



# The Modernist Novel: An Overview

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**Abstract**— The word ‘Modern’ derives from the Latin ‘modo’ meaning ‘current’ ‘new’ ‘contemporary’. With its emphasis on the new, the movement of Modernism encompasses radical ideas and emergent intellectual and pathbreaking ideas of Henri Bergson, Darwin, Freud, Marx, Nietzsche and Einstein from the end of the Nineteenth century until the Second World War. In keeping with the exhortation of its literary guru, Ezra Pound, to ‘make it new’, it set about to establish ‘the tradition of the new’, as articulated by the Art critic, Harold Rosenberg, producing art works which went against the grain of established traditions and conventions. The beginning of the Twentieth century was witness to a diverse variety of aesthetic representation in response to the machine age, to transformational technologies, rapid urbanization, migration to cities, to a world where traditional certainties had departed and the belief in the notion of history and civilization as inherently progressive was shaken to the core. ‘Modernity’ was described by Baudelaire in *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863) as the fashionable, transient, fleeting and contingent and as opposed to the eternal and the immutable. Literary Modernism is a literature of change and crisis, yet with an insistence on the power of Art to give shape to a world which has lost all stability and order. Yet from this nightmare of history, as depicted by Walter Benjamin, and a sense of fracture and dislocation, from the debris of the traditional world, rises the Eiffel Tower as a symbol of aspiration, a marvellous alloy of modern technology of metallurgy and human creativity.



**Keywords**— aesthetics, dislocation, ethical, experimentation, modernity, new

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Twentieth-century Modern Novel has immense variety and complexity, bold experimentation and innovation to assess and confront the “heap of broken images” of Modernity and modern times. Conrad envisages the novelist’s task as rescue work carried out in the dark with cross gusts of wind swaying the action of a great multitude.

## II. DISCUSSION

Following are some of the significant features of the Modern Novel:

**Innovations of Story and Plot:** In *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), E.M. Forster distinguishes between Story as “a narrative of events arranged in time sequence” or “life in time” and Plot or “life by values” and the traditional novel has both in proportion. In the Modern novel there are

subtle variations and mutations of both. Psychology having revolutionized the concept of man and life being “a luminous halo”, cannot be tailored to the rigidity of plot, story or clock and calendar time. In Virginia Woolf, story disappears as in *Mrs. Dalloway* it is about Clarissa Dalloway preparing for her party in the evening; in *The Waves*, Percival’s death highlights the sense of time, death and separation. In *The Ambassadors* by Henry James, plot is equated with a sense of mystery. *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce is significant for its experimental style: the ‘new way’ of telling a story takes the form of a discontinuous dream-narrative, with abrupt changes to character, character-names, locations and plot details. Joyce claims to be representing the night and dreams, and the book ends in the middle of a sentence and begins in the middle of the same sentence which gives a cyclic concept of time; the linguistic experiments include stream-of

consciousness, idiosyncratic language, multilingual puns and portmanteau words and is a vast verbal symphony.

**Unusual Openings and Endings:** The Modern Novel is like an incomplete sentence, whereas the traditional novel ended either in marriage or death, now dubbed by Forster as “idiotic” (*Aspects of the Novel*). There are unconventional openings in the Modern novel---- *Mrs. Dalloway* begins ‘in-media-res’; *The Waves* opens with a poetic interlude; *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* opens with a “moocow coming down along the road” and who meets “a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo”. There are unusual endings too---- Lily Briscoe completing her painting in *To the Lighthouse*; Burlap beginning a new phase of villainy in Huxley's *Point Counter Point*; *Ulysses* ends with Molly Bloom going off to sleep and the unpunctuated monologue abruptly ceases; in Beckett's *Malone Dies*, Malone writes his own story with a pencil quarter of an inch long, and when the pencil is finished the novel ends mid- sentence.

**Time:** The concept of Time undergoes radical change under the influence of Henri Bergson, William James, Freud and Jung, and Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The modern novelist has frequently abandoned the traditional framework of clock and calendar time and space. This has been replaced by 'mind time', 'cyclic time', and 'existential time'. Quentin Compson in Faulkner's *The Sound and Fury*, questions the "round stupid assertion of the clock". Virginia Woolf asserts that "time shall be utterly obliterated" in her novels.

The French philosopher **Henri Bergson's** (1859-1941, Nobel Prize in 1928), concept of 'la duree' or durational or psychological time, laid stress on mental or 'mind time' which is natural whereas clock time is artificial. Bergson stressed on memory and intuition and spoke of life as a flux and a spiritual force, and that Reality could not be apprehended by the rational intellect alone.

