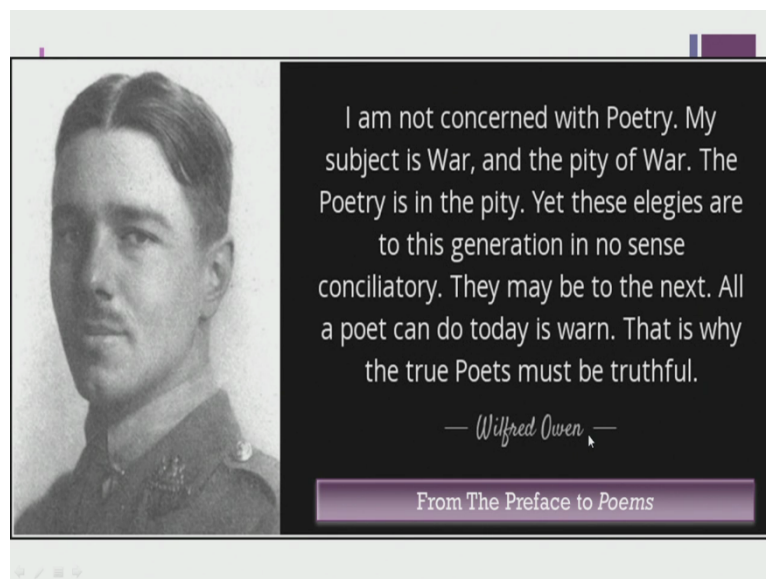


**History of English Language and Literature**  
**Professor Merin Simi Raj**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology Madras**  
**Lecture No 23**  
**Modernist Poetry**

Hello everyone, I am happy to welcome you to yet another session of the NPTEL course, the History of English language and literature. Today's lecture is based on Modernist poetry, it is also important to state right in the outset that we shall not be able to look and take a very detailed look at individual poets and individual works. But since Modernist in itself is a very complex and a complicated phase, we shall be taking a look at Modernist poetry in general trying to locate the major aspects of it and also identifying the major influences that shapes perhaps the most representative poets of the period.

Having given a very detailed introduction to the modernist period and also having shown the various forces which were at work when the modernist literary period had begun, we try to look at the general features of poetry and also at the outset we shall also be giving this a (1:10) that it is impossible perhaps to give a very linear discussion of Modernist poetry. In that sense we shall be talking about some of the shifting tendencies in the way one overlaps with the other, but nevertheless a holistic and comprehensive attempt is being made here in the form of a short lecture.

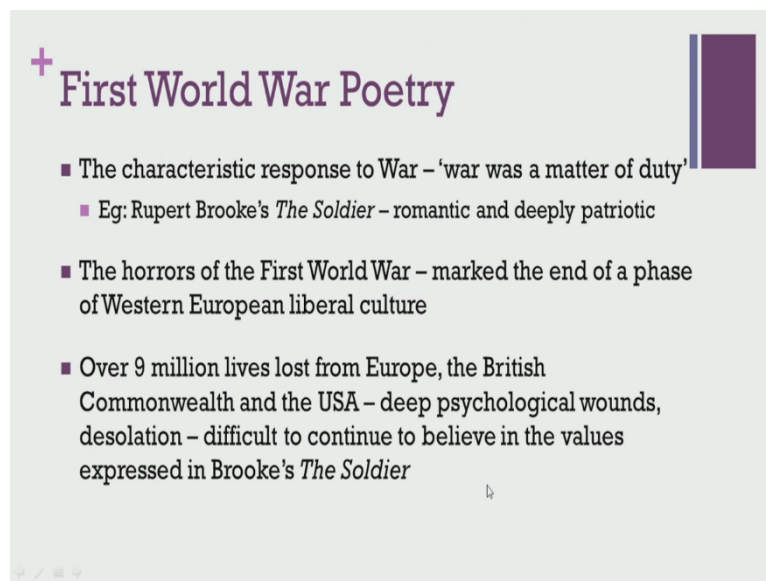
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We have already taken a look at the (1:31) and the Georgian period and also had underlined that the world had played very important role in shaping the modernist

sensibilities. Let us take a look at one of the statements made by a major poet of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Wilfred Owen who is also classified as one of the World's poets. He wrote like this in his preface to poems, "I am not concerned with poetry. My subject is war and the pity of War. The poetry is in the pity. Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense conciliatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true poets must be truthful."

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The slide features a purple plus sign icon in the top left corner. The title "First World War Poetry" is written in a purple serif font. To the right of the title is a vertical purple bar. The main content consists of three bullet points, each preceded by a small purple square. The text is in a black sans-serif font. At the bottom left of the slide, there are small navigation icons.

- The characteristic response to War – 'war was a matter of duty'
  - Eg: Rupert Brooke's *The Soldier* – romantic and deeply patriotic
- The horrors of the First World War – marked the end of a phase of Western European liberal culture
- Over 9 million lives lost from Europe, the British Commonwealth and the USA – deep psychological wounds, desolation – difficult to continue to believe in the values expressed in Brooke's *The Soldier*

Here we get every different sense of poetry, a kind of poetry that is not about poetry itself but more about the socio political sensibilities of the period. So now we begin to look at what actually characterise the 1<sup>st</sup> world war poetry. The characteristic response to war until the world war was that war was a matter of duty, we do find that is explicated in the Rupert Brooke's *The soldier* which we had taken a look in the previous section. Brooke's attitude to war was very conventional and romantic one and he also had very deep patriotic feelings in place.

But the horrors of the First World War and whatever that followed, it in fact had marked the end of phase of European liberal culture. This also had led to a massive loss of life which also had shocked the entire humanity in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. We go by what historians say, over 9 million lives were lost from Europe and the British Commonwealth and the USA. And this also had inflicted deep psychological wounds and a sense of desolation across the world and we also find that it was getting more and more difficult not just for English people but for anyone who was involved with this horrors of war. To continue to believe in the values expressed in the Brook's poem "The soldier".

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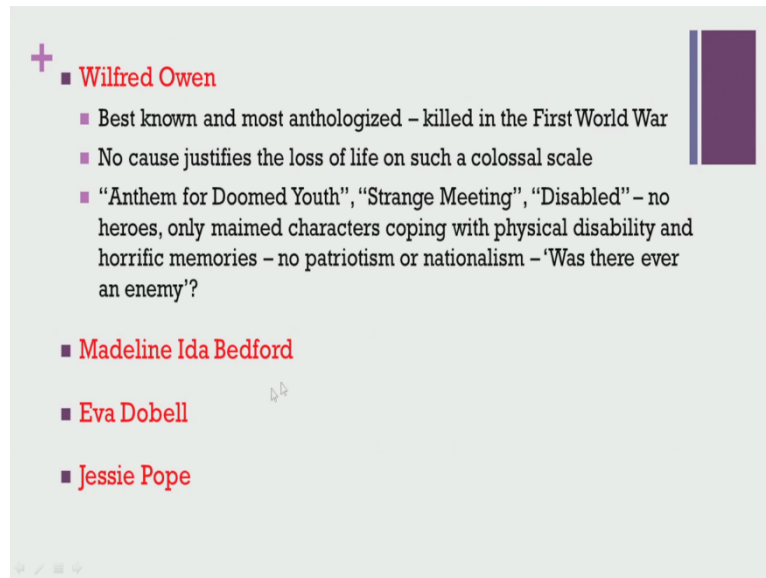
## + The War Poets

