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# 1 Contexts: History, Politics, Culture

## Introduction

The term 'crisis' is often used to describe aspects of modernism: literature of crisis, crisis of value, crisis of language, crisis of knowledge, crisis of belief. The sense of being at a critical turning point is also a defining characteristic of the broader context of modernity. For the historian Eric Hobsbawm, modernity was the product of a 'dual revolution': the French and the Industrial. This, however, was only the start. The first half of the twentieth century in Europe saw a string of interrelated crises. In Russia, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin called for the formation of a revolutionary party in his pamphlet, *What Is to Be Done?* (1902). There followed the failed bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1905, and later the successful Bolshevik revolution of 1917. In Ireland, the 1916 Easter Rising and its brutal suppression culminated in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, resulting in the partition of Ireland, and the Civil War of 1922–1923. The German revolution of 1918–1919 saw the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II and the inauguration of the Weimar Republic (1918–1933). There were also revolutions or rebellions in Romania (1907), Turkey (1908), Portugal (1910), Mexico (1910), China (1911), Hungary (1919), Brazil (1930), and Spain (1936). Anarchist violence at the turn of the century took the form of frequent bombings and resulted in numerous assassinations, including the heads of state of France, Spain, Italy, and the United States.

In his classic study of English politics before the war, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (1935), George Dangerfield argued that Britain was also on the verge of revolution from 1910 to 1914. Events reached a climax in the spring and summer of 1914, which saw the threat of mass strikes by miners, transport, and railway workers; violent demonstrations by suffragettes; and near civil war in Ireland. The first seven months of 1914, not coincidentally perhaps, also saw the most concentrated activity of the English avant-garde, culminating at the end of June in the eye-catching debut of the vorticist magazine *Blast*. Certainly the modernist period as a whole can be seen as a revolutionary phase in

the arts, parallel in some ways to the political and social upheaval of the time. In purely formal terms, modernism broke with all of the major conventions of the Victorian era, exchanging intimacy for sweeping narratives and fragmentation for artificial cohesion. Yet in Britain, being a revolutionary in the arts did not necessarily mean being a revolutionary in politics, at least not in the usual sense. In fact, many giants of modernism, including T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Wyndham Lewis, are better described as politically conservative or, to use T. E. Hulme's preferred term, reactionary. They called into question the basic tenets of humanism and liberal democracy, which they saw as decaying and outmoded vestiges of an earlier Romanticism. For many, the horrors of the First World War only served to confirm this perception: Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920) describes how the war brought 'disillusions as never told in the old days', and how 'a myriad' were killed 'For an old bitch gone in the teeth, For a botched civilization' – or returned 'home to old lies and new infamy'. During the 1920s and 1930s, artists and writers increasingly abandoned liberal democracy for extremes at either end of the political spectrum.

The term revolution, in fact, implies a circular motion rather than continuous forward progress. Hulme, for example, described the pre-war rise of abstraction not in terms of artistic progress but as a return to the abstract art of so-called primitive societies, and associated it with a desire for permanence rather than change. In sharp contrast to European movements like futurism, which called for liberation through the destruction of cultural heritage, Pound and Eliot tried to reconnect with distant traditions and to repair lost links with the past in the hope, especially after the First World War, of finding a way to rebuild the degraded, ruined present. The ideas of the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico (1688–1744) were influential for James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, and other modernists who believed in a cyclical model of history. Vico wrote of a history that proceeds by stages, through *corsi* and *recorsi*, beginning with a poetic, mythologizing phase and moving through a rational, humanistic phase before declining into decadence and returning to a primitive state. (Most modernists, whether they were familiar with Vico or not, felt that they were living in a phase of decline.) Other thinkers who exerted a strong influence on modernism, such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Georges Sorel, were similarly pessimistic about romantic ideas of progress. Whether rebelling or reacting, few put faith in gradual transitions or democratic reforms. The prevalence of manifestos, with their urgent appeals to dramatic change, is indicative of the widespread impulse to reform, rethink, and renew, even without the comfort of faith in progress.

The early twentieth century saw the rapid development of consumer culture, and modernist literature responded to this and other signs of massification with a mixture of fascination and ambivalence. Thorstein Veblen, author of the groundbreaking sociological study *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), invented the phrase ‘conspicuous consumption’, and evidence of the phenomenon was everywhere to be seen. The ‘high’ period of modernism coincided with the decadence of the ‘roaring twenties’, fueled by a booming American stock market; F. Scott Fitzgerald chronicled the excesses of the ‘jazz age’ in stories like ‘A Diamond as Big as the Ritz’ (1922). In his 1931 recording of ‘Minnie the Moocher’, Cab Calloway, the 24-year-old sensation of the Cotton Club in New York, sang of opium dreams of unimaginable wealth: ‘He gave her a home of gold and steel / A diamond car with a platinum wheel.’ In Ernest Hemingway’s short story ‘Hills Like White Elephants’ (1927), meanwhile, the female protagonist (‘Jig’) complains: ‘“That’s all we do, isn’t it – look at things and try new drinks?”’

In Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), the new consumer culture is equated with emptiness and amorality. As the ‘typist’ recovers from her meaningless sexual encounter with ‘the young man carbuncular’, a clerk, ‘She smoothes her hair with automatic hand, And puts a record on the gramophone.’ In *Ulysses* (1922), Leopold Bloom sells advertising for a living, and sees Dublin through an adman’s eyes. He is also a consumer of advertising, getting the newspaper ad for Plumtree’s Potted Meat stuck in his head: ‘What is home without Plumtree’s Potted Meat? Incomplete.’ (With its euphemistic reference to sex, the ad is a poignant reminder of Bloom’s marital problems.) In Virginia Woolf’s ‘Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street’ (1923), the short story that formed the nucleus of *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), a shopping trip becomes a meditation on changes brought by the war: to class and gender relations, religious faith, fashion trends and consumer products, and general confidence. ‘Thousands of young men had died that things might go on’, Clarissa Dalloway muses, then shifts abruptly back to the present and her dealings with the shop assistant: ‘My dear slow coach...do you think I can sit here the whole morning?’

The entries in this section provide significant background information on a variety of cultural contexts relating to modernism. Each entry begins with essential facts: ‘Science and Technology’, for example, features a list of some of the many discoveries and inventions beginning at the turn of the century. Then we get into deeper questions of the impact such inventions had on people’s psyches at the time, and how these effects, the ‘shocks’ of modernity, filtered into literature. Finally, specific examples are provided from modernist texts to illustrate the relationship between

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text and context in understandable terms. Several of the entries in this section describe disciplines – anthropology, psychology, and linguistics, for example – that had evolved relatively recently, over the previous few decades, and whose rapid growth continued in the modernist period. The professionalization of literature and the rise of literary criticism were also part of this wider phenomenon. Questions of value raised by George Gissing in *New Grub Street* (1891), about art and commerce, the role of the critic, and the author as producer, would become central to modernist literature's crisis of identity in the early twentieth century.

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### Anthropology

In Britain, the field of anthropology, most broadly defined as the study of humankind, dates back to the mid-nineteenth century. The Ethnological Society of London, founded in 1843, was a splinter group of the Aborigines' Protection Agency, a Quaker-based anti-slavery organization founded in 1837. In 1871 it merged with the rival Anthropological Society to become the Anthropological Institute, which in turn became the Royal Anthropological Institute (1907) that still exists today. What began as an amateur pursuit in the Victorian era rapidly transformed into a professional activity in the first decades of the twentieth century. Anthropology in Victorian and Edwardian Britain was broadly comparative in nature. From its inception, it was closely tied to a pair of hotly debated issues: colonialism and evolutionary theory. Encounters with the 'other' brought about by colonial expansion produced a growing curiosity among Europeans about non-European cultures. Early anthropological narratives

often attempted to legitimize colonial rule on the basis of two broadly evolutionary models (both of which placed Europe at the pinnacle): racial, according to which other peoples were viewed as biologically inferior; and cultural, which argued that different societies, though biologically equal, were at different stages of development along one continuous axis of progress. The British Quaker anthropologist E. B. Tylor's influential book, *Primitive Culture* (1871), exemplifies the latter position. In Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), the Tylorian narrator describes the African workers on his boat in just these terms: "I don't think a single one of them had any clear idea of time, as we at the end of countless ages have. They still belonged to the beginnings of time – had no inherited experience to teach them". Another Tylorian, the anthropologist Sir James Frazer (1854–1941), is the figure with the closest ties to modernism. *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915) was a bestseller even in its full 12-volume format, and T. S. Eliot famously acknowledged its impact on his generation of writers in the 'Notes' section of *The Waste Land* (1922).

The year 1922 was the *annus mirabilis* of modern anthropology as much as it was the apex of literary modernism. In modernism, it was the year that saw the publication of *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*, the debut of Eliot's *Criterion* magazine, and Woolf's first major excursion into modernist experimentation with *Jacob's Room*. In anthropology, the year was marked by the publication of Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, an ethnographic study of the Trobriand Islanders (in particular the *kula* system of exchange with neighbouring groups), and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's *The Andaman Islanders*. Together these groundbreaking studies signalled a new direction for the discipline, towards the use of fieldwork over library (or 'armchair') research, and away from the biological determinism and crude evolutionary models that marked earlier studies. In the same year, a single-volume edition of *The Golden Bough* was published. Frazer's epic work had already sold 36,000 copies of the full edition between 1915 and 1922, and the newly abridged edition promised even greater success. Originally subtitled *A Study in Comparative Religion*, *The Golden Bough* represented the older comparative (as opposed to analytical) approach. Nevertheless, it remains one of the most famous and influential works of anthropology ever published, and is the closest link between anthropology and literary modernism. Perhaps because it was published over such a long period, and because it is so vast, the book has meant different things to different readers. The earlier editions, for example, might have reassured readers that the forces of progress and rational science would always prevail over superstition and magic. One of Frazer's most controversial ideas (introduced in the

second edition) was that of ‘mental evolution’ – the journey of all human societies from magic, through religion, to science. This in itself might be unsettling for its implication that religion was merely a stage of development linked to more ‘primitive’ forms of ritual and superstition. But *The Golden Bough* could also be read, following on the discoveries of Freudian psychoanalysis and in the aftermath of the First World War, as unsettling proof of the irrationality that lurks beneath the thin veneer of civilization.

The impact of *The Golden Bough* on modernism has long been recognized. ‘Perhaps no book has had so decisive an effect upon modern literature as Frazer’s’, Lionel Trilling once wrote (Trilling, 1965, p. 14). *The Waste Land* is the most obvious representation of the modernist interest in myth and ritual fed by anthropology, in this case by Frazer and his disciple, Jessie Weston. Her book, *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), traced the medieval Grail legend back to its roots in ancient fertility rituals of the kind documented by Frazer. Briefly stated, the Fisher King of the Grail myth and the barren lands he oversees parallel the figure of the poet in his modern ‘waste land’; the poet, like the injured King, must attend to his wounds. Though it is open to dispute, religious faith seems to offer hope at the end of the poem for the restoration of health to both the individual and society. The poem also uses various figures and symbols from Frazer, including those of the Hanged Man and the corpse planted in the garden, and draws parallels to other myths of death and resurrection, including the resurrection of Christ. Using a comparative approach not unlike Frazer’s, Eliot connects individual stories of faith, suffering, and desire to other instances across literature and history. The following year, Eliot expanded on the association between anthropology and modernism in an essay for the *Dial*, ‘Ulysses, Order, and Myth’ (1923), where he applauded Joyce for his revolutionary use of the mythical framework. (Episodes of Joyce’s novel had appeared in serialized form between 1918 and 1920, and Eliot himself had borrowed from its innovations while composing *The Waste Land*.)

In his notes to *The Waste Land*, Eliot called *The Golden Bough* a ‘work of anthropology... which has influenced our generation profoundly’, and indeed the interest in Frazer and anthropology was widespread among modernists. A key point for Eliot and Ezra Pound, who famously edited *The Waste Land*, was the idea of tradition and continuity; that Christianity, for example, is simply the latest incarnation of much more ancient rituals and beliefs. (Borrowing from Frazer, Pound sometimes overlaid or used interchangeably the names of Christ and the Sumerian vegetation god, Tammuz.) Language and literature also retained the wealth of the past, something emphasized by Pound, Eliot, and others. Ideas of a Golden

Age, fleshed out by anthropology, were also popular at the time, as in Yeats's poem 'Sailing to Byzantium' (1927). In this view, the modern West was not the pinnacle of development as it was in Victorian narratives of progress, but a time of barbarism and decadence that awaited a rebirth. T. E. Hulme was also interested in Byzantium, specifically for its geometrical mosaics, in which he saw a precursor to the new abstraction of artists like Wyndham Lewis and the sculptor Jacob Epstein.