**Freud** laid the foundations of Psychoanalysis and he and **Jung** considered the unconscious as the mainspring of all human actions and motives. We come in contact with it in dreams and day-time reveries. Freud also spoke of the 'free-association' of ideas; how past events shaped the psyche and how reality exists in subjective apprehensions. **William James** coined the term 'stream- of-consciousness' to denote the Flux of the mind, its continuity and yet its continuous change. Einstein spoke of a time-space continuum.

Hence under the influence of these philosophers and men of science 'time' is revealed as heterogeneous and always in motion, fluid, ever-shifting, the past and present intermingle and things in it are indistinguishable. Hence the modern novelist experiments with story, plot and time-

space dichotomy. A neat story with a linear progression of time to suit a rigid plot framework seems no longer possible. The result is a dazzling experimentation such as 'mind time': “it took her five seconds in actual time, in mind time ever so much longer” writes Virginia Woolf in *Between the Acts*. A cyclic concept of time is expressed in *Finnegans Wake*; Thomas Wolfe in *Look Homeward Angel* writes what happened in “Crete 5000 years ago”, happened “yesterday in Texas”. In *The Web and the Rock*, Wolfe gives the metaphysics of time. 'Existential time' in the novels--- *The Outsider* by Camus; *Iron in the Soul* and *The Age of Reason* by Sartre, express the “residue of reality grasped in existence as lived”.

Thus, the sense of the passing and duration of time in the modernistic novel is subject to innovation in accordance with new or modern concepts.

If life is a flux, the 'stream-of-consciousness' novelists like Virginia Woolf seek “making of the moment something permanent”, to catch a “fragment of pure time in its pure state” in the words of Marcel Proust. Dostoevsky seeks to catch the “aura” of the moment of heightened sensory experience, the “moments of being” of Woolf. Faulkner wants to crystallize the meaning of the “arbitrary dial” and seeks to present in *Absalom, Absalom!* “forever crystallized instant” of these moments of heightened perception. James Joyce celebrates the moments of “epiphany” or “a sudden spiritual manifestation”, the most delicate moments of perception of the reality behind appearances. The psychic involutions, the delving into consciousness lead to vision and reveal the “mind's conversation with life”, “the relation of the mind to general ideas and its soliloquy in solitude” (*Granite and Rainbow: V. Woolf*). Woolf delves into the “poetry of existence”, the wider question which the poet tries to solve---of our destiny and meaning of life. Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* seeks “the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race”.

#### **Characterization:**

The modern novel not only presents the despair, disillusionment and breakdown of the authority and religious values, but also successfully mirrors its complexities of mind and spirit. David Daiches in *The Present Age* (1958) states that the modern novel explores two themes – the **isolated modern man** and the need for meaningful relationships.

Sean O' Faolain in *The Vanishing Hero* (1956) has noted the disappearance of the “Conceptual hero”. Instead of the traditional hero, there is the “aberrant” or the “**anti-hero**”: a man who instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, heroism, power and leadership in the face of fate, is petty,

ineffectual or passive. David Daiches writes “the modern novelist has returned to the hero as a fool, but without Cervantes’ affectionate undertones. One might call such a character the anti-hero”. Some examples are: Aziz in *A Passage to India* is hypocritical at times; James Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914-1915), vows to use “silence, exile and cunning” to defend himself, to fight what he rejects; Adam and Nina in Evelyn Waugh’s *Vile Bodies* (1930), Graham Greene’s Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), the Whisky Priest in *The Power & the Glory* (1940), the anti-heroes of Protest Fiction and the Absurd school.

The modern novel also presents **character in depth, not length**. Psycho-analysis has radically altered the conceptualization of character since it reveals how consciousness is an amalgam of all that we have experienced and continue to experience, and how experience is continually remolding the personality. Character is presented as a process not a finished state. This ‘turning inwards’ has been dramatically presented by V. Woolf in ‘Modern Fiction’: “on or about December, 1910, human character changed”. December 1910 was the time when the 1<sup>st</sup> exhibition of Post-Impressionist paintings was held in London. It declared that the painter was not a photographer but an artist. The delineation of “the atmosphere of the mind” is reflected in the works of Henry James, Henri Bergson, Edward Dujardin, Dorothy Richardson, Dostoevsky, Marcel Proust, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. James Joyce wrote: “I try to give the unspoken, unacted thoughts of people in the way they occur”. Since the material of any one consciousness are an enigma to the other, the conception of character is poetic – Rhoda in *The Waves* (V. Woolf) is “the nymph of the fountain”; Clarissa Dalloway is like a mermaid or a bird. Poetic prose becomes the medium to explore the subconscious as well as the unconscious. Leon Edel in *The Modern Psychological Novel* (1964) has called *Finnegans Wake* as “a great poetic novel, perhaps the greatest”.