- **Siegfried Sassoon**
  - Criticized war – “Counter Attack”, “They” - useless suffering, rejection of notions of glory, heroism, patriotism
- **Edmund Blunden**
  - Undertones of War (memoir) – war as something that destroys nature, anguished with the memories of his dead comrades
  - “1916 seen from 1921”
- **Edward Thomas**
- **Isaac Rosenberg** – casualty of the War

So the war poets and their writings could be seen as a reaction to this conventional understanding of and the realisation that war is no longer a solution to any of the problems that the modern world was facing. One of the important poets of this period is Siegfried Sassoon criticised the war vehemently in response “counter attack” and “they” we find them talking about useless suffering rejection of notions of glory and heroism and also a moving away from the glorification of patriotism. Edmund Blunden made undertones of war talks about war as something that destroys nature and we also find him being very anguished with the memories of his dead comrades.

In the war poetry, the dead soldiers are not seen amiably as heroes but they are seen as losers and victims contradictory to the popular patriotic standing. In one of his poems in 1916 seen from 1921, he exactly depicts all the horrors that were inflicted upon not just the soldiers but also on their extended families and also the society in general. Edward Thomas and Isaac Rosenberg also wrote about various casualties of the war.

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- **Wilfred Owen**
  - Best known and most anthologized – killed in the First World War
  - No cause justifies the loss of life on such a colossal scale
  - “Anthem for Doomed Youth”, “Strange Meeting”, “Disabled” – no heroes, only maimed characters coping with physical disability and horrific memories – no patriotism or nationalism – ‘Was there ever an enemy’?
- **Madeline Ida Bedford**
- **Eva Dobell**
- **Jessie Pope**


And it was not just that they were all writing about the casualties of war, the war poets themselves had in fact died in these words. Wilfred Owen perhaps the most known and the most anthologised of these war poets was killed in the First World War. It was considered as an eye-opener and many others to continue to expose their vainglory associated with the over glorification of war. In fact in Owen’s poems and writings in general we find that he believed the no cause justifies the loss of life on such a colossal scale and many did agree with him.

And some of his works “Anthem for doomed youth” and “Strange meeting” and “Disabled” in these poems there are no heroes, in fact, he only talks about maimed characters coping with physical disability and also horrific memories. In fact there is no room for patriotism and or nationalism when one is affected with this sort of tragedy in life and this also leads him to question, “Was there ever an enemy?” There will also these women poets Medeline Ida Bedford, Eva Dobell and Jessie Pope who wrote about the horrors and also about the vainglories of war.

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**+** Poetry

- **A E Housman**
- *A Shropshire Lad* (1896) – 63 poems – a volume most of the soldiers in the trenches in the First World War carried with them
  - Love and loss, the English countryside and seasons, the passing of time and death, reflecting a lost love
- A volume that has never been out of print – unusual for poetry collection
- “Because I liked you better / Than suits a man to say, / It irked you, and I promised / To throw the thought away”



The image shows the cover of the book 'A Shropshire Lad' by A. E. Housman. The cover is a light beige color with a central wood engraving of a soldier on horseback, carrying a pack. The title 'A SHROPSHIRE LAD' is printed at the top, and the author's name 'A. E. HOUSMAN' is at the bottom. Below the author's name, it says 'WITH WOOD ENGRAVINGS BY AGNES MILLER PARKER'.

In terms of poetry, A E Houseman’s *A Shropshire Lad* published in 1896 deserves a very special mention, it was a compilation of 63 poems. In fact it was said that this was the volume that most of the soldiers in the trenches in the First World War carried with them because the poem largely spoke about love and loss, the English countryside and seasons, the passing of time and death and also about the reflection about the lost love and these were the things that the soldiers perhaps love to read and talk more about when they were leading such a tragic life within the trenches.

A E Houseman *A Shropshire Lad* also holds a very unusual distinction for a collection of poetry, it is a volume that has never been out of print. And some of his poems are immensely popular even today and one goes like this “because I liked you better than suits a man to say/It irked you and I promised to throw the thought away”.

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The slide features a central text box with the poem's title and verses. To the right is a portrait of A. E. Housman, and below it is a blue box with his name and the poem's title. The slide has a purple header bar and a purple vertical bar on the right side.

**Terence, This is Stupid Stuff**

'TERENCE, this is stupid stuff:  
You eat your victuals fast enough;  
There can't be much amiss, 'tis clear,  
  
To see the rate you drink your beer.  
But oh, good Lord, the verse you make,  
It gives a chap the belly-ache.  
The cow, the old cow, she is dead;  
It sleeps well, the horned head:  
We poor lads, 'tis our turn now  
To hear such tunes as killed the cow.  
Pretty friendship 'tis to rhyme  
Your friends to death before their time  
  
Moping melancholy mad:  
Come, pipe a tune to dance to, lad.'

A. E. Housman (1859-1936)  
Terence, This is Stupid Stuff

A famous poem of his which continues to be anthologised and widely read is “Terence, This is stupid stuff” it goes like this “Terence this is stupid stuff, you eat your victuals fast enough, there cannot be much amiss tis clear. To see the rate you drink your beer. But ohh good Lord the verse you make, it gives a chap the belly-ache. The cow, the old cow, and she is dead, it sleeps well the horned head. We poor lads, tis our turn now to hear such tunes as killed the cow. Pretty friendship tis to rhyme your friends to death before their time. Moping melancholy mad. Come, pipe a tune to dance to lad”. So he did write it very humorous verse which also enlightens the mood perhaps during the war-timed phrase.

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The slide is titled '+ Imagism' and lists several key characteristics of the movement. It also mentions the poets associated with Imagism and the role of Pound in launching H.D.'s career. The slide has a purple header bar and a purple vertical bar on the right side.