At the other end of the modernist period, in the 1930s, a very different kind of impact was seen in the Mass Observation experiment in Britain. This movement, headed by an anthropologist, Tom Harrisson, and two surrealist poets, Charles Madge and Humphrey Jennings, enlisted hundreds of observers to collect ethnological data on their fellow citizens, with the aim of producing a kind of self-portrait of British society and its unconscious. The movement's first report was published in 1937, and afterwards it moved increasingly away from ethnological surrealism and towards popular anthropology, until in 1949 it became a standard market-research company. French surrealism also had close ties with anthropology. The work of Georges Bataille, for example, a student of the great anthropologist Marcel Mauss, borrowed from ethnographic studies in its radically primitivist celebration of 'baseness' and physicality, and its rejection of 'civilized' bourgeois values. In the United States, Zora Neale Hurston (*Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 1937) studied under the founding figure of modern American anthropology, Franz Boas, and was an accomplished folklorist as well as a leading figure of the Harlem Renaissance. Modernism's interest in anthropology speaks to the broader theme of looking elsewhere to revitalize Western society and culture, and in this respect it has been implicated in the colonizing tendencies and logocentric position of early anthropology (and of the West generally). More positively, perhaps, anthropology and modernism shared a healthy scepticism of the notion of civilization, and it was this, more than the impulse towards mastery, that drove their common search for alternative belief systems and other ways of life.

**See also:** *Contexts:* Culture, Empire, Race; *Texts:* Allusion, Dada and surrealism, Harlem Renaissance, Primitivism.

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## Censorship

In the modernist period, the issue of censorship was linked to an important debate about modern art. Some felt that modernism was an accurate and important reflection of the changing society. Others, however, viewed modern art and literature as symptomatic of a broader social decline, or even as a source of the problem. The Marxist critic Georg Lukács argued that modernism provided at best a negative, distorted picture of the world; that it represented, in his words, ‘a glorification of the abnormal and . . . an undisguised anti-humanism’ (Lukács, 1964, p. 32). Other critics attacked what they saw as ‘deviant’ behaviour. Max Nordau, in his best-selling book *Degeneration* (1892), singled out Oscar Wilde as the leading figure in England of a pan-European trend towards decadence. The book was translated into English in 1895, coinciding with Wilde’s trials and his eventual conviction for gross indecency. Nordau asked this question:

It is easily conceivable that the emotion expressed by the artist in his work may proceed from a morbid aberration, may be directed, in an unnatural, sensual, cruel manner, to what is ugly or loathsome. Ought we not in this case to condemn the work and, if possible, to suppress it?

His answer was clear: ‘beauty without morality is impossible’ (Nordau, 1985, p. 326). Wilde himself admitted, in the prison letter known as *De Profundis*, that his subversive aesthetics mirrored his transgressions of social and sexual norms. ‘What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought,’ he wrote, ‘perversity became to me in the sphere of passion.’ In the courtroom, however, Wilde argued that art should be judged solely on aesthetic and not moral grounds, just as a few years earlier, in the ‘Preface’ to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), he had declared: ‘There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.’ Wilde’s contemporaries, the ‘New Woman’ authors George Egerton and Sarah Grand, provoked controversy for their frank treatment of sexuality, which involved depictions of female desire (in Egerton’s short stories) and the risk of venereal disease for women (in Grand’s novel *The Heavenly Twins* [1893]).

It was common in the late nineteenth century for serialized fiction to be sanitized for publication in book form: examples include *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* (1895). In the first decades of the twentieth century the situation shifted as modernist periodicals like the *Little Review* were seized, or their publishers were threatened with

fines for trafficking in obscene material. Obscenity, a highly controversial term in its own right, can be viewed as a way of instigating cultural change. To effect a forceful break with the timid past and generate publicity using taboo language and subject matter is a method that is still widely used today, and still with surprising success. In the early twentieth century, however, many authors had difficulty getting even moderately *risqué* subject matter past increasingly nervous publishers. As George Orwell wrote in 'The Freedom of the Press', originally intended as a preface to *Animal Farm* (1945): 'The sinister fact about literary censorship in England is that it is largely voluntary.' Joyce fought word by word for the unaltered publication of *Dubliners* (1914) and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), but it was *Ulysses* (1922) that brought the real storm of controversy. The first battle with the censors erupted when *Ulysses* was serialized in the American *Little Review* between 1918 and 1920. During the first year, copies were seized and burnt by the US Post Office. Two years – and 23 installments – later, serialization was halted by a court order resulting from a complaint lodged by the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. In 1921 the editors of the *Little Review*, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, were arrested and convicted over the 'Nausicaa' episode. When the intrepid Sylvia Beach published the book in 1922 through her Paris bookshop, Shakespeare and Company, it was immediately banned in Britain and America, and imported copies were frequently confiscated. *Ulysses* was finally released in America in 1934, after Joyce's publisher Random House successfully challenged the importation ban. Two years later Britain followed suit, largely on account of the American ruling. In his summing up of the case, Judge John M. Woolsey famously remarked: 'my considered opinion, after long reflection, is that whilst in many places the effect of *Ulysses* on the reader undoubtedly is somewhat emetic, nowhere does it tend to be an aphrodisiac.' One of the more notorious passages in *Ulysses*, in which Bloom 'wipe[s] himself' with a copy of *Tit-Bits*, the penny weekly founded by George Newnes in 1881, during his morning ritual, has been read as a reflection of Joyce's view of popular fiction. What might seem today like a relatively innocent, if too scatological, piece of cultural commentary, was then considered almost unspeakably coarse. Even a fellow writer like Virginia Woolf, who read *Ulysses* in manuscript form for the Hogarth Press, privately deplored the 'underbred' book.

D. H. Lawrence had a similarly strong reaction to *Ulysses*. He judged Molly Bloom's closing soliloquy to be 'the dirtiest, most indecent, obscene thing ever written'. (The judgement was no doubt influenced by his personal animus against Joyce.) But Lawrence shared with Joyce a notable distinction: the trials of *Ulysses* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* were

two of the most important and talked about literary events of the last century. Lawrence's first foray into modernism, *The Rainbow* (1915), was also initially banned under the notorious Obscene Publications Act of 1857. Like many other works of the period, it was only published with substantial, unauthorized cuts. The alternative, which Lawrence also succumbed to on occasion, was self-censorship. The Act was finally modified in 1959, to allow a defence on the basis of literary or artistic merit. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* became the first test case in 1960, and was cleared for publication. When in the last year of his life an exhibition of his paintings was raided by police, Lawrence responded fiercely and eloquently in a long essay entitled 'Pornography and Obscenity' (1929). Here he reiterated a theme previously expressed in 'Art and Morality' (1925), that the unreflective, hypocritical morality of the 'mob', and the mass culture that it consumed, was to him far more 'obscene' than the work of any 'serious' artist. In 1928, the same year that saw the publication, in Florence, of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, lesbian author Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* became the subject of another high profile obscenity trial. Unlike the works of Joyce and Lawrence, Hall's novel featured neither the detailed depiction of private bodily functions nor any trace of explicit sexual content. The ban and subsequent destruction of printed copies resulted from a warning by the medical establishment that it would encourage female homosexuality and thus erode the moral bedrock of Britain. *The Well of Loneliness* was only published in Britain in 1949, after the author's death.

**See also:** *Contexts:* Culture, Sex and sexuality, Women and gender; *Texts:* Aestheticism and decadence, Irish literature, Realism and naturalism; *Criticism:* Cultural materialism/New Historicism, Feminist and gender criticism, Psychoanalytic criticism.

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### Cities and Urbanization

In 1915, the Scottish city planner and social evolutionist Sir Patrick Geddes coined the term 'conurbation' to describe Greater London and other areas of urban aggregation. Rapid expansion and merging together

of urban areas was one indication that the age of the city had truly arrived. London's population nearly doubled between 1851 and 1901, and reached its highest point just before the Second World War. The increasing complexity of urban space is memorably conveyed in the labyrinthine central episode of Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), 'The Wandering Rocks'. According to Frank Budgen, Joyce composed the episode with a map of Dublin in front of him, tracing the paths of his characters in red ink and timing their journeys down to the minute. (The young Stephen Dedalus, too, creates 'a skeleton map of the city in his mind' in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* [1916].) The 19 sections of 'Wandering Rocks', intercut with glimpses of other sections, each follow a different character or group of characters as they make their way through the city. Woolf used a similar technique in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), with the narrative view shifting constantly from one character to the next as they move through London or stop to witness one of the spectacles of modernity, like the airplane that appears overhead in the opening scene: 'actually writing something! making letters in the sky!'. Midway through the novel, the young Elizabeth Dalloway breaks away from her tutor Miss Kilman to explore the city by omnibus. On her journey, she contemplates the many career options now open to a woman of her generation and class: 'She would become a doctor, a farmer, possibly go into Parliament, if she found it necessary.' She ventures up the Strand, 'a pioneer', anonymous, conscious of herself in the gaze of others, exploring the main thoroughfares but stopping short of entering the 'queer alleys' and 'tempting bye-streets' of London.

Alongside efforts by writers like Joyce and Woolf to portray the subjective experience of urban life, the relatively new fields of sociology and psychology produced numerous studies of the effects of mass living on the average city dweller. Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895) traced the rise of the modern masses, while Georg Simmel's 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903) posited a protective intellectualism that sought to preserve the fragile psychology of the individual from 'the intensification of emotional life' one encounters with urban living. How to 'preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence', in other words, was Simmel's primary concern. In his investigation of the effects of the mass economy on the individual, Simmel draws upon Marx, who declared with Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) that bourgeois capitalism 'left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment"'. Meanwhile, Emile Durkheim, a pioneering figure of both sociology and anthropology, wrote (especially in *Suicide*, 1897) of the personal sense of

*anomie* many city dwellers experienced – the lack of a sense of purpose or belief, and feelings of loneliness, isolation, and despair.

Earlier in the nineteenth century, Edgar Allen Poe had written a short story entitled 'The Man of the Crowd' (1840). Poe's unnamed narrator, seated in a coffee house in London (at that time the most populous city in the world), observes in great detail the appearance and behaviour of individuals caught in the 'press' outside. Some passersby seem to be alone in the crowd; they 'talked and gesticulated to themselves, as if feeling in solitude on account of the very denseness of the company'. Various urban types are registered, including businessmen, clerks, pick-pockets, gamblers, beggars, and prostitutes, along with the change in the crowd from afternoon to evening. One particularly striking face suddenly captures his attention: he pursues an old man unobserved through the gas-lit streets until dawn, but learns nothing about the restless figure except that he appears to be guilty of a nameless crime. In his book on Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin, another theorist of urban life, wrote of the 'shock experience' – the sensory experience of being jostled by a crowd of innumerable strangers – that had become the norm by the nineteenth century. Benjamin expanded this idea of 'shocks' into a theory of modernity itself, including the art it produces: the shock experience of the cinema, for example, or of a surrealist painting.

Modernist literature was almost entirely an urban phenomenon. Yet as Malcolm Bradbury has argued, London was not a particularly vibrant metropolis, nor was it hospitable to the arts. Bradbury claims that while London

is the obvious centre of English-language Modernist activity... it is also in the record as one of the dullest and most deadening of capital cities, one with no real artistic community, no true centres, no coteries, no cafés, a metropolis given to commerce and an insular middle-class life-style either indifferent or implacably hostile to the new arts. (Bradbury and McFarlane, 1976, p. 172)

In 1914, confronted with the challenge of Italian futurism, whose leader Marinetti made several appearances in London during the pre-war years, the vorticist magazine *Blast* reacted with jealous anger, declaring that England was the rightful home of 'the modern movement'. 'Machinery, trains, steam-ships, all that distinguishes eternally our time, came far more from here than anywhere else', *Blast* declared. The city was conceived as an environment, a replacement for nature, the air which the new art would breathe. In its desire to distinguish itself from futurism's worship of technology, however, vorticism set itself a difficult task – to

appear unmistakably modern, but to convey this with a studied nonchalance, to resist succumbing to the illusory notion of progress. Vorticism 'blessed' Britain's major ports – Hull, Liverpool, London, Newcastle, Bristol, Glasgow – while it 'blasted' the Victorian optimism that created them. This ambivalent view of modernity is at the heart of modernism. To be 'modern' meant embracing and in some way reflecting the stimulating urban environment without bowing to ideas of progress. The novels of D. H. Lawrence, for example, faithfully render the earth-shattering psychological experience of modernity ('all that is solid melts into air', in the words of *The Communist Manifesto*), while remaining scathingly critical on the subject of industrialization. The *energy* of modernity is a cause for celebration, if not its achievements. This sentiment may be traced back to nineteenth-century France and Baudelaire's famous essay, 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1863). In England, since Oscar Wilde, whom *Blast* recognized for praising the beauty of the automobile long before futurism did, artists and writers no longer fled to the pastoral: instead, they plunged headlong into the urban chaos.

**See also:** *Contexts:* Psychology, Science and technology; *Texts:* Aestheticism and decadence, Consciousness, Stream of, Imagism and vorticism; *Criticism:* Cultural materialism/New Historicism, Marxist criticism, Postmodernism.

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### Class

The modern three-tier class system, a product of the Industrial Revolution, underwent significant changes in the early twentieth century. There was progress, for example, in the areas of workers' rights, public education, and extension of the vote. Trade union membership doubled between 1913 and 1920, and the first Labour government was formed in 1924. In 1918, women won the right to vote, and by 1928 suffrage had been extended to everyone over 21. At the same time, the General Strike of 1926 revealed that inequality and class tensions still ran deep. All this, however, had less impact on literary modernism than might have been expected. One reason was the fact that so few modernists were British. American expatriates, from James McNeill Whistler and Henry James to Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, enjoyed freedom from the

dictates of social norms that was denied to the native-born. This freedom was further emphasized by the outbreak of war in 1914. Americans like Pound escaped conscription and, along with women, who were also judged unfit to serve, quickly took over the London literary scene. Another important reason was the emphasis the modernists themselves placed on a different kind of social hierarchy: the division between artists and non-artists, elites and Philistines. This idea can be traced back to the Romantic idea of genius, and indeed a belief in the privileged role of the artist survived as a feature of modernism. Charles Baudelaire, in 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1863), proposed an aristocracy of the intellectual elite, based on 'the divine gifts that neither work nor money can give'.

