**MK University\_ Biskra**  Academic Year: 2018/19

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Course: British Literature Level: Master 01

***Lecture one:***

**Literary Modernism: form and content**

**Introduction:**

**Modernism**, in arts as in literature, is a radical break with the past and the [concurrent](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/concurrent) search for new forms of expression. Modernism fostered a period of experimentation in the arts from the late 19th to the mid-20th century, particularly in the years following [World War I](https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I).

For that reason, the literature of this era is characterized by some innovatory features as to form and content. Hereafter, we discuss some.

**Thematic content:**

Alienation

In an era characterized by [industrialization](https://www.britannica.com/topic/industrialization), rapid [social change](https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-change), and advances in [science](https://www.britannica.com/science/science) and the [social sciences](https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-science) (e.g., Freudian theory), Modernists felt a growing alienation incompatible with Victorian [morality](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/morality), optimism, and convention. New ideas in psychology, [philosophy](https://www.britannica.com/topic/philosophy), and political theory kindled a search for new modes of expression.

Objection to tradition and norms:

Modernists followed no order or convention. The movement depicts a break away from the established norms including a fresh looking at the self (the individual) or one’s position in the world rather than discussing the whole society’s matters as well as much experimentation in form and content.

Disillusionment and fragmentation

The Modernist impulse is fueled in various literatures by industrialization and [urbanization](https://www.britannica.com/topic/urbanization) and by the search for an authentic response to a much-changed world. Although prewar works by [Henry James](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Henry-James-American-writer), [Joseph Conrad](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Joseph-Conrad), and other writers are considered Modernist, Modernism as a literary movement is typically associated with the period after World War I. The enormity of the war had undermined humankind’s faith in the foundations of Western society and [culture](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture), and postwar Modernist literature reflected a sense of disillusionment and fragmentation. A primary theme of [T.S. Eliot](https://www.britannica.com/biography/T-S-Eliot)’s long poem [*The Waste Land*](https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Waste-Land) (1922), a [seminal](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/seminal) Modernist work, is the search for redemption and renewal in a sterile and spiritually empty landscape. With its fragmentary images and obscure [allusions](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/allusions), the poem is typical of Modernism in requiring the reader to take an active role in interpreting the text.

**Techniques**:

Stream of consciousness & interior monologue

The publication of the Irish writer [James Joyce](https://www.britannica.com/biography/James-Joyce)’s [*Ulysses*](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ulysses-novel-by-Joyce) in 1922 was a landmark event in the development of Modernist literature. Dense, lengthy, and controversial, the [novel](https://www.britannica.com/art/novel) details the events of one day in the life of three Dubliners through a technique known as [stream of consciousness](https://www.britannica.com/art/stream-of-consciousness), which commonly ignores orderly sentence structure and incorporates fragments of thought in an attempt to capture the flow of characters’ mental processes. Portions of the book were considered obscene, and Ulysses was banned for many years in English-speaking countries. Other European and American Modernist authors whose works rejected chronological and narrative [continuity](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/continuity) include [Virginia Woolf](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Virginia-Woolf), [Marcel Proust](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Marcel-Proust), [Gertrude Stein](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gertrude-Stein), and [William Faulkner](https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Faulkner). **Stream of consciousness** is a technique which seeks to record the flow of impressions passing through a character’s mind. The best-known English exponents are Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Later novelists have often employed the technique, though rarely with such thoroughness as its early proponents. For them it was a fresh weapon in the struggle against intrusive narration. By recording the actual flow of thought with its paradoxes and irrelevancies they sought to avoid the over-insistent authorial rhetoric of Edwardian novels. They felt that the traditional techniques could not meet the social pressures of the new age; believing that, in Virginia Woolf’s words, ‘human nature had changed . . . in or about December 1910’, they rejected the socio-descriptive novel in favour of a novel centring on ‘the character itself’. Inner thoughts and feelings now occupied the foreground of attention.