**+ Imagism**

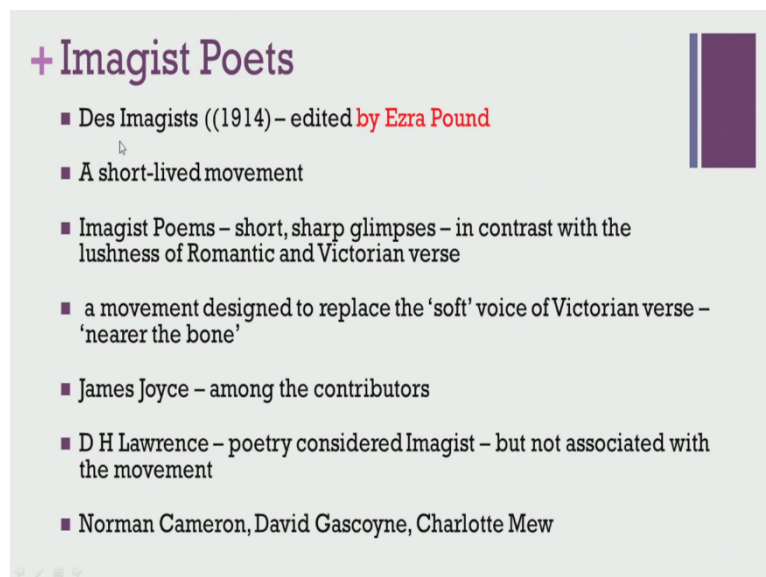
- Emphasized 'Form' above everything else
- The poet removed from the poem – objectivity
- No extra ornamentation – no abstractions – words to convey accurate and precise meanings
- 'hard and clear' – **Imagist Manifesto** – clarity of expression through the use of precise visual images
- Capture emotions and events in 'an instant of time'
- Ezra Pound, T E Hulme, E A Robinson, Ford Madox Ford, Amy Lowell, Hilda Doolittle (HD), F S Flint – formulated the aesthetic
- Pound – claimed to have invented Imagism to launch HD's career in 1912

Let us have a look at some of the very important movements of this period which influence poetry art and the general cultural temperament in England. Imagism was one of the foremost movement of this a kind, in fact this was a movement in art which emphasised a form about everything else. In fact, it also called for the removal of the poet from the poem and also heightens sense of objectivity, the poet who was following a imagist mode he or she did not focus on any extra ornamentation on abstractions, in fact the words were to convey accurate and precise meanings and no more or no less.

There was this Imagist manifesto which also celebrated hard and clear picture of art and literature and they also privilege the clarity of expression through us of precise visual images more than anything else. And also some of them believe that the intention was to capture emotions and events in an instant of time. Some of the Practitioners of this Imagist School of poetry were Ezra Pound, T E Hulme, E A Robinson, Ford Maddox Ford, Amy Lowell and Hilda Doolittle also known as HD and F S Flint, and they were the one who formulated the aesthetic of this predominantly art movement.

There is also a literary rumor that Pound is said to have invented Imagism to launch Hilda Doolittle's career in 1912. Shortly take a look at how Pound was influential in shaping and reshaping the career, moods of most of the writers of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century.

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### + Imagist Poets

- Des Imagists ((1914) – edited by Ezra Pound
- A short-lived movement
- Imagist Poems – short, sharp glimpses – in contrast with the lushness of Romantic and Victorian verse
- a movement designed to replace the 'soft' voice of Victorian verse – 'nearer the bone'
- James Joyce – among the contributors
- D H Lawrence – poetry considered Imagist – but not associated with the movement
- Norman Cameron, David Gascoyne, Charlotte Mew

Pound himself edited volume Des Imagists in 1940 and though this was this did have a lot of followers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was considered as a very short-lived movement and this moment was primarily designed in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century to replace the soft voice of Victorian

verse and also “nearer the bone”. And among the chief contributors and the chief practitioners of imagist poetry includes James Joyce and DH Lawrence. But however there are people like DH Lawrence whose poetry could be considered imagist but were not really associated with the movement.

So in that sense we do find a lot of ways in which the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of modernism begins on a very complex node because it becomes very difficult to identify particular poets with particular kinds of movements. There are lots of overlaps and also radical (())(9:35) that characterised their work as well as their general lifestyle. And the other imagist poets were Norman Cameron, David Gascoyne and Charlotte Mew, And Charlotte Mew in fact continues to be mentioned as one of the significant women poets of the early modernist period.

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## + Futurism

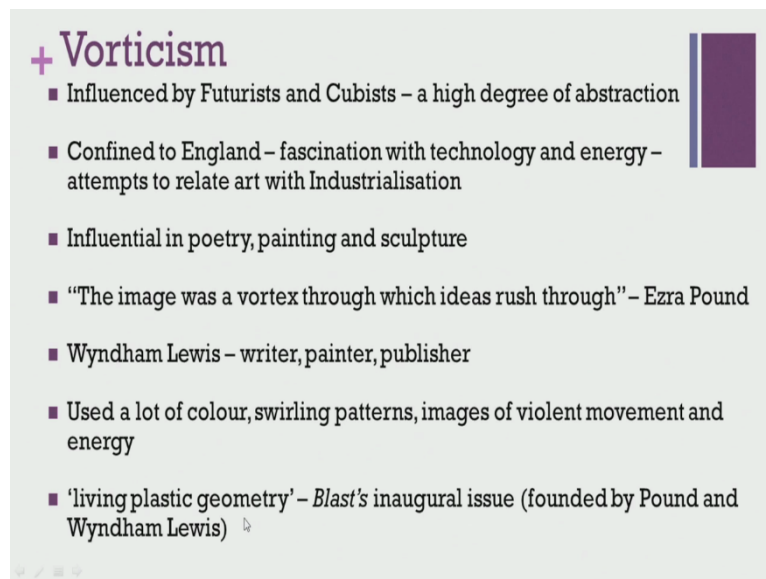
- *Futurist Manifesto* (1909/1912) – F.T. Marinetti
- Emphasis on vibrant energy – ‘the beauty of speed’ – sought a more dynamic language and expression
- Poetry characterised by extreme energy, violent and vivid imagery, descriptions of movement and action
- Celebration of technology, glorification of war and violence
- Automobile, speed, movement – integral elements

Futurism was another movement which laid the foundation of modernist poetry. The Futurist manifesto was published in 1909 and with a different edition in 1912 by F.T. Marinetti. This sort of move was towards an emphasis on vibrant energy and it also celebrates the beauty of speed keeping in tune with the fast industrialised space in which England and Europe in general were moving ahead. And this sort of poetry written with a Futurist manifesto, it sort more dynamic language and expression. And we also find accordingly the poetry getting characterised by extreme energy, violent and vivid imagery and also descriptions of movement and action.



We also find these sorts of poetry and poets celebrating technology and also glorifying war and violence quite in contrast to the war poets of the early period. And we also find that integral elements and the integral motives in these works are automobile, speed and movement, which also was a way in which the modernist period was getting manifested itself.