**The “point of view”** or the relation in which the narrator stands to his story, as explained by Percy Lubbock in *The Craft of Fiction* (1926) is a dominant concern in the modern novel. Wayne C. Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) distinguishes between “showing” and “telling” or manner of presenting the narrative. In “telling” the authorial voice is evident, for example in *Moll Flanders* by Defoe; and “showing” or dramatic presentation as in Henry James’ *The Ambassadors*. James Joyce voices this objective, impersonal method of narration and the role of the novelist: “the artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork,

invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, pairing his fingernails” (*Portrait*).

**The City** occupies centre-stage in Modernism. Modernity is largely defined by urban experience; the modern “city comes to the foreground to make it a primary character, a complex living being” in the words of Peter Childs. With its crowds, consumerism, technology, architecture and fast-paced life, the city provides a wide range of experiences. It transformed modern writing by placing great demands on the means of representation. Malcolm Bradbury explains the experimental trait in Modernism “was an art of cities”. The city was “the locus of intellectual and artistic activity”, a place “for creativity...the place to be modern”, write Tew and Murray. Under the impress of industrialization and refashioning of human psychology, Simmel, the German sociologist (1858-1918), identifies three types of attitudes of the city dweller---the ‘blasé outlook’, the cloak of reserve (‘to prepare a face to meet the faces you meet’, famously articulated by Prufrock) and thirdly a desire for self-display, the Dandy. Baudelaire describes the modern man as a ‘flaneur’, an urban dweller and mover sauntering around the city soaking in the experience of “the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite”. The city itself provides new narratives, possibilities and stimuli for perception and creation. In *Street Haunting: A London Adventure* (1927), Virginia Woolf writes of the pleasures of “rambling the streets of London”. She becomes the ‘flaneuse’ or female stroller who sees the bright paraphernalia of the streets and then periodically withdraws into the interior spaces of the self to speculate boldly over the meaning and significance of experiences. After her morning stroll through the London streets to buy flowers for her party in the evening, Clarissa Dalloway returns home which was “cool as a vault”. Withdrawing “like a nun”, she felt “blessed and purified” to have an epiphanic experience :“this secret deposit of exquisite moments” of heightened perception into the meaning of life, the Bergsonian perception of life as a spiritual force. The ‘uncanny’, according to Walter Benjamin, was born out of the rise of the great cities in which human beings are strangers to each other and to themselves. Homelessness, ‘unhomeliness’ is a literal translation of the German word for ‘uncanny’. Simmel analyses how the city dweller receives a constant barrage of stimuli and this leads to the over-development of the rational faculty and under-development of the ethical and aesthetic one. The metropolitan type knows the mysteries of the atom but “has not peered into the recesses of his heart” writes Gary Day. Modern writers in trying to heal this schism innovate with new techniques and schema to catch the impressions of the individual mind in the flux of life. In so doing the

artist innovates and the '-isms' of modernistic writing evolve--the 'stream-of-consciousness', Symbolism, Dadaism, Cubism, Surrealism, Futurism, Vorticism etc. The Russian literary critic, Viktor Shklovsky (1893-1984), in *Art as Technique* asserts that art "removes objects from the automation of perception" and "exists so that one may recover the sensation of life".

### III. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The development of the modern novel can be traced in 3 phases and presents a **fascinating kaleidoscope of '-isms', experimentation and innovation.**

**The First phase of the Modern novel**, from the last decades of the nineteenth century, (1881- 1914), includes prominent names like Henry James, Joseph Conrad, George Gissing, George Moore, H.G. Wells, John Galsworthy, R.L. Stevenson, Somerset Maugham, Samuel Butler and E.M. Forster.

**The 'Naturalists'** like George Moore and George Gissing study man in his environment and present a realistic 'slice of life' like their French counterparts Zola and Flaubert. In *A Mummer's Wife* (1885), Moore writes that a change in surroundings can change a man's physical and mental constitution over 2-3 generations. Gissing in *New Grub Street* (1891), explores the isolation of modern man.

**Social critics** like Samuel Butler in his *Erewhon* (1872) and *The Way of All Flesh* (1903, pub. posthumously) attacks sentimentalism prudery and repressive Victorian morality and stresses on self-determination, a modern ethical concern. H.G. Wells attacks modern commercialism in *Tono Bungay* (1909) and the educational impostures in *History of Mr. Polly* (1910). *Of Human Bondage* (1915) by Somerset Maugham is one of the most moving of accounts of loneliness of human life.