In one view, of course, this separation of elites and masses was simply class prejudice by another name. Nevertheless, the fact remains that modernism paid little heed to traditional class lines, preferring to draw its own. For example, Wyndham Lewis's iconoclastic pre-war magazine, *Blast*, attacked all classes, suggesting that the artist lived apart from these mass social groupings. It declared: 'Curse abysmal inexcusable middle-class.' But it added – 'also Aristocracy and Proletariat'. Similarly, D. H. Lawrence, a collier's son from Nottinghamshire, was caustic in his criticism of what he called the 'mob', but this group was defined by its narrow-mindedness and intellectual poverty, not by its economic poverty. When the American artist Whistler, who influenced Pound in particular, lamented in his 'Ten O'Clock' lecture (1885) that "'the many" have elbowed "the few", and the gentle circle of Art swarms with the intoxicated mob of mediocrity', his disdain was directed as much at the well-heeled crowd of non-artists who paid to hear his sold-out lecture as it was at the democratization of culture in general. (Wilde, who was in attendance, called him 'a miniature Mephistopheles mocking the majority'.)

The arrival of mass democracy, strongly felt on both sides of the Atlantic, was responsible for some anxiety on the part of writers and artists, but mainly from a market perspective. For example, writers in Britain had to consider, if not necessarily cater to, the much larger reading public that grew up in the wake of the 1870 Education Act, with its seemingly insatiable demand for popular fiction and journalism. While many writers celebrated the arrival of mass democracy and adapted to the new demands, others, especially among the modernists, reacted against the perceived threat to culture. They lamented the passing of the old order, particularly the patronage system and an audience with a shared frame of reference. The declining aristocracy could no longer provide large-scale support of the arts, though a lucky few writers, including James Joyce, did benefit from patronage on a smaller scale. Modernism

is very nearly defined by its hatred for the 'mob', and its corresponding interest in models of society that featured a powerful ruling elite. Yeats had a romantic longing for pre-industrial Ireland, with its uneducated peasant class. Wyndham Lewis's vision for the post-war future, outlined in *The Caliph's Design: Architects! Where is Your Vortex?* (1921), was a ruling Caliphate. On the other hand, the reactionary philosopher T. E. Hulme gained a new interest in democracy during the war. Hulme fought in the trenches as an enlisted man before seeking and gaining a commission in the Royal Marines, and the experience softened his outlook on the 'masses'. Shortly before he was killed in battle in 1916, he wrote in his diary: 'this war has greatly, to their own surprise, converted many men to democracy'.

Where class-consciousness in modernism did exist, its clearest manifestation was in the novel, which continued to function as the primary site for the exploration of social dynamics. The novels of Virginia Woolf provide many examples. In her essay 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown', she elaborated her famous remark that 'on or about December 1910 human character changed' by stating: 'All human relations have shifted – those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children.' ('Mrs. Brown' is herself a working-class woman, like Mrs. McNab in the central 'Time Passes' section of *To the Lighthouse*, and Woolf equates the new style of representation with her emancipation.) That the style of the novel must reflect changes in society is borne out by the representation of diverse characters and their views in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). The 'shift', however, is by no means complete, and characters are still judged and pigeonholed according to their appearance. Septimus Smith is, in class terms, 'a border case, neither one thing nor the other', according to the narrator; 'he might have been a clerk, but of the better sort; for he wore brown boots'. His future might hold a suburban existence, 'a house at Purley and a motor car', or he might 'continue renting apartments in back streets...one of those half-educated, self-educated men'. In her diary of 1922, Woolf famously (and mistakenly of course) wrote that *Ulysses* was 'the book of a self-taught working man, & we all know how distressing they are, how egotistic, insistent, raw, striking, and ultimately nauseating'. In Woolf's last novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), her narrator takes an almost anthropological view and sets such judgements in their place. Following the description of a couple exchanging knowing glances at the appearance of the eccentric Mrs. Swithin, the narrator declares: 'Snobs they were; long enough stationed that is in that one corner of the world to have taken indelibly the print of some three hundred years of customary behaviour.'

See also: *Contexts*: Culture, Race, Women and gender; *Texts*: Bloomsbury, Realism and naturalism; *Criticism*: Cultural materialism/New Historicism, Marxist criticism.

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### Culture

For the modernists, as for the Victorians, the term 'culture' usually meant 'high culture'. Famously defended against its enemies by Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), culture was associated with the idea of perfectibility, and its products were the highest achievements of civilization. At the same time, however, another sense was developing: what the pioneering British anthropologist Edward Tylor, in *Primitive Culture* (1871), called culture in the 'ethnographic sense', in other words: 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'. The idea of 'popular', 'mass', or 'low' culture draws on both these descriptions, the hierarchic and the anthropologic, in that it posits levels of culture, but also broadens the idea of culture and reintegrates it with everyday life. The era of modernism, a movement often represented by its writers as being of and for the few, was not coincidentally also the era of mass culture: the popular press, advertising, cinema, radio, and popular fiction.

Beginning with the Education Act of 1870, it was also the era of mass literacy. As Tim Armstrong has argued, 'Modernity is constituted by mass activity, cutting across work, leisure, politics and intellectual life', from 'typists' pools' and 'Ford factories' to mass political rallies and the Mass Observation project (Armstrong, 2005, p. 47). The line drawn by modernist writers between elite and mass culture was in many ways a line of defence against this new reality, just as Arnold in the previous century wrote in response to the changes brought by an earlier phase of industrialization. Literary critics of the time, F. R. Leavis in particular, reinforced this distinction between the many and the few. Leavis wrote in *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (1930): 'In any period it is upon a very small minority that the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends.' The phrase 'discerning appreciation' signals the crisis of value that was a focal point for much of the anxiety among writers and critics at the time. How to protect 'true' art, and by extension the civilization it stands for,

from a wave of inferior culture apparently flooding the marketplace – that was the question.

The nature of the split between high and mass culture has been theorized in different ways in the past century. In 1944, Frankfurt School critics Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer introduced the term ‘culture industry’ in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to refer to commercial entertainment such as Hollywood movies and popular songs. Their arguments about the culture industry developed from Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism, where exchange-value rather than use-value is the motivating concern. Although they approached culture from a Marxist perspective, Adorno in particular has been criticized (by John Carey and others) for upholding modernism’s view of mass culture as worthless and corrupt. More recently, in *After the Great Divide* (1986), Andreas Huyssen sought to provide an updated account of modernism’s difficult relationship with mass culture, especially as compared with attempts by the avant-garde and postmodernism to reopen the dialogue with pop cultural forms. ‘Modernism’, Huyssen argues, ‘constituted itself through a conscious strategy of exclusion, an anxiety of contamination by its other: an increasingly consuming and engulfing mass culture.’ Huyssen focused attention on two theorists of the ‘great divide’, Adorno and the art historian Clement Greenberg, whom he described as ‘uncompromising enemies of modern mass culture’. (Although he is a self-described postmodernist, Huyssen is sympathetic to the historical reasons for Adorno’s hostility to mass culture, which include its appropriation by Hitler and Stalin, and its perceived degradation by American commercialism.) In Huyssen’s view, postmodernism was an extension of the historical avant-garde as described in Peter Bürger’s *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974). Bürger argued that in contrast to modernism, avant-garde movements like futurism and dada tried to mend the ‘divide’ that was first created by aestheticism in the nineteenth century. The work of another important theorist of postmodernism, Fredric Jameson, has also been described in Marxist terms the blurring of the lines and reintegration of high and mass culture after modernism.

‘THE PLAIN READER BE DAMNED’, declared the Paris expatriate magazine *transition* in its manifesto, ‘The Revolution of the Word’ (1928). It is in many ways a summary statement of modernism’s regard for public taste. The response by modernist writers to the rise of mass culture was not simply anxiety, but aggressive attack. ‘The Day of the Rabblement’ (1901), written and published in pamphlet form while James Joyce was still a university student, declared: ‘No man . . . can be a lover of the true or the good unless he abhors the multitude; and the artist, though he may employ the crowd, is very careful to isolate himself.’ The specific

example Joyce had in mind was Yeats's nascent Irish Literary Theatre. Starting out, it had 'proclaimed war against commercialism and vulgarity', but 'after the first encounter it surrendered to the popular will'. The Theatre's capitulation was only temporary. In 1925, standing before an angry crowd at the production of J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, Yeats delivered a famous speech, which began: 'You have disgraced yourselves again. Is this to be an ever-recurring celebration of the arrival of Irish genius?'

In *The Birth of Modernism* (1993), Leon Surette perceived that modernist elitism had important roots in the occult and the idea of esoteric doctrine, secret knowledge accessible only by initiates. (Yeats and Pound are the key figures of the study.) In the occult view, Surette argues: 'history is seen as a story of conflict between superior individuals of small number ("the few", whether defined genetically or by enlightenment) and an oppressive inferior mass (whether defined genetically or by ignorance). The few are identifiable by their cultural attributes' (Surette, 1993, p. 38). It is not, then, so much a matter of class as of cultural difference: hence the invocation of the Philistine, and the targeting of the bourgeoisie, the Academy, and 'middlebrow' taste. The idea of the enlightened and the ignorant was found by some modernists to be as useful as it was malleable. Ursula Brangwen in D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915), for example, felt 'the grudging power of the mob lying in wait for her, who was the exception'. The Brangwens in general are shown to be targets of resentment for their natural superiority, victims of 'brutish resentment'. During the First World War, the idea of the privileged artist was manifested in petitions for combat exemption, as T. E. Hulme campaigned on behalf of the sculptor Jacob Epstein. (In the end it was Hulme who was killed.) As Stephen Dedalus tells his friend and fellow aesthete Lynch in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916): 'We are right... the others are wrong.'

**See also:** *Contexts:* Class, Fascism; *Texts:* Aestheticism and decadence, Irish literature.

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## Empire

The British Empire, the largest empire in history, reached its greatest size in terms of land mass (roughly a quarter of the earth) and governed population (about a fifth) around 1920, also the peak of the modernist period. Indeed, it could be said that modernity itself is a product of colonialism: not only in material terms, for the wealth, goods, and knowledge gained through global trade and exploitation, but in metaphysical terms, for the self-image that developed of the West as rational and enlightened, an emissary of progress. The greatest phase of colonial expansion took place in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and was marked by the so-called Scramble for Africa and the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, where the African continent was largely divided among the major European powers. This was also the period in which Britons took the most pride in British imperialism, sometimes leading to jingoistic extremes – indeed, the phrase ‘by jingo’ first appeared in a music hall song of the 1870s. Perhaps the most familiar literary expressions of this sentiment are Rudyard Kipling’s popular poems, including the two series of *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1892, 1896), ‘Recessional’ (1897), and ‘The White Man’s Burden’ (1899). The colonizers portrayed by Joseph Conrad in *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Heart of Darkness* (1902), by contrast, revealed the ugly effects of imperialism on both the colonizers and the colonized. The early twentieth century saw expansion give way to consolidation, and public enthusiasm for the Empire began to wane along with other aspects of the Victorian legacy. This was particularly true after the First World War; even before the War, however, the tide of public opinion was turned by revelations of systematic abuse and genocide contained in the Casement Report on the Belgian Congo (1904) and other documents.

Strong ambivalence, if not outright condemnation, is the most common reaction towards British imperialism in modernist literature. In *Heart of Darkness*, for example, the ‘darkness’ and Kurtz’s famous last words (‘The horror! The horror!’), suggest the terrible reality of colonization in Africa. Marlow decides at the end of the story not to reveal Kurtz’s final utterance to his Intended because “‘It would have been too dark – too dark altogether’”. Kurtz was an expert ivory hunter, but he also represented a new type of high-minded colonialism that emphasized the ‘morality’ of its civilizing mission rather than pursuing simple exploitation. At one point a character in the book quotes Kurtz as saying: “‘Each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing.’” Whether this was a cynical cover (as it was for

King Leopold II of Belgium) or misguided idealism, the intellectual pretense dissolves when faced with the situation on the ground. In Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), meanwhile, Peter Walsh, Clarissa's former suitor who ran away to India to become a colonial official, notes on his return to London the 'triumphs of civilization' he sees everywhere: an efficient health care system, for example. This simple binary of civilized Europe and its implied opposite (India), however, breaks down as the reader realizes that Peter's vision is false: the ambulance he sees has been called to take away the body of Septimus Warren Smith, the war veteran turned shell-shock victim and suicide. The idea of civilization suffered greatly after the atrocities of the war, and with it went any belief in the civilizing power of Europe with regard to its colonies.

