# The modern novel

Randall Stevenson

[in Richard Bradford, ed., Introduction to Literary Studies (1Harvester-Wheatsheaf 1996).]

## Modernism and the novel, 1900-39

'They've changed everything now ... we used to think there was a beginning and a middle and an end', remarked Thomas Hardy, discussing contemporary fiction with Virginia Woolf in 1926 (Woolf, [1953] 1989, p. 97). As he suggests, by that date a revolution in writing had occurred which was radical enough to unsettle much of what people 'used to think' about the form and style of fiction. By the mid-1920s comparable innovations had appeared in other arts, such as painting and music, and are as clear in the poetry of the early twentieth century (see Unit 17) as in its fiction. They can be traced in the work of many writers outside Britain—William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway or John Dos Passos in the United States, or Marcel Proust in France, or Thomas Mann in Germany—as well as in the fiction of Joseph Conrad, Henry James, Ford Madox Ford, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf. May Sinclair, Dorothy Richardson, D.H. Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis. Many of this latter group are considered in detail in the analyses which follow this introduction to the period. 'Modernist' is the term now usually applied to their work and the wider movement of which they formed a part—appropriately enough, since a motive many of them shared was to 'make it new', in Ezra Pound's phrase: to make a literature adjusted to the changing pressures of a modem age.

'Modern Fiction' was the title Virginia Woolf chose for an essay published in the 1920s in which she explains that 'the proper stuff of fiction' could no longer be created by following the example set by many of the novelists who were successful earlier in the century (Woolf, 1966, II, p. 106). In another essay, she dates precisely the origin of conditions she considered made their work obsolete, remarking that 'in or about December, 1910, human character changed' (Woolf. 1966,1, p. 320). As she suggests, the early years of the century are worth examining for the new conditions apparent in the life of the lime, and for the way these were addressed by novelists whom the modernists nevertheless thought it necessary—with some important exceptions—to supersede. Yet Woolf's choice of date seems surprising in a number of ways, not least in passing over the First World War to locate profound change in an age often since considered the most placid in the twentieth century. Looking back on the time before the war (usually referred to as the Edwardian age. though Edward VII died in 1910), George Orwell describes il as 'a good time to be alive', one when 'it was summer all the year round' and people had 'a feeling of security ... of continuity'. Orwell also admits, however, that 'if you look back on any special period of time you tend to remember the pleasant bits' (Orwell, [1939] 1962, pp. 37, 102, 107, 106). In relation to later, still more disturbed periods the Edwardian years have come to seem serene, 'rhe year 1910, however, saw not only the death of a king, but continuing troubles in Ireland and violent reactions to the suffragettes on the streets of London, as well as threats by the reforming Liberal government to abolish the House of Lords. Such threats might have seemed serious enough, in challenging a basis of the class-divisions so engrained in British life, to account for Woolf's view that 'all human relations ... shifted' at this time (Woolf, 1966,1, p. 321).

The Edwardian period, however, was from its start a time of shifting values and vanishing

certainties. Even before Queen Victoria died in 1901, the Boer war had shocked the British public into realizing the empire might be indefensible in moral as well as military terms. These doubts grew with the century, matched by comparable questions on the domestic scene. Acquisitiveness encouraged by plentiful raw materials and market monopolies overseas seemed reduplicated in expanding commercialization and industrialization within Britain. In an age of declining religious faith, this often seemed unchecked by altruism and shaped only by greed. These were issues often addressed by Edwardian writers. In *Lord Jim* (1900), for example, Joseph Conrad implicitly criticizes the kind of contemporary adventure story—made popular by authors such as Rider Haggard, Arthur Conan Doyle or John Buchan—which supported the values of honour and heroism on which the empire was ostensibly based. In Conrad's vision, these turn out to be thoroughly difficult or distracting to sustain in practice. Ford Madox Ford provides a similar picture of the hollowness of contemporary values in *The Good Soldier* (1915, see below). Conrad's criticism of empire is extended in *Heart of Darkness* (1902, see below), and in *Nostromo,* which examines the displacement of altruism in empire by materialism; by 'the religion of silver and iron' Conrad shows shaping the history of an imagined South American republic (Conrad, [1904] 1969, p. 71).

Materialism on the domestic scene similarly concerned Edwardian novelists such as H.G. Wells, John Galsworthy, E.M. Forster and Arnold Bennett. Wells was interested in a wider range of social issues, including the emancipation of women in *Ann Veronica* (1909), or the possibility of scientific or socialist progress towaids a utopian future examined in his novel *In the Days of the Comet* (1906). But questions of commerce, class and wealth predominate in Edwardian social comedies such as *Kipps* (1905) and *The History of Mr Polly* (1910), and in *Tono-Bungay* (1909), whose narrator sums up much contemporary uneasiness when he complains that in 'the whole of this modern mercantile investing civilisation ... ultimate aims [are] vague and forgotten' (Wells, [1909] 1972, p. 186). Each of these novels follows a hero forced by some unexpected circumstance to abandon his usual station in life and experience a number of others: 'a succession of samples', as Wells calls them, chosen to reveal the broad construction of 'mercantile civilisation' and its effects within contemporary British life (Wells, [1909] 1972, p. 3). *The Forsyte Saga* (1906-29) has a similar aim. John Galsworthy suggests the family he portrays are representative of their era as a whole, and shows their destruction of true values—and often true love—through their obsession with property and convention.

E.M. Forster's Edwardian writing is more optimistic, finding in love and the capacity to 'connect' ways of resisting class differences and social pressure. The heroine of *A Room with a View* (1908) learns to reject Victorian constraints on personal and social life in favour of art and passion. Even in *Howards End* (1910)—concerned with a mercantile world of 'telegrams and anger' similar to that examined in Wells's *Tono-Bungay*—the sensitive heroine's marriage to a businessman shows some possibility of restoring wholeness to a fragmented society, and of resisting the spreading 'rust' of industrialization which threatens the countryside. Forster's liberal faith in social reintegration fades only in his writing after the First World War, when examining the sharper antitheses of empire in *A Passage to India* (1924).

Optimism is largely absent from the work of Arnold Bennett, whose protagonists, sensitive or otherwise, can do little to escape conditions life imposes upon them and the numbing effects of their environments. His novels are often set in a landscape already overrun by mercantile civilization, leaving characters trapped in factory towns 'mean and forbidding of aspect—sombre, hard-featured, uncouth' (Bennett, (1902] 1976, p. 25). Whereas a lucky legacy allows Wells's hero in *Kipps* to escape his dreary circumstances, even a substantial inheritance does not free Bennett's heroine in *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902). Later novels such as *The Old Wives Tale* (1908)

likewise illustrate in minute detail the pressures of physical, environmental factors on self and destiny.

Bennett, Wells and Galsworthy, the novelists Woolf considered the ‘most prominent and successful ... in the year 1910’, are the ones her essays criticize most fiercely (Woolf, 1966, I, p. 326). Yet as the above discussion suggests, neither they nor other Edwardian writers could be justly accused of ignoring contemporary life or pressures on the ‘human character’ Woolf saw changing in that year. Indeed, this is not the basis of her criticism. Instead, it is on the issue of method that Woolf attacks Bennett and his contemporaries—not for any failure of attention to contemporary life, which she sees presented almost *too* attentively in their work. She attacks Bennett, in particular, for his wish to ‘describe ... describe ... describe’: a determination to communicate endless facts about the environment of his characters which puts ‘an enormous stress upon the fabric of things’ and leaves too little time to look truly ‘at life ... at human nature’ (Woolf, 1966,1, pp. 332, 330). In one way, such criticism misses the point of Bennett’s fiction, which follows the French writers he admired in treating ‘the fabric of things’ not as separate from human nature, but as the principal shaping force upon it. Yet in another way so much detailed attention to the material circumstances of existence does allow a kind of materialism to dominate Bennett’s vision, and sometimes Wells’s and Galsworthy’s. This makes their work inadvertently complicit with the very aspects of modem life they sought to criticize, emphasizing the material world and marginalizing the inner life or spirit of the individual much as contemporary social forces did in reality. Woolf’s criticisms of this kind of materialism were also supported by other authors. D.H. Lawrence found Galsworthy’s characters ‘only materially and socially conscious ... too much aware of objective reality’ rather than ‘the psychology of the free human individual’ (Lawrence, 1955, pp. 123, 120). Reaching the end of his career in the Edwardian period, Henry James criticized contemporaries such as Wells and Bennett for offering in their work a ‘slice of life’ too full of the ‘quarried and gathered material’ of reality to exist properly as art (James, 1914, pp. 268, 262).

Along with Joseph Conrad, Henry James is exempt from Woolf’s criticism of the Edwardians. Each can be seen as an early exemplar or precursor of modernist fiction, free of the limitations its authors found in other Edwardians. James’s techniques and ideas, in particular, offered Woolf herself—and Dorothy Richardson and other later writers—alternatives to the ‘materialism’ and preoccupation with ‘objective reality’ which seemed to limit other Edwardian novelists. Rather than carrying life over into fiction in raw slices, James considered it should be shaped into art by the use of a ‘structural centre’, a figure through whose perceptions the novel could be focused (James, 1934, p. 85). He praised Conrad for finding this kind of centre in the figure of Marlow, the talkative seaman who narrates the story in *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness,* supposedly to a circle of more or less silent listeners. Marlow’s idiosyncratic vision of the world directs attention upon the way he presents the story, and on the subjective reactions of the person telling it, and away from any securely defined ‘objective reality’. These tactics and similar ones used by Ford Madox Ford are further discussed below.

James achieves much the same effec: in his own fiction by what he calls ‘placing advantageously, placing right in the middle of the light, the most polished of possible mirrors of the subject’. As an example of this kind of mirror, James points to his use in *The Ambassadors* (1903) of Strether, an ‘intense perceiver’ of complex relations encountered during a delicate mission to Paris (James, 1934, pp. 70, 71). Unlike the narrators used by Conrad and Ford, Strether does not tell the story in his own words, but the narrative nevertheless remains closely confined to his point of view. In the same way as Impressionism in painting, such tactics ensure that attention centres not only on Paris life and manners, but on the reflective medium in which it is represented:

on Strether's perception and reactions; on his nature as 'mirror'. James's disposition to 'place the centre of the subject in ... consciousness' in this way anticipates one of the defining priorities of the modernist authors discussed below (James, 1934, p. 51). Woolf particularly approved of his determination to 'illumine the mind within rather than the world without', a strategy she extends in her own writing (see below) and stresses in 'Modem Fiction' (Woolf, 1966, II, p. 81). To find 'the proper stuff of fiction' and to avoid the concentration on 'the fabric of things' which she felt limited the work of Bennett and others, she considers that the novelist should

> Look within ... examine ... an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions ... Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit ... with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? ... to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain. (Woolf, 1966, n. pp. 106-7)

By the time Woolf published her essay, several of the novelists considered below had evolved new means of presenting the inner flow of consciousness; for recording not, as Conrad or Ford did, the voice of a narrator addressing silent listeners, but of characters silently, inwardly, addressing themselves. One of these novelists is D.H. Lawrence, who in one way, in *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1921), redirects the attention of fiction towards inner life simply by means of the volume of attention he accords it. Whole paragraphs describing inner thoughts appear in these novels between single lines of direct speech. Like James before him. however, Lawrence not only describes characters' thoughts but deploys to a new extent means (see below) of approximating to the form in which these thoughts supposedly occur within the mind.

Such approximation is taken a decisive step further by Dorothy Richardson in her use in *Pilgrimage*—a novel-sequence which began publication in 1915—of a stream-of-consciousness form which seeks to present characters' thoughts with the immediacy of their actual occurrence (see below). While Richardson invented or reinvented this stream-of-consciousness form for writing in English, its most spectacular development appeared in the novel which Woolf had much in mind when she set out her priorities in 'Modem Fiction': James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). Much of the Dublin of *Ulysses* is seen only in so far as it is reflected in the mind of Joyce's protagonist Leopold Bloom as he wanders around the city. His mental life is presented through a full range of the devices developed by James, Lawrence, Richardson and others for recording 'the mind within', and so thoroughly and inventively that one critic has suggested that Joyce 'rewrote for the modem novel generally the definition of a man' (Friedman, 1972, p. 442). It is in the last section of *Ulysses,* however, that Joyce's stream-of-consciousness tactics are deployed most extensively, not in presenting a man, but rather the mingling thoughts and memories of Bloom's wife Molly as she hovers on the edge of sleep. Such writing ensures that—whether or not 'human character' itself had changed—by the early 1920s the way character could be represented in fiction *had* changed decisively (see Unit 18, pp. 533-4).

This new modernist concentration on the mind and inner life was accompanied by related changes in the structure of the novel, also retraceable to the example of Conrad and Ford. In *Lord Jim,* as in *Heart of Darkness.* Marlow tells his story in a single evening, relying for its construction on a fickle memory which does not always present events in chronological order. The result is what Conrad calls in his Preface to *Lord Jim* *a free and wandering tale'. Later modernist writers are similarly innovative with their chronology and construction. Rather like Marlow's story, the narratives of *Ulysses* and Woolf s *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) are confined to a single day, though one which allows readers an acquaintance with characters' lives in some ways as full as any offered by Victorian fiction. What is new in modernist fiction is the way such acquaintance is made. As

the novel increasingly reflects 'the mind within', so it comes to rely on what Woolf calls 'time in the mind' rather than 'time on the clock': on characters' memories and recollections, returning to and associating with the present moment events long distant from it in time, stitching past experience into present consciousness (Woolf. [19281 1975, p. 69).

'Life is not a series ... symmetrically arranged' Woolf suggests in "Modem Fiction", complaining in her diary about the 'appalling narrative business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner' (Woolf, 1966, II, p. 106; [1953] 1985, p. 138). Avoiding this business by relying on 'time in the mind' creates another of modernism's distinctive features—its rejection of the serial chronology conventional to Victorian or Edwardian fiction in favour of more fluid approaches to structure. For the Victorians, the onward flow of history and the life in time may have seemed sufficiently coherent to provide a valid structuring basis for the novel, and Orwell was probably right to see some such 'feeling of continuity' surviving into the Edwardian period. After the outbreak of the war, and as a result of other factors discussed below (see especially on Lawrence), the modernists found in the passage of time and history not coherence but the 'nightmare' Stephen Dedalus speaks of in *Ulysses,* and the old strucaires of the novel consequently in need of change (Joyce, [1922] 1992, p. 42).