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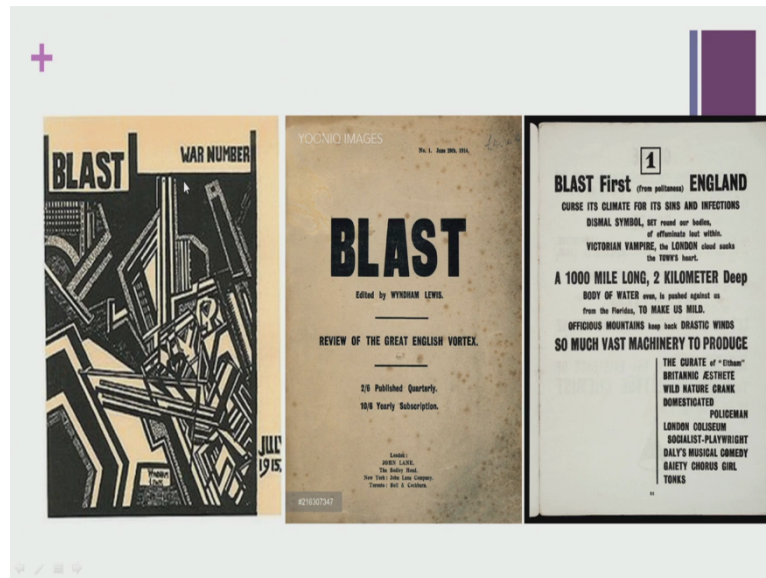
### + Vorticism

- Influenced by Futurists and Cubists – a high degree of abstraction
- Confined to England – fascination with technology and energy – attempts to relate art with Industrialisation
- Influential in poetry, painting and sculpture
- “The image was a vortex through which ideas rush through” – Ezra Pound
- Wyndham Lewis – writer, painter, publisher
- Used a lot of colour, swirling patterns, images of violent movement and energy
- ‘living plastic geometry’ – *Blast's* inaugural issue (founded by Pound and Wyndham Lewis)

Vorticism was another movement in art and literature, it was in fact a movement which involved high degree of abstraction influenced by both the Futurist and the Cubists. It was mostly confined to England and these set of poets also show the fascination with technology, energy and also attempts were being made to relate art with industrialisation. This movement was particularly influential in poetry, painting and sculpture as Ezra Pound put it, “The image was a vortex through which ideas rush through”. So the visual element which was getting all the more important in the modernist phase was coming through most of these movements and most of the works of those times.

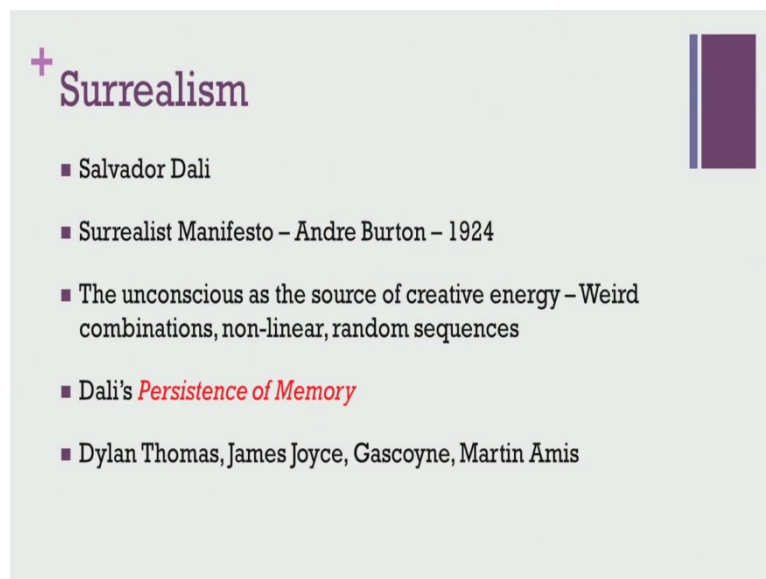
Wyndham Lewis who was a writer, painter and publisher of the modernist time is perhaps the most important practitioner of Vorticism. He used a lot of colour, swirling patterns and images of violent movement and energy in his works. In fact, journals of those times *Blast* which was jointly published by Pound and Wyndham Lewis, it did celebrate a vorticist movement to a great extent in its inaugural issue, *Blast* did speak about the living plastic geometry which was also an extension of the movement of Vorticism.

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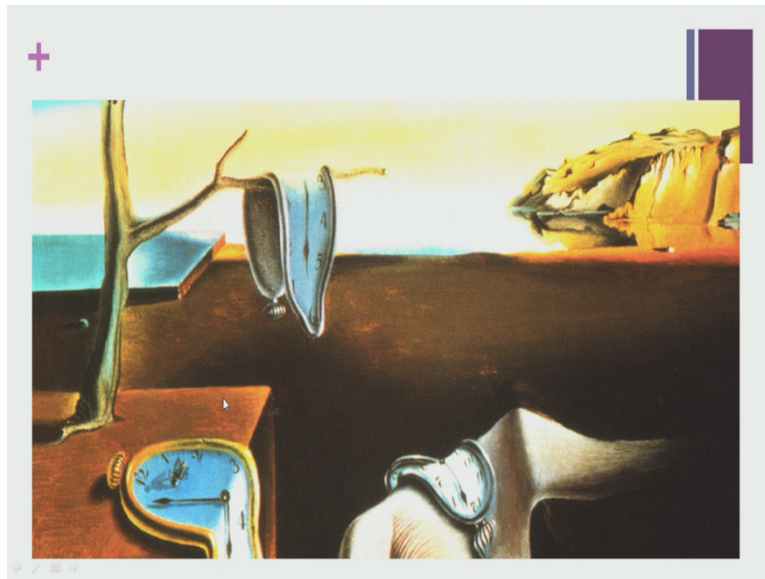
Blast though it ran only for about few issues, it was immensely popular, it continues to be referred as a modernists manifesto and also as a matter of historical interest.

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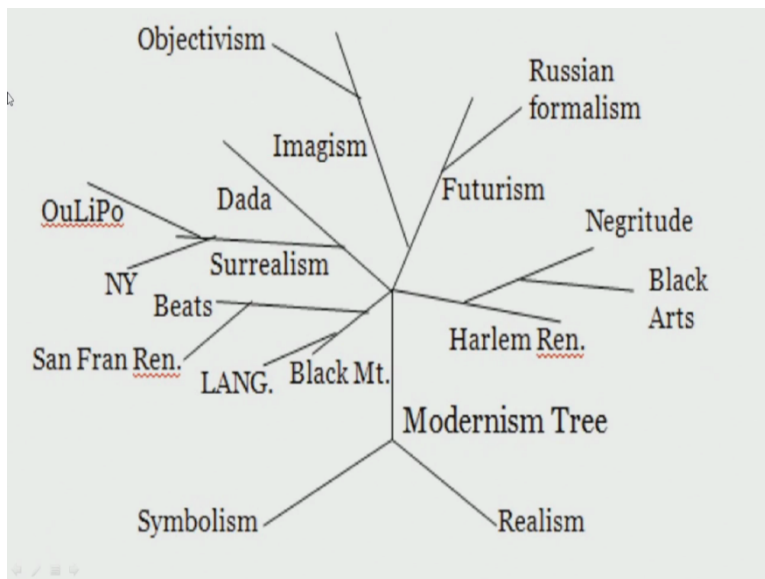
Surrealism was another movement which was characterised mostly in the visual arts than in poetry and Salvador Dali was perhaps the most important practitioner and proponent of Surrealist art. Surrealist manifesto published by Ander Burton in 1924 had laid the foundation to this. And in this movement we find the use of unconscious as the source of creative energy and the also the art is also use a weird combinations, non-linear and random sequences as we can see in this very famous painting by Dali titled “The persistence of memory”.

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Here we find it, there is a lot of use of abstractions and also weird kind of combination which are being used. The other literary practitioners includes Dylan Thomas, James Joyce, Gascoyne and Martin Amis.

