

## The Development of Modernism in English and American Literature

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### Abstract:

The research paper looks at two theories that might account for the word's blemish. The usage of "Modernism" as either a word, a term, or a idea within the English dialect scholarly feedback has been advancing soundly amid the final fifty a long time. The paper examines the history of the word's utilize from its zero begin within the 1960-1970 when, for illustration, The Reference book Americana had no "Modernism" section at all, up to the primary decade of the 21 century when "Modernism" appears to turn into one of the foremost well-known scholarly issues. The word in spite of the fact that is still considered unclear and as well deluding to be utilized as a valid scholarly term.

**Keywords:** English and American Modernism, antiquity, genre, emergence, modernity, literary literary criticism.

### I. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, American literary criticism is annually replenished with dozens of monographs, collective works, reference books and manuals devoted to modernism. The only thing that now seems to confuse modern authors is a certain semantic inconsistency of the term, its ever-growing and undaunted contradictio in adjectum. The preface to the seventh edition of the most respected "The Cambridge Companion to Modernism" begins with irony with the words: "We still continue to call modernism an era that is rapidly fading into the past of our culture, despite the obvious anomaly of this naming. "Modernism" - the name for the era of the beginning of the last century " Here it may seem that these doubts are caused by a keen sense of language, natural for philologists. Perhaps someone might think that the indicated anomaly in English is felt more sharply than, say, due to the fact that modern as an adjective is very common. But if we look at the usage of the word "modern", we find out that its meaning is close to "ultramodern", as in the following example: "In our salon you will find everything: from classic to modern". It is clear that this advertising slogan is used by a modern furniture store, rather than an antique salon, as would be the case with terminological usage to refer to items produced from the 18th century to the turn of the 19th-20th centuries. It is impossible to assume that the authoritative publication of the University of Cambridge is designed for the so-called "wide reader", which could be suspected of not knowing the terminological modernism. The publication is designed for specialists, and the irony that we encountered in the preface is really a consequence of the instability of the terminological meaning, more precisely the ambiguity of the word modernism. It happens that the same word has different terminological meanings in different scientific fields. But the ambiguity and instability of the term in one discipline is a rarity and there must be very good reasons for this, which we will try to understand. For several decades now, bourgeois critics have been repeating one and the same argument with noteworthy unanimity: in fact, there is no "modernism". Marxists came up with it to justify their aesthetic conservatism. It is difficult to confirm or deny the observation of the Soviet specialist in modernism at once. The claim that there really is no "modernism", which belonged to a Western (bourgeois) scientist, has not yet been Solid State Technology Volume: 63 Issue: 4 Publication Year: 2020 95 Archives Available @ www.solidstatetechnology.us found, which does

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not mean at all that there was no such statement. The observation, although it looks (so far) unfounded, but it seems (and with each decade more and more), it has some basis.

## II. METHOD OF RESEARCH

The number of works in which the word (not necessarily as a term) modernism was used in English literary criticism in the mid-1970s was measured in units. So in Encyclopedia Americana, the most authoritative encyclopedia of the United States, in the 1970-1980s edition there is not even a minimal article on "Modernism". In the three post-war decades, only four books and no more than ten articles have been published that use the word "Modernism". For the first time, modern to indicate the aesthetic confrontation between the old and the new was used to describe the dispute between Boileau and Perrot that took place in France in 1690 (in the original - moderne). The first English version of this dichotomy was presented by Jonathan Swift in the 1704 pamphlet, The Controversy of Old and New Books. Harry Levin (1912-1994) - Outstanding Harvard professor and literary critic. The Harry Levine Prize is awarded for best work in comparative literature. It was in this small work that the author was able to identify some and almost basic areas of scientific thought on our problem for the next fifty years. Harry Levin used the words "the moderns", "the modernist writers", "modernism" in several meanings, including those that are now called "the term in a narrow and broad sense." According to Levin, the modernist writers (but not "modernists") are writers from among the moderns who demonstrate some aesthetic and ethical community mainly in the perception and implementation of the ideas of "modernity".

