现代主义文学的
核心概念

Key Concepts in
Modernist Literature

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出版说明

　　上海外语教育出版社一直全心致力于我国外国文学研究的发展与学科建设，出版的文学类著作涵盖了文学史、文学理论、文学批评、文学作品、作家研究等多个领域，展现了中西方的大家智慧，汇聚了国内外的高端学术精品。外教社精心引进的《牛津英国文学百科全书》、《牛津美国文学百科全书》、"外教社原版文学入门丛书"、"剑桥文学指南丛书"等荣膺各类奖项，深受读者好评。

　　近年来，文学研究的理论和方法取得了不少新的进展。为了帮助文学专业学生及广大文学研究者、爱好者迅速而有效地掌握文学研究的核心概念和背景资料，外教社特从 Palgrave 出版社遴选引进了这套权威、实用的"原版文学核心概念丛书"。

　　本套丛书堪称浓缩的文学百科辞典，各分册大多按研究主题分为不同板块，每一册都按字母表顺序列出精选的核心词条，词条下大多附有补充书目，书后基本附有编年史、参考文献和索引，个别分册还根据实际需要设置了习题。丛书文献丰富，语言精炼，编排合理，查阅方便，是不可多得的文学类学术工具书和阅读参考资料。

　　相信本套丛书的引进将满足我国广大文学专业的师生及其他文学研究者、爱好者的需求，有力推动我国文学研究的发展与繁荣。

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For Simone, Clyde, and Nico, with love

General Editor's Preface

The purpose of **Palgrave Key Concepts in Literature** is to provide students with key critical and historical ideas about the texts they are studying as part of their literature courses. These ideas include information about the historical and cultural contexts of literature, as well as the theoretical approaches current in the subject today. Behind the series lies a recognition of the need nowadays for students to be familiar with a range of concepts and contextual material to inform their reading and writing about literature.

But behind the series there also lies a recognition of the changes that have transformed degree courses in Literature in recent years. Central to these changes has been the impact of critical theory together with a renewed interest in the way in which texts intersect with their immediate context and historical circumstances. The result has been an opening up of new ways of reading texts and a new understanding of what the study of literature involves together with the introduction of a wide set of new critical issues that demand our attention. An important aim of **Palgrave Key Concepts in Literature** is to provide brief, accessible introductions to these new ways of reading and new issues.

Each volume in **Palgrave Key Concepts in Literature** follows the same structure. An initial overview essay is followed by three sections – **Contexts**, **Texts**, and **Criticism** – each containing a sequence of brief alphabetically arranged entries on a sequence of topics. **Contexts essays** provide an impression of the historical, social, and cultural environment in which literary texts were produced. **Texts essays**, as might be expected, focus more directly on the works themselves. **Criticism essays** then outline the manner in which changes and developments in criticism have affected the ways in which we discuss the texts featured in the volume. The informing intention throughout is to help the reader create something new in the process of combining context, text, and criticism.

Martin Coyle

General Introduction

The term 'modernism' has many varied and contradictory associations. For some it has an aura of difficulty and formal experimentation, while for others it connotes an exuberant celebration of the machine age; still others might imagine the kind of romantic disenchantment and alienation summed up in the title of British modernism's most famous poem, *The Waste Land*. But what the term primarily suggests is a sense of crisis and a will to innovation. In most cases this involves a break with traditional modes and subject matter. The desire to change and to reflect change, to 'make it new' in Pound's famous phrase, is modernism's defining characteristic. Paradoxically, the study of modernism generally involves treating the modernist spirit as something confined to history. In Harold Rosenburg's phrase, modernism is 'the tradition of the new'. This seems counterintuitive: how can 'modernism' end? Are we not modern? But fixing the boundaries, even in a seemingly arbitrary way – Virginia Woolf's famous suggestion, for example, that 'on or about December 1910 human character changed' – is usually considered to be a practical necessity. Modernism, like all terms, is defined by difference: 'modernist' literature is not Victorian or Edwardian, for example. Literature after the Second World War, meanwhile, is labelled 'postmodern' or 'contemporary' and given its own set of attributes.

Modernism may be defined, in one major view, as the reaction of artists and writers to the drastic changes that accompanied the onset of modernity. (Here a further distinction becomes necessary – between 'modernism', the cluster of artistic and literary tendencies; 'modernity', the period concerned and the conditions associated with it; and 'modern', the broadest of the three terms, which simply means 'current' and is not easily fixed to an historical period.) Far from being a self-contained aesthetic experiment, in this view, modernism describes a range of responses to the technological advances and rapid urbanization experienced across Europe and elsewhere at the turn of the twentieth century. Reactions expressed through art to the sweeping effects of modernization varied considerably: some, like the Italian futurists, were unabashed in their enthusiasm; others, including many of the British modernists, drew back in horror, especially after the First World War. But without exception they were fascinated by the changes brought to everyday life,

especially in cities like London, Paris and Milan. Even in the Dublin of 1904 depicted in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), the reader is assaulted by the noise of trams – an innovation reintroduced to the city exactly a century later, in 2004 – carrying commuters to and from the suburbs:

> Before Nelson's pillar trams slowed, shunted, changed trolley, started for Blackrock, Kingstown and Dalkey, Clonskea, Rathgar and Terenure, Palmerston park and upper Rathmines, Sandymount Green, Rathmines, Ringsend and Sandymount Tower, Harold's Cross. The hoarse Dublin United Tramway Company's timekeeper bawled them off:
>
> – Rathgar and Terenure!
> – Come on, Sandymount Green!
>
> Right and left parallel clanging ringing a doubledecker and a singledeck moved from their railheads, swerved to the down line, glided parallel.
>
> – Start, Palmerston park!