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So altogether we can find that a lot of movements and lot of forces by coming to whether to produce what is generally and loosely known as modernist poetry, so taking a look at a particular kinds of writings and particular writers, we shall begin with Ezra Pound who lived from 1885 till 1972.

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**+ Ezra Pound (1885-1972)**

- Born in USA, moved to Britain and Europe
- Reputed as one of the most difficult poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Nurtured several writers, at the forefront of Vorticism, Imagism
  - Helped shape the work and career of Eliot, Joyce, Frost and Hemingway
- Supported Mussolini during the II World War – got arrested in 1945 by American forces – declared insane after trial – released only in 1958 – returned to Italy where he spent the rest of his life
  - “a cat that walks by himself, tenaciously unhousebroken and very unsafe for children” (Times Magazine, 1933, about Pound)



He was born in USA and move to Britain and Europe at a later point and his reputation chiefly rest in a very difficult verse that he produced during his life time and he is reputed accordingly as one of the most difficult poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He has also said to have launched the writing careers of several modernist writers and in fact he was at the forefront of Vorticism and imagism and it is very difficult to say whether his poetry belonged to one kind or the other. He was very instrumental in shaping the writing and also the career of Eliot, Joyce, Frost and Hemingway. And as mentioned earlier, he is also said to have launched Hilda Doolittle’s poetic career.

But he did have a controversial side to his life, he supported Mussolini during the Second World War and accordingly got arrested in 1945 by the American forces, he was however declared insane after trial but he was released only by 1958 which also mended he had to spend considerable amount of time in in prison and he then returned to Italy where he spent the rest of his life. In fact, his reputation had declined considerably during this period due to its political choices and then the trial and the present period that he had undergone. And in Times Magazine in which came out in 1933, there was this particular comment about Pound that he was a cat that walks by himself, tenaciously unhouse broken and very unsafe for children”.

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Some of his important works include Ripostes and Cathay which was a translation, the set of SES Make It New and also a long series of poems which is also considered as one of his best works The Cantos.

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### + Pound's Modernism

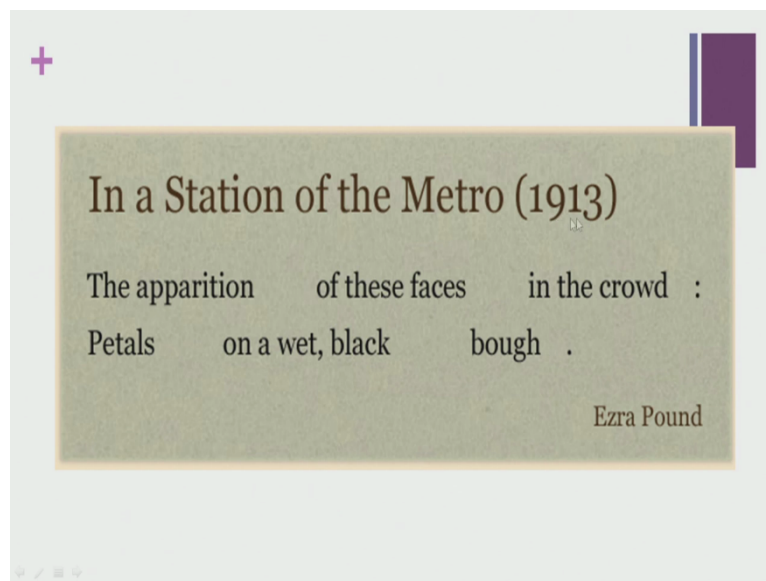
- Translations and adaptations – Old English to some Chinese poets – makes his poetry inaccessible
  - Assimilated the ancients and the non-European cultures in English poetry
- “objectionably modern and objectionably antiquarian” – Eliot
- Attention to form – advocate of spare imagery and free verse
  - “In a Station of the Metro”
- *Cantos* – 120 sections – a multicultural epic
  - Chinese characters, quotations in European languages, references from African history – never bothered to explicate his references – unconnected sections, fragmentary imagery - Autobiographical elements? - Fascination for Economics – banking is a key theme
  - “The best of Pound’s writing – and it is in the Cantos – will last as long as there is any literature”: Hemingway

When we talk about Pound's modernism, it would be impossible not to talk about the translations and the adaptations that he had carried out. In fact, his interest was very weird, his range was from the old English writers till some of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese poets and this also made his poetry extremely inaccessible because most of the material that he accessed was very esoteric and also not very known to everyone. And we find him assimilating the

ancients and also the non-European cultures in English poetry. This was interesting thing but it also made it very difficult to access his poetry without a reference source.

Eliot makes this comment about Pound “he was objectionably modern and objectionably antiquarian” so it is very difficult to locate and identify the source of his poetic genius. Pound was also a portrait who had given adequate attention to form in fact, he was an advocate of spare imagery and free verse as we can see in poem “In a station of the Metro”.

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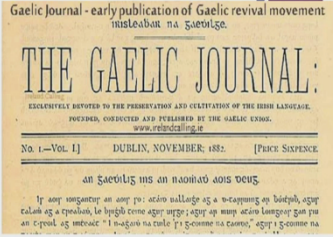
In fact, this poem written in 1913 it only has about 2 dozen words, “The apparition of these faces in the crowd Petals on a wet black bough”, the entire poem is comprised of these 14 words. But in Cantos we find a very prolific poet at work, it had about 120 sections and it could be considered as a multicultural epic. It included almost everything under the sun such as Chinese characters, quotations in European languages, references from African history, but however Pound never bothered to explicate his references and this also led to him composing a lot of unconnected sections and fragmented imagery. It nevertheless made the reception of the work all the more difficult, it continues to be one of the most difficult text to access.

Since this work Cantos also has a lot of autobiographical elements adapt into it, and keeping in tune with the time he also had a major fascination for economics and we find banking occupying a key schematic interest in his writings. In fact, Hemingway had opined about Pound’s work “The best of pound’s writing and it is in the Cantos will last as long as there is any literature”. So that was a kind of impact that Pound had left in the modernist period.

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## Irish Literary Revival

- An upsurge in interest in Celtic myths and legends, Ireland's Gaelic heritage – 'Celtic Twilight' – but more of a Renaissance than a decline
  - Centred in Dublin and London
- *The Celtic Twilight* – Yeats – 1893
- Similar to the sentimental Scottish Kailyard School
- More concerned with national identity and cultural individuality
- Struggle for Irish nationhood



Irish Literary Society  
Cumann Éireannach na liteardhachta  
founded 1892


Now we take a look at the event known as the Irish literary revival, it was nothing but an upsurge in interest in Celtic myths and legends, particularly in Ireland's Gaelic heritage. This was also nicknamed as Celtic Twilight based on a poem by Yeats published in 1893. But however, this was seen more as a Renaissance than as a decline and this movement was centred in Dublin and also in London. This was quite similar to the sentimental Scottish Kailyard School and however on the contrary, the interest and the concern was more with national identity and cultural individuality.