No wonder, then, that it was the absence of a conventional beginning, middle and end in contemporary fiction which Hardy remarked on in 1926. He might, of course, have registered other new aspects of modernist fiction: not only its transcriptions of inner consciousness, but a new interest within the novel in art and writing, often focused through characters who are painters or writers. This is further discussed below in relation to Joyce and Woolf. And yet, despite the scale and variety of contemporary innovation, Hardy might have been more restrained than to assert that modernist fiction had changed *everything* by 1926. That year also saw the publication of Gerald Bullett's study *Modern English Fiction,* which emphasizes—despite its title—the survival of the conventional novel, and of esteem for it. Bullett assesses Bennett, Wells, Galsworthy ar.d Forster as the most significant of living authors, while Joyce, Woolf, Lawrence and Dorothy Richardson receive attention only in a last chapter devoted to 'Eccentricities'. Later judgements have on the whole accepted this latter group as among the great writers of the twentieth century, though they have not always seen them as belonging to what Bullett calls the 'main road of English fiction' (Bullett, 1926, p. 121). Indeed, the modernist novel is almost by definition an alternative to this road, as it comes down through the Victorians and Edwardians, and the new styles and strategies it offers have been valued variously by the generations of authors who have followed since the 1920s. (See also the second pan of this unit.)

Critics and readers have likewise never been unanimous in modernism's praise. Its innovations need to be seen as responses to the shifting, challenging forces of history in the early twentieth century (see below, especially on Lawrence). Yet modernist writing is sometimes so successful in distancing or effacing these forces that it risks the accusation of ignoring them altogether; so successful in avoiding the material world and social concerns which preoccupied Edwardian novelists, in favour of the inner life of the individual, that it has sometimes been considered escapist and irresponsible. Apparent evasion of the public world might seem to extend into a partial evasion of the public itself, complexity and unusualness of technique never allowing modernism the wide readership some Edwardian authors enjoyed. Criticisms of this kind are forcefully expressed by the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács, for example, who challenges modernism for what he sees as its 'rejection of narrative objectivity, the surrender to subjectivity ... disintegration of lhe outer world ... the reduction of reality to a nightmare ... the denial of history' (Lukács, [1955] 1972, pp. 479, 484, 486).

Some answers can be found to Lukács's criticisms. Some of Roland Barthes's ideas, for

example, might be used to suggest that the complexity and unfamiliarity of modernist texts might not diminish but enhance their responsibility in political terms. Readers required to piece together a fictional world out of fractured chronologies and streams of consciousness are less likely to be passive recipients of the views and values of the author, as might be the case with more conventional fiction. In Barthes's terms, readers who are the 'producers' and 'no longer the consumers' of a text are more likely to engage critically with a world, and a way of envisaging it, which they have had to reconstruct to such an extent for themselves (Barthes, 1974, p. 4).

Debates about the values of modernism continue to occupy critics at the end of the twentieth century. Obviously, this was a matter of immediate concern in the 1930s, a time when several authors expressed the kind of criticism Lukács outlines, and sought an orientation for their novels which was quite different from modernist fiction in the previous decade. George Orwell complained of modernism that it showed 'no attention to the urgent problems of the moment, above all no politics in the narrower sense' (Orwell, 1970, p. 557). Orwell and others in the 1930s found they had many 'urgent problems' to confront, and less opportunity than the modernists to retreat from them into memories of a supposedly more secure age before the First World War. The Wall Street Crash late in 1929 set off a decade of mass unemployment, poverty and political unrest within Britain, and the economic crises it contributed to abroad hastened the rise to power of dictators—Hitler and Mussolini—whose belligerence made a second war seem inevitable. Franco's rebellion and the Civil War in Spain, sharply dividing opinion in Britain between right and left, sometimes seemed a dire rehearsal of what was to follow for Europe as a whole.

Consequences of this sense of crisis can be illustrated by the progress of Christopher Isherwood's early career. An acknowledged debt to Joyce, Woolf and other modernists appears in the interior monologues and time-shifts which shape his first two novels. *All the Conspirators* (1928) and *The Memorial* (1932). In *Mr Norris Changes Trains* (1935) and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), however, he gives up complexities of modernism in favour of a more documentary style, communicating directly the threat of fascist politics Isherwood had discovered for himself in 1930s Berlin. His narrator in *Goodbye to Berlin* emphasizes this style's immediacy when he describes himself as 'a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking' (p. 11). Entirely passive recording is scarcely possible in prose, or perhaps in any other medium, but Isherwood's definition of his tactics at the end of the 1930s suggests a very different set of attitudes from the modernists': a rejection of their 'impressionism' and emphasis on inner consciousness in favour, once again, of documentary attention to outward reality anc social being.

These altitudes sometimes disposed 1930s writers to return to the example of the Edwardians whom modernism had discarded, George Orwell recording particular admiration for H.G. Wells. Much of Orwell's 1930s writing is in the form of documentary: of factual accounts of poverty in Britain in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), or of the war in Spain in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938). In novels such as A *Clergyman's Daughter* (1935) or *Coming up for Air* (1939) he adopts tactics very similar to Wells's, following a central f.gure whose changes in income and social sphere allow broad investigation of contemporary society.

Similar interests and similar straightforwardncss appear in the early work of Graham Greene, who settled in the 1930s on the 'straight sentences, no involutions' which continue, throughout his fiction, to demonstrate an ambition to 'present the outside world economically and exactly' (Greene, 1980, p. 33). Like Orwell's, his 1930s (and some later) writing is marked by a broadly socialist outlook on contemporary poverty and injustice: this is especially apparent in novels such as *It's a Battlefield* (1934) and *England Made Me* (1935), before Greene enters with *Brighton Rock* (1938) and *The Power and the Glory* (1940) a phase also shaped by the Catholicism to which he had been converted a decade or so earlier. Conflicts between political and religious imperatives,

as well as moral and emotional ones, continue to dominate Greene's writing throughout a career lasting until the 1990s (see the second part of this unit), also adding to the intensity he brings to the genres of thriller and spy fiction.

The Catholicism of another convert, Evelyn Waugh, remained covert until *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). 1930s fiction such as *Vile Bodies* (1930) and A *Handful of Dust* (1934) follows his first novel, *Decline and Fall* (1928), in satirizing the smart set of the times. The shifting patterns of behaviour and belief which encouraged the experiments of modernism made the years after the First World War also a strong age of satire. This shapes the work of authors Waugh draws upon, such as Ronald Firbank, as well as Aldous Huxley's anatomies of contemporary values in *Crome Yellow* (1921), *Antic Hay* (1923) and *Point Counter Point* (1928), and Wyndham Lewis's huge attacks on modernist style and the artistic pretensions of the 1920s in *The Childermass* (1928) and *The Apes of God* (1930). Though more or less opposite in politics to Greene and Orwell, in his 1930s satires Waugh does share their directness of style, and the pace and visual quality of his writing, like the work of Greene and Isherwood, shows the increasing influence of the cinema on narrative at this time.

Similarities of this kind in the styles of 1930s authors, and often in their politics, have allowed critics such as Samuel Hynes and Bernard Bergonzi to construct a view of the decade as one of shared, collective interests, sharply differentiated from those of modernism. While Thomas Hardy found 'everything changed' in 1926, he might well, in this view, have found much of it changed back a decade later—back to some of the conventions of Edwardian fiction, and to its concern with society and the material world. This is not an inaccurate picture of 1930s writing, but it is more convenient than it is complete. Modernism was not as universally rejected as it suggests, even by some of the authors usually supposed to do so. Orwell still uses the tactics of the Nighttown chapter (15) of *Ulysses* at one stage of A *Clergyman's Daughter,* and Greene a kind of stream of consciousness in *England Made Me.* Even Waugh's reliance on dialogue and implication probably owes something to Ernest Hemingway. There were also authors who adopted the methods of modernism much more extensively. Rosamond Lehmann and Elizabeth Bowen show some of its freedom with chronology and structure, and follow tactics similar to Virginia Woolf's in tracing what Bowen calls in *The House in Paris* 'the you inside you ... reflections ... memories' ([1935] 1983, p. 77). Other novelists such as Lewis Grassic Gibbon, considered below, found that modernist tactics did not necessarily obscure the political concerns of the age, but could be used to focus them; while Edward Upward and Rex Warner perhaps under the influence of Franz Kafka, first translated into English in the 1930s—showed that political issues could be expressed as forcefully by means of fantasy and allegory as in realist styles. These were methods Orwell also came to use in his later fiction in *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).

The modernists themselves, of course, did not stop writing in the 1930s. Woolf extends her methods of interior monologue in *The Waves* (1931), and her experiments with the genre of fiction in *The Years* (1937) and *Between the Acts* (1941). The publication of *Finnegans Wake* (1939) completes the experimentation with language which Joyce began as 'Work in Progress' in the late 1920s. The 1930s also saw the emergence of a new generation of writers ready not only to adopt modernist tactics but to reshape them for purposes of their own. Like Lehmann and Bowen, Jean Rhys adapts to the communication of women's consciousness a range of modernist methods, fluently intermingling uncertain thoughts, memories and present experience. Malcolm Lowry's wordplay and streams of consciousness in *Ultramarine* (1933); Henry Green's idiosyncratic language; Lawrence Durrell's adoption of some of the interests and methods of D.H. Lawrence; and Samuel Beckett and Flann O'Brien's extension of the example of Joyce (see below) had all confirmed by the end of the 1930s that modernism did not perish during the decade, but continued

as an influence for the future. Its effects, however, were partly postponed and redirected by the Second World War. The second part of this unit considers the legacies of this period in later writing, and the competition and coalescence of conventional and innovative styles in the latter half of the twentieth century.

## Texts, authors, contexts

### Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness* (1902)

> 'Kurtz ... at the time 1 did not see—you understand. He was just a word for me. I did not see the man in the name any more than you do. Do you see him? Do you see the story? Do you see anything? It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream—making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams. ...' He was silent for a while.
>
> '... No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence—that which makes its truth, its meaning—its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream – alone ...'
>
> He paused again, as if reflecting, then added -
>
> 'Of course in this you fellows see more than I could then. You see me, whom you know ...'
>
> It had become so pitch dark that we listeners could hardly see one another. For a long time already he, sitting apart, had been no more to us than a voice. There was not a word from anybody. The others might have been asleep, but I was awake. I listened, I listened on the watch for the sentence, for the word, that would give me the clue to the faint uneasiness inspired by this narrative that seemed to shape itself without human lips in the heavy night-air of the river. ([1902] 1995, p. 50)

The passage's most repeated words are 'see' and 'drcam', and the tension between what each implies about truth and perception—present throughout *Heart of Darkness*—is a shaping force in the evolution of modernism more generally. As recently as his Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897) Conrad had claimed that his task as a novelist was 'before all, to make you *see',* but of the seven occurrences of the verb 'to see' in this passage, five are in interrogative sentences, or in ones expressing doubt or negation. Conrad's narrator Marlow repeatedly questions the possibility of making his audience—becalmed on a yacht in the Thames at nightfall—'see the story' or its main character Kurtz in any straightforward way, concluding that the 'life-sensation' may be 'impossible to convey*. It fades instead towards an equally impalpable 'dream-sensation', and an equation of living and dreaming which suggests that each occurs alone, an ineluctable possession of individual experience and consciousness.

Such problems are typical of modernism's general scepticism of conventional realism—in particular, of the possibility of seeing or communicating any experience independent of its subjective construction by an individual observer. The early appearance of such scepticism in Conrad's fiction helps to locate it within an intellectual climate already established at the end of the nineteenth century. Epistemologic doubts about the validity of contact between mind and world had been extensively expressed, for example, in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, denying the existence of any 'absolute truths' or 'eternal facts' (Nietzsche, [18781 1986, p. 13). Modernism's emphasis on the individual mind—on living and dreaming alone—results partly from uncertainty of any surely knowable world beyond it; any objective, factual reality. Marlow indicates a wider feeling underlying the development of modernism in the early twentieth century when he remarks earlier in *Heart of Darkness* 'For a time I would feel I belonged still to a world

of straightforward facts; but the feeling would not last long' (p. 30).

The passage also speaks for later modernists, as well as the feelings of its own age, in the doubts it casts over words and language. Marlow's audience listens apparently in vain to his benighted voice, waiting 'for the sentence, for the word' that could communicate decisively his uneasy individual vision. Loss of faith in a knowable world also threw doubt upon the capacities of language used to represent it: Henry James's brother William was only one of several late-nineteenth-century philosophers to suggest that 'language works against our perception of the truth' (James, 1890,1, p. 241). Such doubts often appear in later modernist fiction, and are further discussed below in relation to Joyce and Flann O'Brien. Conrad was likely to encounter them on account of an experience shared by several other modernists—exile. As a Polish seaman who learned French before English, he was inevitably aware of the competing versions of reality different languages create, and the unlikeliness of establishing absolute truths in any of them.

*Heart of Darkness* may also be considered in the light of another contemporary thinker who challenged the capacities of language and conventional relations of self and world. Given the passage's stress on 'the essence of dreams', it is a significant coincidence that *Heart of Darkness* first appeared in serial form in 1899, the same year that Sigmund Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams.* Virginia Woolf was later inclined to suggest that the change in 'human character' she locates in 1910 may have been owed partly to Freud, whose work was first translated into English the previous year. Though Freud's work may have encouraged the modernists to Took within' and 'examine the mind' it also suggested limits to what could be seen or recorded there, since the unconscious Freud describes is at most partially accessible to intellect and language—an issue later to concern both D.H. Lawrence and James Joyce.

The nature and existence of a dark core of being, outside the intellect, is in other ways of obvious significance for *Heart of Darkness.* Conrad's novella relies strongly on the symbolic—an idiom figuring in the work of many later modernists, such as Lawrence, and perhaps also encouraged by the example of Freud. Travelling into the interior in quest of Kurtz—'the chief of the Inner Station' (p. 47) who has been overtaken by madness and savagery—Marlow is also symbolically journeying into himself. Much of Conrad's fiction is concerned with conflicts of the rational and orderly with the irrational or unreliable: in this case, between Marlow, reliant on 'an honest concern for the right way of going to work', and Kurtz, 'a soul that knew no restraint, no faith' (pp. 65, 108). Many of Conrad's central characters, however, find themselves secret sharers of values they had thought antithetical to their own, and Marlow is disturbed and fascinated to find Kurtz not simply a figure of depravity, but one in whom intelligence and enlightenment have somehow ceased to exist independently of their opposites. This reveals a darkness from which Marlow cannot consider himself immune. The 'absurdity, surprise and bewilderment' of this discovery, and Marlow's 'tremor of struggling revolt', precipitate a near-fatal illness, further confirming his identification with Kurtz, who dies on the way down river.

While Marlow cannot distance himself from Kurtz, the context of his storytelling ensures that the 'civilized' world is likewise fully implicated in the darkness he discovers in Africa. His narrative opens with the judgement, while looking over the Thames at London—an area once itself subjugated by the Roman empire—that 'this also ... has been one of the dark places of the earth' (p. 18). The kind of diminished distinction between civilization and barbarism, reason and anarchy, which his remark implies later concerned modernism in various ways, especially after the First World War. It also has immediate political implications about the immorality of empire. Much of *Heart of Darkness* shows the impropriety of any European civilization believing in or trying to enforce upon its colonies the superiority of its ways, or assuming itself an 'emissary ... of science, and progress' (p. 47). Conrad has recently been criticized for an imperialism of his

own—a facile and unexamined equation of 'niggers' and 'savages' with the darkness which concerns him—but in other ways *Heart of Darkness* is a sharp, early critique of empire.