Ireland represents a special case in terms of modernism and empire. On one hand, it may be seen as a 'settler colony' like Canada or Australia, whose writers were British subjects (whether or not they considered themselves as such) until Partition in 1922. In another view, the idea of linguistic, cultural, and racial difference – of Irishness and Englishness – was often exploited in a way that emphasized the relationship of colonizer and colonized. Joyce in particular has proved fertile ground for postcolonial readings. A cosmopolitan writer above all else, meditations on issues of nation and empire appear in all of Joyce's major works. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), the built environment of Dublin reveals its colonial history. Stephen's father 'lingers' in the Bank of Ireland when Stephen claims his cash reimbursement for a school prize, and tells Stephen 'that they were standing in the house of commons of the old Irish parliament'. Later Stephen recalls a phrase he learned in Latin class: *India mittit ebur*, or 'India sends ivory' (as if willingly). In conversation with the Dean of Studies, who is also an Englishman and a Jesuit priest, Stephen thinks:

The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine . . . . His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language.

In *Finnegans Wake* (1939), Joyce's subversion of the language of the colonist reaches its highest point: it is not the English language we are reading but the language of Joyce, a slippery, punning, polyglot language.

**See also:** *Contexts:* Nationalism, Race; *Texts:* Irish literature, Primitivism; *Criticism:* Postcolonialism.

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## Fascism

Modernism has long held an unfortunate, but not unfounded, association with fascism. Most obviously, there are the coinciding timeframes. On the fascist side, Mussolini formed his party in Milan in 1919, the same year Hitler joined the nascent Nazi party. Hitler became leader of the Nazi party in 1921, and was appointed Chancellor of Germany in 1933. Oswald Mosley formed the National Union of Fascists in Britain in 1932. In 1936, General Franco led his military coup, setting off the Spanish Civil War. The two movements, modernism and fascism, share a simultaneous progression from radical roots in the pre-war period to a 'high' or institutionalized period in the 1920s and 1930s. Shared philosophical influences are also cited as evidence of their affinity: from Nietzsche, whose influence was pervasive in Europe during the early twentieth century, to the French syndicalist Georges Sorel, author of *Reflections on Violence* (1908), which was published in an English translation by T. E. Hulme in 1914. More striking are the explicit links: perhaps most notoriously Ezra Pound's broadcasts in support of Mussolini on Rome radio between January 1941 and July 1943. Pound's wartime activities resulted in his detention at Pisa, during which time he wrote the *Pisan Cantos*. There followed charges of treason, deportation to America, and 12 years at St. Elizabeth's Hospital for the Criminally Insane in Washington, D. C.

Marinetti's futurists, who had their own revolutionary political party, were among the earliest and most boisterous supporters of fascism in Italy. They joined forces with Mussolini in 1918 and helped to establish the *Fasci di Combattimento* in Milan the following year. In England, Wyndham Lewis's misguided praise in *Hitler* (1931) dealt a lasting blow to his reputation; he later reversed his judgement in *The Hitler Cult* (1939), but to little effect. In the case of D. H. Lawrence, some have found his frequent talk of 'blood consciousness' too close to the blood metaphors of fascism, and his 'leadership' novels of the 1920s, notably *Kangaroo* (1923), too enthusiastic in their depiction of extreme-right politics. Yeats's support for the Irish Blueshirts, an openly xenophobic and anti-Semitic fascist organization, extended

to writing marching songs for the movement, which were reportedly sung by Blueshirts fighting for Franco alongside a Nazi tank regiment in Spain. One of the most open supporters of Spanish fascism was the South African poet Roy Campbell, a friend of Lewis's and author of the pro-Franco epic *Flowering Rifle: A Poem from the Battlefield of Spain* (1939). It is perhaps a reminder of the complexity of some of these cases that Campbell was also a translator of the poet Federico García Lorca, a leftist homosexual who was executed by Franco's Falangists in 1936.

The turn to fascism must be seen in the context of the turn against liberal democracy, especially after the failures of the First World War. A sense of crisis and the legitimate fear of collapse into anarchy motivated the movement towards political extremes in the interwar period. Yeats wrote in 1933: 'I find myself constantly urging the despotic rule of the educated classes as the only end to our troubles' (Yeats, 1954, pp. 811–12). It should be remembered that a large number of Left-leaning writers and artists flew to communism for similar reasons, and many remained faithful to the Party long after Stalin took control in the late 1920s. There was a sense that democracy and the Enlightenment belief in progress and rationality had been invalidated by the mass carnage of the First World War and state of chaos into which Europe had fallen. There needed to be, in Nietzsche's words, a 'revaluation of values'. Because fascism is fundamentally opposed to the bourgeois ideals of liberalism and democracy, any reaction against these values, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, would naturally have made one appear to share common cause with fascist ideology, even if there were disagreement in the details. Other interests common to modernism and fascism include order, social hierarchy, myth, regeneration, and the occult. (Leon Surette usefully explores the links between modernism, fascism, and the occult in *The Birth of Modernism*.)

Less common was the treatment of fascism as a theme. One exception is Lawrence, who had witnessed violent clashes between fascists and communists in Italy after the war, and transposed the rise of extreme politics to Australia in his novel *Kangaroo*. More common were ideological debates conducted in newspapers and magazines in the 1930s, when the binary opposition of fascism versus communism reached its height. In 1937, for example, the *Left Review* published its landmark pamphlet *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*, which boasted 148 contributions including many first-rank writers. The anti-fascist statements made up the overwhelming majority, and ranged from Samuel Beckett's '¡UPTHEREPUBLIC!' to the West Indian writer C. L. R. James's

reply: 'Against Fascism, against Franco, but against Bourgeois democracy too.' Only five supported Franco, one of whom was Evelyn Waugh. The 'Neutral' category, meanwhile, featured T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound (who dismissed the whole exercise as 'an escape mechanism for young fools who are too cowardly to think'), and others including Sean O'Faolain, Robert Byron, H. G. Wells, Vita Sackville West, and Oscar Wilde's son Vyvyan Holland. Writers who fought against Franco in the International Brigades included George Orwell, Ernest Hemingway, the poet John Cornford, the Marxist critic Christopher Caudwell, and Julian Bell, who was Virginia Woolf's nephew and the son of Clive and Vanessa Bell.

The many links between modernism and fascism have been examined in books with titles like *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (1979), *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (1993), *The Poetics of Fascism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Paul de Man* (1996), *Thinking Fascism: Sapphic Modernism and Fascist Modernity* (1998), and, more broadly, *Bad Modernisms* (2006). Some scholars defend their authors' fascist tendencies as a product of the time, while others argue that claims are exaggerated or judgements have made unfair use of hindsight following the Second World War. Defenders of poets like Pound, Eliot, and Yeats have sometimes insisted that political affiliations are irrelevant, especially when considering the work of a movement that often emphasized formal innovation and autonomy over political engagement or issues of morality. But it is clear that there existed a modernist flirtation with fascist ideas, and that this flirtation developed into a more serious relationship for Pound in particular. With the exception of Pound, however, most of these figures could more accurately be referred to simply as conservatives or reactionaries, or 'proto-fascists', as Fredric Jameson has called Wyndham Lewis. In 1943, George Orwell, who fought in the International Brigades against Franco, wrote of Yeats that 'long before Fascism was ever heard of, he had had the outlook of those who reach Fascism by the aristocratic route. He is a great hater of democracy, of the modern world, science, machinery, the concept of progress – above all, of the idea of human equality' (Orwell, 1946, p. 116). In this sense, 'fascism' is too historically limited a term, and it seems more accurate to say that the views held by Yeats and other modernists with anti-democratic, anti-humanist tendencies had similar origins and followed a similar path of development to those of the European fascist movements.

**See also:** *Contexts:* Class, Culture, Nationalism, Philosophy, Race, War; *Texts:* Anti-Semitism, Apocalypse, Futurism, Imagism and vorticism, Violence; *Criticism:* Cultural materialism/New Historicism, Marxist criticism.

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### Language

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), a pioneering Swiss linguist whose work led to the development of structuralism, is a name that is often mentioned in relation to modernism and language. The main source of his ideas is the *Course in General Linguistics* (1916), which was assembled from his papers and from the notes and recollections of students who had been present at his lectures in Geneva between 1907 and 1911. (Saussure died in 1913.) According to Saussure, language is a system of signs. These signs can be broken down into two components: the ‘signifier’ (the written or spoken part), and the ‘signified’ (the idea in the mind of the speaker). The connection between signifier and signified is arbitrary, which allows shifts in meaning to occur over time. Most relevant to modernist art and literature, aside from the linguistic self-consciousness that Saussure’s ideas represent, was his idea of linguistic autonomy: that the meaning of words derived from their context, the language system, and not from the thing to which they referred. Language, much like abstract art, is a closed system, where meaning is relative and does not necessarily relate to or derive from the outside world. Our language shapes and bounds our world. This theory was akin to James McNeill Whistler’s declaration, in his famous court case with the critic John Ruskin in 1878, that rather than producing a faithful rendering of a particular scene from nature, his only goal was to create a perfectly coherent world within the painting, ‘to bring about a certain harmony of colour’. It also resonates with Gustave Flaubert’s expressed desire to write ‘a book about nothing, a book without external attachments which would hold together by itself through the internal force of its style’. Virginia Woolf also attempted to achieve such formal balance in her novels. In *To the Lighthouse* (1928), for example, the first and third parts are almost literally balanced by a thin passage down the middle, ‘Time Passes’. The artist character Lily Briscoe mirrors this balance in the novel’s famous closing passage: ‘With

a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre.'

In the pre-war period, avant-garde literary manifestos called for radical changes, especially to poetic language. Some of the more influential manifestos included Marinetti's 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature' (1912), Mayakovsky's 'Slap in the Face of Public Taste' (1912), and Pound's 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste' (1913). Mayakovsky and the Russian futurists called on poets to enlarge the language with neologisms, and 'To feel an insurmountable hatred for the language existing before their time.' Marinetti presented a highly detailed programme for renewal, which advocated 'words in freedom', the destruction of syntax, and dispensing entirely with adverbs and adjectives, punctuation, and the pronoun 'I'. Analogy, the essence of poetry, would be elevated to fill the place of all this grammatical scaffolding. More conservatively, and indeed partly in reaction to Marinetti, Pound instructed the poet simply to 'Use no superfluous word' and to 'Go in fear of abstractions'. All of these poetic commandments, with their calls to strip language down to its elements and build it up afresh, can be seen as a reaction against the excesses of the previous generation. Pound and other Anglo-American modernists differed from their Russian and European counterparts not in concept but only in degree, and in their continued reverence for past masters like Shakespeare and Dante. In another articulation of Pound's slogan, the Russian critic Viktor Shklovsky observed in avant-garde literature the attempt to 'estrangle' language (his concept, *ostrenenie*, translates as 'estrangement' or 'defamiliarization'). He contrasted everyday language with literary language, where the goal, at least if it was done right, was to make strange and thereby revitalize the language.

The modernist project of renovation encapsulated in Ezra Pound's exhortation to 'make it new' applies, above all, to language itself. Language, as opposed to what it represents, became the central focus of much modernist writing; language itself became the subject. This will be evident to anyone who has reached the second half of Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), where the mode of telling increasingly threatens to eclipse the tale itself. Each chapter is written as a pastiche or burlesque of one or more styles: the musical, 'fugue' style in 'Sirens'; the succession of generic styles in 'Cyclops' (journalistic, epic, legal, scientific, all filtered through the nameless narrator's Dublin street slang); or the sentimental style of a popular women's magazine in 'Nausicaa' ('mayhap he would embrace her gently, like a real man, crushing her soft body to him, and love her, his ownest girlie, for herself alone').

Other modernists were less confident than Joyce was about the power of language. They felt that even if language could still represent the 'real' world, the picture of this world was no longer shared. In the opening scene of Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, for example, onlookers vary widely in their interpretations of two spectacles: an impressive automobile taking someone, possibly the Queen or the Prime Minister, to Buckingham Palace; and an airplane writing something in the sky overhead. How to describe the world accurately when everyone sees it differently? For other modernists, the relationship between words and their referents, signifier and signified, had broken down. Narrators lost their reliability, or they lost the ability to describe anything with confidence. In Samuel Beckett's early novel *Murphy* (1938), Celia, talking to Murphy, feels 'spattered with words that went dead as soon as they sounded; each word obliterated, before it had time to make sense'. The experimental novelist B. S. Johnson, an heir to Joyce and Beckett, grew so disillusioned with the task of communicating with his readers that when it came time to describe the protagonist of his final novel, *Christie Malry's Own Double-Entry* (1973), he threw up his hands and declared: 'Make him what you will: probably in the image of yourself.' The struggle with language, whether or not it is seen as hopeless, goes back to Flaubert's famous struggle, in the writing of his foundational modernist text, *Madame Bovary* (1856), to find just the right word. As Prufrock exclaims in Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1915): 'It is impossible to say just what I mean!'

**See also:** *Contexts:* Censorship; *Texts:* Allusion, Fragmentation, Futurism, Imagism and vorticism; *Criticism:* Deconstruction, New Criticism, Structuralism, Poststructuralism.