This a period was struggle for Irish nationhood, it also saw an increase in heightened sense of Irish national consciousness. Some of the important publications of this time include the Gaelic journal, which was exclusively devoted to the preservation and cultivation of the Irish language. And we also find the Irish literary Society being founded in 1892, even some of the major important writers being a part of this.

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## William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

- Stretches across the late Victorian period early modernism
  - more marked changes than that of Hardy
  - Not as restlessly experimental as Eliot – not as content as Hardy
- Ireland's greatest modern poet
  - First poetry – 1885; Nobel Prize – 1923
- Influenced by the French symbolists
- Ambivalent towards Ireland's struggle
  - Maud Gonne – viewed Yeats as being insufficiently radical in his nationalism
- **Easter 1916** – transformation of Ireland and Maud Gonne
- **Meditations in the Times of Civil War** – mocks himself for his indifference



William Butler Yeats was perhaps the most important and the most noted figure of the Irish literary revival, he lived from 1865 till 1939. His work in fact stretches across the late Victorian period towards the early modernism. In that sense we can find in his work more marked changes than that could be in Thomas Hardy's and he was a quite different from many of his contemporaries. I mean in his work we do find that he was not as restlessly experimental as Eliot nor was he as content as Hardy. However, in terms of his poetic genius he is considered as the greatest modern poet of Ireland. His 1<sup>st</sup> poetry was published in 1885 and he also went on to win the Nobel Prize in 1923.

He was immensely influenced by the French symbolists, but however his ambivalent attitude towards Ireland's struggle had made him little unpopular for a while. In fact, Maud Gonne on whom he also had some romantic interest for a while, she viewed Yeats as being insufficiently radical in his nationalism. It was in his poem *Easter 1916* that we find a certain kind of a transformation that Yeats underwent and in fact he talks about the transformation of Ireland as well as the changes that have come about in his view of relationship with Maud Gonne.

And this poem *Easter 1916* was immensely popular and immensely important in the social history of Ireland as well as because it did talk about the Easter rising that happened in 1916. It was also a very important part of the Irish struggle for independence. And in his poem "*Meditation in the Times of Civil War*" Yeats mocks himself or his indifference because he



was quite aware of the way of his own limitations and also about the way in which he could not commit himself radically to the cause of Irish nationalism.

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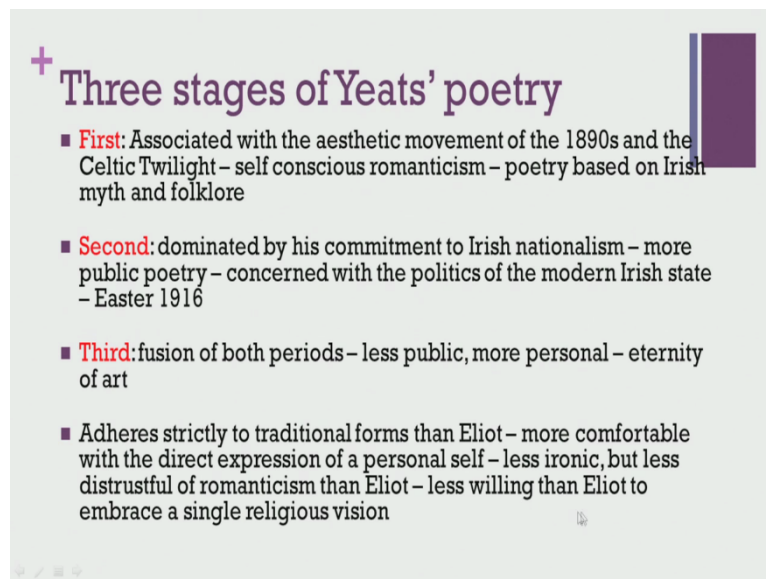
### + Yeats' poetic experiments

- Mysticism; Automatic writing – writing in a trance
- Developing a feminine persona
  - Two voiced poetry – feminine mask and masculine poetry
  - Exploring his own fragmented personality – mind is not just male or female but a bit of both – influence of Freudian theory (Solomon to Sheba and Leda the Swan)
- Love poems – deeply erotic and violent – **Leda and the Swan**
- Anxiety about body, mortality, death – **Sailing to Byzantium**
- **The Second Coming** – the vision of civilization and destruction – Christianity's peak and destruction after 2000 years
- **Lapis Lazuli, The Tower** – two byzantium poems

Yeats' poetry experiments could be considered very interesting, he was interested in mysticism and also practised something that he called as automatic writing that is writing in a trance. And he also tried to develop a feminine persona through his writing because he tried to compose a Two voiced poetry, which included both feminine and masculine elements. And he believed that he wanted to explore his own fragmented personality through his poetry because according to him mind was not just male or female but a bit of both. And in he in this argument we can also find a very profound influence of Freuds theory.

And his love poems such as “Leda and the Swan” they considered deeply erotic and violent, they also considered quite objectionable by some of the writers of those times. And in his works such as “Sailing to Byzantium” we also find an anxiety about body, mortality and death, which also exemplified many of the struggles and many of the fears that the modernist mine had. His work “The second coming” is perhaps the best known poem and the best conceived a poem of Yeats. In this define him articulating the vision of civilisation and destruction and also he also talks about Christianity's peak and destruction after 2000 years. And he also composed 2 poems known as the Byzantium poems, “Lapis lazuli” and “The tower”.

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### + Three stages of Yeats' poetry


- **First:** Associated with the aesthetic movement of the 1890s and the Celtic Twilight – self-conscious romanticism – poetry based on Irish myth and folklore
- **Second:** dominated by his commitment to Irish nationalism – more public poetry – concerned with the politics of the modern Irish state – Easter 1916
- **Third:** fusion of both periods – less public, more personal – eternity of art
- Adheres strictly to traditional forms than Eliot – more comfortable with the direct expression of a personal self – less ironic, but less distrustful of romanticism than Eliot – less willing than Eliot to embrace a single religious vision

And throughout his work we can identify 3 different stages in his poetry. The 1<sup>st</sup> was when he was associated with the aesthetic movement of the 1890s and the Celtic Twilight and the 2<sup>nd</sup> one was dominated by his commitment to Irish nationalism and the 3<sup>rd</sup> one was the fusion of both periods. While the 1<sup>st</sup> phase was mostly private, the 2<sup>nd</sup> was mostly public and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> period we find him becoming less public and more personal. And he also began to celebrate the eternity of art in his works.

And in fact when we talk about his poetry and compare it with Eliot the other important (()) (21:51) of this period. We can find that Yeats adheres strictly to the traditional forms than Eliot, in fact he is more comfortable with direct expression of personal self. In his work we notice a less ironic tone but also he is less distrustful of romanticism than Eliot. In fact, overall we also find that Yeats is less willing than Eliot to embrace a single religious vision. Overall in the modernist period characterised by the various complex poets that work, we also find these writers trying to compose radically different poetry from one another.