Significantly, Marlow's only unreserved, affirmative use of the verb 'to see' occurs when he assures his audience they can see him and his pan in the story more clearly than he could himself—even though, as darkness falls, he becomes invisible even as he speaks. As the presence of his immediate audience on the Thames emphasizes, an attempt must be made to see Marlow's role in his narrative, difficult though this may be. As he half-con fesses in the passage above, his story concerns an encounter with a dark, unseen side of himself, and with what lies beyond his powers of interpretation and communication: it is part of 'the essence of dreams', after all, to be often opaque to the dreamer. Readers must therefore deduce what is at best implied in his narration, such as his identification with Kurtz. For example, when Marlow recounts seeing Kurtz seeming to stare at him out of the 'glassy panel' (p. 118) on his fianede's door in Brussels, readers are left to deduce that he is actually seeing a reflection of himself.

Marlow's suggestion that his audience 'see more than I could then. You see me, whom you know' is echoed in contemporary fiction when in Henry James's *The Ambassadors* (1903) Strether remarks of his story 'You see more in it than I' and his companion replies 'Of course I see you in it' (James, [1903] 1973, p. 46). Like the fiancee's door, the texts of James and Conrad present a 'life-sensation' in which, regardless of the ostensible subject, the nature, motives and thoughts of central observers or narrators is always reflected. No longer uncomplicatedly showing the life-sensation of the external world, but drawing attention towards the dream-shaped depths of its inscription in the individual mind, both Conrad and James anticipate a major concern of modernism and a shaping imperative of its form. (See Unit 19, pp. 553-6, for a deconstructionist reading of *Heart of Darkness.)*

## Ford Madox Ford: *The Good Soldier* (1915)

> It is very difficult to give an all-round impression of any man. I wonder how far I have succeeded with Edward Ashbumham. I dare say I haven't succeeded at all. It is even very difficult to sec how such things matter. Was it the important point about poor Edward that he was very well built, carried himself well, was moderate at the table and led a regular life—that he had, in fact, all the virtues that are usually accounted English? ([1915] 1977, p. 140)

> I have, I am aware, told this story in a very rambling way so that it may be difficult for anyone to find their path through what may be a sort of maze. I cannot help it. I have stuck to my idea of being in a country cottage with a silent listener, hearing between the gusts of the wind and amidst the noises of the distant sea, the story as it comes. And. when one discusses an affair—a long, sad affair—one goes back, one goes forward. One remembers points that one has forgotten and one explains them all the more minutely since one recognises that one has forgetten to mention them in their proper places and that one may have given, by omitting them, a false impression. I console myself with thinking that this is a real story and that, after all, real stories are probably told best in the way a person telling a story would tell them. They will then seem most real. (p. 167)

George Orwell suggests in *Coming up for Air* (1939) that the Edwardians believed that 'the old English order of life couldn't change', but that they actually 'lived at the end of an epoch, when everything was dissolving into a sort of ghastly flux' ([1939] 1962, pp. 108-9). Looking back on an earlier, apparently innocent and splendid life in those Edwardian years—spent travelling with his wife Florence and their friends the Ashbumhams—Ford Madox Ford's narrator John Dowell likewise comments 'Permanence? Stability? I can't believe it's gone ... that long, tranquil life,

which was just stepping a minuet, vanished' (p. 13). Ford highlights a final cause of this era's loss of permanence and stability by locating his novel's crises on the date, 4 August, on which the First World War eventually broke out. But in the figure of Edward Ashbumham he also draws attention to the temper of an epoch which was 'dissolving' well before it finally collapsed in 1914. Like this era itself. Ashbumham is solid-seeming on the surface, yet actually dissolute: his 'well-built' appearance, suggestive of 'all the virtues' of the Englishman, belied by spectacular infidelities and a long-standing affair with Florence. Like Conrad's Lord Jim. another hero unable to live up to the virtues he seems to personify. Ashbumham is one of the 'hollow men' who often appear in literature at this time, his representativeness of the Edwardian age emphasized by his firet name.

Ford collaborated with Conrad earlier in the century, and *The Good Soldier* shares some of the characteristics of Conrad's narrative, discussed above. Like *Heart of Darkness,* it is concerned with uncertainties which are perceptual rather than only personal; with the unreliability not only of Ashburnham himself, but with ways in which it is 'very difficult to see' him or to communicate any final truth about his character or anything else. Dowell does not claim to have attempted a true picture, but only an impression, doubts if he has achieved even this much with success, and warns that any impression he does manage to communicate may be false. His narrative and its contradictions confinn these doubts: Dowell denying, for example, that '[his] own psychology matters at all to this story', yet also mentioning a 'mysterious and unconscious self' and 'unconscious desires' (pp. 99, 100, 213). Deep involvement with the events he narrates impedes objectivity: even more fully than Marlow, he exemplifies the kind of unreliable narrator some critics consider characteristic of the modem novel. J. Hillis Miller suggests that 'Victorian novels were often relatively stabilised by the presence of an omniscient narrator ... a trustworthy point of view and also a safe vantage point' (Miller, 1970, p. 220). Such figures, however, belong to a less uncertain age perhaps corresponding to faith in an omniscient, omnipotent God—whereas twentieth-century epistemologic uncertainty spreads to the teller as well as the tale. Like *Heart of Darkness, The Good Soldier* is in this way typical of the situation defined by the critic Gérard Genette when he considers the novel after the end of the nineteenth century 'caught between what it tells (the story) and what tells it (the narrating)', and moving increasingly towards 'domination by the latter (modem narrative)' (Genette, 1986. p. 156).

There are other aspects of his narrative about which Dowell is usefully conscious and explicit. Like *Heart of Darkness,* though this time in 'idea' only. *The Good Soldier* is supposedly an oral narrative, Dowell narrating events in the order he happens to recall them—each 'as it comes'. His narrative therefore 'goes back ... goes forward', exemplifying conclusions Ford recalls reaching when working with Conrad, that:

> what was the matter with the Novel ... was that it went straight forward ... To get ... a man in fiction you could not begin at his beginning and work his life chronologically to the end. You must first get him in with a strong impression, and then work backwards and forwards over his past. (Ford, 1924, pp. 129-30)

Relying on 'time in the mind' through the fickle memories of narrators such as Marlow or Dowell, the fiction of Conrad and Ford shows the beginnings of modernism's movement away from conventional structure and 'life as a series'. Yet Dowell is still ready to acknowledge another, 'proper' place for episodes in his story
- presumably in the conventional chronological order of their occurrence. He adds, however, that 'what will seem most real' will not necessarily be created by following this order. His comments indicate some of the tensions underlying the development of modernism, suggesting a gap between 'proper' or established conventions of fiction, and what is 'real': between the novel's traditional

strategies for representing the world, and a world that seems to have outgrown them. Modernism might be considered to bridge this gap by a kind of extension of realism: a representation not only of a fictional world, but also—in the novels of Joyce, Woolf and Richardson
- of minds that perceive it, or in Conrad and Ford's work, of 'what tells it', of the devices of 'a person telling a story'. Modernism is less a complete break with realism than a radical reshaping of its established conventions: including, in particular, a foregrounding in the represented picture of the means of its perception or creation.

## Dorothy Richardson: *Pilgrimage* (1915-67)

> She was surprised now at her familiarity with the detail of the room ... that idea of visiting places in dreams. It was something more than that... all the real pan of your life has a real dream in it; some of the rea. dream pan of you coming true. You know in advance when you are really following your life. These things are familiar because reality is here. Coming events cast *light.* It is like dropping everything and walking backwards to something you know is there. However far you go out. you come back. ... I am back now where I was before I began trying to do things like other people. I left home to get here. None of these things can touch me here. (1979. II. p. 13) I *must* have been through there; it's the park. I don't remember. It isn't. It's wailing. One day I will go through. Les yeux gris. vont au paradis. Going along, along, the twilight hides your shabby clothes. They are not shabby. They are clothes you go along in, funny; jolly. Everything's here, any bit of anything, clear in your brain; you can look at it. What a terrific thing a person is; bigger than anything. How *funny* it is to be a person. (D. p. 256)

Richardson admired Henry James, following in the early volumes of *Pilgrimage* what she describes in her Foreword as his tactics of 'keeping the reader incessantly

watching ... through the eye of a single observer' (I. p. 11). Her observer is Miriam Henderson, whose experience remains central throughout the thirteen-volume sequence of *Pilgrimage.* (The above extract comes from the fourth volume. *The Tunnel,* 1919.) Miriam, however, is described as 'something new—a kind of different world', as a 'new woman' (I, pp. 260, 436), and much of her experience is shaped by, and explores, new social possibilities and ways of thinking for women early in the twentieth century, including a sense of the inadequacy of literary conventions established by men. Miriam feels there are 'millions of books 1 can't read' because they are written with 'some mannish cleverness that was only half right. To write books, knowing all about style, would be to become like a man ... a clever trick, not worth doing' (I. p. 284; II. p. 131). In her Foreword Richardson discusses ways of avoiding these tricks of established style, suggesting the need for 'a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism ... feminine prose ... moving from point to point without formal obstructions' (I, pp. 9, 12). She admired Joyce as a writer of this kind of prose, most in evidence in the unobstructed, unpunctuated flood of Molly Bloom's mine at the end of *Ulysses.*

The two passages above illustrate the progression of her own early writing—before the publication of *Ulysses*—towards a 'new realism' and new prose able to enter more fully into the 'new world' of feminine consciousness. Like Ford in *The Good Soldier,* or Conrad comparing 'life-sensation' and 'dream-sensation', the first passage makes the nature of realism and true perception almost explicitly an issue, repeating the terms 'real', 'really' and 'reality', often alongside 'dream', and suggesting that life is 'real' only when somehow in touch with 'the dreaming part of you'. The passage itself likewise moves between something close to conventional realism and a much more subjective, inward register of the 'dreaming pan of you'. It begins objectively enough, the first sentence opening with an authorial report of Miriam's state of mind, using the third-person pronoun 'she' and the past tense. 'Now', however, suggests the time-frame of the character rather than the author, and the passage soon moves entirely into the present tense, with the more colloquial •you' replacing 'she', also indicating a closer transcription of Miriam's inner voice. 'You' is used much in the sense of 'one', part of a gradual slippage from third person to first, from authorial report to character perception. This makes the final appearance of 'I' in the last lines seem quite natural, though it actually marks a final, decisive change from the objectivity of the opening in favour of a stream-of- consciousness form which records Miriam's thoughts in the way they supposedly occur to her. The second extract illustrates this form in fuller, uninterrupted operation. Richardson uses alternately the pronouns 'you' and 'I' to represent the first person, without the more external, objective 'she' or any distanced voice of authorial report. Instead, it follows the wandering, associative progress of Miriam's polyglot inner voice, demonstrating the new intimacy and immediacy with which stream of consciousness looks within the mind and reaches towards the core of 'what... a person is*.

The first passage also helps to clarify ways Richardson's invention or reinvention of stream of consciousness may have derived from specifically female vision of 'what... a person is'. Virginia Woolf talks in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) of the 'alien and critical' feelings women experienced for what they more and more recognized, in the early twentieth century, as a male-dominated society, and of the 'splitting off of consciousness' which was the result (Woolf, [1929] 1975, p. 96). Women, and women writers, may therefore have been particularly disposed to look within the mind, within a 'split off' consciousness, for a private space, the 'room of their own' otherwise denied them by contemporary society. Yet they could scarcely have ignored ways this society so often evaluated them, not in terms of their inner lives but of their appearance, even as objects. However subjectively they wished to see themselves, awareness of a contrary external

2.

perspective inevitably remained, creating not only a consciousness 'split off' from the world but one partly split by it. The resulting division between external and internal views of self may nevertheless have helped to create just the kind of fluidity between pronouns and subject positions the first passage illustrates: the movements between 'she' and T' which lead towards the stream-of-consciousness form. There may therefore be a particular logic in the first appearance of stream of consciousness in English in *Pilgrimage,* a new woman's vision of a new woman's mind. Its development in Richardson's writing supports the conclusion reached by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar—that 'women writers are the major precursors of all 20th-century modernists, the *avant- garde* of the *avant-garde'* (Gilbert and Gubar, 1986, p. 1). As these and many other critics have recently shown, modernist writing and its innovations particularly require to be seen in the context of changing gender roles and assumptions in the society of their time. (See Unit 23 for a discussion of women writers and modernism.)

## James Joyce: *A Portrait of the Artistas a Young Man* (1916)

> He drew forth a phrase from his treasure and spoke it softly to himself:—A day of dappled seaborne clouds.
> The phrase and the day and the scene harmonized in a chord. Words. Was it their colours? He allowed them to glow and fade, hue after hue: sunrise gold, the russet and green of apple orchards, azure of waves, the grey-fringed fleece of clouds. No, it was not their colours: it was the poise and balance of the period itself. Did he then love the rhythmic rise and fall of words better than their associations of legend and colour? Or was it that, being as weak of sight as he was shy of mind, he drew less pleasure from the reflection of the glowing sensible world through the prism of a language many-coloured and richly storied than from the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose? ([1916] 1973, pp. 166-7)

In the passage from *Heart of Darkness* discussed earlier, Marlow becomes 'no more ... than a voice', his narrative eventually seeming to 'shape itself without human lips'. While Conrad shows language almost detaching itself from its speaker, the above extract suggests a language detaching itself from the world, its pleasures and possibilities existing for Stephen Dedalus almost independently of its conventional semantic, representational function. The passage extends in this way some of the epistemologic doubts about relations of mind, word and world identified in Conrad's work at the turn of the century: a mistrust of language continues to appear throughout twentieth-century writing, and was already a central concern for the modernists. Rather than transparently representing reality, for many modernist authors language came to seem as much a screen between mind and world, or the •prism' Joyce mentions in the passage above, obscuring reality or warping its light into patterns and colours of its own. Dorothy Richardson's heroine Miriam sums up such feelings in *Pilgrimage* when she suggests that 'language is the only way of expressing anything and it dims everything' (1979, II, p. 99). As an Irishman growing up in Dublin, still under English rule, Joyce had particular reasons for sharing some of these feelings. In *Portrait,* while discussing words with an Englishman, his semi-autobiographical hero Stephen reflects that

> 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. (1973, p. 189)

Stephen's fretful sense of English as the language of a foreign power, slightly distanced from him and the Ireland he inhabits, helps explain some of the sense in the above extract of a gap between words and the world they supposedly serve (see Unit 25, p. 665).

The whole passage, however, sees this less as a problem than as a source of possibility, and it is significant that Stephen eventually discovers that his feelings of foreignness as well as familiarity for his language actually equip him to know and use it *more* fully than his English interlocutor. Joyce might likewise be thought to have found in his particular relation to words a sense of freedom from the bounds of convention and of opportunity for his writing ~ one which may also help to explain why so many modernist authors were exiles. A sense of English as a partly foreign and 'acquired' language—added to by a life abroad, in Trieste, where he worked as an English teacher, and later in Zurich and Paris—places Joyce close to the position of the exile defined by Julia Kristeva when she remarks that

2.

