Fin de siècle e primo Novecento

- Crescente urbanizzazione
- Crescente accesso all'istruzione (1870: Education Act) > nascita di una cultura di massa
- Polarizzazione radicale della cultura: forte crisi dei valori vittoriani VS recupero del nazionalismo e del patriottismo; intellettualismo anti-borghese VS letteratura di largo consumo
- Iniziale sgretolamento dell'Impero Britannico
- La *Irish question*
- La ***New Woman***: icona della cultura storico-letteraria di fine secolo e fenomeno di "protofemminismo"

Estetismo

- Profonda insoddisfazione verso il credo materialista e utilitarista
- Reazione alla cultura e alla letteratura di massa
- Culto della bellezza e dell'oggetto artistico VS assolutezza dei valori morali e religiosi tradizionali, ma anche…
- …estetismo come "nuova religione" in un mondo in veloce trasformazione, sempre più relativista e senza certezze
- Concezione dell'arte e della letteratura come oggetti estetici autonomi, svincolati da finalità sociali o didascaliche – formula "art for art's sake" mutuata dal francese T. Gautier
- **Walter Pater** (1839 – 1894)
- **Oscar Wilde** (1856 – 1900)

- **Il romanzo**: internazionalizzazione del romanzo inglese > concetto di "Englishness" sempre più sfaccettato e problematizzato – es. **Henry James**, **Joseph Conrad**, **Rudyard Kipling**, **James Joyce**
- **La poesia**: poesia polifonica che esprime, come il romanzo, una visione della realtà più fluida e variegata

  → predominano tematiche legate alla città

  → poesia "impressionista"

  → influenza del simbolismo francese

  → rifiuto della *poetic diction*

  → frequente uso del verso libero
- **Il teatro**: **G. B. Shaw e O. Wilde** > mantengono la struttura formale del teatro ottocentesco (melodramma, *society drama*) ma ne sovvertono lo spirito.
  W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot
  Nb. nessuna rivoluzione paragonabile a poesia e romanzo

Il Modernismo

"Modernism is essentially post-Darwinian: it is a search to explain mankind's place in the modern world, where religion, social stability and ethics are called into question."

(Carter, McRae, *The Routledge History of Literature in English*)

Il Modernismo

- Modernismo VS Modernità – crisi di rappresentazione, destabilizzazione delle forme di significazione
- Urgenza di rompere con le tradizionali categorie rappresentative, di superare la referenzialità del linguaggio e di perseguire un rinnovamento estetico – formula "make it new" di Ezra Pound
- Periodo pre-bellico: maggior rottura, fase più distruttiva e aggressiva nei confronti della tradizione – Avanguardie
- **Vorticismo** (1913 – 1915 ca.) – unico movimento di avanguardia novecentesca peculiarmente inglese
- Distinzione convenzionale tra "alto" e "basso" Modernismo > sia cronologica che estetica

- Cosmopolitismo e metropoli

  → provenienza e formazione internazionale di alcuni scrittori; apertura internazionale; esigenza di confrontarsi con tutta la letteratura occidentale

  → metropoli come spazio centrifugo e frammentario, un flusso disarticolato e soggettivo > impressioni, images (Pound), epifanie (Joyce), momenti (V. Woolf)

- Recupero della mitologia, attenzione verso l'arcaico, il primitivo, gli aspetti pre-classici dell'antichità.
  → J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (1890; 1907 - 1915)

- Generi privilegiati del Modernismo: romanzo, poesia e cinema > grande sperimentazione linguistica e formale

La poesia modernista

- "dry, hard, classical verse", T.E. Hulme– **Imagismo**:

"An Image is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (E. Pound)

→ Massima concentrazione espressiva / densità di pensiero

→ Libertà formale e metrica

→ Esattezza dell'immagine > linguaggio icastico

→ *Des Imagistes*: prima antologia dell'Imagismo, 1914

In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough. (E. Pound)

Alba

As cool as the pale wet leaves
Of lily-of-the-valley
She lay beside me in the dawn. (E. Pound)

Autumn

A touch of cold in the Autumn night –
I walked abroad,
And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge
Like a red-faced farmer.
I did not stop to speak, but nodded,
And round about were the wistful stars
With white faces like town children. (T. E. Hulme)

- Vertice della poesia modernista **T.S. Eliot** (1888-1965)

- Modernisti degli anni Trenta > reazione verso l'astrazione formale e l'autoreferenzialità dell' “alto Modernismo”, tendenza a un nuovo realismo di stampo socialista, impegno ideologico e civile.