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### Market

Drastic changes to the publishing industry that began in the Victorian era continued to have their effect in the modernist period. Literacy rates had climbed steadily since the Education Act of 1870, and by the early twentieth century literacy in Britain stood at about 80 percent. Newspapers and magazines accounted for much of the growth in reading material: at the turn of the century, the *Daily Mail* famously achieved circulation of a million copies a day. 'For her generation', the narrator

of Virginia Woolf's last novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), relates about a character born in 1900, 'the newspaper was a book'. For those who still read books, as of course many did, private lending libraries offered the most affordable way for people to consume fiction. Boots' Book-Lovers Library, for example, was founded in 1900. This was as it had been in the previous century; however, public libraries were gradually extending their branches from large cities to smaller towns, particularly after the Public Libraries Act of 1919. The three-decker novel had suffered a sudden collapse in the 1890s, when circulating libraries withdrew their support of the format, but the single-volume novel that replaced it continued to thrive and diversify into different genres.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, cheap editions (sixpenny or even lower) were printed in the tens of thousands. Popular authors could expect to sell their books at various prices – half a crown, one shilling, sixpenny – simultaneously to capture different readerships. The advent of compact, affordable reprint editions, including the World's Classics (1901, bought by Oxford University Press in 1905) and Everyman's Library (1906), was another significant change to publishing. The World's Classics were priced as low as one shilling in 1905, when the pocket edition was also introduced. The average literary novel, however, might sell only 1000 copies, and the hardbound edition was usually priced at a fairly expensive six shillings. During the inter-war years, the price of these novels rose to seven shillings and sixpence, further widening the gap between middle-class fiction and mass-market cheap editions. Penguin Books, which arrived on the scene in 1935, revolutionized the industry by offering 'high-culture' titles in a paperback edition that cost only sixpence.

Throughout this period, modernism's relationship with the market was complex and often marked by outright hostility. Of course, what was then called 'modern' literature amounted to only a small fraction of the publishing industry. By 1914, more than 1000 novels were published in Britain each year, but very few of them offered the challenge of Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr* or Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, both of which were serialized in Harriet Shaw Weaver's *Egoist* magazine and then published by the *Egoist* Press during the war. These writers rejected the novelistic conventions of best-selling authors like H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett, who appealed to middle-class readers, while also shunning the 'mass' culture represented by everything from popular romance novels to the newer media of cinema and radio. To hear the writers tell it, modernism made few if any concessions to either audience expectations or commercial concerns. The familiar modernist pose was to defy reader expectations and the demand for a familiar plot, characters, and style.

Writers actively taunted readers by breaking taboos and placing rigorous demands on the reader's knowledge and patience. In the *Manifesto of Futurist Theatre* (1910), subtitled *The Pleasures of Being Boomed*, the Italian futurist leader F. T. Marinetti, who was a regular visitor to England during the pre-war years, called on authors to 'despise the public' as fickle and mediocre. 'Playwrights should have no other concern than that of an absolute, innovative originality.' This dictum summarized the view of most modernists. It can also be seen in earlier works like George Gissing's bleakly pessimistic *New Grub Street* (1891), with its somewhat simplistic binary of money versus art in the London literary world.

Recent studies in publishing history, most notably Lawrence Rainey's *Institutions of Modernism* (1998), have uncovered in careful detail the truth behind claims that modernism existed outside of market pressures. According to Rainey, the show of contempt for mass culture was simply part of modernism's broader cultural economy, in which value and demand tied in with collectability, new forms of patronage, coterie audiences, and a general aura of exclusivity. Far from resisting commodification, in other words, these texts invited it, albeit on their own terms. Modernism, as conceived by Ezra Pound and others, was like a fashionable nightclub: the stricter the door policy, the longer the queue, the higher the entrance fee, the greater the interest was generated. Of course, modernism made all sorts of demands: a higher price and hard-to-find copies were only the first difficulties the contemporary reader-consumer would have encountered. Quality, small-scale publishing did not originate in the twentieth century. In the 1890s, for example, William Morris's Kelmscott Press had produced its finely crafted editions partly in reaction to the mass market.

The publishing history of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) serves as Rainey's chief example of modernist exclusivity as a marketing technique. A combination of money and reputation led Eliot to place his poem in the *Dial* for its initial US publication rather than the *Little Review*, where payment was nil and circulation was too limited, or *Vanity Fair*, which had ten times the *Dial's* circulation but lacked its exclusivity and seriousness. Pound acted not only as editor of *The Waste Land* but also as its agent, negotiating between various offers. (The professionalization of literature in Britain had begun in the previous century with the founding of the Society of Authors by Walter Besant in 1884.) Following the careful re-examination of print culture in the early twentieth century by Rainey and others, it is now generally accepted that modernism was more deeply entangled in commercial concerns than was previously thought. Even before he sold *The Waste Land*, Eliot perceived with clarity the relationship between supply and demand: in a letter from 1919 he remarked:

I write very little, and I should not become more powerful by increasing my output . . . each [poem] should be an event. (Eliot, 1988, p. 285)

**See also:** *Contexts:* Censorship, Class, Culture; *Texts:* Aestheticism and decadence, Futurism, Imagism and vorticism; *Criticism:* Cultural materialism/New Historicism, Leavisite criticism, Marxist criticism.

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### Nationalism

The issue of nationalism in this period is complicated by the rise of two new tendencies, both of which are strongly present in modernist literature: transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. Transnationalism may be defined as extending beyond national boundaries, or cutting across boundary lines, as modernism certainly did. Cosmopolitanism, often linked with decadence and used as a term of derision by conservatives in the period (much as ‘liberalism’ is used in America today), similarly denotes a lack of regard for international boundaries. It can also describe a city with a highly diverse ethnic makeup or cosmopolitan outlook: a ‘cosmopolis’ or world city. It has often been noted that none of the so-called ‘Men of 1914’ – Joyce, Pound, Eliot, and Lewis – were born in England. Joyce in particular was defiantly cosmopolitan, an outlook that is reflected in many of his characters. The idea expressed by Hugh Kenner that ‘English’ modernism was a movement of Irish exiles and American expatriates is of course only partly true: Lawrence, Woolf, Hulme, and Ford were born in England, as were Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair, and Rebecca West. British-born modernists were also prone to periods of self-imposed exile: Lawrence lived in Sicily and New Mexico, for example, while Mina Loy moved between Florence and New York. It is perhaps more accurate to say that Anglo-American modernism was primarily a literature of exiles and outsiders: if not exiles of another nation, then outsiders in terms of class, sex, or gender.

Modernism elsewhere in Europe is in some ways a different story. Italian futurism was extremely nationalistic and supported Italy’s colonial

interests in Libya and Ethiopia, for example. Futurism was vehemently opposed to the family; instead, it considered the nation to be the ideal grouping. Marinetti wrote of the nation in 1919: 'It is generous, heroic, dynamic, and Futurist, while . . . the family is small-minded, fearful, static, conservative, and . . . bound by tradition' (Marinetti, 2006, p. 322). Italy and Germany were both newly formed nation states, having come into existence roughly at the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, and it was not by accident that these nations also saw the strongest support for fascism, with its dependence on national and racial mythologies. In Scotland, meanwhile, the leading figure of the Scottish renaissance, Hugh MacDiarmid, wrote approvingly of Italian fascism in 1923, calling for Scotland to welcome a similar marriage, as he saw it, of socialism and nationalism. The Irish literary revival also flirted with fascism, seen in Yeats's support for the Blueshirts in the 1930s. However, the revival was by no means uncritical in its nationalism, and protests over plays deemed insulting to Ireland were a common occurrence at the Abbey Theatre.

Modernist literature is generally marked by its reaction against nationalism and its advocacy of the writer's and the individual's freedom from institutional restraints. This is perhaps best seen in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Stephen Dedalus undertakes to free himself from a series of 'nets' that would hamper his development as an artist, namely: 'nationality, language, religion'. When Davin, a member of the Gaelic League, challenges Stephen's Irishness he replies: 'This race and this country and this life produced me . . . . I shall express myself as I am.' Stephen, like Joyce, is mindful of the fate of nationalist heroes like Wolfe Tone and Charles Stewart Parnell, whose death occurs at the beginning of the book. In Joyce's view, these men tried to save Ireland from itself, and were betrayed and martyred at the hands of their own people. As Stephen tells Davin with bitterness: 'Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow.' Despite his obvious reservations, Stephen is in some ways modeled on past nationalist heroes, and the novel's famous penultimate line, 'to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race', makes one form of allegiance clear. A similar concern for the artist's autonomy was expressed in England at this time in Wyndham Lewis's *Blast* (1914–1915). On the eve of the First World War, the vorticist magazine made the audacious declaration: 'We fight first on one side, then on the other, but always for the SAME cause, which is neither side or both sides and ours.' (The 'War Issue' that followed in 1915, however, made some concessions to patriotic duty.)

The impact of the First World War was a major factor in the erosion of nationalist sentiment among writers and public alike. Bloomsbury

writer and conscientious objector Lytton Strachey published his ironic biography *Eminent Victorians* shortly before the Armistice in 1918, and with it laid to rest four pillars of Victorian England – Cardinal Manning, Thomas Arnold, Florence Nightingale, and General Gordon – and set the tone for the post-war period. In Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), the new post-war attitude is signalled by a description of the brief swell of patriotic interest created as a luxurious motorcar carrying 'Queen, Prince, or Prime Minister' passes through the crowd on its way to Buckingham Palace. The narrative tone is anything but reverential, noting the gossip-mindedness of the onlookers, and if some still doff their caps and stand to attention, they just as quickly lose interest when a skywriting airplane advertising toffee flies overhead, at which point 'the car went in at the gates and nobody looked at it'. The old symbols of Queen and country still survive, but they are largely nostalgic. Meanwhile, for another of Woolf's characters, the shell-shocked Septimus Smith, the war has killed off his romantic patriotism. Septimus went to war for the England of Shakespeare, but came back to find in the same plays only 'loathing, hatred, despair'. D. H. Lawrence's wartime short story 'England, My England' (1922) takes its title from W. E. Henley's patriotic poem 'England' (1900), and indeed starts out in the idyllic and timeless setting of Crockham Cottage in Hampshire. This place is described as being 'savage as when the Saxons first came', and life there is 'like a chapter of living romance'. When the modern world interrupts this idyll, in the form of trench warfare, Egbert, the lazy, idealistic Englishman, 'born and bred free', goes to war as if in a daze and is soon killed by a German shell. Lawrence later wrote, in *Kangaroo* (1923): 'It was in 1915 the world ended.'

**See also:** *Contexts:* Empire, Fascism, Race; *Texts:* Anti-Semitism, Futurism, Irish literature; *Criticism:* Cultural materialism/New Historicism, Leavisite criticism, Marxist criticism, Postcolonialism.

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## Psychology

Like the fields of anthropology and sociology, psychology was an emerging profession in the modernist period and was very much tied up with modernist concerns. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) was a contemporary of the modernists and published his most influential writings, including *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), *Totem and Taboo* (1912), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1919–1920), and *The Ego and the Id* (1923), in the first decades of the twentieth century. Freud's groundbreaking study, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), introduced the idea that our dream life is intimately connected with, and revelatory of, our waking life – that, for example, dreams may represent repressed sexual desires and the wish fulfillment of desires. Far from being trivial and non-sensical, dreams were revealed as dense texts that could be 'translated' from their symbolic or 'picture-puzzle' state into the accessible language of our conscious wishes or 'dream-thoughts'.

One of Freud's earliest successes was the technique of 'free association', later to become the psychoanalytical method. It was developed as an alternative to hypnosis used in the recovery of repressed memories. In 1910 Freud established the International Psychoanalytical Association, with the Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist Carl Jung as its first president. Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1912), which marked the beginning of his break with Freudian psychoanalysis, was another influential work of psychology for modernism. Jung's ideas of the 'collective unconscious' as a source of dreams, and the recurring images or symbols ('archetypes') manifested in dreams and myths, led among other things to the practice of archetypal or myth criticism. Like Freud, Jung was influenced by the anthropology of E. B. Tylor and James Frazer, particularly on the subject of myth, and for both of them myth was seen as a key to the universal unconscious. This is the side of Freud (and of Frazer) that influenced T. S. Eliot, seen in *The Waste Land* (1922) and his influential review of *Ulysses*, 'Ulysses, Order, and Myth' (1923). Jung also wrote a review of *Ulysses*, in 1932, and in 1934 he became the twentieth doctor to be consulted by James Joyce about his daughter Lucia's mental illness. Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) contains several references to Jung, as well as to Freud.

The dissemination of Freud's theories sparked widespread interest in the unconscious, and this extended to modernism. The 'inward turn' or exploration of the psyche often said to characterize modernist literature is difficult to imagine without Freud. That is not to say that Freudian influence was necessarily direct or explicit; such an assertion would be not only difficult to prove, it would be anachronistic. Like Einstein or Darwin,

Freud's ideas of the unconscious, the libido, and repression were partly a product of their time. Once published, they quickly became so popular that they were in some form or other simply 'in the air'. Translations of Freud into English became available shortly before the War, and by the 1920s most writers would have been familiar with the central tenets of his work. The London Psychoanalytic Society was founded in 1913, followed by the British Institute of Psychoanalysis in 1924, which published the International Psychoanalytic Library Series in partnership with the Woolfs' Hogarth Press.