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## Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965)

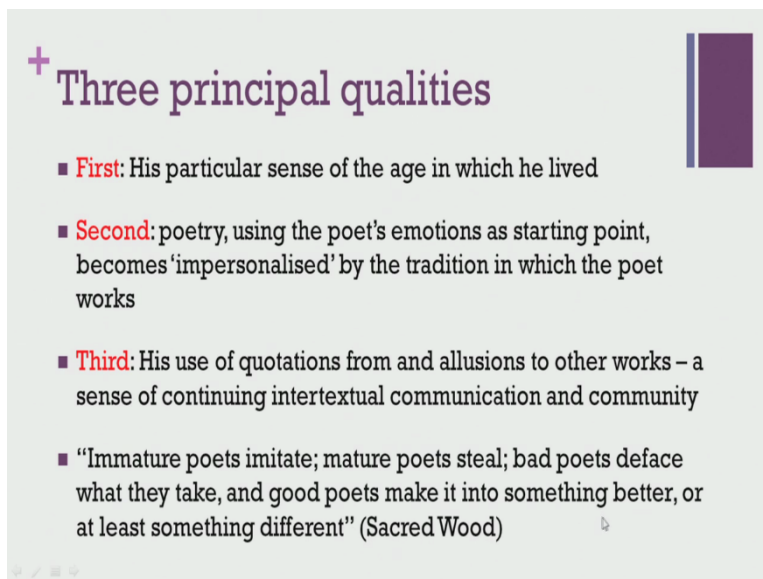


- Moved from USA to England in 1914
  - Renounced his American citizenship
- Nobel Prize in literature - 1948
- Very little direct reference to War
  - *The Waste Land* – a land laid waste by war – culturally and spiritually
  - “these fragments I have shored against my ruins”
- Radical break from the past – HAD to change the poetic idiom which was already exhausted
- Practiced free verse in poetry

Thomas Stearns Eliot who lived from 1888 till 1965 could be considered as the representative poet of the modernist period. He was one writer who moved from USA to England in 1914 and he also renounced his American citizenship by the time he turned 39 years old. He also went on to win Nobel Prize in literature in 1948. Though he lived during the war-torn period, his poetry has got very little direct reference to war, but however he talks about a wasteland in his poem with the same title and he talks about a land which is laid waste by war, though they are no direct references to the First World War. In fact, he believed that war had led to a spiritual and cultural ruin of the entire humanity.

And in this poem in one of the sections he talks about “these fragments I have shored against my ruins”. So the specific reference is not there but however one does find that the war had attacked not just the physical spaces but also the general spirituality and also the cultural artefacts of those times. In his poetry we do find a radical break from the past, but critics are also of the opinion that he had to be radically different because one had to change the poetic idiom which was already exhausted. And he also practised a free verse in poetry and not subscribe to any rigidities.

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## + Three principal qualities

- **First:** His particular sense of the age in which he lived
- **Second:** poetry, using the poet's emotions as starting point, becomes 'impersonalised' by the tradition in which the poet works
- **Third:** His use of quotations from and allusions to other works – a sense of continuing intertextual communication and community
- “Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different” (Sacred Wood)

And he also had his work on 3 principal qualities; the 1<sup>st</sup> one was his particular sense of the age in which he live, the 2<sup>nd</sup> one was that in his poetry he use the poet's emotions as a starting point. And in that sense he also developed this theory of impersonality, in that sense he also developed the theory of impersonality through his poetry which also begin the basis of most of his works. The 3<sup>rd</sup> was that he used quotations from an allusions to other works and leading to a sense of continuing inter-textual communication and community in all his works. Quoting a hymn from his critical work Sacred Wood “Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take and good poets make it into something better or at least something different”.

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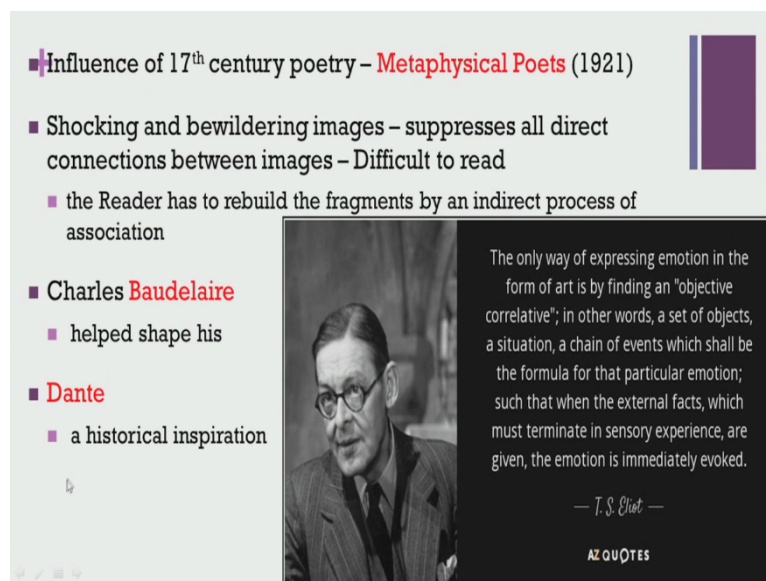
## +

- Continues the tradition of dramatic monologue
- Exploits the past for use in the present
- Considers himself English – European influences
- Stream of consciousness – **The love Song of Alfred J Prufrock**
- Later poetry – search for spiritual peace
  - **The Journey of the Magi**
- Charges of Anti-Semitism
  - “Eliot's conservative religious and political convictions began to seem less congenial to the post-war world, other readers reacted with suspicion to his assertions of authority, obvious in **Four Quartets** and implicit in the earlier poetry. The result, fueled by intermittent discovery of Eliot's occasional anti-Semitic rhetoric, has been a progressive downward revision of his once towering reputation”

We find that in Eliot's poetry he continues the tradition of dramatic monologue and I also exploits the past for the use in the present. He also considered himself thoroughly English though he was immensely influenced by lot of European traditions. He also practised the stream of consciousness technique in his work "The Love Song of Alfred J Prufrock". And his later poetry we also find him searching for spiritual peace for instance "The journey of the Magi" is a supreme example of this.

But however his reputation was also clouded by a lot of charges of anti-Semitism and as one of the historian note "Eliot's conservative religious and political convictions began to seem less congenial to the post-war world, other readers reacted with suspicion to his assertions of authority, obvious in Four Quartets and implicit in the earlier poetry. The result, fuelled by intermittent discovery of Eliot's occasional anti-Semitic rhetoric, has been a progressive downward revision of his once towering reputation".

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- Influence of 17<sup>th</sup> century poetry - **Metaphysical Poets** (1921)
- Shocking and bewildering images - suppresses all direct connections between images - Difficult to read
  - the Reader has to rebuild the fragments by an indirect process of association
- **Charles Baudelaire**
  - helped shape his
- **Dante**
  - a historical inspiration

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula for that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.

— T. S. Eliot —

AZ QUOTES

But nevertheless, his influence on literary history continues to be quite immense, he was also the modernist writer who revived the interest, the critical interest in Metaphysical poetry through work 1921. He also had included a lot of shocking and bewildering images in his poetry, in fact he believed that the reader had to rebuild the fragments by an indirect process of association which he identified as objective or correlative.

