



**Forum on Contemporary Theory
Baroda**

(A Member of the Humanities Centers and Institutes)

In collaboration with

**Balvant Parekh Centre for
General Semantics and Other
Human Sciences
Baroda**

and

**The University of Rajasthan
Department of English
Jaipur**

organizes an

**International Conference
on**

World War I; Modernism(s); and Time Binding

Dates: 27 – 28 January 2023

Venue: Department of English, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur

Concept Note

The word “modern” has continued to be contentious since its early usage in Europe after the emergence of Christianity as a “modern” religion and its dominance thereafter. But its subsequent transfiguration into “modernity” and then “modernism” has signalled its assimilation into European identity and its eventual valorization as its cultural marker. From the time of Immanuel Kant to that of Hegel and even after this word has been used as Europe’s quintessential essence to be cherished and flaunted as an ideal. Hegel’s projection of its progressive trajectory until it meets its apotheosis in a distant future was a smooth and unchallenged line of thought. But the First World War (1914-18) and the destruction it caused in Europe disrupted that flow and brought into doubt the vaunted spirit of its cultural and political mission. This war, which is often called the Great War, brought Europeans face to face with their destiny, a state of uncertainty, a sort of *hubris*. But ironically, it was in such a confrontation they began to realize the potential of their strength. The pains they experienced both physically and psychologically from the war wounds provided them the resilience they needed to move forward to turn their suffering into aesthetic triumph; from the debris of the ruins of time into poetic forms. It was Emily Dickinson in one of her poems earlier spoke about this process most evocatively: “After a great pain a formal feeling comes.” It was the War that engendered “modernism,” an aesthetic movement that turned a crisis into a new possibility. Yeats, Eliot, and Joyce in UK; Hemingway, Faulkner and Stevens in US; and Proust in France and many other artists spearheaded that movement. However, this movement was dialectical and often embraced Manichaeian dualism like the co-presence of faith and skepticism. By attempting at forging an alliance between disparate ideas and ideologies within their placement in a well-constructed structure they

redefined modernity as “unity in diversity.” In a way, one can say that this War marked both the end and beginnings of modernity in its new incarnations. “Modernism” as a cultural formation was created from such a critical moment; what was already simmering as a subliminal idea finally morphed into a spectacular phenomenon, spreading across the world through colonial dispensation. Writer after writer in Europe and the US responded vigorously to this change in the air. In the 1920s writers and artists flocked to Paris under this new spell and began experimenting with new forms of art. Ernest Hemingway called Paris a “moveable feast.” In London and New York similar experiments began to take place in conjunction with the ones in Paris; the entire world seemed caught up by such euphoria of change and also for a need to slow down and reflect. From such a dual temper “Modernism” was born.

This conference is an attempt to make sense of what this “temper” means for us after hundred years of its appearance. Is there something worthwhile to learn from the exuberance of the “roaring twenties”? Has “Modernism” been substituted by its enigmatic “-post”? Are there expressions of “multiple modernisms”? In her latest book, titled *Multiple Modernisms* (2022), Jasbir Jain has not only raised some of these questions but has complexified them by disrupting and expanding their generative genealogies through “contrapuntal” readings of their histories and geographies. In such readings “Modernisms” are both spatial and temporal tropes cutting across time and space like Bakhtin’s “Chronotope.” Therefore, it is time to have a close look at this notion and to debate whether we too coming from other cultures could be called “modernists” without feeling any sense of guilt.

If one is asked to name one element which characterizes what Joseph Wood Krutch called almost one hundred years ago “the modern temper” it is, I think, the notion of “time-binding” made famous by Alfred Korzybski after experiencing the horrendous experience of being in the field of War I in Europe at its early stage. Through a conscious practice of realizing the benefits of this exercise, one can cultivate one’s humanity. T. S. Eliot echoes such a need in the “Burnt Norton” section of “Four Quartets” in eloquent words about time’s flux and stasis as co-presence, an idea that echoes pervasively in many modernist writers. It was Korzybski who developed the concept of “general semantics” of which “time binding is an integral part” was an excellent exemplar of a “time-binder” selectively resurrecting the past for its proleptic vision and hindsight.

Sub Themes

- Modernism and Alternate Modernisms
- World War I: Language, Literature, Culture and Society
- Enlightenment and Aesthetic Closure
- Literary Formalism, Canon Formation, Verbal Icon
- Self-generated Ideology and Utopia
- Post-colonial Modernism, Colonialism and Indigeneity
- Post-modernism, Cosmopolitanism and Globalisation
- War, History and Historiography
- War: Environment and Violence
- Imperialism, Neo-Colonialism and Hegemony
- World War I: Philosophy, Psychology and Art
- World War I: Critical Theory and Movements
- Empire, Nation and Ethnicity
- Time, Space and Memory
- Other related themes

Call for papers

Abstracts not exceeding the limit of 250 words are invited for presenting a full paper at the conference. The abstracts typed in Times New Roman, font size 12 points, double spaced and adhering to MLA 9th Edition shall be sent in MS Word format to conferencemodernism23@gmail.com

Registration Details

The last date to submit abstracts is December 20, 2022.

Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/cdzH1suDTUALv9Ak9>

For further queries kindly contact Prof Deepa S.P Mathur, Conference Convenor and Head, Department of English at conferencemodernism23@gmail.com