In 1909, Freud made a celebrated trip to the United States, his first and only visit. The trip came at the invitation of G. Stanley Hall, a fellow psychologist and President of Clark University in Massachusetts, where a major conference was taking place. Jung accompanied Freud, and at the conference they met the psychologist William James, who coined the term 'stream of consciousness', and the anthropologist Franz Boas, among other pioneering figures of the social sciences. Freud's visit began a longstanding relationship with America, where interest in psychoanalysis was always greater than on the other side of the Atlantic. The First World War, with its many psychological as well as physical casualties, did contribute to Freud's notoriety in Britain. The shell-shocked character Septimus Smith in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), for example, is symptomatic of a wider fascination in the post-war period with the causes of psychological trauma. Septimus's doctors, Holmes and Bradshaw, struggle and ultimately fail to treat their suicidal patient, and Woolf's portrayal of the medical establishment is highly critical. It was C. S. Myers, an experimental psychologist and a consultant to the British Army during the war, who first used the term 'shell shock' in 1915. Myers considered the condition treatable, but was frustrated by strong opposition to this view. Since shell shock was not widely recognized or understood, it was often equated with cowardice, and in some cases soldiers exhibiting signs of mental distress on the battlefield were simply shot. Nervousness as a symptom of modern life can be traced back at least as far as Baudelaire's conception of the modern subject as 'nerve-ridden', and Max Nordau's infamous study *Degeneration* (1892) associated nervousness and hysteria – signs of an 'artistic temperament' – with moral and spiritual decay. This view only increased after the war, and persisted well into the 1930s: in 1936, for example, the American reporter Michel Mok called F. Scott Fitzgerald 'The poet-prophet of the post-war neurotics'.

Importantly for modernist writers, Freud's theories suggested that our identity was fluid and changing rather than fixed and permanent. (The French philosopher Henri Bergson also articulated this view.) Neither was self-knowledge something to take for granted; it seemed suddenly

that people were at the mercy of complex desires and hidden drives. This contradicted the Victorian idea of a stable and knowable identity, and in fact it was Oscar Wilde who presented an early challenge to this notion in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), where Jack discovers at the end of the play that in fact he is not Jack, the person he thought he was, but Ernest, the person he pretended to be. Clarissa Dalloway, too, reveals her unified self to be merely a mask: she 'tried to be the same always, never showing a sign of all the other sides of her'. Moreover, Freud saw the formation of identity as something that occurred mostly in childhood. Woolf's 'tunneling' method of characterization, flashing back to her characters' formative experiences, suggests that she shared this view. Other remarkable episodes depicting the unconscious at work in modernist literature include: the dream sequence in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912), with its obvious symbolism and themes of homosexual desire and repression; the 'Time Passes' section of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), with its astonishing invention of the dream life of an empty house; the 'Circe' episode of *Ulysses* (1922), in which Bloom and Stephen lose themselves in 'Nighttown', Dublin's carnivalesque brothel quarter; and indeed virtually all of what John Bishop has called Joyce's 'book of the dark', *Finnegans Wake* (1939). D. H. Lawrence wrote two Freud-inspired books, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921) and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922), and the basic theme of freedom versus repression, of the quest for the instinctual self, is central to many of his works. The modernist novelists May Sinclair and Dorothy Richardson were two of the first writers in England to digest Freud's ideas. Of course, Freud did not win the admiration of all modernists. Some, like Pound and Lewis, reacted against what they saw as another excuse for romantic introversion, infantile regression, and a morbid overemphasis on sex.

**See also:** *Contexts:* Cities and urbanization, Sex and sexuality; *Texts:* Consciousness, Stream of, Fragmentation, Memory; *Criticism:* Feminist and gender criticism, Psychoanalytic criticism.

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### Race

Race was a subject of great interest in this period among scientists and scholars, artists, and the general public alike. It was part of a broad network of issues relating to nationalism, colonialism, war, population

and migration, and new directions in science and the humanities that had emerged in the Victorian period – Darwin’s theory of evolution, psychology, anthropology, and so on. Though racial prejudice even in its modern form developed much earlier, the term ‘racist’ only entered common usage in the 1930s. (Its predecessor, ‘racialist’, dates back to 1907.) The relationship between modernism and race has many different aspects. The ‘primitivism’ of white European and American modernists attempting to ‘make it new’, for example, has long been a subject of interest. What was often simply called Negro Art, and might have included anything from African masks to jazz or the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance, enjoyed immense popularity at the time. Many artists viewed it as the antidote to a dying European culture: it was seen as a source of vitality, or as a rich repository of abstract motifs ripe for plundering – even as the roots of abstraction.

A very different aspect of the relationship between race and modernism can be found in the Harlem Renaissance itself. This movement of the 1920s and 1930s married stylistic innovation to cultural nationalism and ideas of ‘race consciousness’, ‘uplift’, and W. E. B. DuBois’s idea of an active and assertive black cultural elite, the so-called ‘talented tenth’. The contribution of Harlem Renaissance writers was so great, in fact, that this body of writing is often seen as a distinct, in a sense parallel literary movement, not to be easily subsumed under the broader definition of a predominantly white Anglo-American modernism. The questions of race and empire contribute to the ongoing discussion of what constitutes modernism: where did it take place, who were the important figures, how was its early history written, and how should we redraw its boundaries to bring it into line with contemporary scholarship.

Another important and controversial aspect of this topic is modernism’s engagement with eugenics, the study of racial engineering. As David Bradshaw makes clear, the eugenics movement that reached its height in Britain and America in the 1920s was anything but marginal. Eugenicist themes are present in the writing of Yeats, Eliot, Woolf, Stein, Lawrence, and other modernists, and in the more popular works of Wells and Shaw. High profile advocates of eugenics in the 1920s came from across the political spectrum, and included many ‘progressive’ thinkers such as the economist John Maynard Keynes, the philosopher Bertrand Russell, and the birth control advocate Marie Stopes. Compulsory sterilization for certain groups became law in countries like Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Canada, and Switzerland, as well as in many American states, though it never got that far in Britain. It was Darwin’s cousin, Sir Francis Galton, who coined the term ‘eugenics’ in *Inquiries into Human Faculty* in 1883. The anxiety that drove this phenomenon

was the perceived deterioration of the race, which some believed was reaching epidemic proportions. Evidence was found in the declining health of the working classes in industrial cities like Manchester and Birmingham. This fear was compounded by studies showing a decline in the birth rate for the upper and middle classes, while the birth rate among the poor and immigrant populations remained steady. 'Positive' and 'negative' eugenic strategies were proposed to combat this differential decline: the former included incentives to encourage breeding among the 'better' classes, while the latter sought to limit (or eliminate) breeding among 'less desirable' or 'unfit' groups. Much has been written about modernism's flirtation with fascism, and this theme is often tied – for obvious reasons – to eugenics. The interest in selective breeding ultimately led to, and also ended with, the eugenics-inspired ideology of the Nazis and the genocide of the Holocaust, an event many scholars (most recently Vicki Mahaffey in *Modernist Literature: Challenging Fictions*, 2007) have identified as marking the end of modernism.

The modernist period was one of enormous cultural hybridity, cosmopolitanism, and expatriation. There were Irish writers in London, American writers in Paris, and Caribbean writers in New York, and a constant flow of migration was stirred up by two world wars. Take, for example, the byline at the end of Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922): 'Trieste-Zurich-Paris, 1914–1921'. Joyce had chosen exile from Ireland, and first settled his family in Trieste, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Forced to leave Trieste at the outbreak of the First World War because he was a citizen of the United Kingdom, and was therefore considered an enemy, he moved to neutral Zurich to sit out the war. He finally settled in Paris shortly after the Armistice. In 1940, when Joyce tried to move his family back to Switzerland from France, he was initially denied entry on the grounds that he was suspected of being Jewish. The cosmopolitanism of this period resulted in new breakthroughs, but also new anxieties about the policing of national and ethnic boundaries. Britain lagged behind the rest of Europe in the registration of resident aliens, which it instituted in 1914, and the country had long been considered a safe haven for anarchists and other radicals. The English poet and philosopher T. E. Hulme, who arrived in London in 1908, was keenly cosmopolitan despite his reactionary reputation. This cosmopolitanism was reflected in the guest lists at his weekly Frith Street salon, which included an array of continental European visitors and expatriates. Hulme was, according to his biographer Robert Ferguson, 'a leading importer into England of intellectual goods, in the form of French *vers libre*, Bergson's dignified and dignifying metaphysics, and the artistic theories of the German aestheticians'.

The concept of 'otherness' that is so central to an understanding of Victorian literature also lies at the heart of modernism. In Victorian literature, the English sense of self is often constructed in contrast to its foreign other – Indian or Irish, or for that matter female or working class. However, a major shift in the concept of race and otherness can be seen to occur in literature between the height of the colonial period at the end of the nineteenth century and the period of decolonization beginning with the Second World War. Increasingly, the other is not encountered outside of oneself, but rather it is found within: the self *as* other. New discoveries in science and psychology were one factor in this shifting sense of self, as uncertainty and inwardness replaced Victorian confidence to become distinguishing marks of modernist literature. Another factor was the increased movement of people between countries. As Marjorie Perloff has argued recently, 'the diaspora literature of our own time begins in the early twentieth century' (Perloff, 2006, p. 576). At the turn of the century, the sociologist and activist DuBois, who (like Gertrude Stein) studied under William James at Harvard University, pioneered the idea of 'double consciousness' – an idea which later gained a more general application – to describe the African-American experience of alienation from the self. 'An American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body', DuBois intoned in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), the collection of essays in which he famously predicted that 'the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line'. This quintessentially modern form of alienation, 'double consciousness', DuBois argued, came from being raised in the mindset of the majority culture while at the same time being excluded from it. This split identity produced a sense of otherness towards oneself. Two meanings of otherness, both of which are central to modernism, are present in the concept of 'double consciousness': the view of the exotic 'other' that was a legacy of the nineteenth century and earlier, here internalized; and the feeling of alienation from the larger society, of being an outsider, that is already present in early modernists like Baudelaire and Dostoevsky. The interest in primitivism that was pervasive in the modernist period carried on the old ways of the colonial era, but it also suggested a new recognition of, and identification with, the authenticity of the other: the other was now seen as being one facet of ourselves.

**See also:** *Contexts:* Anthropology, Class, Empire, Fascism, Nationalism; *Texts:* Anti-Semitism, Harlem Renaissance, Primitivism; *Criticism:* Postcolonialism, Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, Psychoanalytic criticism.

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### Religion

'It is a curious thing, do you know, Cranly said dispassionately, how your mind is supersaturated with the religion in which you say you disbelieve.' The line from James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) speaks not only to Stephen Dedalus's situation, and to Joyce's own, but also to a generation born into religion and raised in an age of doubt. In the Victorian era, Christian belief was most famously shaken by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution through natural selection, detailed in *The Origin of the Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). The more literal, historical sort of Christianity was further undermined by textual scholarship on the Bible itself, which revealed its gradual production by numerous authors over an extended period of time. The new field of comparative religion was also widely perceived as a threat to Christianity. In 1889, the anthropologist James Frazer wrote to his publisher describing the first edition of *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915), a book that would have a profound effect on modernist literature, and acknowledging one of its possible side effects. He wrote: 'The resemblance of savage customs and ideas to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity is striking. But I make no reference to this parallelism, leaving my readers to draw their own conclusions, one way or the other.' Then, in addition, there was Nietzsche's sustained attack on Christianity in the last decades of the century. This was neatly summed up in the bold and quotable declaration 'God is dead', which first appears in *The Gay Science* (1882). The fact that the phrase was usually taken out of context is overshadowed by the substantial currency it gained with the general public.

Given the rise of secularism in Britain and the West during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the extent to which religious themes and imagery still appear in modernist literature and art may be surprising. However, if the language and iconography of religion were still used, the treatment and function of religion in modernism changed dramatically. Religious belief, like most other areas of thought at the time, was perceived to be in a state of crisis. The directions modernist

writers took in responding to this crisis varied, but they generally fell into three categories: embracing secularism, usually in tandem with challenging or attacking religious institutions; exploring spiritual alternatives to Christianity, including pantheism, the occult, and Eastern religion; and calling for the return to some sort of Christian tradition. The secularists were led by James Joyce, whose wife Nora refused last rites on his behalf at his deathbed, and Virginia Woolf, along with most of Bloomsbury. The occultists included W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, and the influential *New Age* editor A. R. Orage, although Joyce and D. H. Lawrence also employed the occult tradition in different ways. Yeats was a member of the Hermetic Students of the Golden Dawn and the Theosophical Society, both led by Madame Blavatsky, the key figure of the occult fad of the 1890s. His dedication to the occult lasted throughout his life, and was reflected in the automatic writing experiments with his wife, Georgie Hyde Lees, and in the system outlined in *A Vision* (1925).