Moreover, "since we still belong to the present [In so far as we are still moderns], I affirm that we are children of humanism and Enlightenment". Thus, according to Levin, modernism as a literary phenomenon refers to a particular period of the beginning of the twentieth century, from the position of 1962 it is an irretrievable past (what was modernism), but its ideological and aesthetic nature is rooted in the vast cultural mass of European history. A year later, Steven Spender's book The Struggle of the Modern [4] was published, in which, however, it is very difficult to identify the terminological meaning of the word modernism that occurs several times. Spender analyzes the literary situation of the beginning of the twentieth century from the inside, as a participant in the process, and not as an outside observer. Perhaps this is partly why his look is much narrower than that of Harry Levin, but also noticeably sharper. For Spender, the moderns are only those of his contemporaries (here we used the contrast of the moderns vs. the contemporaries) who acutely felt the "unprecedentedness of the present", its unprecedented novelty. V. Dneprov, however, would not agree with this approach, since he repeats his idea exactly the opposite: "A dead, dilapidated idea is galvanized due to contact with a new form - it holds and writhes like a dead frog under the influence of electricity. This is modernism "[2, p. 458]. Solid State Technology Volume: 63 Issue: 4 Publication Year: 2020 96 Archives Available @ www.solidstatetechnology.us Fig.1. Defining Pre-modernism and Modernism In 1968, a collection of articles by Frank Kermoud was published, in which a British researcher identifies several types of modernisms: paleo-modernism (1910-1920s) and neo-modernism (after the 1930s and to the present). He distinguishes between the modern and avant-garde, and even establishes the relationship between modernism and postmodernism. And only in 1976 did the large volume "Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930" appear, edited by Malcolm Bradbury and James MacFarlen, who was destined to be "the key tool for modernism in world literature" (as his editors wrote without modesty in 1991). The success and credibility of this study may be due, on the one hand, to the breadth of the problems and, on the other hand, to the variety of scientific schools that were presented by the authors of the publication. Almost half of this remarkable study was written by well-known European Slavists and Germanists working in leading universities in the USA and Great Britain. The latter fact at least partially explains the fact that in the following decades the number of studies devoted to the problem began

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to grow exponentially: more and more new students joined the work, and then students of the students. Despite the fact that absolutely all authors of the publication are bourgeois critics, not one of them attributed the invention of modernism to Marxism, although some connection between these phenomena can be traced in a number of articles, though not always explicit<sup>3</sup>. In the first article, “The Name and Nature of Modernism,” Bradbury and MacFarlen, taking advantage of the chief editors, anticipate the diversity of approaches of their co-authors, introduce the reader to a circle of problems, one of which, undoubtedly, was the problem of the term, more precisely, the inability to find an unambiguous and consistent definition for it. Solid State Technology Volume: 63 Issue: 4 Publication Year: 2020 97 Archives Available @ [www.solidstatetechnology.us](http://www.solidstatetechnology.us) Perhaps, thanks to these authors, English and American terminological reference books and encyclopedias, which subsequently appeared, if they contained Modernism articles, they usually began with a reservation - the term is complex, but vague (comprehensive but vague term). The vagueness, if not to say “turbidity,” of the term turns out to be due to the fact that under the umbrella of the word “modernism” fall, on the one hand, an epoch, more precisely a certain period of time, and more precisely, several time periods, the boundaries of which depend both on geography (in In France, it all started earlier and lasted longer than in the UK, it started earlier than in Britain, but later than in France, and also ended earlier than in any other country), and from the breadth of the author’s view and angle of view of the phenomenon. And on the other hand, the same ideological and aesthetic tendencies of the era are found under this umbrella, which, it turns out, “works” to the utmost ambiguity, since in this case not only ideas that are internally contradictory in themselves, but also ideas mutually exclusive of each other. The authors of the introductory article pose a very difficult task - to generalize the observations and statements proposed by the co-authors so that they are not just the sum of the views, but some system with a common denominator. Often this common denominator is negative. This is exactly what happens in the case of a search for common stylistic features of modernism.

“Modernism is not a style, but rather a search for a style that is characterized by a high degree of individualism”. The impasse of the double contradiction contained in the definition is overcome, as the authors think, by the following proposition proposed by Irving Howe back in 1967: “Modernism does not establish a dominant personal style; and if it establishes, then it denies itself, since in this case it ceases to be modernism (thereby ceasing to be modern) ”. Not finding common stylistic features, the authors turn their absence and, moreover, their impossibility as such, into a characteristic of the phenomenon being determined. It should be noted that with a clear unfamiliarity with the Marxistly labeled and, therefore, at that time (1967, 1976) geographically isolated theory of artistic methods, our authors demonstrate the conviction that any general stylistic features, at least are expected. Behind It should be noted that Marxism in American literary criticism was a fairly influential force. In certain periods, especially in the 1920-1930s, its influence was quite strong. However, in the 1950s, Marxism had to hide itself, and by the 1970s, when it could get stronger, its latest versions, for example, deconstructivism, became fashionable. Moreover, he always lacked the strength to build a historical typology that would satisfy his Soviet colleagues. Thus, the first hypothesis about the lack of time for the term to be established was only partially confirmed. Usually, for a term to confidently enter into scientific usage, a period of time much shorter than thirty years is required. The stability of the term was hindered by its “innate” polysemy. To overcome ambiguity, it is necessary that the winner value is supported by the scientific community through frequency use. As Peter Gay noted in 2008, “it is much easier to give examples of Modernism than to give it a definition”. To test this hypothesis, let us go back to the beginning of the history of usage in order to reveal the basic meanings of modernism. “One of the features of the described era is that it clearly observes historicism, and its historical views are based on faith in the end of the world and crises”. This remark by Malcolm Bradbury and James