> lacking the reins of the maternal tongue, the foreigner who learns a new language is capable of the most unforeseen audacities when using it ... since he belongs to nothing ... that weightlessness ... gives him the extravagant ease to innovate. (Kristeva, 1991. pp. 31-2)

Joyce's most audacious innovation is usually considered his use of stream of consciousness and other methods in *Ulysses* to reflect the inner lives of his characters. Looking with only 'weak ... sight' at the external world, and, instead, contemplating 'an inner world of individual emotions' may therefore seem the ideas in the above passage most significant for his later fiction. Nevertheless, its concern with the shape, rhythm, and balance of words—with the whole existence of language, rather than only what it represents defines an equally important direction in this later writing. Joyce remarked of *Ulysses* that 'it is the material that conveys the image ... that interests you' (Budgcn, 1934, p. 180), and this interest in the medium of fiction, language, is sustained throughout the novel, not as a mailer of actual discussion as in the passage above, but largely by means of parody. Casting Bloom as an unlikely modern equivalent of Odysseus, journeying through a single Dublin day, *Ulysses* is parodic throughout, but individual chapters also mock specific styles of literature, journalism, advertising or ordinary speech. Parody, stylistic variation and exaggeration make the nature of language impossible to ignore, ensuring that representation is as much a subject of interest throughout as what is represented—that *Ulysses* once again involves its readers as much, in Genette's terms, in 'what tells it' as in 'what it tells'.

This is a balance which shifts in *Finnegans Wake* (1939), in which elements of character or story are harder to discern through Joyce's 'screens of language', as the critic Hugh Kenner calls them (Kenner, 1978, p. 41). In one way, Joyce's last work attempts a final extension of modernism's urge to look within the mind, creating a kind of stream of unconsciousness: 'waters of babbalong' moving towards areas hitherto beyond the reach of language (p. 103). Joyce's 'babbalong', however, constantly directs attention upon its components: upon the nature and relations of words; on linguistic issues such as phonetics, etymology, and the semantics of English and other languages. Such interests can be summed up by one of the novel's own phrases, 'say mangraphique, may say nay por daguerre!' ([1939] 1971, p. 339). Among its multilingual puns can be found the suggestion that Joyce's work is primarily 'graphique', not 'por daguerre': it is writing, writing for itself, not as daguerrotype or any other quasi-photographic attempt to represent reality. As a contemporary commentator on Joyce's work remarked,

> The epoch when the writer photographed the life about him with the mechanics of words redolent of the daguerrotype, is happily drawing to its close. The new artist of the word has recognised the autonomy of language. (Jolas, [1929] 1972, p. 79)

Recognized by Stephen Dedalus and developing throughout the modernist period, in Joyce's writing especially, this sense of autonomy—as both a problem and an opportunity for fiction—also reaches towards the postmodernism discussed below in relation to Flann O'Brien.

Other important developments in early twentieth-century fiction are illustrated by passages such as the above, and by *Portrait* as a whole. Along with novels such as Arnold Bennett's *Clayhanger* series (1910-18) or Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street* (1913-14), *Portrait* shows in one way the survival into the twentieth century of the *Bildungsroman*—the novel of personal education and growth towards maturity, such as *David Copperfield,* popular in Victorian times. Joyce's title, however, and the interest in language and aesthetics in many passages such as the above, suggest that *Portrait* is more of a *kunstlerroman* than a *bildungsroman:* more interested in the achievement of maturity as an artist rather than only as an individual. A comparable interest appears in many contemporary works of fiction: in D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913),

Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27), May Sinclair's *Mary Olivier* (1919) and Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage,* as well as the novel serialized immediately after *Portrait* in *The Egoist* magazine—Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr* (1918), its title a near-anagram of 'art', and its hero, like Stephen, much concerned with discussion of aeshetic theories of interest to his author, and to the novel in which he appears. Sharing in a move from *Bitdungsroman* to *Kunstlerroman,* these novels also demonstrate a wider readiness among modernist writers to establish within the domain of language and art a 'harmony', 'pleasure', or 'poise' which could hardly be imagined continuing to exist in reality, especially after the First World War. This modernist concentration on art and vision rather than social reality is further considered below in relation to Virginia Woolf. (For a discussion of Joyce's and Ilann O'Brien's work in their Irish context, sec Unit 25, pp. 657-8,665 and 666.)

## D.H. Lawrence: *Women in Love* (1921)

> The thought of the mechanical succession of day following day, day following day. *ad infinitum,* was one of the things that made her heart palpitate with a real approach of madness. The terrible bondage of this tick lack of time, this twitching of the hands of the clock, this eternal repetition of hours and days—oh God, it was too awful to contemplate...
>
> Oh, how she suffered, lying there alone, confronted by the terrible clock, with its eternal tick-tack. All life, all life, resolved itself into this: tick-tack, tick-tack, tick-tack; then the striking of the hour; then the tick-tick, tick-tack, and the twitching of the clockfingers.
>
> Gerald could not save her from it. He, bis body, his motion, his life—it was the same ticking, the same twitching across the dial, a horrible mechanical twitching forward over the face of the hours. What were his kisses, his embraces. She could hear their tick-tack, tick-tack...
>
> Oh, why wasn't somebody kind to her?
>
> Gerald! Could he fold her in his arms and sheathe her in sleep? Ha! ... The Geralds of this world Let them turn into mechanisms, let them. Let them become instruments, pure machines, pure wills, that work like clockwork, in perpetual repetition ... perfect parts of a great machine ...
>
> Poor Gerald, such a lot of little wheels to his make up! He was more intricate than a chronometer-watch. But oh heavens, what weariness? What weariness, God above! ([19211 1971. pp. 523-5)

Readers of this passage—and many others like it throughout *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* might wonder who it is who says 'oh' and 'ha!' and invokes the deity. However passionate an author Lawrence is supposed, such inteijections are unlikely to belong to his authorial voice. Instead, it is clear enough that the oh-ing and ha-ing, and much of the pattern and content of this passage besides, represent the thinking of a character, in this case, Gudrun's thoughts about her relationship with Gerald as it reaches its fatal climax at the end of *Women in Love.* Yet Gudrun's thinking is not conventionally represented in the text either as direct speech, in the first person and the present tense—in the form, for example, of '"Oh", she thought, "why isn't somebody kind to me?"' or as indirect speech, in the third person and the past tense, such as 'she asked herself why somebody wasn't kind to her'. Instead, Gudrun's thoughts emerge in a form which preserves some of the features of both direct and indirect speech, and of the voice of both author and character. This form of combinatory discourse—following the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, recently of much interest to narrative theorists—is usually known as Free Indirect Style or Free Indirect Speech (sec Unit 18. p. 356).

Frequently appearing in earlier fiction—in the work of Charles Dickens and Jane Austen, for example—this style is by no means Lawrence's invention. Nor is it his only means of communicating the consciousness of his characters: the first sentence in the passage above is

2.
typical of authorial reporting of thought which Lawrence often sustains at much greater length. Free Indirect Style, however, is used in Lawrence's novels more extensively and sometimes more subtly than by nineteenth-century writers, and it is similarly important for many other modernists. It is one of the devices Henry James uses to keep the reader 'incessantly watching ... through the eyes of a single observer', as Dorothy Richardson puts it, and Richardson herself employs it in much the same way to ensure concentration around Miriam Henderson's mind, especially in the early stages of *Pilgrimage,* when she uses stream of consciousness less often. Joyce also relied on Free Indirect Style to draw the draft material of *Stephen Hero,* begun about 1904, into the firmer focus around the thoughts of Stephen Dedalus which figures in *Portrait:* it shapes much of the passage from the novel discussed earlier, for example. For Joyce and the modernists more generally, it is a style which marks a kind of half-way stage—retaining the voice of the author but also engaging with the inner life of characters—in the progression from the fairly conventional realism of novels such as *Stephen Hero* toward the full entry to the mind offered by stream of consciousness in *Ulysses* and elsewhere.

The passage also suggests why the modernists found it necessary to move in this direction, and to restructure their novels in doing so. Gudrun's terror of 'the mechanical succession of day following day' is an extreme version of Virginia Woolf's suspicion of 'life as a series', and the passage's concentration on Gerald helps indicate an origin for such feelings, additional to modernism's wish, discussed earlier, to escape the 'nightmare' of history. Throughout *Women in Love,* Gerald is portrayed as 'The Industrial Magnate'. In the chapter of that name, Lawrence shows him forcing upon his mines 'the great reform', one which ensures that they are 'run on the most accurate and delicate scientific method' and that 'the miners were reduced to mere mechanical instruments ... they became more and more mechanised' (p. 259). These reforms correspond to the introduction of principles of Scientific Management in the United Stales and Britain after the turn of the century, principles which in several ways did ensure that 'all life resolved itself into tick- tack'. Following the introduction of 'clocking in' for factory work in the 1890s, and based on 'time and motion study', new management principles and industrial practices worked on the assumption that lime is money; a dimension to be commodified by the clock and used to control and reward workers made virtually as mechanical in their labour as the machinery of the workplace. Ironically, Gerald becomes as much the victim as the instigator of the attempt described in 'The Industrial Magnate' at 'substitution of the mechanical principle for the organic' (p. 260) in running his industry. Gudrun sees him as a pure machine, personified in her vision as the very instrument, the chronometer, on which his capitalist industrialism has come to be based.

Modernism can be seen to react to these new conditions in twentieth-century life in a number of ways. Not only in this passage, but often elsewhere in modernist fiction, there is an explicit hostility to the clock. Virginia Woolf remarks in *Orlando* that it seems 'a great shock to the nervous system, hearing a clock strike' ([1928] 1975, p. 85), and there are a number of characters who strike back: in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the bury* (1929), for example, Quentin Compson twists the hands off his watch at the start of his last day at Harvard. In another way, modernist authors. Faulkner included, 'strike back' themselves by devising structures for their novels which depart from chronological succession and 'time on the clock' in favour of memory and 'time in the mind', as discussed in the Introduction. Typically of modernism, the challenges of the contemporary world are incorporated and resisted not so much at the level of theme, argument or statement—as the Edwardians might have done—but through finding new forms and shapes through which life can be differently or more positively imagined.

Much the same is true of the strategies deployed by Lawrence and others to create what he calls 'a deeper sense than any we've been used to exercise' (Lawrence, 1962, I, p. 282) in order to

sustain a coherent sense of self and individuality: to see if beneath the 'little wheels' there could still be discovered some organic principle to substitute for the mechanical aspects modem life had installed within the self; to find some way of continuing to establish, in Dorothy Richardson's phrase, 'what a terrific thing a person is*. Her heroine Miriam's idea that 'Everything's here, any bit of anything, clear in your brain; you can look at it' is therefore not just a personal discovery, but indicative of a possibility modernism required to establish for itself in general. By 1910, 'human character* was threatened as never before by industrialization, materialism and reification, and Virginia Woolf naturally insists on a literature which could find some domain of the mind aloof from such pressures. Threatened by a first phase of industrialism, the literature of the Romantics recreates a sense of integral individuality through contact with external, green nature. Challenged by an accelerating industrialized technology in the early twentieth century, modernism turns instead to the inner fields of the self.

## Virginia Woolf: *To the Lighthouse* (1927)

> Everything seemed possible. Everything seemed right. Just now (but this cannot last, she thought, dissociating herself from the moment while they were all talking about boots) just now she had reached security; she hovered like a hawk suspended; like a flag floated in an element of joy which filled every nerve of her body fully and sweetly, not noisily, solemnly rather, for it arose, she thought, looking at them all eating there, from husband and children and friends; all of which rising in this profound stillness (she was helping William Bankes to one very small piece more and peered into the depths of the earthenware pot) seemed now for no special reason to stay there like a smoke, like a fume rising upward, holding them safe together. Nothing need be said; nothing could be said. There it was, all round them. It partook, she felt, carefully helping Mr Bankes to a specially tender piece, of eternity . there is a coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out ... in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby; so that again tonight she had the feeling she had had once today already, of peace, of rest. Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that remains for ever after. This would remain.
> ([1927] 1973. pp. 120-1)

The second section of *To the Lighthouse,* 'Time Passes', emphasizes the need discussed above in relation to D.H. Lawrence to turn towards inner life rather than the external nature of the Romantics. Surrounding the Ramsays' Hebridean holiday home is a natural world which in the family's absence seems a lonely domain of stones, stars and things hostile or at best indifferent to humanity. Especially when near a sea stained by the destruction of the First World War, it is impossible to continue, as the Romantics had, 'to marvel how beauty outside mirrored beauty within'. Instead, 'contemplation was unendurable; the mirror was broken' and 'Time Passes' suggests that only 'those mirrors, the minds of men' offer an uncertain contact with surviving dreams of order and happiness (pp. 153, 150). The above passage illustrates the tactics Woolf uses in the other two parts of the novel to look within these minds and trace their reflecdons, following in this case Mrs Ramsay's thoughts at her triumphal dinner party, towards the end of the first section.

Woolf remarked of *To the Lighthouse* that 'it is all in oratio obliqua' (Woolf, 1953, p. 102). As she suggests, the use of the third person and the past tense in passages such as the above, along with frequent authorial cues such as 'she thought', 'she felt' or 'she meant', creates a form close to indirect speech—though here used, of course, to record unspoken thoughts. There are times, too, when this 'oratio obliqua' moves closer to Free Indirect Style of the kind described above in

2.

the work of D.H. Lawrence, or towards imitation of patterns of thinking even when not necessarily representing thoughts themselves. The complicated syntax of the long third sentence, for example, and the rhythms which result, suggest the gradually unfolding associations of Mrs Ramsay's thoughts, even if these are described as much as transcribed. Though less immediate in its recording of thoughts than stream of consciousness, this is a style which achieves as comprehensive an enclosure of narrative within the mind as appears in *Ulysses* or *Pilgrimage.* The inner life exists so richly in passages such as the above that nothing need—or can—be found to match it in actual speech, or to connect it with the everyday world. On the contrary, this banal world of conversations about boots is relegated to parentheses, emphasizing Mrs Ramsay's mental 'dissociation' from the moment: free to float like a hawk, flag, or fume.

However privately it may be enjoyed, the richness and security of Mrs Ramsay's inner life nevertheless depends upon the sense of community established by her dinner party. She knows herself that 'it arose ... from husband and children and friends'. The first part of *To the Lighthouse* ends with a further consummation of her sense of community: with two members of the Ramsays' holiday party engaging to marry, as Mrs Ramsay had wished; with her reassuring thoughts of her brilliant children, safely asleep upstairs; and of her own marriage, drawn into tranquil harmony once again. This note of social cohesion and apparent 'immunity from change'—of stability and continuity, emphasized by marriage—brings this first section to a conclusion like that of many Edwardian or Victorian novels. *To the Lighthouse,* of course, does not end there. Its short, painful second section, 'Time Passes', quickly shows the redundancy for modernist fiction of this kind of conclusion, along with the irony of Mrs Ramsay's sense that it represents a kind of 'remaining for ever'. 'Time Passes' emphasizes the hostility not only of the natural world, but of the modernists' old adversaries: time and history. Covering the years of the First World War, it shows decay and loss intruding upon the Ramsays' family home, upon the family itself, and on all its hopes for the future. Mrs Ramsay and her daughter Prue die, and her son Andrew is blown up in the trenches. When remnants of the family and its friends return to the Hebridean house in the third section of the novel, painful memories of those more placid Edwardian times, ten years before, are all that remains of Mrs Ramsay's coherence and 'eternity'.