To give his own definition, "The only way of expressing emotions in the form of art is by finding an objective qualitative. In other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula for that particular emotion such that when the external facts which

must terminate in a sensory experience are given, the emotion is immediately evoke”. And a few others also were quite instrumental in shaping his poetic career, Charles Baudelaire and also Dante who was a historical inspiration for most of his poetry.

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Eliot also had composed a few plays such as Murder in the capital, The cocktail party and The confidential Clerk. He also had a very interesting collection of old Possum's book of practical Cats and his most important poetic work continues to be The Wasteland which was published in 4 different parts. And also he wrote a series of essays and poetries and criticism and published it under the title The Sacred Wood, this continues to be one of the foundational works in terms of modern and literary criticism. He was also the assistant editor of the Journal The Egoist, which was published in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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## + Eliot's letter to Wyndham Lewis

- It seems to me a very good portrait, and one by which I am quite willing that posterity should know me, if it takes any interest in me at all . . . And I certainly have no desire, now, that my portrait should be painted by any painter whose portrait of me would be accepted by the Royal Academy (21 April 1938)



A portrait of T.S. Eliot by Wyndham Lewis, showing him seated in a chair, wearing a dark suit and tie, with his hands clasped in his lap. The background is a light, abstract composition.

In this (27:09) we also draw attention to Eliot's letter to Wyndham Lewis who was also a leading poet and painter of those times. In fact, Wyndham Lewis is the one who made the portrait of Eliot which was also quite acceptable to Eliot himself and also to posterity. In Eliot's letter he wrote "It seems to be a very good portrait and one by which I am quite willing that posterity should know me, if it takes any interest in me at all... And I certainly have no desire now that my portrait should be painted by any painter whose portrait of me would be accepted by the Royal Academy". And we also find him moving away from the (27:46) art which was set by the Royal Academy and going ahead to (27:51) an artist who was not really appreciated by the Royal Academy.

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## + Popular modernist poets

- Robert Bridges and John Masefield
- Best selling poets of the 1920s
  - Poet laureates
  - Bridges: 1913-1930
  - Masefield: 1930-1967


Two black and white portraits of poets. The top one is Robert Bridges, a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a suit and tie. The bottom one is John Masefield, a man with a mustache, wearing a suit and tie.

The other popular modernist poets of those times were Robert Bridges and John Masefield and they were also incidentally the bestselling poets of the 1920s. And both these poets; Bridges and Masefield, they were both poet laureates, Bridges was poet laureate from 1913 till 1930 and Masefield from 1930 to 1967, this perhaps is also the most opportunistic time to take a look at the other remaining poet laureates in England.

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**+ Poet Laureates**

- Cecil Day Lewis: 1968-72
- Sir John Betjeman: 1972-84
- Ted Hughes: 1984-98
- Andrew Motion: 1999-2009
- Carol Ann Duffy: 2009 -



Cecil Day Lewis became the poet laureate in 68 and continued till 72, Sir John Betjeman from 72 till 84, Ted Hughes from 1984 to 98 and Andrea Motion from 1999 till 2009. The present poet Laureate of England is Carol Ann Duffy who was appointed to the post into 2009.

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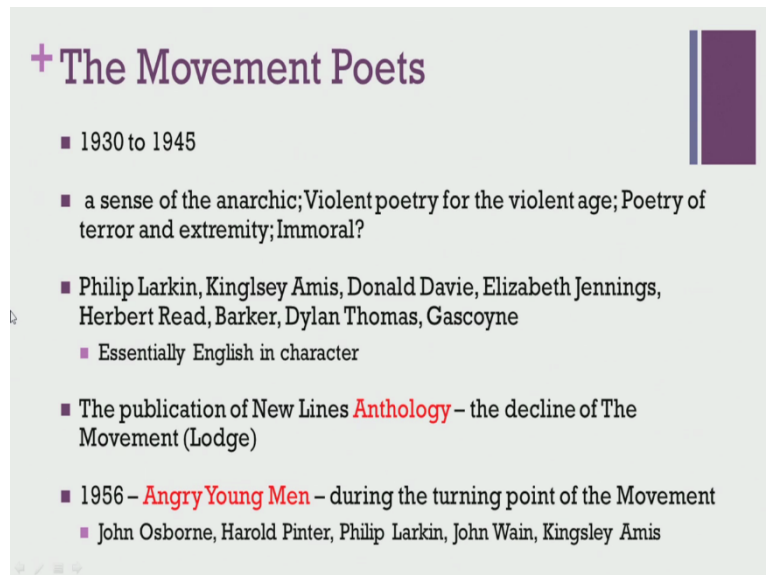
**+ Thirties**

- Hugh Syke Davies
- Hugh MacDiarmid
- W H Auden
- Stephen Spender
- John Bentjeman
- Kathleen Raine
- Welsh Dylan Thomas
- George Barker
- David Gascoyne



The important poets of 1930s modernism include Hugh Syke Davies, Hugh MacDiarmid, WH Auden, Stephen Spender and John Bentjeman, Kathleen Raine, Welsh Dylan Thomas, George Barker were also important figures of those time. And David Gascoyne's name we find in multiple contexts because he was writing from the early modernist time onwards.

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**+ The Movement Poets**

- 1930 to 1945
  - a sense of the anarchic; Violent poetry for the violent age; Poetry of terror and extremity; Immoral?
  - Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, Donald Davie, Elizabeth Jennings, Herbert Read, Barker, Dylan Thomas, Gascoyne
    - Essentially English in character
  - The publication of New Lines **Anthology** – the decline of The Movement (Lodge)
- 1956 – **Angry Young Men** – during the turning point of the Movement
  - John Osborne, Harold Pinter, Philip Larkin, John Wain, Kingsley Amis

There was also a set of poets known as movement poets who wrote from 1930 to 1945, they celebrate a sense of the anarchic and also believed that a violent kind of poetry was needed for this violent age. And they also popularized a poetry of terror and extremity and some also considered their work as being highly immoral. Some of the important poets whose names are associated with the movement poets include Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, Donald Davie, Elizabeth Jennings, Herbert Read, Barker, Dylan Thomas and Gascoyne. And most of these writers were primarily English in character, we do not find any writers of other origins being associated with this movement.

And it is generally said that the decline of the movement poets began with the publication of the New Lines Anthology and this also led to many of the others dissociating with this movement. In fact it was through this decline that a new movement was launched in 1956 named the “Angry Young Men” and this became more popular during the turning point of the movement and writers mostly dramatist associated with the Angry young men movement includes John Osborne, Harold Pinter, Philip Larkin, John Wain and Kingsley Amis.

So by now we have noticed that there is a wide range of writers and wide range of influences that we talk about when we talk about modernist poetry. It is very difficult to identify a

singular trance in which one can bring in a group of people or one can begin to talk about modernist poetry in a linear phase. It is a multifaceted, it is a complex and it is also quite inherently complicated. So with this understanding we try to wrap up today's discussion on modernist poetry, thank you for listening and we look forward to seeing you in the next session.