The traditionalists, meanwhile, included Eliot and the philosopher and critic T. E. Hulme. Hulme upheld the doctrine of Original Sin – though arguably more as a philosophical idea than a specifically religious one – against what he considered false optimism and the notion of progress. In the essay-lecture ‘Romanticism and Classicism’ (1912), he famously denounced Romanticism as ‘spilt religion’. Eliot’s decisive embrace of Christianity came in 1927, the year he gave up his American citizenship and became a British subject, when he was baptized into the Church of England. The following year, in the ‘Preface’ to *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order* (1928), Eliot described his ‘point of view’ as ‘classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion’, an English gloss on a slogan that originated with the French reactionary thinker Charles Maurras (*classique, catholique, monarchique*). Eliot’s conversion can be seen as part of a greater effort to escape what he called the ‘futility and anarchy’ of the present age, including the growing secularism and materialism of Western society. This deliberate move into orthodoxy seemed like an abrupt departure from his earlier bohemianism, but in fact it had deeper roots than many realized at the time. Eliot’s embrace of Christianity and its institutions contrasted greatly with Lawrence’s very personal, pantheistic view. Lawrence summed up this view in 1912: ‘I worship Christ, I worship Jehovah, I worship Pan, I worship Aphrodite . . . I want them all, all the gods.’ He goes on: ‘If I take my whole passionate, spiritual and physical love to the woman who in turn loves me, that is how I serve God.’ Here the prophetic influence of William Blake is clearly evident, representing another very different strain of modernist belief. Both of these differ again from the view expressed by Stephen Dedalus (to the Englishman Haines) in Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922).

When Haines tells Stephen, 'You are your own master', Stephen replies: 'I am the servant of two masters... an English and an Italian.' Stephen equates the power of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland with English colonial rule, and tries, as the younger Stephen did in *A Portrait*, to free himself from these 'nets'. In *A Portrait*, Stephen goes so far as to tell Cranly, 'I will not serve', echoing Satan's *non serviam*; as Cranly says: 'That remark was made before.'

Spiritual alternatives aside, the majority of modernists believed that art itself represented the last, best chance for Western civilization. Like many modernist beliefs, this can be traced back to Romanticism, and to the aestheticism of the late-Victorian period. Whistler, the American expatriate artist, cast his influential 'Ten O'Clock' lecture of 1885 in the style of Genesis, and himself in the role of the preacher declaiming the doctrine of art. He also spoke of 'false prophets' and the 'Gentle priest of the Philistine' (alluding to Wilde), who convinced the public that they should take an interest in art – an unhealthy interest, in Whistler's view. The artist was given the raw materials of nature by God, but surpassed God (or 'the Gods') in the masterpiece he created: 'and the Gods stand by and marvel, and perceive how far and away more beautiful is the Venus of Melos than was their own Eve.' Whistler's typically outrageous assertion, that the artist not only equalled but actually surpassed and improved upon God's work in the creation of beauty, is a testament to the strength of modernist confidence in the redemptive power of art.

**See also:** *Contexts:* Anthropology, Culture; *Texts:* Aestheticism and decadence, Apocalypse, Bloomsbury, Epiphany, Fragmentation, Primitivism; *Criticism:* Leavisite criticism, Marxist criticism.

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### Science and Technology

It is common for modernist criticism to draw parallels between advances in science and literature: use of the word 'experiment' is one such gesture. However, tracing a line of influence can be difficult. What is clear is that innovations in the two fields, and the new ways of seeing they introduced, bear some striking resemblances. 'Relativity' and

'uncertainty', for example, evoke defining features and achievements of both. In science, as in the arts, 'reality' was dealt a heavy blow at the turn of the century by a rapid succession of new discoveries. Beginning in the 1890s, Wilhelm Roentgen discovered X rays (or Roentgen Rays) in 1895; Henri Becquerel, investigating Roentgen's work, discovered radioactivity in 1896; J. J. Thomson announced his discovery of the electron in 1897; Marie and Pierre Curie followed with radium in 1898; and in 1900 Max Planck first proposed the quantum theory, which reached maturity in the 1920s. These discoveries among many others, including Ernest Rutherford's successful splitting of nitrogen atoms in 1910, had profound implications for empirical science. As in the work of Freud, these new lines of inquiry dealt, disconcertingly for some, more with the unseen than the seen. Abstract, speculative theory increasingly replaced old-fashioned observation. Moreover, with the advent of Einstein's special (1905) and general (1916) theories of relativity, high-level physics no longer appeared to obey reasonable laws. After Einstein, the physical (Newtonian) universe was never the same. Even if writers did not necessarily understand Einstein's theories, they understood that everything previously held to be true was now subject to revision and would remain ambiguous at best, just as Darwin's theories had turned natural science on its head in the previous century. Even more unsettling was the idea that, in fact, Newton's laws still held for everyday life; Einstein's theories applied to extreme situations, such as travel near the speed of light. Had everything changed, or not? The existence of two apparently contradictory theories in tandem furthered the impression that science (like religion at the time) could no longer be thought of as a single, conclusive explanation, but only a series of 'stories' made up to account for the workings of the universe.

If science had suddenly been rendered 'all too human', to borrow Nietzsche's phrase, the new doctrine of relativism was in many ways liberating. Einstein published a layman's version of his work, *Relativity, the Special and the General Theory*, in 1920. Several other popular introductions followed. Relativism is perhaps the key identifying factor of modernist literature: what 'happens' in a modernist novel or poem is highly speculative and subjective, owing to unreliable narrators, shifts in perspective, and other techniques suggesting epistemological uncertainty. Werner Heisenberg's 'uncertainty principle' of 1927, another step forward in quantum mechanics, only added to this general outlook. Rather than one reliable, omniscient perspective, readers were shown several limited ones, often with nothing more than the distant and ambiguous presence of an 'arranger' (as this figure has been called in studies of Joyce) to watch over things. Even taken together these multiple

perspectives do not necessarily add up to an objective view of the world. Characters witness events from their particular position in the world, and this position influences their view, just as Einstein and Heisenberg's theories suggested that the observer's position would always render scientific laws relative and contingent. In the 'Lestrygonians' episode of *Ulysses* (1922), Bloom contemplates the word 'parallax', which in astronomical terms refers to a 'change in the apparent position or direction of an object [e.g. a star] as seen from two different points' (*Oxford English Dictionary*). In the novel, it signals an important element of relativism, that what you see depends on who you are and where you are standing, not unlike the multiple perspectives of a cubist painting. Bloom, however, professes his ignorance of the term ('I never exactly understood') and moves on. Another version of the new *Weltanschauung* can be seen in the philosopher T. E. Hulme's early work 'Cinders', a collection of notes begun in 1906 and unpublished in his lifetime, which described a new outlook of uncertainty, plurality, and only local comprehension. 'The *absolute*', Hulme states, 'is to be described not as perfect, but if existent as essentially imperfect, chaotic, and cinder-like'. Hulme adds to this the very modern sounding statement that 'all a writer's generalisations and truths can be traced to the personal circumstances and prejudices of his class, experience, capacity and body.' Our knowledge, in other words, is partial, contingent, and highly subjective. Attempts at outright explanation were now seen as hopelessly naïve.

The impact of technology on daily life in the first decades of the twentieth century can scarcely be overstated. Technological innovations brought profound changes to every aspect of human existence in Europe and North America. In a section of *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907) entitled 'The Dynamo and the Virgin', for example, the American Adams recorded the shock he felt at the Great Exposition of 1900 in Paris: 'he found himself lying in the Gallery of Machines... with his historical neck broken by the sudden irruption of forces totally new'. In manufacturing, Henry Ford pioneered the moving assembly line in 1913, which dramatically increased the production capacity and affordability of the Model T (first built in 1908). Mass production was advanced not only by 'Fordism' but also by 'Taylorism', the management theory developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor in the 1880s and 1890s to increase productivity through division of labour. It was the dehumanizing, repetitive work promoted by Taylorism that Charles Chaplin parodied in the film *Modern Times* (1936). Domestic life was altered, especially in the United States, by inventions like the lightweight electric iron (1903), the domestic vacuum cleaner (1907), the electric toaster (1909), and the electric dishwasher (1911). This was also the age of mass

communication, which meant cheaper and more plentiful printed matter (books, magazines, newspapers, posters, pamphlets), telegraph, telephone, radio, film, phonograph, and television, as well as the increased communication that accompanied easier travel. When the *Titanic* sunk in the mid-Atlantic on the night of 14–15 April 1912, New Yorkers read about it in their morning papers. Some significant landmarks in communications in this period include Guglielmo Marconi's transmission of radio signals from Cornwall to Newfoundland in 1901, the first transcontinental telephone call from New York to San Francisco in 1915, and John Logie Baird's demonstration of televised images at Selfridges department store in London in 1925.

Travel was revolutionized by the internal-combustion engine (1876) and the diesel engine (1896), along with advances in steam power. These laid the groundwork for the appearance of motorcars and buses in Britain at the turn of the century. There were over 750,000 passenger journeys by bus in 1914, and roughly the same number by tram and trolleybus. The London Underground, one of the great achievements of the Victorian era, was gradually electrified starting with the District and Circle lines in 1905, and by 1914 most lines had come under common ownership, making connections easier. The first escalators were built in Earl's Court Station in 1911, followed by the appearance of the familiar Underground logo, the 'roundel', in 1913. Charles Rolls and Henry Royce launched the Silver Ghost in 1907, the year before Ford introduced the popular Model T. Twentieth-century aviation began with the first zeppelin flight in 1900, followed by the Wright brothers' first sustained flight in a controlled airplane at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina in 1903. The French aviator Louis Blériot, later to become a major designer and manufacturer of airplanes, was the first to fly across the English Channel in 1909. Aircraft technology made a great leap during the First World War, where it was used in reconnaissance, air to air combat, and bombing missions. Civil aviation increased steadily after the war, with daily flights between London and Paris established in 1919. Airplanes feature prominently in literature of the 1920s and 1930s, often as a symbol of modern technology. A skywriting plane is watched by a crowd in the opening scene of *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), while in Woolf's last novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), the first page mentions the ancient 'scars' on the landscape, which are visible from the air. Stephen Spender's poem, 'The Landscape Near an Aerodrome' (1933), begins with an admiring description of a passenger airplane in descent, 'More beautiful and soft than any moth'. William Faulkner was a keen aviator, and airplanes appear in many of his stories. He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1918, but the war ended before he saw action; he resumed flying in the 1930s. *Pylon* (1935) depicts the world

of air shows and barnstorming stunt pilots that Faulkner knew from personal experience.

**See also:** *Contexts:* Cities and urbanization, Culture, Market; *Texts:* Cinema, Futurism, Music, Primitivism; *Criticism:* Cultural materialism/New Historicism, Marxist criticism, Postmodernism.

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### Sex and Sexuality

The language of sex as we know it originated to a large extent in the modernist period. Words like 'sexology' (1902), 'sex-obsessed' (1914), 'sex act' (1918), and 'sexy' (1925; first in French in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* referring to Joyce's *Ulysses*, and shortly thereafter in English), as well as 'sex-talk' and 'sexual orientation' (both 1931), entered regular usage at this time. Even 'sex' meaning 'sexual intercourse' ('to have sex') is first recorded in the D. H. Lawrence poem 'Sex and Trust' from *Pansies* (1929), which begins: 'If you want to have sex, you've got to trust / at the core of your heart, the other creature.' In his 'Introduction' to *Pansies*, Lawrence registered his surprise at the power some words still have to shock. 'The words themselves are clean, so are the things to which they apply', he wrote. 'But the mind drags in a filthy association, calls up some repulsive emotion. Well then, cleanse the mind, that is the real job.' The slogan of the *Egoist* (1914–1919), a London-based little magazine that published the work of Joyce, Eliot, and many other modernists, was 'Recognises no taboos'. This new sexual frankness marked yet another departure from the Victorian era, where euphemism held sway until the end of the century despite inroads made by writers like Havelock Ellis, whose seven-volume series *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1897–1928) began with *Sexual Inversion* (co-authored with John Addington Symonds), the first major study of homosexuality to be published in Britain.

The open discussion of sexual matters was encouraged in Britain by the growing awareness of Freud and psychoanalysis. In the 1915

edition of his book *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Freud introduced the concept of the sexual instinct or libido (Latin for 'desire' or 'lust'), which he argued was the motivating energy behind much of human behaviour. The first translations of Freud into English appeared before the War, and in the 1920s the Woolfs' Hogarth Press began publishing the International Psychoanalytic Library Series in partnership with the newly formed British Institute of Psychoanalysis. By this time authors had become bold enough with the censors that legal action was taken in high-profile cases involving Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), and D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). Language, of course, was not the only issue. Risqué themes of the period included adultery, homosexuality, prostitution, illegitimacy, venereal disease, abortion, rape, and incest. Adultery figures in many key modernist novels, and is central to *Ulysses* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, as well as Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915). Prostitution is a rite of passage in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), while incestuous desire in the father-daughter relationship is a theme in *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Homosexuality is a significant theme in such works as *The Well of Loneliness*, Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915), Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–1927), Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912), Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack* (1928), and E. M. Forster's *Maurice* (privately circulated from 1913, published posthumously in 1971). Shortly before the war the futurist leader Marinetti attacked English prudery and hypocrisy in his 'Lecture to the English on Futurism' (1911). After the war, however, changes to mainstream society became more and more apparent, as Peter Walsh notices on his way back to England in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). He sees 'lots of young men and girls... carrying on quite openly; and the old mother sitting and watching them with her knitting, cool as a cucumber'. Nevertheless, Lawrence would continue to battle 'sexless' England through his writing and painting until his death in 1930.