One of these family friends is Lily Briscoe. Finding the post-war world •changed completely', she is ready to move beyond what she sees as Mrs Ramsay's 'limited, old-fashioned ideas', such as her 'mania ... for marriage' (pp. 198, 199). For Lily, refuge from 'eternal passing and flowing' (p. 183) can be found not in stability achieved in the lived, social world, as Mrs Ramsay tried to, but in art. She reflects that '"you" and "I" and "she" pass and vanish; nothing stays; all changes; but not words, not paint' (p. 204). Just as Lily rejects Mrs Ramsay's old-fashioned ideas, so *To the Lighthouse* moves in its third section beyond the principles of order and closure conventional in Victorian or Edwardian fiction and towards a sense of coherence and conclusiveness achievable in art rather than in life. Lily's interest in art and in her own painting are in other ways correlative with Woolf's strategies throughout the novel. For example, a solution to one of Lily's problems, 'a line there, in the centre' (p. 237), is close to Woolf's use of the short middle section of the novel to separate the days of experience, ten years apart, recorded in the novel's first and third parts. Painting and fiction are also co-terminous, Lily's decision of her work that 'it is finished ... I have had my vision' (p. 237) also concluding the novel. In such ways, *To the Lighthouse* draws attention to its own techniques as part of its interest in art and vision apparently the only alternatives to a social reality now too disrupted by the 'nightmare' of history to offer the stability on which Victorian or Edwardian fiction had relied. In this way—as well as in its reliance on memory, restructured chronology and inner consciousness—*To the Lighthouse* is paradigmatic of modernist fiction's changes of form, style and emphasis, and indicative of some

of the aspects of contemporary history which helped bring these about. Its three-part structure, in particular, emphasizes how distant Edwardian life had come to seem in the 1920s; how, in the novelist Richard Aldington's terms, the war had left 'adult lives ... cut sharply into three sections—pre-war, war, and post-war' (Aldington, [1929] 1984, p. 199). (See Unit 23, pp. 625-30, for a feminist reading of *To the Lighthouse.)*

## Lewis Grassic Gibbon: *A Scots Quair* (1932-4)

> Here she was now, watching the east grow pale in the dawn.
>
> Pale and so pale: but now it was flushed, barred sudden with red and corona'd with red, as though they were there, the folk who had died, and the sun came washed from the sea of their blood, the million Christs who had died in France, as once she had heard Robert preach in a sermon. Then she shook her heal and that whimsy passed, and she thought of Robert—his dream just a dream? Was there a new time coming to the earth, when nowhere a bairn would cry in the night, or a woman go bowed as her mother had done, or a man turn into a tormented beast, as her father, or into a bullet-tom corpse ...
>
> Suddenly, far down and beyond the toun there came a screech as the morning grew, a screech like an hungered beast in pain. The hooters were blowing in the Segget Mills. ([1933] 1978, *Cloud Howe,* p. 36)

[Cronin] took to the reading of the daftest-like books, about Labour, Socialism and such-like stite. *Where would you be if it wasn't for Capital?* you'd ask old Cronin, and he'd say *On the street—where the capitalists themselves would be, you poor fool. It's the capitalists that we are out to abolish, and the capital that we intend to make ours.* And he'd organised a union for spinners and if ever you heard of a row at the mills you might bet your boots a Cronin was in it. trying to make out that the spinners had rights, and ought to be treated like gentry, b'God. *(Cloud Howe,* p. 68) Virginia Woolf describes the 1930s as a time when young writers 'could not go on discussing aesthetic emotions and personal relations ... they had to read the politicians. They read Marx. They became communists; they became anti-fascists' (Woolf, 1966, II, p. 172). In one way, the last lines of the first passage above might be read as exemplary of changes in literature Woolf and many other commentators suggest as typical of the 1930s, and of the fate of modernism within it. Modernism's complex styles and emphasis on inner consciousness are often supposed to have been superseded by attention to working life and the political issues of the time, much as the above passage shows Lewis Grassic Gibbon's heroine Chris Guthrie finding her reveries rudely interrupted by the harsh sounds of modem industry.

Chris's reverie, however, could hardly have less to do with 'aesthetic emotions and personal relations'. Instead, it is typical of hopes often expressed in the 1930s for social and political change—for 'a new time coming to the earth', to be created by the kind of socialist politics Cronin outlines in the second passage. The red dawn Chris witnesses is symbolic: even the landscape she watches it from adds to political implications emphasized throughout Gibbon's *Scots Quair* trilogy. It is dominated by Standing Stones, representative of an ancient time 'without gods and classes' ([1932-4] 1978, *Grey Granite,* p. 48) which characters believe socialist politics may re-establish in a new form for the future.

Typical in this way of much 1930s thinking, each passage nevertheless exemplifies the particularity of Gibbon's style. Chris's vision in the first passage incorporates a sense of the present, emphasized by the repeated 'now' in its first lines, within hopes for the future and a clear awareness of the past. Dawning dreams of new times are strongly coloured, in this case, by angry recollection of the slaughter of the First World War. This kind of historical thinking is emphasized

2.

by the trilogy's adroit structure throughout. Chapters are circular, beginning at a moment later than the events they go back to describe, ending with the story advanced again to the moment at which the chapter began. Much as the Standing Stones impose a broader perspective on the novel's physical landscape, this temporal pattern ensures immediate events are contained within wider vision of their significance. Showing a modernist freedom in its approach to chronology and structure, such patterning allows A *Scots Quair* to remain completely engaged with contemporary conflicts and injustices, while also indicating their historical origins and their implications for a future envisaged beyond them.

Gibbon is similarly flexible in representing the inner voice of his characters. The first passage sometimes employs the kind of Free Indirect Style, discussed earlier, to represent the thoughts of the heroine. The unusual, colloquial 'you' form illustrated in the second is also used on occasion to communicate the thinking of principal characters—Chris sometimes included—rather in the manner of the passage from *Pilgrimage* examined above. But this form transcribes the voices of a range of minor figures as well, and sometimes the collective thinking of whole groups. Showing ironically the prejudices Cronin's ideas encounter, the sceptical view of socialism in the passage above is not located with a particular character, but only as what 'folk said'—a voice almost of choric commentary. In moving so flexibly between individual and collective expression, Gibbon democratizes the vision of the novel as a whole, finding in the voice of his fiction, as in its structure, a formal reflex for some of the political ideals of the 1930s.

Gibbon's background—growing up among the class and community he came to write about—probably contributed to this achievement. By contrast, the fiction of many of the young writers of the 1930s Woolf mentions—novelists such as Orwell, Isherwood, Greene or Upward—can be seen as limited by the public school, Oxbridge education they shared. This kept them at a distance from the working life towards which their politics inclined them, making inevitable their role, discussed earlier, as distanced documentarists, camera-like observers. Gibbon was one of few novelists in the 1930s with a chance to represent contemporary political and working life with the inwardness and immediacy modernism had made available during the previous decade: his trilogy confirms the survival of a modernist idiom even in a decade, and in treating subject matter, usually thought unfavourable for it. This helps to make *A Scots Quair* one of the most powerful, sophisticated treatments of its times.

## Flann O'Brien: *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939)

> Having placed in my mouth sufficient bread for three minutes' chewing. I withdrew my powers of sensual perception and retired into the privacy of my mind, my eyes and face assuming a vacant and preoccupied expression. I reflected on the subject of my sparetime literary activities. One beginning and one ending for a book was a thing I did not agree with. ([1939] 1977, p. 9)

> The novel was inferior to the play inasmuch as it lacked the outward accidents of illusion, frequently inducing the reader to be outwitted in a shabby fashion and caused to experience a real concern for the fortunes of illusory characters ... The novel, in the hands of an unscrupulous writer, could be despotic ... a satisfactory novel should be a self-evident sham to which the reader could regulate at will the degree of his credulity, (p. 25)

Flann O'Brien's narrator considers that the works of 'Mr Joyce' are 'indispensable to all who aspire to an appreciation of the nature of contemporary literature' (p. 11), and *At Swim-Two-Birds* extends in various ways, usually comic and parodic, directions established in the contemporary novel by modernism in general and James Joyce in particular. The narrator is a kind of parodic

extension of Stephen Dedalus, engaged not just in 'contemplation of an inner world', as Stephen is in Joyce's *Portrait,* but instead withdrawing completely his 'powers of sensual perception' in favour of privacy within the mind. Like a contemporary novel by another author impressed by Joyce, Samuel Beckett's *Murphy* (1938)—whose hero prefers to 'come alive in his mind' ((1938] 1973, p. 6) rather than in 'contact with outer reality' (p. 101)—*At Swim-Two-Birds* sometimes shows an extreme version of modernism's urge to 'look within ... with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible'.

As well as being aware of the streams of consciousness of modernism, however, both Beckett and Flann O'Brien witnessed the growing interest in language and writing evident in the late 1920s and 1930s in Joyce's 'Work in Progress'—finally published as *Finnegans Wake* in the same year as *At Swim-Two-Birds,* 1939. It is this later, self-referential phase of Joyce's writing which is probably most influential on their work. While Stephen Dedalus remains concerned with 'individual emotions' as well as 'perfect prose' within his 'inner world', the private mental space of the narrator of *At Swim-Two-Birds* is apparently occupied by reflection on 'literary activities' alone. Such reflections continue to appear throughout, sometimes in the form of half-ironic critical essays such as the second extract above. The narrator also includes discussions of his own narrative problems—including mislaying pans of his text—as well as extracts from literary works which happen to interest him.

The literary principles discussed in this way are also exemplified and enacted throughout *At Swim-Two-Birds.* Suggesting the insufficiency of 'one beginning for a book', the narrator goes on to provide three. One of these introduces the story of Dermot Trellis, who is an author himself: his characters, however, rebel against him, take over his narrative, and indulge story-telling ambitions of their own as revenge for his earlier 'despotic' treatment. Ostensibly the work of a range of these competing narrators, *At Swim-Two-Birds* becomes a story about writing a story about story-telling; a collage of narratives and commentaries on the nature of fiction. This is a pattern comparable to Samuel Beckett's in the trilogy *(Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable,* 1950-2) which followed *Murphy.* Each author matches the 'autonomy of language' critics saw in *Finnegans Wake* by establishing a kind of autonomy of fiction—novels no longer principally reflecting a lived reality in plausible actions and characters, but concerned as much or more with examining their own medium and creative processes; the strategies through which the 'sham' of literary illusion is established and sustained.

The novel, in short, begins to look at itself rather than the world. This is a direction which can be seen as a logical extension of Woolf's interest in Lily Briscoe's painting, or Stephen's scrutiny of words and their pleasures in *Portrait.* Novels such as Beckett's and Flann O'Brien's, however, are obviously more explicit than their predecessors in dealing with questions of an and writing, and more directly self-referential in examining these issues in relation to their own practice. Following from modernism, yet entering in this way a new phase of imagination, such texts make appropriate the term 'postmodernist' now often applied to them and many others like them appearing since the war. The critic Brian McHale (1987) provides another comparable model for this transition from modernist to postmodernist literature. McHale sees the epistemologic concerns of modernism—discussed at several points above—giving way to a postmodernist writing defined by practices and interests which are principally oniologic: concerned, that is, not so much with how the mind encounters the world, but with its capacity to project imaginative domains—worlds—of its own. Thus in Joyce's *Portrait* Stephen Dedalus may be sensitive to the potential autonomy of language, but the epistemologic issue of its relation to 'the glowing sensible world' and its capacity to reflect it remains an important interest. On the other hand, Beckett's

2.
narrators—or Flann O'Brien's—are resigned to detachment from this world, and interested instead in the ontologic freedoms of language and imagination to create worlds of their own, separate from the real one.

Many critics see *Finnegans Wake* and other novels around the time of the Second World War marking a point of transition or terminus for modernism, and McHale's is one of several models of how modernist fiction relates to writing in recent decades. Elements of postmodernism are often seen as central to this period's thinking in general, though 'postmodern' is a term still very variously defined. Most commentators, however, would agree that the increasing examination of 'literary activities' within recent fiction can be seen as pan of a wider postmodern challenge to all theories, explanations or versions of life: pan of a widespread scepticism of any construction of reality. Such scepticism is appropriate to an era more than ever enthralled by its media; one in which language and image must be seen not as innocent means of representing a world, but as inevitably bound up with intentions to condition and control it.

## The novel in Britain since the Second World War

In 1940, George Orwell talked of 'the *impossibility* of any major literature until the world has shaken itself into its new shape' (Orwell, [1940] 1970, p. 578). Reviewing war fiction in 1941, Tom Harrisson indicates some of the problems for contemporary writers when he finds the reconstruction and rearrangement of life's events (literature) taken over, as it were, by the more powerful and less manageable pressures of gigantic war. It is difficult ... to work it into the familiar patterns' (Harrisson, 1941, pp. 435-6). The pressures of war—the bombing raids of the Blitz, for example, nightly reshaping the landscape of major cities—did often seem to 'take over' reality, outstripping anything fiction could conventionally contain. Yet such challenges to literature, such fracturings of the familiar, did encourage some writers to establish *new* shapes and patterns: rearrangements or reconstructions of fiction which make the war and immediately post-war years a distinct period in the history of the novel, and a more successful one than Orwell, Harrisson and most later commentators suggest.

James Hanley, for example, makes the war's fracturing unfamiliarity an aspect of style as well as subject in *No Directions* (1943). Confining the narrative within the consciousnesses of characters caught together in the Blitz, Hanley communicates unusually immediately the patternless disorientation the war forces upon them. P.H. Newby was to create a comparable immediacy in *The Retreat* (1953), presenting events during the evacuation of Dunkirk at the moment they impinge on the minds of his characters, before they can be fully understood or formulated in language. Newby's *Something to Answer For* (1968) later offered a similarly disorienting vision of the Suez conflict.

