

Modernism

Background of Modernism in the arts

- criticism of Victorian values
- late 19th century: art for art's sake, aestheticism; schism between artists/intellectuals and "ordinary" people
- French symbolist and decadent poetry
- new trends in visual arts
- in literature: focus on individual perspective; fragmentation of perspective; impression rather than description; time as a constant flow, not linear development
- in poetry: free verse
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Thomas Stearns Eliot

Prufrock and Other Observations
(1917)

“Tradition and the Individual Talent”
(1919)

“The Metaphysical Poets” (1921)

The Waste Land (1922)

Ash Wednesday (1930)

Four Quartets (1943)

from "East Coker," *Four Quartets*

In my beginning is my end. In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth
Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.
Houses live and die: there is a time for building
And a time for living and for generation
And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane
And to shake the wainscot where the field-mouse trots
And to shake the tattered arras woven with a silent motto.

In my beginning is my end. Now the light falls
Across the open field, leaving the deep lane
Shuttered with branches, dark in the afternoon,
Where you lean against a bank while a van passes,
And the deep lane insists on the direction
Into the village, in the electric heat
Hypnotised. In a warm haze the sultry light
Is absorbed, not refracted, by grey stone.
The dahlias sleep in the empty silence.
Wait for the early owl.

In that open field

If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,

On a summer midnight, you can hear the music

Of the weak pipe and the little drum

And see them dancing around the bonfire

The association of man and woman

In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie—

A dignified and commodious sacrament.

Two and two, necessarye coniunction,

Holding eche other by the hand or the arm

Whiche betokeneth concorde. Round and round the fire

Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,

Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter

Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,

Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
Mirth of those long since under earth
Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,
Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
As in their living in the living seasons
The time of the seasons and the constellations
The time of milking and the time of harvest
The time of the coupling of man and woman
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.
Eating and drinking. Dung and death.

Dawn points, and another day
Prepares for heat and silence. Out at sea the dawn wind
Wrinkles and slides. I am here
Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning.



James Joyce (1882-1941)

Dubliners (1914)

A Portrait of an Artist as a Young

Man (1916)

Ulysses (1922)

Finnegan's Wake (1939)

image: time.com



Virginia Woolf

Mrs Dalloway (1925)

To the Lighthouse (1927)

Orlando (1928)

A Room of One's Own (1929)

image: wikipedia



D. H. Lawrence

Sons and Lovers (1913)

The Rainbow (1915)

Women in Love (1920)

Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928;
1960 in England)

image: wordsworth-editions.com

from *Women in Love*

Birkin thinks about heterosexual love and offers friendship to Crich

He [Birkin] wanted so much to be free, not under the compulsion of any need for unification, or tortured by unsatisfied desire. (...) And he wanted to be with Ursula as free as with himself, single and clear and cool, yet balanced, polarised with her. The merging, the clutching, the mingling of love was become madly abhorrent to him.

But it seemed to him, woman was always so horrible and clutching, she had such a lust for possession, a greed of self-importance in love. She wanted to have, to own, to control, to be dominant. Everything must be referred back to her, the Woman, the Great Mother of everything, out of whom proceeded everything and to whom everything must finally be rendered up. (...)

“You know how the old German knights used to swear a Blutbruderschaft,” he said to Gerald (...) and swear to be true to each other, of one blood, all their lives. That is what we ought to do. No wounds, that is obsolete. But we ought to swear to love each other, you and I, implicitly, and perfectly, finally, without any possibility of going back on it. (...) You must tell me what you think, later. You know what I mean? Not sloppy emotionalism. An impersonal union that leaves one free.”