Il romanzo modernista

- Interesse verso la coscienza individuale e i suoi meccanismi
- Interesse verso la percezione individuale e soggettiva del tempo
- Molteplicità di punti di vista e punti di vista relativi, parziali, fluttuanti, idiosincratici VS narratore onnisciente, VS visione stabile, unificata, oggettiva
- Scenario metropolitano
- Isolamento, alienazione
- No plot convenzionale e lineare
- Romanzo come prodotto estetico autonomo

Enter a character's mind

- Interior monologue / Stream of consciousness:

  → a free, unmediated flow of thoughts in the 1st person singular – free associations and analogies, sudden shifts, lack of chronological order

  → broken and elliptic syntax, incorrect grammar and spelling

  → overlap of different levels of temporality

  → high degree of mimesis

Stream of consciousness – interior monologue /1/

Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs since the *City Arms* hotel when he used to be pretending to be laid up with a sick voice doing his highness to make himself interesting for that old faggot Mrs Riordan that he thought he had a great leg of and she never left us a farthing all for masses for herself and her soul greatest miser ever was actually afraid to lay out 4d for her methylated spirit telling me all her ailments she had too much old chat in her about politics and earthquakes and the end of the world let us have a bit of fun first God help the world if all the women were her sort down on bathingsuits and lownecks of course nobody wanted her to wear them I suppose she was pious because no man would look at her twice I hope Ill never be like her a wonder she didnt want us to cover our faces but she was a welleducated woman certainly and her gabby talk about Mr Riordan here and Mr Riordan there I suppose he was glad to get shut of her and her dog smelling my fur and

[…]

O that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson sometimes like fire and the glorious sunsets and the figtrees in the Alameda gardens yes and all the queer little streets and the pink and blue and yellow houses and the rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums and cactuses and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.

(from: James Joyce, *Ulysses*, "Penelope")

Stream of consciousness – interior monologue */2/*

Mr Bloom came to Kildare street. **First I must. Library.** Straw hat in sunlight. Tan shoes. Turned up trousers. **It is. It is.** His heart quipped softly. **To the right. Museum. Goddesses**. He swerved to the right.
Is it? Almost certain. Won't look. Wine in my face. Why did I? Too heady. Yes, it is. The walk. Not see. Not see. Get on. Making for the museum gate with long windy strides he lifted his eyes. **Handsome building. Sir Thomas Deane designed. Not following me?**

(from: James Joyce, *Ulysses*, "Lestrygonians", 1922)

- Free indirect discourse (speech/thought)

  → a character's speech or thought reported without inverted commas

  → possible introductory verb > it specifies the speech/though act (say, think, reply, tell – ex. It is probably the Queen, thought Mrs Dalloway; And his profile, Anthony suddenly perceived— that too was an actor's: too noble to be quite true.)

  → deictics and tenses vary according to the perspective of the reporting speaker/narrator (ex. Clarissa Dalloway would quite understand without requiring him to specify. Ah yes, she did of course; By Jove, but that was something like!)

  → it allows a shift of perspective, for ex. from omniscient narrator to internal focalization, or from one character's to another character's subjectivity.

Free indirect discourse (speech/thought) /1/

Clarissa had visited Evelyn Whitbread in a nursing home. **Was Evelyn sick again?** Evelyn was a good deal out of sorts, said Hugh, intimating by a kind of pout or swell of his very well-covered, manly extremely handsome upholstered body (**he was almost too well dressed always, but presumably had to be, with his little job at Court**), that his wife had some internal ailment, nothing serious, which as an old friend, Clarissa Dalloway would quite understand without requiring him to specify. **Ah yes, she did of course; what a nuisance**; and felt very sisterly and oddly conscious at the same time of her hat. **Not the right hat for the early morning, was that it?**

It is probably the Queen, thought Mrs Dalloway, coming out of Mulberry's with her flowers: the Queen. And for a second she wore a look of extreme dignity standing by the flower shop in the sunlight while the car passed at a foot's pace, with its blinds drawn. **The Queen going to some hospital; the Queen opening some bazaar**, thought Clarissa. The crush was terrific for the time of day. **Lord's, Ascot, Hurlingham, what was it?** she wondered, for the street was blocked.

(from: V. Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 1925)

Free indirect discourse (speech/thought) /2/

Afterwards he glowed with pleasure. **By Jove, but that was something like!** He stayed the afternoon with the girl, and wanted to stay the night. She, however, told him this was impossible: **her own man would be back by dark, and she must be with him. He, Brangwen, must not let on that there had been anything between them.**

(from: D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow,* 1915)