Through critical reinterpretation and adaptation, classics continue to thrive and exert a significant influence on contemporary literature.

This process of revival and reinterpretation underscores the importance of classical literature not only as historical heritage but also as a powerful tool for analyzing and understanding the modern world.

Examples of Contemporary Writers Engaging with Classics

Haruki Murakami, «Kafka on the Shore» – A novel that intertwines themes of magical realism, identity search, and the contradictions of perceiving reality. Murakami often revisits classical themes and forms to create new worlds that reflect the complexities of our time.

J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter series – Rowling seamlessly integrates her novels into the tradition of world literature, from ancient classics, which she studied at Exeter University, to British literary heritage. The cultural magic lies in how the connections between Geoffrey Chaucer and «The Song of the Nibelungs» and «Harry Potter» work in both directions, making classical texts more engaging after reading the «Harry Potter» series.

Jonathan Franzen, «The Corrections» – If this were the 19th century, this novel would be akin to those of Charles Dickens or Leo Tolstoy. Today, «The Corrections» holds that place, as Franzen breathes new life into the great American novel, replacing the epic of a hero's grand dream with a story of ordinary people navigating life's circumstances.

When discussing the role of classics in the modern literary landscape, it is clear that classical literature remains vital in education and cultural life, though it is now being reinterpreted. Classics serve not only as a foundation for analysis but also as an essential source of inspiration for contemporary writers, helping them reflect on personal experiences and relevant themes.

Modern authors frequently draw on classical motifs and reimagine them in the context of new social and

cultural realities. This is evident in their use of classical themes to highlight contemporary issues such as identity, social inequality, and ecology.

Moreover, as technology and media formats evolve, classics adapt to new platforms, reaching a wider audience. Screen adaptations, theater productions, and even graphic novels breathe new life into past works, making them more accessible and relevant for younger generations.

Thus, classical literature remains an integral part of the literary process, evolving and enriching itself through dialogue with contemporary texts and cultural trends. This constant exchange between past and present helps not only to preserve the heritage but also to reinterpret it for a new generation.

In doing so, important aspects are:

Inclusivity: modern literature strives to incorporate various cultural and social contexts, broadening the horizons of classical literature.

Plot Reinterpretation: many contemporary works adopt classical plots and present them as a deconstruction of myths associated with past romanticism.

Intercultural Connections: the globalization of literature has opened new opportunities for dialogue between classical and modern works, particularly between Eastern and Western literary traditions.

The perspectives of the literary canon in the 21st century require an active reconsideration of the role of classical literature in contemporary contexts. The growing interest in inclusivity and diversity, along with shifting cultural paradigms, changes not only the texts themselves but also the approaches to their interpretation. The very concept of the canon continues to evolve, opening new opportunities for research and dialogue on the significance of literature in today's world.

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