Henry Green's *Caught* (1943) also emphasizes the war's subversion of conventional language and pattern. Its hero admits of the Blitz that 'there's always something you can't describe' and his attempts to communicate his experience contrast sharply with actual recollection of it ([1943] 1978, pp. 179-80). Believing life 'oblique in its impact upon people' (Green, 1950. p. 506), Green is concerned throughout his fiction with the uncertainties of communicating or sharing any experience, often teasing readers with symbolic or other patterns of meaning eventually left inconclusive or incomplete. Set in a London fire-station before and during the Blitz, *Caught* exemplifies his location of such uncertainties among the tensions generated by a group of people 'caught' together in situations of work or leisure. *Living* (1929) concentrates on a similar group in a Midlands factory, also illustrating Green's interest in language, dialect and dialogue:

his late novels *Nothing* (1950) and *Doting* (1952) are almost entirely in direct speech. One of the most accomplished and unusual of twentieth-century novelists. Green's demonstration of the uncertainties of language and of fiction's shaping of experience has affinities with the French *nouveau roman* of the 1950s (see below): it also coincided productively with challenges to conven'.ional patterning around the Second World War, a lime when he published more than at any other stage of his career.

Showing its hero escaping the Blitz when he returns to the countryside of his childhood, *Caught* also indicates a direction followed by novelists who avoided presenting directly the violent action of the war. P.H. Newby defines this direction when he remarks that

> experience could be divided into two halves: childhood and adolescence on the one hand and war on the other. Unless one wandered off into fantasy or allegory these were the inescapable themes and of the two childhood probably proved the more attractive. (Newby, 1951, p. 8)

As Newby suggests, writers often turned to fantasy in the war years and those that followed, though more often as a means of analyzing the violence of contemporary history rather than attempting only to escape it. C.S. Lewis's trilogy *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Voyage to Venus* (1943) and *That Hideous Strength* (1945) transposes earthly politics, allegorically, into interplanetary settings. Tracing a dark struggle for power among a cast of grotesques, Mervyn Peake's trilogy *Titus Groan* (1946), *Gormenghast* (1950) and *Titus Alone* (1959) can likewise be seen as a nightmare projection of European history. Concerned with overcoming a malign power in the East, even J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy *Lord of the Rings* (1954-5) has been connected with contemporary conflict. Such connections are clearer in Wyndham Lewis's late fantasies *Monstre Gai* (1955) and *Malign Fiesta* (1955), which refer clearly enough to fascism. Hitler, and the invention of nuclear weapons.

As Newby indicates, childhood and adolescence proved a stronger interest among writers around the time of the war. though one that offered still less chance than fantasy to escape its gigantic pressures. Such possibilities are denied by George Orwell's *Coming up for Air* (1939): seeking to escape the shadow of impending war by returning to the countryside of his Edwardian childhood, Orwell's hero finds it has ceased to exist except as a happy memory. The idyll of childhood turns out to be equally precarious in Rosamond Lehmann's *The Ballad and the Source* (1945). which traces the consequences of adultery on subsequent generations of a family, several of whose members narrate this complexly structured novel. L.P. Hartley's *Eustace and Hilda* trilogy (1944-7) follows more straightforwardly the results in later life of events in an Edwardian childhood a theme concisely focused later, in Hanley's most popular novel. *The Go-Between* (1953). Its narrator retraces the emptiness of his life to disillusion he experiences with people he met on an idyllic holiday in 1900 and made into 'inheritors of the summer and of the coming glory of the twentieth century' ([1953 J 1983, p. 264).

Such reflections in *The Go-Between,* and the tactics of some of the novels mentioned above, show authors seeking within individual experience some context in which to consider a wider sense of loss in the twentieth century itself. In *The Heat of the Day,* Elizabeth Bowen's heroine likewise comes to feel that 'the fateful course of her fatalistic century seemed more and more her own', and that she and her lover are 'creatures of history' ([1949] 1983, pp. 134. 194). The narrators in each part of Joyce Cary's brilliant wartime trilogy *Herself Surprised* (1941), *To be a Pilgrim* (1942) and *The Horse's Mouth* (1944) also function as 'creatures of history'. though the connection of personal destiny with the fateful course of the century is of particular interest in *To Be a Pilgrim.* The pressing moral concerns which shape its narrator's search for a source of present

2.

evils nevertheless extend in various ways throughout the trilogy. They are emphasized by the highly individual styles and views—often of the same relationships and events—which appear in each of its parts, forcing readers to arbitrate between disparate yet self-consistent sets of moral priorities. Strong moral concerns of this kind feature not only throughout Cary's writing, but also in other fiction of this period, a result of a war often conceived as a struggle between good and the evil forces of fascism; or. at a deeper level, between light and dark, civilized and barbaric tendencies innate in the human condition. Such conflicts (further considered below) also appear in Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge* (1944). in C.P. Snow's *The Light and the Dark* (1947). and in Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* trilogy (1952-61). which traces the doom of decency and idealism across a broad wartime landscape.

The novel Waugh completed during the war, *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), helps elucidate a pattern apparent in much of the fiction discussed above. *Brideshead Revisited* reflects troubled wartime experience in its first and third parts, while its idyllic second section, looking back at youth and country-house life before the war. is entitled 'Et in Arcadia Ego' ('I too was in Paradise'). The phrase reappears graven on the skull the narrator keeps as an eccentric decoration, and can be seen to sum up ways that fear of death and disaster forced contemporary novelists to look through contemporary history towards myth—towards stories of Eden and paradise lost which are sometimes referred to directly, sometimes just suggested by an idyllic.
often rural past reconsidered not in order to escape from present darkness, but to try and discover its origins. Rosamond Lehmann's title. *The Ballad and the Source,* and her novel's investigation of 'what poisons from what far-back brews went on corroding' ([1944] 1982, p. 42) are likewise paradigmatic of this Edenic pattern in contemporary novels, one often confirmed by their unusual structures. It is only around the time of the war, or in writing about it, that Orwell, Waugh or Graham Greene (in *The End of the Affair* (1951), each of whose opening chapters seeks to 'turn back time' (p. 66), as the narrator puts it) much depart from the straightforward chronology which usually structures their fiction. Similar inclinations to 'turn back time' appear in *The Go-Between, The Ballad and the Source, To Be a Pilgrim* and *The Heat of the Day.* Edenic retrospection in these novels, and the structures that accentuate it, show fiction finding a particular pattern within which to contain the darkness and destruction which had fallen like a primal curse on contemporary life.

This distinctively wartime pattern also shapes the outstanding novel of the 1940s, Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* (1947). Typically, it opens after the outbreak of war, going back in later chapters to examine the dissolution of a 'creature of history' whose drunkenness and self-destruction symbolize the wider experience of his times. His tragedy and its brilliant Mexican background are refracted through a series of interior monologues and streams of consciousness: along with confinement of the narrative largely to a single day, these show a debt to James Joyce and the modernists unusual in writing at this time. They also create a 'whirling cerebral chaos' ([1947] 1983, p. 309) which disorients readers as thoroughly as the writing of Henry Green, James Hanley or P.H. Newby, forcefully communicating the crises of the world envisaged. These are further focused by reflections on 'the old legend of the Garden of Eden' (p. 137) and the hero's recollection of a notice which he transla:es to himself as 'You like this garden? Why is it yours? We evict those who destroy!'.

Lowry reproduces a final version of this warning on the last page of the novel, the use of atomic weapons at the end of the war further linking his protagonist's self-destructiveness with what he calls 'the ultimate fate of mankind' (Lowry, [1946] 1985, p. 66). Concern with the new nuclear threat appears in many other novels at this time and later. Aldous Huxley's *Ape and Essence* (1948), the popular novelist Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* (1957), John Bowen's *After the*

*Rain* (1958) and L.P. Hartley's *Facial Justice* (1960) all anticipate the likely fate of mankind after nuclear war. Along with the Allied armies' discovery of the concentration camps and the beginnings of the Cold War, such anxieties contributed to an exhaustion and disillusion in the late 1940s and early 1950s in some ways deeper than any that existed between 1939 and 1945—ensuring that, as P.H. Newby commented in 1951, 'the war seems, in spirit, to go on and on' (Newby, 1951, p. 14).

As a subject for fiction, it has certainly done so. The war accentuates stresses within the relationship Olivia Manning depicts throughout the adventure story she sets in Bucharest, later Athens, in *The Balkan Trilogy* (1960-5), moving to the arena of the desert war in Egypt in *The Levant Trilogy* (1977-80). Moral questioning which the war encouraged in contemporary fiction extended in the early sixties to novels examining the rise of Nazism from a German point of view. Set in Germany immediately after the First World War, Richard Hughes's *The Fox in the Attic* (1961) continues, in a more political context, an investigation of conflicts of innocence and experience begun in his celebrated first novel, *A High Wind in Jamaica* (1929). Gabriel Fielding's *The Birthday King* (1962) considers the problems and passions of the same period, along with the gradual connivances which led from them to the ultimate horror of the concentration camps. Even as the war has faded from immediate memory these horrors have continued to haunt later novels: Julian Mitchell's *The Undiscovered Country* (1968), for example; or D M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* (1981).

The shadow of war and something of its patterning of writing also figure in long novel sequences begun around the time of its occurrence: the fifteen volumes of Henry Williamson's *Chronicles of Ancient Sunlight* (1951-69); the twelve in Anthony Powell's *A Dance to the Music of Time* (1951-75); and C.P. Snow's eleven-volume *Strangers and Brothers* (1940-70). Rather like Joyce Cary's trilogy, each can be seen as an attempt to locate within individual destiny some of the wider developments of what L.P. Hartley calls in *The Go-Between* 'the most changeful half a century in history' ([1953] 1983, p. 269). Only *A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight,* however, much engages in the kind of Edenic retrospection discussed above, its early volumes presenting the nature and hopes of a new century during the Edwardian period, though also in *A Fox Under my Cloak* (1955), *The Golden Virgin* (1957) and *Love and the Loveless* (1958), which reflect Williamson's own experience in the trenches—the destruction of what peace and harmony this period possessed. Snow's *Strangers and Brothers* traces disillusion in a slightly later period: the aftermath of the First World War in *George Passant* (1940); the drift towards the Second in *The Light and the Dark* and *The Masters* (1951), and the development of the atom bomb in *The New Men* (1954), for example. Throughout. Snow is principally concerned with public life and office and their relations with private morality, an interest summed up by the phrase his title *Corridors of Power* (1964) added to the language. Public life and history remain further in the background in Powell's work, private relationships among the shallow, moneyed upper classes taking up much of the attention of *A Dance to the Music of Time.* In particular, the determination to claw his way up the social ladder shown by the sequence's main eccentric—and counterpointed against the fastidiousness of the narrator helps to delineate what the latter calls 'the general disintegration of society in its traditional form' (Powell. [1955] 1983, p. 128), Powell's chief interest throughout.

It was a central interest in many other novels in the 1950s: in William Plomer's *Museum Pieces* (1952). for example, another novel of Edenic retrospection whose characters lament the passing of a more genteel era. But there also appeared in the 1950s a new generation of writers apparently enthusiastic for the demise of social convention and gentility. By the mid-1950s, life in Britain had indeed shaken itself into a newish shape, the war's erosion of assumptions and traditions, the creation of the Welfare State just after it, and a wider spread of education and

2.
affluence contributing to what Malcolm Bradbury ca ls 'a quiet but still fundamental social revolution' (Bradbury, 1993, p. 275). This helped re-establish the kind of interest in class and social mobility exemplified in John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957) and John Wain's *Hurry on Down* (1953). Moving respectively up and down the social scale, the adventures of the heroes in each—like those of H.G. Wells's protagonists (see the first part of this unit)—carefully reveal the nature of the social strata they cross. Like Kingsley Amis's pseudo-rebel in *Lucky Jim* (1954), each nevertheless ends in a secure job and an affluent marriage, showing the tendency of their authors, supposedly 'Angry Young Men', towards reconciliation with a society they were sometimes thought at the time to seek to reform.

Shallow or covertly conservative in its values, their fiction was equally conventional in style, drawing on the example of Wells or the sceptical, colloquial narrative tone of William Cooper's influential *Scenes from Provincial Life* (1950). Cooper's work also encouraged a movement towards provincial settings which appears in the treatment of the Northern working class in, for example, Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) and Stan Barstow's *A Kind of Loving* (1960). Cooper spoke for several of these fifties novelists when suggesting—rather as some commentators had in the 1930s—that 'the Experimental Novel had got to be brushed out of the way' before contemporary fiction could properly tackle social issues (Rabinovitz, 1967, p. 6). C.P. Snow concurred in finding experiment and the example of modernism 'at best a cul-de-sac' (Snow, 1958, p. iii). Only Sillitoe gained anything from this example, following D.H. Lawrence's style of transcribing the inner thoughts of characters, creating a warmth and inwardness in the portrayal of working-class life which sets him apart from other writers at this time. Post-war exhaustion seems to have settled heavily on their work, allowing it to be reabsorbed, without much real challenge, by English fiction's perennial obsessions with class, society and manners—which too often exclude technical sophistication or depth of feeling or vision. No wonder so many comments about 'the death of the novel' were made at the time. On the evidence of the Angry Young Men, it is the mid-1950s, and not, as Orwell suggested, the 1940s, which look most bereft of worthwhile fiction.

The 1950s, however, also saw the beginning of several careers more promising than those of the Angry Young Men, though the novelists concerned were often, sometimes understandably, numbered among them at the time. The tough Northern setting of David Storey's first novel. *This Sporting Life* (1960) has affinities with the work of Alan Sillitoe or John Braine, but later fiction such as *Pasmore* (1972) confirms that Storey's concern with class and social change always reached towards deeper interests in identity and self—sometimes, as in *Radcliffe* (1963), in almost allegoric form. William Golding's fiction is likewise close to allegory or fable, abandoning the social issues of the 1950s in favour of deeper areas of moral and philosophic investigation. As Golding has often explained, his principal concerns were shaped earlier, arising from his dark experience of the Second World War. 'The end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart' as he calls it in *Lord of the Flies* ([1954] 1967, p. 223) is a main concern not only of this first novel, tracing the rapid descent to savagery of a group of 'civilized' children after a war. It also shapes his next, *The Inheritors* (1955), describing a kind of wider Fall for the entire human species, and much of the fiction that follows. It remains a central issue in his outstanding 'Sea Trilogy', *Rites of Passage* (1980), *Close Quarters* (1987) and *Fire Down Below* (1989), examined as always with exceptional vividness in describing the natural world and its forces, and a moral complexity which in this later fiction moves further from fable and the allegorical directness of his first novels.

Moral concerns reintroduced by the war remain apparent long afterwards not only in Golding's writing, but in the work of a number of other novelists whose careers began in the 1950s and continued successfully into the 1990s. Like Golding, Iris Murdoch finds 'two wars and the

experience of Hitler' continuing shadows upon the life of the later twentieth century (Murdoch. [1961 ] 1977, p. 23): their effects are apparent in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970), showing an ex-inmate of Belsen insouciantly destroying his acquaintances. Murdoch's tactics, however, are in some ways almost opposite to Golding's reliance on fable or allegory. The moral vision she begins to develop from her first novel. *Under the Net* (1954). depends upon recognition of the 'unutterably par.icular' ([1954] 1983. p. 82) in every situation and individual, and this is matched by a densely realistic style which resists the abstraction of allegory and of over-exigent moral judgement of any kind. In her own way, Muriel Spark is similarly critical—in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), for example—of figures who attempt to impose their will and judgement at the expense of the particular nature of other individuals. Comparable relations of good and evil, freedom and will, preoccupy Anthony Burgess throughout much of his work examined in *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) in a threatening future world, and a form close to fable, but traced, in his outstanding novel. *Earthly Powers* (1980), through a long, detailed examinaiion of twentieth-century history from before the First World War up to the time of writing.