Similar scenes take place in many other novels of the period. In the opening pages of Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Clarissa Dalloway takes in the excitement of a June morning in central London, 'the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs...and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead'. The first futurist manifesto of 1909 celebrates 'the beauty of speed' and champions war, factories, crowds, shipyards, railway stations, locomotives, steamships, bridges, and other features of modernity. The pre-war manifestos of vorticism give their blessings to 'the great ports' of Britain, that 'industrial island machine'. These reactions echo the description in *The Communist Manifesto* of the revolutionary nature of bourgeois capitalism, the foundation of modernity. The capitalist era, in the words of Marx and Engels, 'accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals'. This period of upheaval saw venerable institutions crumble and firmly held convictions disintegrate. With the old order 'stripped of its halo', a new world of uncertainties and possibilities was revealed. 'The lies of centuries have got to be discarded', Mina Loy declared in her 'Feminist Manifesto' of 1914. She asks: 'Are you prepared for the wrench?'

Modernism is best described as a set of tendencies, rather than one particular style. Some of its traits include formal experimentation and

complexity; a sense of crisis or apocalypse; the evocation of dynamism and speed; sexual openness; scepticism about traditional social, moral, and religious values and systems; an interest in alternative cultures, distanced by geography or history; confidence in aesthetic doctrines; and suspicion of progress, rationalism, and notions of fixed identity. Descriptions of modernism often reveal striking contradictions. In one view, for example, modernism is radically subversive, earning the label 'degenerate art' from Adolf Hitler in 1937, a label many modernists would have worn with pride. In his essay 'The Ideology of Modernism' (1955), the Hungarian Marxist critic Georg Lukács attacked precisely this 'asocial' quality of modernism, albeit from the opposite end of the political spectrum. Modernist literature's 'surrender to subjectivity', Lukács complained, came at the cost of historical context and depicted a 'nightmare world' of alienation and impotence that did little to encourage social change. In contrast to its image of degeneracy, modernism can also be seen as coldly formal, difficult, elitist, produced and understood by the few, and concerned only with its own perfection, a survival of nineteenth-century aestheticism. T. S. Eliot, for example, when surveyed by the *Left Review* in 1937 for his opinion concerning the Spanish Civil War, put himself firmly in the 'neutral' category with the statement that 'at least a few men of letters should remain isolated, and take no part in these collective activities'.

It is important to keep in mind that modernist literature was only a small fraction of the literature produced in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century. It was the voice of a small band of revolutionaries – Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Woolf – whose work represented an alternative to the mainstream novels of H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, and John Galsworthy, the three writers Woolf chose to illustrate the stodgy realism she objected to in her essay 'Modern Fiction' (1919). Successful self-promotion by modernist writers, especially Eliot and Pound, and the critics who took up their cause, from Edmund Wilson and F. R. Leavis to Hugh Kenner, resulted in a distorted picture of the literature of the period that still persists to this day. Other forms, including social chronicles, humour, romance, and detective fiction, travelogues, and historical novels, have only recently been brought back into the picture by new surveys, and they account for the vast majority of literature in this period. At the same time, the lines of modernism have been redrawn in recent decades to include a much broader and more diverse group of writers: no longer the preserve of the 'Men of 1914', modernism now includes, in Bonnie Kime Scott's phrase, the 'Women of 1928', as well as other groups like the Harlem Renaissance writers that were either considered distinct from

the modernism of Pound and Eliot (as in a sense they surely are) or were neglected by literary scholars entirely.

Setting the boundaries for this book, as the preceding points should suggest, has not been an easy task. As the field of modernist literature grows in many productive directions, its characteristics become harder to define in any clear and meaningful way. Modernism has in fact become 'modernisms', a set of often contradictory and even irreconcilable movements. The dates chosen for other books on modernism give some sense of the flexibility of the field: Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane's classic study covers the years 1890–1930; Michael Levenson's *A Genealogy of Modernism* covers the crucial years of development 1908–1922, from Ford Madox Hueffer's *English Review* (1908–1909) to the launch of T. S. Eliot's *Criterion* and the publication of *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses* in 1922; Marjorie Perloff understands the period as 'roughly 1900–1930' but also considers it in some ways 'not yet finished'. Jane Goldman's recent study extends the end date to 1945 but also concurs with Woolf that the year 1910 signalled an important point of origin for modernism. The Second World War is accepted as the (latest) end date by the majority of modernist scholars for obvious historical reasons: the years 1939–1945 saw the deaths of numerous key figures of modernism, including Yeats, Woolf, Joyce, Ford (Hueffer), Marinetti, Freud, and Bergson, along with the incarceration for treason of Ezra Pound in 1945. What Perloff means when she says it is 'not yet finished' is that the modernist project and its innovations were 'deferred by two world wars and then the Cold War so that many of its principles are only now being brought to fruition' (Perloff, 2006, p. 571). Thankfully, the format of this book allows for a flexible timeframe. While some discussions of context will go as far back as the mid-nineteenth century, most works under discussion will have been published between 1909 and 1939. The primary focus will be on the key works and 'key concepts' of Anglo-American modernism, with important digressions on European movements whose importance was felt in Britain and America.

Further Reading

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Contents

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.