**The Romancers** like R.L. Stevenson author of *Treasure Island* (1886), *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), *Kidnapped* (1886), *Travels with a Donkey* (1879), *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), writes the Novel of Adventure while Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901), romanticizes and glorifies British rule and colonial enterprise.

**The Regionalists** – Arnold Bennet (*Anna of the Five Towns* (1902), *Clayhanger* (1910-18)), Galsworthy (*The Forsyte Saga*, 1906-21) and Wells delineate materialistic aspect of life, giving minute details of industrial provincial communities. They were dubbed as 'materialists' by Virginia Woolf.

**Science Fiction and fantasy** carves a niche for itself with H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), *The Invisible Man* (1897), and others.

Later Wells turned into a social critic with *Tono Bungay* (1909), and *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910).

**The Innovators** like **Henry James** and **Joseph Conrad** treat the novel as a serious art form, akin to a great poem or painting or sculpture. *The Art of Fiction* (1884), by Henry James ushers in the concept of the novel as a serious art form, where the novelist's occupation is "a sacred office" and whose work is "a history dealing with truth not 'making believe'"; and that "experience is an immense sensibility...the very atmosphere of the mind". Both, Henry James and Conrad are 'historians and connoisseurs of fine consciences' and delve into the psychological realism of character. Form and substance, the ethical and the aesthetic are inextricably fused in their novels. Henry James' *The Ambassadors* (1903), has a plot structure comparable to an hour-glass while that of *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), resembles a grand cathedral. The 'Prefaces' to his novels offer valuable insights into the aesthetics of the modern novel.

Some of Conrad's famous novels are *Lord Jim* (1900), *Heart of Darkness* (1902), *Nostramo* (1904), among others and bring in exotic locales, adventure and suspense in the encounter with the social, racial and psychological 'other'. *Heart of Darkness* has been described by John Batchelor (*The Life of Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography*, 1994) as "a deeply troubling modernist masterpiece"; by Michael Levenson (*Modernism*, 2011) as "the leading example of modern psychological fiction" where Kurtz, the white colonial in the Congo, "an emissary of pity, and science, and progress" in his greed for ivory descends to the region of subtle horrors. Ironically, like a God he presides over "the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation" and "unspeakable rites" with hints of cannibalism and indulges in an orgy of violence against the natives "in the gratification of his various lusts". In 'Preface' to *The Nigger of Narcissus*, Conrad writes "my task...is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see". Further he states that Fiction must "aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the colour of painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music". He questions how a novel can aspire to the condition of Art; how can a work in prose carry, like poetry, "its justification in every line?". Conrad answers that it can be done with "the light of magic suggestiveness... over the commonplace surface of words" and "with a care for the shape and ring of sentences". Thus, Conrad will appeal to other 'temperaments' with a remorseless "fidelity" to the truth of emotions and sensations and bind them in a "solidarity" of understanding through an impressionistic appeal to the senses in order to represent the universality of human experience. Ian Watt has analyzed Conrad's narrative method as "subjective



moral impressionism” because the understanding sought is of an inward kind. Conrad was concerned with something larger and symbolic the “truth”, the meaning behind impressions. *Heart of Darkness* portrays the ‘Apocalyptic modern’. In Conrad’s words “a novelist is historian, the preserver, the keeper, the expounder of human experience”. Using a nautical metaphor, Conrad described his narratives, in *A Personal Record*, as “paper boats” that were “freighted” with technical innovation; further the artist “like the thinker or the scientist” seeks the truth and makes his appeal. Such experimentation and a devotion to the aesthetic and ethical make Henry James and Conrad leading figures of modernistic writing.

**The Symbolist Movement** finds great utterance in E.M. Forster’s novels *A Passage to India* (1924), *Howards End* (1910), *The Longest Journey* (1907). Forster rejects modern materialism – “the outer life of telegrams and anger” and seeks to build the “rainbow bridge” of personal relations built through the “secret understanding of the heart”. Mrs. Moore in *Passage to India* is in quest of the spiritual life and her journey to the Marabar Caves becomes traumatic. The Caves are the apex of symbolism, and are the ‘eternal womb’ from which humanity comes and the eternal tomb to which it returns. The echo in the caves “boum-ou-boum’ is the ‘om’ of Hindu belief, the primordial sound after which creation came.

The novel in the First Phase has conventional elements of story, plot, and yet there are new technical innovations and experiments with time sequence as in Conrad and Henry James, and it also delves into the psychological aspect of character and reflects the new philosophies of the time. There is a consciousness of the split in fiction between the old and the new, as expressed in Henry James’ *The Art of Fiction*, a new focus on the aesthetics of the novel.