This is also the area covered in Angus Wilson's Ang/o-Sawn *Attitudes* (1956), one of several novels whose realist style and investigation of contemporary social strata place this phase of his writing closer than any of the authors just mentioned to (he manner of the early 1950s and the Angry Young Men. Wilson's later fiction, however, shows a much greater technical range. While covering nearly the same historical period as *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*—though eventually showing the emergence of a new 1960s generation, habitues of pot and the pill—*No Laughing Matter* (1967) engages in a series of parodies and employs many of the resources of modernism in presenting inner consciousness. In this way. *No Laughing Matter* is a good example of a readiness to experiment or depart from convention which appeared alongside a renewed liberalism in ideas and 1960s life in general. This created new possibilities and interests for fiction which in various ways—considered below—can be seen to have lasted more or less until the present day. In a decade which saw at last the uncensored publication of D.H. Lawrence's *Chatterley's Lover* (1928). A particular liberation was in attitudes to sex: one result was a new questioning of gender roles, further encouraged by the appearance of an organized women's movement towards the end of the decade. New consciousness of women's outlook and social role helped open up new directions for women's writing, which has developed since the 1960s as strongly and even more diversely than in the modernist age.

The two periods are comparable, and sometimes directly connected. Sensitive registers for inner thought established by Virginia Woolf, May Sinclair and Dorothy Richardson, extended into the 1930s by Elizabeth Bowen, Rosamond Lehmann and Jean Rhys, were carried forward into the 1960s by Rhys's publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1965), and the subsequent reissue of her earlier novels. Techniques they offer have continued to develop in the work of recent women writers such as Anita Brookner and Eva Figes—author of an influential feminist tract, *Patriarchal Attitudes* (1970) as well as novels such as *Waking* (1981), close to Woolf's *The Waves* (1931) in structure and style. In novels such as *Providence* (1982), which alternates between an objective, third-person narrative voice and first-person transcription of the heroine's inner thought, Brookner's writing also shows some of the divided vision discussed earlier in relation to women's fiction in the modernist period. Such divisions are apparent elsewhere in recent fiction: in Margaret Drabble's *The Waterfall* (1969) or Fay Weldon's *Down Among the Women* (1971), for example, each of which alternates between first- and third-person forms. Both authors, however, are often closer to a social realist tradition than to modernism, Drabble declaring admiration for Arnold Bennett and an interest in questions of 'justice, guilt and innocence' (Drabble, (1965) 1981, p. 84): issues also of concern to Fay Weldon, though focused more particularly by a feminist perspective

2.

upon them. Splittings of identity figure in more experimental form in the writing of Emma Tennant, investigating in *The Bad Sister* (1978) what she calls a 'double female self' ([1978] 1979, p. 101), highlighted by the narrative's own movement between a realistic account of women's roles and their extrapolation into dimensions of dream and hallucination. Novels such as Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) and *Nights at the Circus* (1984) or Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) have recently used this .atter domain of fantasy not just to escape a male-dominated reality, but to satirize its assumptions, and to engage, independently of them, in a free re-examination and exploration of gender roles and identities.

Fantasy, realism, split narratives, divided selves and investigations of gender roles not only appear at various points throughout the fiction of Doris Lessing, but are combined in a single novel, *The Golden Notebook* (1962). This contains both a short novel and the notebooks kept by its central character, reflecting the problematic nature of experience as 'free woman', socialist, private being, and, above all, as a writer. *The Golden Notebook* has a strong realist component, fulfilling Lessing's wish to 'give the ideological "feel" of our mid-century' (Lessing, [1962] 1972, p. 11), but it has more than enough reflection on the nature of fiction and fragmented examples of various sorts of text to ensure that language and representation are central subjects. (See Unit 23, pp. 625-30, for a detailed study of Lessing.)

This experimentation and self-consciousness about writing, along with such diversity in envisaging the contemporary world, make *The Golden Notebook* paradigmatic of distinct though related strands of development in women's writing since the 1960s. As the work of Drabble and Weldon helps suggest—along with the example of recent novelists such as Maureen Duffy, Rose Tremain, Penelope Mortimer, Beryl Bainbridge, Penelope Lively or Penelope Fitzgerald—this writing is particularly equipped to 'give the ideological "feel"' of contemporary society from a specific, often sceptical and satiric point of view. Yet as Dorothy Richardson pointed out, as part of their rejection of a conventionally allotted place in society, women writers need to reshape conventional modes of narrative. Evident in several of the writers discussed above, this reshaping is the particular concern of recent novelists such as Marina Warner, Maggie Gee, Zoe Fairbairn or A.S. Byatt, whose *Possession* (1990) offers a collage of narrative strategies as diverse and mutually illuminating as Doris Lessing's in *The Golden Notebook.*

Exemplary of recent developments in women's writing, *The Golden Notebook* also shares in a wider movement towards experiment—a turn towards postmodernism—which occurred in the late 1950s and the 1960s. Writers at this lime can be seen to extend several aspects of the modernist experiment identified in the first part of this unit. Modernism's restructuring of the novel—its challenges to conventional chronology and concentration on single days of consciousness—extends into the more radical abbreviation practised by William Golding in *Pincher Martin* (1956), or the challenge to conventional order created by B.S. Johnson in his loose-leaf novcl-in-a-box *The Unfortunates* (1969). Lawrence Durrell also creates his own radical 'challenge to the serial form of the conventional novel' (Durrell, [1962] 1974) in *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-60), offering in each of the first three novels of the sequence a sharply differentiated perspective on the same set of events, before allowing time to flow forward again in the fourth.

Durrell is one of the new generation of novelists, ready to carry on the idiom of modernism, which had emerged by the end of the 1930s. The war and other factors, however, deferred much of their success and influence until the 1960s. Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds,* for example, was less well received when first published in 1939 than when reissued in 1960—the year after the last section of Samuel Beckett's trilogy *Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (1950-2) had been translated into English. Much bleaker than O'Brien's work, Beckett's narrative is equally self-reflexive: each carries forward towards the writing of the 1960s the 'autonomy' of language

and fiction discussed earlier in this unit; each in this way adding to the major area in which writing al the time can be seen, in the critic Brian McHale's terms, as a 'logical and historical *consequence'* of modernism (McHale, 1987. p. 5). Like *The Golden Notebook, The Alexandria Quartet* shows a thoroughly self-reflexive—postmodernist—concern with art, literature and its own means of representation. Aesthetic discussion proves a surprisingly powerful distraction from the love and sexual relations which otherwise preoccupy Durrell's community of artists, writers and spies. Their analyses and demonstrations of aesthetic ideas—including many affecting the text in which they figure—justify Durrell's opinion that his novel 'is only half secretly about art, the great subject of modem artists' (Durrell, 1963, p. 231).

It is a subject which has shaped novels since the 1960s often enough to make the term 'postmodernist' quite widely applicable to recent writing, though perhaps less so in Britain than elsewhere. B.S. Johnson records James Joyce, Beckett, and Flann O'Brien as influences, and appears in *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry* (1973) to discuss the progress of the story with its hero, and in *Albert Angelo* (1964) to assure readers that, as a story-teller, he is merely lying. In his Epilogue to *Lanark* (1981)—which appears long before the end of this chronologically fragmented novel—Alasdair Gray also discusses his narrative with its hero, and provides a list of experimental and other authors he has supposedly imitated or plagiarized. Under the influence of the French *nouveau roman* — which both foregrounds and undermines its own language and means of meaning—in novels such as *Thru* (1972) Christine Brooke-Rose likewise enacts and discusses relations between fiction and reality, word and world. Such issues are raised in other ways by John Berger in *G.* (1972), emphasizing concerns with political liberty while highlighting conventional constraints of narrative and encouraging his readers to free themselves from them.

Something similar is attempted by John Fowles in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). Set in Victorian times, Fowles's story follows the education of a hero who frees himself from that age's assumptions about social and gender roles. This movement is paralleled by Fowles's attempt to free his readers from their conventional expectations of fiction: by his demand that they choose between alternative endings to the novel, and his insistence throughout on the constructed, artificial quality of the story. In this way, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* once again illustrates parallel departures, in the 1960s, from conventions in lifestyle and in literature. Recreating much of the atmosphere of the Victorian novel, yet framing this within postmodernist investigation of writing and literary artifice, Fowles's work is also typical of the general condition of contemporary fiction David Lodge analyzes in his essay 'The Novelist at the Crossroads' (1971). Like Gerald Bullett in 1926 (see above). Lodge sees the main road of English fiction to be 'the realistic novel ... coming down through the Victorians and Edwardians' (p. 18). This is a main road which runs on throughout the twentieth century, widening from time to time, especially in the 1930s and early 1950s. But ever since the modernist period, and in the light of postmodernist and other experimental directions following from it, there have been what Lodge calls 'formidable discouragements to continuing serenely along the road of fictional realism' (p. 22).

Something of this crossroads of possibilities appears in the careers of most of the distinguished post-war novelists discussed above. William Golding and Muriel Spark retain conventional-enough interests in issues of morality, yet each employs unusual narrative tactics in examining them. For example, Spark uses repeated prolepses in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* to illustrate the consequences of her heroine's powerful influence on her pupils, while the self-referentiality of *The Comforters* (1957) or *The Driver's Sea:* (1970) shows her proximity to the *nouveau roman.* In *The Black Prince* (1973) and *The Sea, the Sea* (1978). Iris Murdoch goes beyond the realism of much of her fiction to engage in postmodernist scrutinies of language and narrative. Though these are thoroughgoing interests of *The Golden Notebook,* Doris Lessing also

2.

expresses admiration for 'the work of the great realists' of the nineteenth century, and follows their example more exclusively elsewhere in her writing (Lessing, 1957, p. 14). Anthony Burgess has expressed a similarly divided determination to 'welcome experiment in the novel', yet without discarding all that fiction has 'learned throughout the slow centuries of its development' (Burgess, 1971, p. 192). His own fiction alternates between realistic reflection of his colonial experience ir. the Malayan trilogy *The Long Day Wanes*
(1956-9) and the innovative tactics of novels such as *A Clockwork Orange,* whose verbal inventiveness reflects his admiration for James Joyce. If the postmodern idiom which has followed from the example of writers such as Joyce is less widely or clearly discernible in Britain than elsewhere, it is partly because, in the work of many of the most successful of recent novelists, it has been sustained alongside or digested within more traditional interests.

Once again reviewing the progress of fiction in 1991. Lodge remarks that it is possible to see 'the novelist still at the crossroads' (Lodge, 1991). As he suggests, dual allegiances he identified in the early 1970s continue to shape the work of writers emerging since, his own and that of his academic colleague Malcolm Bradbury included. Each draws on the conventional example of Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* as part of the comic campus background of much of their fiction. In Lodge's *Small World* (1984) or Bradbury's *Rates of Exchange* (1983), however, each also flirts with the experimental possibilities Bradbury has been equally ready to analyze at work in the contemporary novel. These also figure at various points in the careers of J.G. Ballard, moving between the realism of *Empire of the Sun* (1984) and the fantasy of *The Unlimited Dream Company* (1979); or of Brian Aldiss, alternating his regular science fiction with a *nouveau roman. Report on Probability A* (1968), and realistic novels such as *Ruins* (1987). Traditional tactics continue to appear juxtaposed or amalgamated with innovative ones even within single novels. Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984) combines realism with bestiary, pseudo-biography, a kind of dictionary, and various conversations with the reader. In *Hawksmoor* (1986), Peter Ackroyd alternates chapters set in contemporary and in eighteenth-century London, each written in the style of its period. Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* uses dystopian fantasy alongside—and as a commentary upon—a portrait of the artist as a young Glaswegian. Martin Amis outlines his own version of Lodge's crossroads in suggesting that his novels attempt to combine the 'staid satisfactions' of Jane Austen with the 'tricksy' manner of a principal author of the *nouveau roman*, Alain Robbe-Grillet (Amis, 1978, p. 18)—an intention apparently realized in novels such as *Other People* (1981) and *London Fields* (1989). Each provides an unusually constructed but sharp satire of unemployment, depression and the decay of inner cities under Tory government in the late twentieth century: a grim landscape also surveyed by other members of a new generation of novelists such as Ian McEwan and James Kelman.

Exemplifying a crossroads of innovative and conservative styles in late twentieth-century fiction. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* also points to origins of some of the alternatives to the main road of realism. The novel's opening shows its heroine looking longingly across the Channel at France: Fowles confirms this scene's figuration of some of his own interests when he acknowledges the influence of Alain Robbe-Grillet, Roland Barthes and other 'theoreticians of the *nouveau roman* ((1969] 1977, p. 348). Like Fowles, authors in recent decades have regularly looked abroad, quite often to France and the *nouveau roman,* for alternatives to a social realism still a dominant influence at home. This is not a new situation, of course. Many of the alternatives to the main road of Victorian and Edwardian fiction earlier in the twentieth century, in the modernist period, came from across the Channel, or across the Atlantic. They also come from across the Irish Sea, and this and other

alternatives to the metropolitan mainstream, within the British Isles, continue to be influential at the end of the century. Roddy Doyle, Benedict Kiely, and Bernard MacLaverty illustrate the continuing vitality and influence of twentieth-century Irish fiction. Within the United Kingdom—ir. recent decades, not always much united in culture or politics—Scottish fiction has lately been equally successful. Alongside Alasdair Gray's stylistically diverse portraitures of Glasgow life, in novels such as *A Disaffection* (1989) James Kelman enters desolate reaches of the mind as powerfully and comprehensively as Samuel Becket: to show the reflexes of urban deprivation deep within the self. Their work has encouraged and sometimes shaped the fiction of a promising new generation, including novelists such as Duncan McLean, Andrew Greig, Brian McCabe, Ron Butlin, A.L. Kennedy and Iain Banks.

Other aspects of innovation in recent fiction can be recognized as one of the many consequences of the British empire for late twentieth-century life and writing. Throughout the century empire has provided novelists such as Joseph Conrad, Somerset Maugham, E.M. Forster, Joyce Cary, Doris Lessing or Anthony Burgess with a variety of colourful contexts in which characters could be confronted with unfamiliar values or an exiled loneliness sharpening questions about their own identity. Moving beyond the domestic landscape of much of his 1930s writing (see above), Graham Greene has perhaps made especially good use of such contexts since the war. Novels such as *The Hear: of the Matter* (1948), *The Quiet American* (1955) or *The Honorary Consul* (1973) use conflict in distant parts of the world to focus and amplify protagonists' individual crises and moral dilemmas: their preservation of an improbable grace even in a fallen, soiled modern life adds to the appeal which has made Greene one of the most popular, as well as critically admired, of twentieth-century novelists.