The new atmosphere of sexual openness was not always seen as a cause for celebration. Rather, it was often used to symbolize decadence and decline, or the triumph of shallow materialism over a more meaningful existence. In the poetry of T. S. Eliot, for example, sex is a source of anxiety, abjection, and ennui. Masculinity in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1915), like everything else in the poem, is diminished and doubtful. 'I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each', Prufrock thinks, but then: 'I do not think that they will sing to me.' After the First World War, the sense of trauma and loss was frequently portrayed in sexual terms, particularly in the form of impotence or injury. Jake Barnes is left impotent by an unnamed war wound in

Ernest Hemingway's first novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (alternatively titled *Fiesta*, 1926). The war fills Septimus Smith with a feeling of revulsion in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). He remains unable to consummate his marriage with Rezia after five years, partly due to his reluctance to 'bring children into a world like this'. In the novel this parallels the Dalloways' sexless marriage, Clarissa's residence in the attic room, and her feeling of 'virginity preserved through childbirth'. In *The Waste Land* (1922), the theme of impotence is evoked by the myth of the Fisher King and the pagan fertility rituals from which it was believed to have derived: to revitalize his 'arid' lands, the king must first heal his own (sexual) wounds. Society in the poem is seen to be ill – exhausted, debased, fragmented – and it is the poet who might offer the chance of a cure, if there is to be one at all.

**See also:** *Contexts:* Censorship, Psychology, Women and gender; *Texts:* Aestheticism and decadence, Bloomsbury, Primitivism, Realism and naturalism; *Criticism:* Feminist and gender criticism, Poststructuralism, Psychoanalytic criticism.

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### War

The modernist period is a period of wars, including their build up and aftershocks. Beginning in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) and the Boer War (1899–1902), it was cut in half by the First World War (1914–1918), then progressed through the Anglo-Irish War (1919–1921), the Irish Civil War (1922–1923), and the Spanish Civil War (1936–1937). It was brought to a close, in most accounts, by the Second World War (1939–1945). Primarily, however, it was the First World War, which Britain entered on 4 August 1914, that left its mark on modernist literature. For many writers and artists, as for the wider public, the initial reaction in 1914 was stoic acceptance or even outright enthusiasm. Rudyard Kipling's 'For All We Have and Are' (1914), with the line 'The Hun is at the gate!', is an extreme example of the literary output in this phase. In addition, a long list of authors, including Kipling, G. K. Chesterton, and Arthur Conan Doyle, as well as Thomas Hardy, H. G. Wells, and May Sinclair, signed a petition in September 1914 supporting Britain's entry into the war.

By the mid-point of the war, however, when the endless slaughter in the trenches became an unavoidable reality, attitudes had changed considerably. This later view, captured in Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum Est' and 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' (both written in 1917 and published posthumously), extended to the eruptions of nihilist outrage by members of the dada movement that began in neutral Zurich. Conscription was introduced in Britain in January 1916. Unmarried men of military age had the choice of either enlisting voluntarily, which sometimes carried the benefit of a preferred assignment, or being placed automatically in a reserve group to be called upon when needed. One of the greatest massacres of the Western Front, the battle of the Somme, with more than a million casualties, occurred in the summer and autumn of 1916. The following year, more than a quarter of a million Allied casualties were recorded at the disastrous battle for control of Passchendaele, a small and relatively insignificant Belgian village near the town of Ypres. These events marked a grim new phase of the war.

'Then down came the lid – the day was lost, for art, at Sarajevo.' Wyndham Lewis's bleak judgement of the effect the war had on art may be surprising given the achievements of modernist art and literature in the 1920s. The First World War is considered by many to be the defining historical event, even the primary source, of modernism. But the war had a catastrophic impact on the burgeoning avant-garde scene of the pre-war period, including Lewis's own vorticist movement. Looking back, Lewis described the pre-war avant-garde as a game played between artists, press, and public, where everyone 'felt as safe as houses'. Then the war entered, and swept away these antics. Modernism may have recovered, and even thrived, enjoying its 'high' period after the war, but it was a different kind of modernism – less exuberant, less open, and less optimistic. The post-war literature is characterized by a keen sense of lost innocence; a deep nostalgia for a world now vanished. D. H. Lawrence wrote in a letter to Mary Cannan in June 1918: 'Something inside one weeps and won't be comforted. But it's no good grieving.... there was *something* in those still days, before the war had gone into us... something very good, and poignant to remember, now the whole world of it is lost' (Lawrence, 1962, p. 558). Woolf's greatest novels, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), are both divided – literally down the middle in the case of *To the Lighthouse* – between pre- and post-war settings. Woolf's writing entered a new phase immediately after the war, and *Jacob's Room* (1922), a fragmented portrait of a young man killed in battle (the aptly named Jacob Flanders), was her first truly experimental novel.

Relatively few major artists and writers actually died in the war. They included the poets Rupert Brooke (from an illness), Charles Hamilton Sorley, Isaac Rosenberg, and Wilfred Owen, the critic and philosopher T. E. Hulme, and the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (remembered in the second issue of *Blast*). Wyndham Lewis served at the Front as an officer in the Royal Artillery and then as a war artist. Four of the central figures of modernism, two American and two Irish – Eliot, Pound, Joyce, and Yeats – had little involvement with the war. Voices opposed to the war included Bertrand Russell (who went to prison), D. H. Lawrence and Lytton Strachey (both judged unfit for service), Leonard and Virginia Woolf, Clive and Vanessa Bell, George Bernard Shaw, and Aldous Huxley. E. M. Forster, a pacifist, worked for the Red Cross, while Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas transported medical supplies in their Ford automobile for the American Fund for the French Wounded (AFFW). Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, May Sinclair, and E. E. Cummings served in the ambulance corps in Europe. A list of modernist fiction of the First World War might include, in addition to the novels by Woolf already mentioned: Hemingway's *In Our Time* (1925), with its vignettes of war scenes between the stories, and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929); Rose Macaulay's *Non-Combatants and Others* (1916); Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918); Mary Butts's story 'Speed the Plow' (1922); Lawrence's 'England, My England' (1922); Faulkner's *Soldier's Pay* (1926); Cummings's *The Enormous Room* (1922); Ford Madox Ford's tetralogy *Parade's End* (1924–1928); and Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* (1929). There were also many autobiographical accounts, including Robert Graves's *Good-bye to All That* (1929), Wyndham Lewis's *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937), and Herbert Read's *In Retreat* (1925).

The endpoint of the modernist era is often given as 1939, the start of the Second World War. In her last novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), set in the summer of 1939, Virginia Woolf described one character's foreboding 'vision of Europe, bristling with guns'. If the Second World War was not necessarily the end of a modernist style, it was for all practical purposes the end of a generation. Yeats, Ford, and Freud died in 1939; Fitzgerald, Nathanael West, and the critic Walter Benjamin (fleeing the Nazis) in 1940; Joyce, Woolf, and Bergson in 1941; Kandinsky and Marinetti in 1944; and Stein in 1946. Pound was arrested in Italy on charges of treason in 1945.

**See also:** *Contexts:* Empire, Fascism, Nationalism, Psychology, Race, Science and technology, Women and gender; *Texts:* Apocalypse, Bloomsbury, Dada and surrealism, Fragmentation, Futurism, Imagism and vorticism, Violence; *Criticism:* Cultural materialism/New Historicism.

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## Women and Gender

The modernist era saw momentous gains for women in society, but it was also a period of struggle and reaction. The movement for women's suffrage in Britain dates back to the formal exclusion of women from the 1832 Reform Act. It began to gather momentum after 1866, when a group of women petitioned the philosopher and Member of Parliament John Stuart Mill to introduce a bill for enfranchisement. (Mill put forward an amendment to the Second Reform Act of 1867, but it was defeated.) The campaign for suffrage gathered momentum in Britain towards the end of the nineteenth century, with the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) founded by Millicent Fawcett in 1897. Associated with this movement were the so-called 'New Woman' writers of the 1890s, including Sarah Grand (*The Heavenly Twins*, 1893) and George Egerton (*Keynotes*, 1893). The New Woman was also a subject of plays and novels by male writers, both sympathetic (Hardy, Gissing, Shaw, and Ibsen) and satirical (Sydney Grundy's play *The New Woman*, 1894).

In 1903 a militant offshoot of the NUWSS, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), also known as the suffragette movement, was formed. The suffragettes were represented in literature and polemical pamphlets by a new generation of writers, notably Cicely Hamilton (*Diana of Dobson's*, a play, 1908), Elizabeth Robins (*Votes for Women*, a play, 1907), Evelyn Sharp (*Rebel Women*, 1910), Gertrude Colmore (*Suffragette Sally*, 1911), Constance Elizabeth Maud (*No Surrender*, 1912), and Margaret Wynne Nevinson (*In the Workhouse*, a play, 1911). As the dates of these works suggest, the suffragette movement was a phenomenon of the immediate pre-war years, reaching its peak intensity with the direct action campaigns of 1912–1914, which began with the smashing of shop and government office windows, and escalated to acts of arson and bombing. It not only coincided with the artistic and literary avant-garde, vorticism in particular, but also influenced their militant tactics. (Marinetti, the Italian futurist leader, marched with the suffragettes on a visit to London in 1912.) The right to vote was granted in the UK to women over 30 in 1918, and in the US in 1920. In 1928 the vote in Britain

was extended to women over 21. The suffrage movement was supported by the majority of women modernists, including May Sinclair, Rebecca West, and Violet Hunt.

The modernist canon was, for much of the twentieth century, a masculine domain. Surprisingly, even Virginia Woolf's place in modernism was rejected by no less significant a scholar than Hugh Kenner, who mentioned her only three times in his magnificent but unapologetically partisan magnum opus, *The Pound Era* (1971). Kenner called her a 'shade' and a 'treacly mind' in two of these passages, and in the third offered a snide passing remark ('a cultivated person – the kind Virginia Woolf found fit to talk to') as he discussed Eliot's *The Waste Land*. For Kenner, she is merely a personality: none of her works are mentioned by name. Part of this antipathy has to do with Kenner's anti-Bloomsbury bias and his thesis that the 'real' British modernists were all foreigners. On the other hand, he was almost equally dismissive of the American Gertrude Stein. Similarly, essays by only two women authors, Woolf and George Eliot, were chosen for Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson's landmark anthology, *The Modern Tradition* (1965), totaling nine out of 948 pages. Bonnie Kime Scott made this observation in the Introduction to her equally significant revisionist anthology, *The Gender of Modernism* (1990). Scott's work, which was built on two decades of challenges to the canon, altered the course of modernist studies. The authors included Djuna Barnes, Nancy Cunard, Katherine Mansfield, Mina Loy, Nella Larsen, Charlotte Mew, H. D., Gertrude Stein, Marianne Moore, Jean Rhys, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair, Rebecca West, Zora Neale Hurston, Sylvia Townsend Warner, and others. A recent follow up anthology, *Gender in Modernism* (2007), also edited by Scott, offered further revisions to the field. These revisions acknowledged the flood of scholarship on gender and modernism since 1990, and offered a more thematic arrangement in keeping with current pedagogical trends.

The anxiety among male modernist writers caused by the campaign for women's rights is evident in the literature of the time. The first issue of the vorticist magazine *Blast* (1914), for example, included 'To Suffragettes', a notice advising women to 'stick to what you understand' and calling on them to 'Leave art alone'. The notice was prompted by Mary Richardson's high-profile attack on Velasquez's *Rokeby Venus* in the National Gallery, which she slashed seven times with a meat cleaver in March 1917. There were also attacks on pictures in the National Portrait Gallery, and in the Doré Gallery, where Wyndham Lewis and other vorticists had works on display. *Blast*, edited by Lewis, warned condescendingly: 'You might some day destroy a good picture by accident.' The use of heavily gendered language was another feature of the reaction by writers like Lewis,

Ezra Pound, T. E. Hulme, and D. H. Lawrence to changes in male–female relations. ‘Masculine’ language was used to describe the modern and stylistically innovative, while ‘feminine’ terms were used to describe either the products of mass culture or anything outdated or passé – in other words, whatever modernism opposed. Hulme’s notorious opposition, delivered in a lecture in 1912, between the masculine, ‘dry, hard, classical verse’ of the new generation and the feminine, ‘damp’ Romanticism of the old, is one example. Despite Marinetti’s participation in a suffragette march in 1912, the first futurist manifesto of 1909 had declared ‘scorn for women’ as one of its founding principles, and women were usually associated in futurist manifestos with timidity, sentimentality, and threats to masculinity. Marinetti later attempted to clarify what he actually opposed. He insisted that it was not women *per se* that he rejected, but the feminine ideal as conceived by society: woman as the object of sentimental love. (Being opposed to parliamentary democracy, Marinetti stated that he cared little whether women won ‘the ridiculous, miserable little right to vote’.) Whatever the explanation, futurism and vorticism in particular established a vocabulary in which the modern was masculine and the past – Romanticism, aestheticism, or the entire Victorian era – was feminine. Femininity was earlier linked to decadence in the writings of Nietzsche and in Max Nordau’s *Degeneration* (1892, trans. 1895). The anxiety surrounding Oscar Wilde and homosexuality, after his highly publicized conviction for gross indecency in 1895, almost certainly contributed to this discourse.

**See also:** *Contexts:* Class, Culture, Sex and sexuality; *Texts:* Aestheticism and decadence, Bloomsbury, Consciousness, Stream of, Futurism, Imagism and vorticism; *Criticism:* Deconstruction, Feminist and gender criticism, Marxist criticism, Poststructuralism.

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