#### **Cataclysm of War:**

**World War I** and its representation in English fiction is celebratory of heroism and also mirrors the tragedy of war. John Buchan’s spy thriller, *Greenmantle* (1916), celebrates the ideal of heroism, the romantic notion of military prowess. *The Childermass* (1928) by Wyndham Lewis, uses fantasy to evoke aspects of the war’s social and political effects and upholds a charismatic “last Aryan hero”, Hyperides. But his World War II novel *The Human Age* rejects Hyperides and his Fascist ideology. Henry Williamson wrote a sequence of 15 novels, *A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight* (1951-1969), centred on World War I. It upholds the Aryan hero and delineates the experience of the ordinary soldier at the Front with the promise of a “land fit for heroes”. Yet there are other writers who delineate the harsh aspects of war. Rebecca West’s *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), is a rejection of modernity

and is the first account of shell-shock. Arnold Bennett’s *The Pretty Lady* (1918), is about civilian experience of London bombings. The male protagonist G.J. heads a charitable hospital. Wounded in a bomb blast he suffers concussion; looking for his walking stick in torch light, what he sees is a ghastly sight, the stark reality of “a child’s arm, with a fragment of brown frock on it...blood...stained the ground”. Pat Barker’s *Regeneration* trilogy (1991-5), traces the social and cultural transformations which came as a shock to the traditional order and war as futile and horrific.

**World War II** novels question the inadequacy of liberal humanistic values in the face of extreme brutality, violence and cruelty of fanatic ideologies: *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* (1956), by Angus Wilson; *Black Dogs* (1920) and *Atonement* (2001), by McEwan.

**The Second Phase** of the Modern Novel (1914-1935-39), is “the great experimental period of modern English literature” writes David Daiches in *The Present Age After 1920*; and further that the 1920’s is the “most fruitful period in the whole history of English Literature”. Virginia Woolf famously announced in a Cambridge lecture, 1924: “on or about December, 1910, human character changed”. Freud and Jung lectured in 1909 in the US and laid the foundations of psycho-analysis; the English translations were beginning to be available in 1910.

**D.H. Lawrence** (1885-1930), the pioneer of psycho-analytical fiction in England “represents the revolt against reason” writes Diana O’Neill. He rejects Christianity, materialism and intellectuality, the “priest of love” he believes in “worshipping with the body” and gives us the “shimmering protoplasm” of life itself. Lawrence expressed a “belief in the messianic possibilities of sexual liberation”. Associated as “a key figure in the history of antimodernism”, his characters are alienated individuals who try to find some redemption through fulfilling sexual and personal relationships. His works reflect modernism’s re-imagining of the sexual self. Some of his famous novels are *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915), *Women in Love* (1920), *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928).

**Aldous Huxley** (1894-1963), picked up his pen and denounced the rot of modern civilization as in *Crome Yellow* (1921); in *Point Counter Point* (1928) he writes of “the wearisome condition of humanity”, “vainly begot”, “created sick” and “the very possession of a body is a cynical comment on the soul”, the “twentieth century successors were abortions”, living in an “atmosphere of hell”. In *The Brave New World* (1932) he presents a negative utopia in which everything is controlled by science. *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936) has a message of non-attachment and Vedantic philosophy. Huxley experiments

with technique and gives the “musicalization of fiction”, presenting his narrative through points and counterpoints in the manner of a musician who can play many variations of the same theme.

The *Stream-of-consciousness* technique of fiction emerged between 1913-1915 with three novelists working simultaneously in exploring the psychic content of being. These were Marcel Proust in France writing *Remembrance of Things Past*, Dorothy Richardson in England writing *Pilgrimage* and James Joyce, an Irishman, writing *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. This psychic involution, the voyages delving into the consciousness lead to vision or “epiphany” or sudden spiritual manifestation. This is represented through poetic prose and symbolism to reveal the “mind’s conversation with life” and “the larger questions which the poet tries to solve – of our destiny and meaning of life” in the words of Virginia Woolf.