**Interior monologue** In FICTION, a NARRATIVE technique in which a character’s intimate thoughts and impressions are related directly and immediately. For the reader the effect is, in the words of novelist and critic David Lodge, “like wearing earphones plugged into someone’s brain, and monitoring the subject’s impressions, reflections, questions, memories, and fantasies as they are triggered either by physical sensations or the association of ideas.” The term is sometimes used interchangeably with *stream of consciousness*, although increasingly there has been a tendency to define stream of consciousness as a type of fiction that represents a character’s consciousness, and interior monologue as one form of that representation, others being free indirect discourse and simple first-person narration. The best-known example of interior monologue is Molly Bloom’s soliloquy, the closing section of James Joyce’s novel *Ulysses* (1922). Other novels featuring interior monologues include *To the* *Lighthouse* (1927) by Virginia Woolf, and *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *As I* *Lay Dying* (1930) by William Faulkner.

Flashback and flash-forward

**Foreshadowing (flashforward)** is the hint in a narrative of later developments. Foreshadowing may assume a variety of forms: Hedda’s toying with a pistol early in Ibsen’s play *Hedda Gabler* anticipates her eventual suicide, while the description of a graveyard with “five or six graves” foreshadows the fate of the traveling family in Flannery O’Connor’s short story “A Good Man Is Hard to Find.”

**Flashback**  in literature and dramatic media, an interjected scene or point that takes the narrative back in time from the current point.

Free indirect style/discourse

The presentation of thoughts or speech of fictional characters which seems by various devices to combine the character's sentiments with those of a narrator.

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| |  | | --- | | ***FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE****: A style of third-person narration that mingles within it traits from first-person narration, often shifting pronouns, adverbs, tense, and grammatical mode. The term comes from the French "style indirect libre," and Flaubert's use of this technique in French literature strongly influenced English-speaking authors like James Joyce* | |

The following is an example of sentences using direct, indirect and free indirect speech:

* **Quoted** or [**direct speech**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_speech): *He laid down his bundle and thought of his misfortune. "And just what pleasure have I found, since I came into this world?" he asked.*
* **Reported** or normal [**indirect speech**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indirect_speech): *He laid down his bundle and thought of his misfortune. He asked himself what pleasure he had found since he came into the world.*
* **Free indirect speech**: *He laid down his bundle and thought of his misfortune. And just what pleasure had he found, since he came into this world?*

Logopoeia,

a term introduced, along with *phanopoeia* (visual image) and *melopoeia* (sound), by Ezra Pound from Greek *logopoeia*, from *logos* "word" ( [Logos](https://www.etymonline.com/word/Logos?ref=etymonline_crossreference)) + *poiein* "to make, create".

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| |  | | --- | | ***LOGOPOEIA****: Ezra Pound's term for one of the three techniques he would use to create "charged" language. According to Pound, you can charge any particular word by "using the word in some special relation to 'usage,' that is, to the kind of context in which the reader expects, or is accustomed, to finding it". Basically, if a poet takes a word and uses it in a strange or unusual manner, or alters its normal relationship to expected grammar or its most common semantic field, that word will then stand out from the rest of the line and be poetically energized. That technique is logopoeia.* | |

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| |  | | --- | | ***ALLUSION****: A casual reference in literature to a person, place, event, or another passage of literature, often without explicit identification. Allusions can originate in mythology, biblical references, historical events, legends, geography, or earlier literary works. Authors often use allusion to establish a tone, create an implied association, contrast two objects or people, make an unusual juxtaposition of references, or bring the reader into a world of experience outside the limitations of the story itself. Authors assume that the readers will recognize the original sources and relate their meaning to the new context. For instance, if a teacher were to refer to his class as a horde of Mongols, the students will have no idea if they are being praised or vilified unless they know what the Mongol horde was and what activities it participated in historically. This historical allusion assumes a certain level of education or awareness in the audience, so it should normally be taken as a compliment rather than an insult or an attempt at obscurity.* | |

**Epiphany :** When used as a literary device, an epiphany is a moment in which there is a sudden realization that leads to a new perspective that clarifies a problem or situation. A character may have an epiphany, or it may also occur in the narration such that the reader has the epiphany.