

# Exploring the Characteristics of the Modernist Novel

Dr. Nihal TOPCU



# Introduction

Ezra Pound's famous slogan: *Make it New*  
— *published as a book in 1934*

William Butler Yeats's *The Second Coming* (1920):  
“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold”

# Introduction

**modo – modernus – moderne – modern**  
just now or recently

**Modernity** (the broad historical condition –  
17th century)

**Modernism** (a cultural movement that  
reacts to modernity – the early 20th century)



# Stream of Consciousness

free-flowing inner thoughts without logical progression

## **Extract 1: *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf**

*How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window.*

## **Extract 2: *Ulysses* by James Joyce**

*Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs since the City Arms hotel when he used to be pretending to be laid up with a sick voice doing his highness to make himself interesting to that old faggot Mrs Riordan.*

# Fragmentation and Nonlinear Narratives

disrupted or nonlinear chronology; stories without a clear beginning, middle, or end

**Extract:** *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf

*But what after all is one night? A short space, especially when darkness dims so soon, and so soon one thinks, 'Time shall be no more'.*

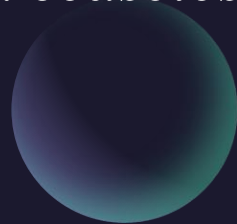


# Symbolism, Imagery, and Myth

symbols representing complex ideas; mythological or religious references

## **Extract: *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald**

*Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter--tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther.... And one fine morning-- So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.*



# Alienation and Disconnection

a sense of loss, meaninglessness, or existential crisis; unhappy with the outside world

## **Extract: *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka**

*One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that in bed he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug.*



# Subjectivity and Psychological Depth

subjective perception; memories, reflections, and emotions over objective reality

## **Extract: *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf**

*He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot. Only human beings — what did they want? Coming down the staircase opposite an old man stopped and stared at him. Holmes was at the door. ‘I’ll give it you!’ he cried, and flung himself vigorously, violently down on to Mrs. Filmer’s area railings.*





# Unreliable Narrators

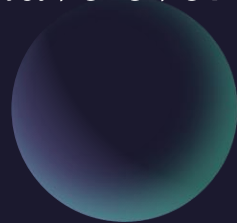
biased, unreliable, or deceptive, forcing readers to question the truth

## **Extract 1: *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad**

*I don't like work. I had rather laze about and think of all the fine things that can be done.*

## **Extract 2: *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald**

*I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known.*



# Experimental Language and Style

unconventional grammar, punctuation, and syntax; repetition, wordplay, or poetic rhythm

**Extract 1: *Ulysses* by James Joyce**

*yes I said yes I will Yes*



# Moments of Epiphany

a sudden moment of awareness; can be positive or painful

*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce

*Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience.*



# Ambiguity and Multiple Interpretations

lack of a clear resolution; themes open to multiple interpretations

**Extract:** *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett

*Nothing to be done.*



# The City as a Symbol

a metaphor for modern alienation, isolation, and the chaos of industrialised life

**Extract:** *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot

*Unreal City, under the brown fog of a winter dawn.*





# Conclusion

The goal of modernist techniques was to make sense of a world grown increasingly complex, fragmented, and difficult to understand. A “**brave new world**” required brave new art forms to reflect and understand it, and modernist writers and artists sought to create that art.



# Thank you

Dr. Nihal TOPCU

[nihalmemis@karabuk.edu.tr](mailto:nihalmemis@karabuk.edu.tr)