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MacFarlen seems extremely accurate, laconically linking the obvious hereditary and acquired features of the era: on the one hand, romantic historicism, reinforced by Marxist historicism, faith in progress, fear of progress, on the other, adolescent denial of one's own heredity, not always consistently expressed dialectically as a negation of negation. To describe the reasons for the Great Gap, the authors turn to the authority of the French scientist Roland Barthe, who explains this phenomenon by the spread of worldview pluralism (pluralization of world-views), which was the result of the evolution of new classes and means of communication that happened in the middle of the XIX century.

In literature, pluralism led to complete disintegration, "after Flaubert and to this day has become a pure language issue. Worldview pluralism has replaced unanimity. But are there any reliable evidence for these allegations? Evidence is necessary, firstly, because Roland Bart did not differ in the accuracy of historical observations and, secondly, his statement is very much like extrapolation relevant for the 1960s. the situation, repeating the popular and seemingly convincing statement of M. McLuhan. Worldview pluralism really in one form or another took place as an object of literature. A common place in the mid-twentieth-century novels was the clash of ideological positions, and sometimes several. Fig.2. Classification stage of modernism Comparing this situation with the one that preceded it, namely with romanticism, one can notice that the collision of various worldviews was not fundamentally new. Romanticism, as you know, is built on the opposition of the true, albeit lost by almost all, the false, but generally accepted view. The main difference is not even that the total criticism of false ideas was replaced by a discussion of their nature and consequences, but that the new, non-romantic author was no longer perceived by society as a prophet. However, the author himself no longer uses the method adopted by the romantics to affirm the only truth. From the second half of the 19th century, situations have become habitual when different readers (critics), discussing the author's point of view, often come to the opposite opinion. It was, without any doubt, only a cursory analysis of the description of the era, but it seems to us that it allowed us to identify a certain author's logic. The period 1890-1930 characterized as an era, the defining features of which are hypertrophy of heredity. Not all the inheritance was saved, and not everything was of interest. But much was not just saved, but a hundredfold increased. The resulting picture very seriously undermines the terminological potential of using modernism. It is clear that such a variety of meanings cannot portend an easy terminological fate to a single word. Looking from our "far" one can clearly see that the roots of the era are becoming a thing of the past, but it seemed sincere to the participants in historical events that they were creating their era literally from nothing, and everything they live by is new by definition. The moderns, that is, modern people, cherish their modernity, experience it, often horrified by it, but it is through it that they define themselves. Such a vision of oneself and the world, which is characterized by increased attention to modernity, is called modernism in English. The only problem is that, due to the stability of the morphological mechanism, the word modernism, like any noun with the suffix -ism, gets its meaning depending on whether it is formed from a noun or from an adjective. In the first case, this is the direction of thought, the nature of the action, style, etc. And in the second case, we get a noun that is characterized by an adjective motivating it. In the English language for the formation of modernism, the word modern was used, which can serve as both a noun and an adjective, which dooms modernism to the polysemy described above. Moreover, due to the Marxist marking of classifications in directions and ideological trends, the first meaning of modernism (as the direction of thought) was doomed. Therefore, the word was often used in the second meaning. This word could indicate an artistic device or a train of thought rather than a system of representations. That is why until the 1970s the word modernism was used very rarely.

### III. RESULTS

The large (in comparison with the English word) terminology of modernism is explained by the fact that this word came to our language from the French pair of modernist - modernism and immediately took its place in a serious line of communists - communism, anarchists - anarchism. The word modern came into use later, after the terminology of modernism was fixed to indicate the style and direction of thought. In any case, in 1908, even in the very peripheral publication *Modernists, Their Predecessors and Critical Literature about them*, published in Odessa by the Mutual Aid Society of Jewish clerks, modernism and modernists are terminologically relevant, bearing traces of French origin from modernite. By the way, English modernity is much less frequent than its French relative, and in books about the era of 1890-1930. almost never occurs.

### IV. CONCLUSION

Consequently, we have at least partially found factors that explain the limited terminology of the word modern. Linguistic, and overcoming it requires that one of the meanings in the scientific literature has a more regular use than the other or others. One of the reasons has already been identified and contained in Howe's earlier discussion of style, about the mandatory desire for renewal, which does not imply the development of sustainable forms, without which the style is not perceptible. It is clear that Howe's reflections are the arguments of the theorist, who, in this case, is absolutely obvious, is captured by the language.

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