**James Joyce** is a key figure of Modernism, so much so as to have the word ‘Joycean’ become a synonym for the exciting, the experimental and the new. *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* serialized in the modernist journal, *The Egoist*, from 1914 to 1915, is semi-autobiographical and “the single most important ‘kunstlerroman’ (or story of the development of the artist) in the twentieth century”. It employs prose in an imaginative and experimental manner so as to depict the growing sensibilities of the protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, from that of a young boy to his maturity as a young man who then decides to leave his native Dublin and to go to the continent and become a writer who aims to encounter the reality of experience: “to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race”. *Ulysses* (1922) has been described by Joyce as “an epic of everyday life”. It is a one-day-in-the city novel, as Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus crisscross Dublin on 16 June 1904. The mythical structure of the novel is based on Homer’s epic *Odyssey*. The French critic Valery Larbaud noted its “mass of notations, phrases, data, profound thoughts, fantasticalities, splendid images, absurdities, comic or dramatic situations” but the book “has a key” as the 18 ‘chapters’ are structured in correspondence with the adventures of Ulysses on his return from the battle of Troy. T.S. Eliot in his 1923 essay ‘*Ulysses, Order and Myth*’, applauded Joyce’s “mythical method” and in this method of parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity Joyce artistically orders and controls “the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history”. Joyce himself stated “I have opened the new way...In fact, from it you may date a new orientation in literature-the new realism;...a new way of thinking and writing has been started...previously writers were interested in externals...they thought only on one plane, but the modern theme is the subterranean

forces, those hidden tides which govern everything and run humanity counter to the apparent flood” (A. Power: *Conversations with James Joyce*, 1978; p. 64). *Ulysses* is one of the most influential accounts of ‘high modernism’. In *Finnegans Wake* (1939), Joyce stated his usage of “nightlanguage” of dreamlike state: “I sow home slowly now by own way, moyvalley way. Towy I too, rathmine”. He writes: “howmulty plurators made eachone in person?” The complexity and multitudinous impressions received by the mind dissolves into language of poetic aura, a halo, and gives “a sort of eternity to style” explains Leon Edel. The novel’s “middenheap” of extravagant linguistic play displays how “its subject is the nature of indeterminacy itself” writes Margot Norris (*Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*). It is considered as the first postmodern novel.

**Dorothy Richardson** set out to write ‘feminine realism’ and evolved a radical free indirect narrative technique in which “she must not interfere; she must not analyse or comment or explain...she must not be the wise, all-knowing author. She must be Miriam Henderson” writes Kime Scott. The focus is on Miriam’s perceiving consciousness, her various states of mind, her developing sense of selfhood, ideas and opinions vis-a vis the world around her. Richardson writes that “feminine prose...should properly be unpunctuated” to approximate the natural flow of thoughts. Miriam’s internal monologue is characterized by long passages of unparagraphed text, with punctuation and syntax flouting conventions. *Pilgrimage*, her 13-volume life work is built around a series of “luminous points” or intensities of perception.

**Virginia Woolf** declared: “I want to write a novel about silence, the things people don’t say”. In writing the *Stream-of Consciousness* novel, she makes silence speak by giving tongue to the complex inner world of feeling, thought and memory and establishing the validity of that world’s claim to the term ‘Reality’. In *Modern Fiction* she writes: “the mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms” of experience which are continuously remoulding the personality. It is the task of the novelist to record this “unknown and uncircumscribed spirit”, and “to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain”. Life is “not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end”. Reacting against the ‘materialists’ writers--Galsworthy, Bennett and Wells, she rejects the “ill-fitting vestments” of traditional Story and Plot. Like Bernard in *The Waves*, Woolf articulates: “I wish to go under, to visit the profound

depths ...to explore; to hear vague ancestral sounds". She desires there be "no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted sense". Further she desires to give the "essence of character, and the quality of experience without indulging in superficialities". Life is a flux and she seeks "making of the moment something permanent", a moment of heightened perception when the universe seems to have beauty and meaning, the Joycean parallel of 'epiphany' or "a sudden spiritual manifestation" and "it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies...the most delicate and evanescent of moments" (*Portait*). Virginia Woolf describes it as "this secret deposit of exquisite moments" that Clarissa Dalloway experiences; that Mrs. Ramsay, the feminine creator, does in *To the Lighthouse*; "ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough"; Bernard in *The Waves* experiences "the mystic sense of completion". Time, space and consciousness and their intriguing interplay are of central concern. In *A Sketch of the Past*, she writes how "behind the cotton wool" of limited perceptions and the quotidian of daily life, is hidden a "pattern", a paradigm of connection, of universal meaning and purpose, normally unseen or unnoticed. But in "moments of being" this cotton wool is lifted and repetitive, wordless rhythms are revealed: "what's behind things" (*The Voyage Out*). Woolf evolves the feminine sentence, in fact the androgynous mind as that of Shakespeare and Coleridge "the fully developed mind" which "does not think specially or separately of sex". Her novels render in poetic prose the "mind's conversation with life" (*Granite and Rainbow*).

**The Third phase** of the modern novel extends from 1939-1950/1970s, until the advent of Postmodernism. In the 30s & 40s social reality dominates the novel and the prominent authors and novels are as follows: Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* (1930), *Decline and Fall* (1928); C.P. Snow's *Strangers and Brothers* (1940-1970); Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) dealing with 'lonelies', gun-running, drug smuggling and moral corruption; George Orwell's *1984*, and *Animal Farm*; William Goldings' *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) depicts evil and brutality in human nature.

The pioneers of **Women's Writing** and feminine consciousness are Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf. Richardson's Miriam Henderson is a fiercely independent New Woman. In the 13-volume Pilgrimage Richardson desired to create a woman-centric outlook and perspective on life, an experience left out of "all novels' and especially "these men's books". Woolf's writings, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and *Three Guineas* (1938) are the high points of First-Wave feminism. The Suffragette

Movement rejected traditional Victorian roles for women and was successful in getting women the right to vote in the 1920's. Feminist writing of Second-Wave Feminism, has leading figures of Margaret Drabble and Fay Weldon and is concerned with issues of white, middle-class women. Margaret Atwood began writing in the Second - Wave and continued into the Third-Wave phase of feminism. Third -Wave feminism is associated with activists, writers and leaders—important names are those of Judith Butler, Rebecca West, Naomi Wolf. The feminist author Laura Bates established 'The Everyday Sexism Project' in 2012. It is a feminist campaign which began online utilizing the Internet to share stories of sexual assault and sexist bias and harassment experiences of women. Fifth-Wave feminism is more concentrated on changemaking on a large-scale. Peter Nicholls in *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (1995), states that Modernism is "inextricably bound up with a politics of gender". 'Feminisms' conditioned by diverse and unique cultural practices, all aspire for respect, inclusivity and equality.

Avant-garde writing presents absurd philosophy and protest fiction. The **literature of the Absurd** reveals existence as anguished and absurd: "cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless" in the words of Eugene Ionesco, a leading figure of this movement. Famous authors and works are – Samuel Beckett : *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, *Watt*; Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, Thomas Pynchon's *V*, Gunter Grass and Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961) is an important definitive work. Beckett's trilogy of novels—*Molloy* (1951), *Malone Dies* (1951) and *The Unnamable* (1953), along with *Watt* (1953) blend philosophical speculation, deadpan philosophical and gallows humour, a hypnotic use of repetition and unidiomatic English. Beckett's work explores and projects the human need to persevere in the face of difficulties and obstacles. In *Worstword Ho* (1983), he writes: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better". His attitude is hence not defeatist; his surreal conceits, experimentation with language and skepticism of unifying and grand narratives is an inspiration for postmodern writers like Donald Barthelme, Harold Pinter among others.

**Protest fiction** has voices from Harlem, described as the 'Mecca of the New Negro' by Alaine Locke (philosopher and educator) as for example----- James Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain* and *How Long the Train's Been Gone*. **The Harlem Renaissance** (1920's-1930's), had a transnational sweep reaching out to Africa and the wider European Black diaspora. Important names associated



with it are those of Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, C.L.R. James, Nella Larsen and Jean Toomer. They articulated racial difference in a modernized world.

**The Avant-garde:** Modernism especially in its first phase, was avant-garde or a movement at the forefront of change, the innovative, experimental, projecting radical views and effecting cultural change. But there are “recurrent dispositions in the recognition of the newness”, explain Tew and Murray. The question arises whether the term “late modernism” be applied to writing published after 1950, as Jameson puts it? Or should ‘modernism’ refer to texts published throughout the twentieth century? The modernist spirit and impulse continues to be expressed as in the works discussed below. The aspect of dislocation, cultural, political and ideological change and transformations provide the impetus to new trends and verbalization.

Such new writing presents the angst of the ‘**Angry Young Men**’ wherein the anti-heroes revolt against the evil and hypocrisy of upper and middle classes of society, have a disillusioned critical attitude towards post-war British society, a revolt against the accepted ideals and norms, excessive anger, sardonic humour, pride in lower-middle class manners, the rootless, lower-middle or a working-class male with a university degree are typical features of this writing. Some leading examples are: Kingsley Amis’s *Lucky Jim* (1954); *The Anti Death League* (1966); John Braine’s *Room at the Top* (1957) John Wain’s *Hurry on Down* (1953) Allan Sillitoe’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958).

**Science fiction** becomes a popular genre for ex; Alvin Toffler’s *Future Shock*, Arthur Koestler’s *The Lotus and the Robot*, Kurt Vonnegut Jr.’s *Cat’s Cradle* and Micheal Crichton’s *The Andromeda Strain*.

In recent decades such experimentation has reached a radical extreme. The Russian-American, Vladimir Nabokov writes “**involuted fiction**”, a work whose subject is multi-layered and complex and involves its own author’s genesis and development, ex; *Pale Fire* (1962). The novel is a 999-line poem written by John Shade, a fictional poet; the Forward and a lengthy commentary and index is written by Shade’s neighbour and fellow academic, Charles Kinbote, but who is an unreliable narrator.

**Anti-novels** were written and brought into vogue, for example, by Alain Robbe-Grillet’s *Jealousy* (1957) which leaves out standard novelistic elements for the reference of the reader; in this novel we inhabit the fast- disintegrating mind of a jealous husband. *Connecting Door* (1962), by the British author Rayner Heppenstall is another example of this ‘**New Novel**’ where characters are vaguely

identified, the arrangements of events is casual and it has an ambiguous meaning. Other writers are the French ‘nouveau roman’ authors: Claude Simon, Marguerite Duras, Nathalie Sarraute, Michel Butor and Julio Cortazar, the writer from Argentina, famed for his masterpiece *Rayuela* (1963).

Jimmy Breslin and Tom Wolfe and Norman Mailer write ‘**Factoid**’ or ‘**New Journalism**’ or ‘**Creative nonfiction**’ which combines journalistic traits with fiction writing. Mailer wrote a biography of Marilyn Monroe, *Marilyn: A Biography* (1973). He has never met her, but he has ‘karmic’ existential similarities with her. He read biographies on her, watched her films, looked at her photographers and for the rest of it, Mailer said “I speculated”. His own biographer, J.M. Lennon, stated that Mailer saw “himself as a species of divining rod to explore the psychic depths” of famous personalities like Muhammad Ali, Pablo Picasso, Lee Harvey Oswald, among others. Other works by Mailer in this genre are *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* (1968), dealing with 1968 political conventions; *Of a Fire on the Moon* (1971,) is about the Apollo 11 mission.

‘**Little Magazines**’ described by Michael Levenson as “micro-sociology of modernist innovation” were flourishing communities of artists as they provided a valuable platform for publishing ‘new’ writings of artistic modernism. These were---*The Little Review*, *Poetry*, *transition*, *Coterie*, *Poetry and Drama*, *The English Review*, *The Egoist* to name a few. *The Egoist* serialised Joyce’s *Portrait*, early extracts from *Ulysses*, W. Lewis’s *Tarr*. Under the aegis of *Modernist Journals Project* in US, and *Modernist Magazines Project*, UK, these are available online.

“**Janus-faced modernism**” thus presents the modern novel as mirroring and articulating realistically, the doubts, conflicts and frustrations of the disintegrating modern world and also the search for meaning and coherence in a confused valueless contemporary world.

The ‘**multivoicedness**’ of the English novel is highlighted by R.L. Caserio’s observation in *The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth-Century English Novel*: “there is no way we can now delimit ‘English’ or ‘English’ fiction”. Raymond Williams in *Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism*, explains how many innovations in Art are due to the perceptions of different cultural milieu of the immigrants to the city. Commonwealth associations, the British Empire’s Anglophone legacy and diasporic affiliations also make for multicultural populations of the metropolis of today. Significant voices are those of Conrad, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Kazuo



Ishiguro, Timothy Mo, to mention a few. This makes the English novel “**the genre of realized alterity**”, writes Dorothy J. Hale.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In *Surgery for the Novel--or a Bomb* (1923), D.H. Lawrence asks “Is the novel on his death-bed, old sinner? Or is he just toddling round his cradle, sweet little thing?”

Malcolm Bradbury in *Possibilities* (1973) poses the question: is the novel dead, dying or about to be reborn. The novel is co-extensive with life and with such dazzling innovations and experimentation, the possibilities are limitless.

In ‘*Craftmanship*’, written for a radio broadcast in 1937, Virginia Woolf drew attention on the continuity of past and present inherent in the medium of language: “words, English words, are full of echoes, of memories, of association... they have been out and about, on people’s lips.... for many centuries”. Language has unlimited possibilities to express the reality of existence, especially in fiction and she asks herself – “how can we combine the old words in new orders so that they survive, so that they create beauty, so that they tell the truth?”

Henry James tells us that “the house of fiction has...not one window, but a million” to be opened in answer to “the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will”; the novel’s architecture is a “transitive medium”, the form of realized alterity.

E.M. Forster described the novel as “sogged with humanity” while D.H. Lawrence calls it the “bright book of life”. The novel reflects life, in all its alterity the uncircumscribable spirit of mankind, and in the words of Lubbock its substance is “neither to hold nor to bind”. The genre gets a fresh lease of life with changing perspectives of times and the flux of life.

James Joyce, when asked by Arthur Power whether literature should be a record of fact or the creation of art, replied: “It should be life” and that “in my opinion there are as many forms of art as there are forms of life”.

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