The context of empire has also been used successfully by Paul Scott in *The Raj Quartet* (1966-75); Ruth Prawer Jhabvala in *Heat and Dust* (1975), and J.G. Farrell in *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973) and *The Singapore Grip* (1978). Recently, however, it has become clear that the empire's most significant literary legacy has not been only in providing a challenging set of contexts for fiction, but rather, as Anthony Burgess remarks, that 'British colonialism ... exported the English language, and a new kind of British novel has been the eventual flower of this transplanting' (Burgess, 1971, p. 165). This 'export' has led many writers of foreign origin to use English as their literary language: Timothy Mo, a resident of Hong Kong until the age of 10; Adam Zameenzad, brought up in Pakistan; the Indian Anita Desai, or the West Indian Caryl Phillips, a winner of the James Tait Black Prize in 1994. The Booker Prize—another annual indication of the best non-US fiction published in English—further confirms the strength of recent writing by authors with strong cultural roots outside Britain. The 1980s began with its award to Bombay-born Salman Rushdie for *Midnight's Children* (1981); the 1990s with the success of *The Famished Road* (1991) by the Nigerian novelist Ben Okri. Winners in the years between included the New Zealander Keri Hulme, the Australians Thomas Keneally and Peter Carey, and Kazuo Ishiguro, for *The Remains of the Day* (1989). While earlier novels such as *Ar. Artist of the Floating World* (1986) reflect Ishiguro's Japanese background, the precise anatomy of English social life in *The*

*Remains of the Day* illustrates the objectivity and irony which exile can add to authors' observations of a society not wholly their own.

Social concerns, however, keep *The Remains of the Day* relatively conventional in style. The new kind of writing Burgess sees as a legacy of empire is more conspicuous in the work of Salman Rushdie and Timothy Mo. The latter's comprehensive examination of the rise of Hong Kong in *An Insular Possession* (1986) intersperses fictional narrative with newspaper reports and contemporary journals, while in *Midnight's Children* and later work Rushdie—like Okri—brings into writing in English the powerful intermingling of fantasy and the quotidien practised by South American 'magic realists' such as Gabriel Garcia Márqucz and Mario Vargas Llosa. Rushdie also confirms an almost inevitable disposition towards experiment among many of the writers mentioned above when he describes the sensibility of 'migrants'—people 'in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur' and who 'must, of necessity, make a new imaginative relationship with the world' (Rushdie, [1985] 1991, pp. 124-5). As he suggests, no author aware of two or more cultures can remain unquestioningly content with the conventions of one of them. Contact with other cultures and literatures helps create for writers a sense of the character and limitations of their own, encouraging pursuit of alternatives, of possibilities for innovation, of self-conscious interrogations and fusions of different styles. Critics have sometimes seen the postmodernist tendencies in writing since the 1960s therefore giving way to an age better considered postcolonial—or have considered the latter always subsuming the former; self-reflexive and innovative fiction in the later twentieth century (perhaps throughout) best understood as the result of frictions, fusions and mutual critiques of cultures in which colonialism has been a main agent.

However it may finally be named or understood, the contemporary situation of the novel seems productively complex: conventions surviving or being subordinated by innovative alternatives; foreign or marginal influences competing with or contributing to the mainstream. The main road of realist tradition running through the century will no doubt remain a strong direction al its end. Yet the range of alternatives—modernist or postmodernist—has grown sufficiently diverse to make David Lodge's crossroads seem an inadequate metaphor. The novel has moved beyond the crossroads to a kind of spaghetti junction, a formation whose complexity and faintly foreign flavour make it a more appropriate image for an era in which long-serving main roads may remain discernible, but increasingly overlaid with new directions, recombining and diversifying he old. This should lead to a fruitful period for English literature around the millennium, though it will in another way mark its end, 'the English novel' remaining English only in terms of linguistic rather than in any firm sense of national identity.

## *BIBLIOGRAPHY*

### MODERNISM AND THE NOVEL [1900-39]

Aldington, R. (1984) *Death of a Hero,* Hogarth Press, London [first published 1929]. Bakhtin, M. (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays,* ed. M. Holquist, trans. M. Holquist and C. Emerson, University of Texas Press, Austin.

Banhes, R. (1974) *S/Z,* trans. R. Miller, Hill & Wang. New York. Beckett, S. (1973) *Murphy,* Picador, London [first published 1938).

Bennett, A. (1976) *Anna of the Five Towns,* Penguin. Harmondsworth [first published 1902]. Bergonzi, B. (1978) *Reading the Thirties,* Macmillan, London.

Bowen, E. (1983) *The House in Paris.* Penguin, Harmondsworth [first published 1935]. Budgen, F. (1934) *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses.* Grayson & Grayson. London. Bullett, G. (1926) *Modern English Fiction: A Personal View,* Herbert Jenkins, London.

Conrad, J. (1969) *Nostromo,* Penguin, Harmondsworth [first published 1904]. Conrad, J. (1995) *Heart of Darkness.* Penguin. Harmondsworth [first published 1902]. Ford, F.M. (1924) *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance.* Duckworth, London. Ford, F.M. (1977) *The Good Soldier,* Penguin, Harmondsworth [first published 1915]. Friedman. A. (1972) 'The Novel'. *The Twentieth Century Mind,* cd. C.B. Cox and A.E. Dyson, Oxford University Press, London.

Genette, G. (1986) *Narrative Discourse,* trans. J.E. Lewin, Blackwell, Oxford. Gibbon. L.G. (1978) *A Scots Quair (Sunset Song, Cloud Howe, Grey Granite),* Pan, London (first published 1933].

Gilbert, S.M. and Gubar, S. (eds) (1986) *The Female Imagination and the Modernist Aesthetic,* Gordon & Breach, London.

Greene, G. (1980) 'God and Literature and So Forth'. interview with Anthony Burgess, *The Observer,* 16 March.

Hynes, S. (1976) *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s,* Bodley Head, London.

Isherwood, C. (1982) *Lions and Shadows: An Education in the Twenties,* Methuen, London [first published 1938].

Isherwood, C. (1983) *Goodbye to Berlin.* Granada, London [first published 1939]. James, H. (1914) *Notes on Novelists: With Some Other Notes,* J.M. Dent, London. James, H. (1934) *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces,* ed. R.P. Blackmur, Charles Scribner's Sons, London.

James, H. (1973) *The Ambassadors.* Penguin, Harmondsworth [first published 1903]. James, W. (1890) *The Principles of Psychology.* 2 vols, Macmillan, London.

Joias, E. (1972) 'The Revolution of Language and James Joyce' in Samuel Beckett *et al.*. *Our Exagmination Round his Facrification for Incamination of Work in Progress.* Faber & Faber, London [first published 1929].

Joyce, J. (1971) *Finnegans Wake,* Faber & Faber, London [first published 1939]. Joyce. J. (1973) *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* Penguin. Harmondsworth [first published 1916].

Joyce, J. (1992) *Ulysses.* Penguin. Harmondsworth [first published 1922]. Kenner, H. (1978) *Joyce's Voices,* Faber & Faber, London.

Kristeva, J. (1991) *Strangers to Ourselves,* trans. S. Roudiez. Harvester Whcatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead.

Lawrence. D.H. (1955) *Selected Literary Criticism,* ed. A. Beal, Heinemann, London. Lawrence, D.H. (1962) *The Collected Letters of D.H. Lawrence,* ed. H.T. Moore. 2 vols, Heinemann, London.

Lawrence, D.H. (1971) *Women in Love.* Penguin, Harmondsworth [first published 1921]. Lukács, G. (1972) 'The Ideology of Modernism', in *20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader,* cd. D. Lodge, Longman. London [first published 1955]. McHale, B. (1987) *Postmodernist Fiction,* Methuen, London.

Miller, J.H. (1970) 'The Interpretation of *Lord Jim",* in *The Interpretation of Narrative: Theory and Practice,* ed. M.W Blocmfield, Harvard University Press, Cambridge. Mass.

Nietzsche, F. (1986) *Human, All too Human: A Book for Free Spirits,* trans. RJ. Hollingdale, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [first published 1878].

O'Bnen, F. (1977) *At Swim-Two-Birds.* Penguin, Harmondsworth [first published 1939]. Orwell, G. (1962) *Coming up for Air.* Penguin, Harmondsworth [first published 1939],

Orwell. G. (1970) 'Inside the Whale', in *The Collected Essays. Journalism and Letters of George Orwell,* cd. S. Orwell and I. Angus, vol. 1. Penguin. Harmondswonh (first published 1940].

Richardson. D. (1979) *Pilgrimage,* 4 vols, Virago. London (first published 1915-67], Wells. H.G. (1972) *Tono-Bungay,* Pan, London [first published 1909]. Woolf. V. (1966) *Collected Essays,* 4 vols. Hogarth. London.

Woolf. V. (1973) *To the Lighthouse*. Penguin, Harmondsworth (first published 1927]. Woolf. V. (1975) *Orlando.* Penguin. Harmondsworth (first published 1928]. Woolf. V. (1975) *A Room of One's Own,* Penguin. Harmondswonh [first published 1929]. Woolf, V. (1985) *A Writer's Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf,* ed. L. Woolf, Triad. London [first published 1953].

FURTHER READING

Listed below are a number of accessible or introductory studies and critical surveys covering the fiction of the first decades of the century, addressing either the whole period or sections of it.

Batchelor. J. (1982) *The Edwardian Novelists,* Duckworth, London. Bradbury, M. and McFarlane, J. (eds) (1976) *Modernism: 1890-1930.* Pelican, Harmondswonh. Bradbury, M. (1993) *The Modern British Novel,* Seeker & Warburg. London. Friedman, A. (1966) *The Turn of the Novel,* Oxford University Press. New York. Gindin. J. (1992) *British Fiction in the 1930s.* Macmillan, London.

Johnstone. R. (1982) *The Will to Believe: Novelists of the Nineteen-Thirties.* Oxford University Press. Oxford.

Scott. B.K. (ed.) (1990) *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology,* Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

Stevenson, R. (1993) *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction.* Harvester Wheatsheaf. Hemel Hempstead.

Stevenson, R. (1993) *A Reader's Guide to the Twentieth-Century Novel in Britain,* Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead.

Trotter. D. (1993) *The English Novel in History 1895-1920.* Routledge, London.

THE NOVEL IN BRITAIN SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Amis, M. (1978) 'The State of Fiction: A Symposium', *The New Review.* Summer. Bowen. Elizabeth (1983) *The Heat of The Day,* Penguin. Harmondsworth [first published 1949],

Bradbury. M. (1993) *The Modern British Novel,* Seeker & Warburg. London. Burgess. A. (1971) *The Novel Now A Student's Guide to Contemporary Fiction.* Faber. London.

Drabble, M. (1981) *The Millstone.* Penguin. Harmondsworth [first published 1965]. Durrell. L. (1963) interview in *Writers at Work: The 'Paris Review' Interviews,* ed. M. Cowley, second series, Seeker & Warburg, London.

Durrell. L. (1974) 'Prefatory Note' to *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-60), Faber, London, p. 9 [first published 1962].

Fowles. J. (1977) *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* Panther. London [first published 1969]. Golding. W. (1967) *Lord of the Flies.* Faber, London (first published 1954]. Green, H. (1950) 'A Novelist to his Readers—Communication without Speech', *The Listener,* 9 November.

Green, H. (1978) *Caught,* Hogarth Press, London [first published 1943]. Greene, G. (1976) *The End of the Affair,* Penguin, Harmondswonh [first published 1951]. Harrisson. T. (1941) 'War Books', *Horizon,* December.

Hartley, L.P. (1983) *The Go-Between,* Penguin. Harmondsworth [first published 1953). Lehmann. R. (1982) *The Ballad and the Source.* Virago. London (first published 1944].

Lessing, D. (1957) 'The Small Personal Voice' in *Declaration,* ed. T. Maschler, MacGibbon & Kee, London.

Lessing, D. (1972) *The Golden Notebook,* Granada, London [first published 1962]. Lodge, D. (1971) *The Novelist at the Crossroads and Other Essays on Fiction and Criticism,* Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

Lodge. D. (1991) The Novelist: Still at the Crossroads?', lecture to the British Council Cambridge Seminar. 'The Contemporary British Writer', Christ's College. Cambridge. July.

Lowry. M. (1985) Letter to Jonathan Cape, 2 January 1946, in *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry,* ed. H. Breit and M.B. Lowry, Penguin, Harmondswonh [first published 1946). Lowry, M. (1983) *Under the Volcano,* Penguin, Harmondsworth [first published 1947]. McHale, B. (1987) *Postmodernist Fiction,* Methuen, London.

Murdoch, I. (1983) *Under the Net,* Granada, London [first published 1954]. Murdoch, I. (1977) 'Against Dryness' in *The Novel Today,* ed. M. Bradbury, Fontana, Glasgow [first published 1961).

Newby, P.H. (1951) *The Novel 1945-1950,* Longmans. Green, London.

Orwell. G. (1970) 'Inside the Whale', in TAe *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell,* ed. S. Orwell and I. Angus, vol. 1, Penguin. Harmondsworth (first published 1940].

Powell. A. (1983) *The Acceptance World,* Fontana. London [first published 1955]. Rabinovitz. R.

(1967) *The Reaction against Experiment in the English Novel, 1950-1960,* Columbia University Press. New York.

Rushdie, S. (1991) 'The Location of Brazil' in *imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991,* Granada Books, London [first published 1985]. Snow, C.P. (1958) 'Challenge to the Intellect', *Times Literary Supplement,* 15 August. Tennant, E. (1979) *The Bad Sister*, Picador, London [first published 1978].

## FURTHER READING

Listed below are a number of studies which analyze fiction since the Second World War. or consider sections of this period.

Allen. W. (1964) *Tradition and Dream: The English and American Novel from the Twenties to Our Time,* Dent. London.

Bergonzi, B. (1979) *The Situation of the Novel,* Macmillan, London. Bradbury, M. (1993) *The Modern British Novel,* Seeker & Warburg, London. Bradbury, M. and Palmer, D. (eds) (1979) *The Contemporary English Novel,* Arnold, London.

Burgess. A. (1971) *The Novel Now: A Student's Guide to Contemporary Fiction,* Faber, London.

Burgess. A. (1984) *Ninety-nine Novels: The Best in English since 1939,* Allison & Busby. London.

Gasiorck, A. (1995) *Post-War British Fiction: Realism and After,* Arnold, London. Gindin, J. (1962) *Postwar British Fiction: New Accents and Attitudes,* University of California Press, Berkeley.

Karl, F.R. (1972) *A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel,* Thames & Hudson, London.

Lee, A. (1990) *Realism and Power: Postmodern British Fiction.* Routledge, London. Rabinovitz. R. (1967) *The Reaction Against Experiment in the English Novel, 1950-1960,* Columbia University Press. New York.

Stevenson. R. (1986) *The British Novel since the Thirties,* Batsford, London. Stevenson, R. (1993) *A Reader's Guide to the Twentieth-Century Novel in Britain,* Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead.