Irish Modernism

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**Summary**

Although Irish writers were foundational to English-language modernism, Irish Modernism is a new field in literary studies. Embedded imperial frameworks and assumptions about Irish traditionalism have been an obstacle to recognizing Irish Modernism, despite the importance of Irish writing to the development of modernism as a whole. Informed by postcolonial and transnational theory, a reading of Irish Modernism accommodates writers who lived and wrote in and about Ireland, as well as those who were Irish by birth but who lived and worked outside of the country, such as James Joyce; who wrote in languages other than English or Irish, such as Samuel Beckett; or whose political allegiances are at odds with the rise of the separatist nation state, such as Elizabeth Bowen. Irish Modernism has its genesis in the Irish Revival (ca. 1880s–1910s), a popular movement that sought to create a distinctive Irish culture. The little magazines and literary theaters that arose out of the Revival were often aesthetically conservative in themselves; nonetheless, they became venues for literature that was radical in form. Just as early modernist writing arose out of the Revival, high modernist literature was provoked by a rejection of the Revival’s values. These reactions are exemplified in William Butler Yeats’s poetry from *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910), in which he castigates the Irish public for its religious conservatism, and in Joyce’s *Dubliners* (1914) and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Late modernism, which is typified by a weakening of the tropes of high modernism to make way for a more politically engaged literature, not only includes well-known Anglophone writers but also the work of Brian Ó Nualláin/Flann O’Brien and Máirtín Ó Cadhain, whose satires were formally and politically radical.

**Keywords:** Irish Modernism, W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, Elizabeth Bowen, Samuel Beckett

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Whereas the towering Irish modernists, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, took their lead from international, cosmopolitan, and generally metropolitan artistic currents, the revivalists were, in this view, nationalist, valorizing a rural and premodern Ireland swathed in cultural purity and twilit nostalgia. How and why does the cleavage between Irish Revival and modernism now emphasize the joints rather than the divisions? Jazz is rarely discussed in modernist studies, yet its importance to the movement is crucial, as revolutionary intervention on Western music, for its aesthetic contribution, its relationship with popular culture, and its relevance to periodisation. The peculiar conjunction of modernism, jazz, and Ireland, offers a window into a neglected area of both modernism and Irish Studies which can help us reassess both. Since W. B. Yeats wrote in 1890 that "the man of science is too often a person who has exchanged his soul for a formula," the anti-scientific bent of Irish literature has often been taken as a given. Science, Technology, and Irish Modernism brings together leading and emerging scholars of Irish. By focusing on writers’ often-ignored interest in science and technology, this book uncovers shared concerns between revivalists, modernists, and late modernists that challenge us to rethink how we categorize and periodize Irish literature. First Year Essay: Modernism in Early Twentieth Century Ireland The White Stag and the Birth of Irish Modernism. Hence the term modernist or modern art. Modernism gathered pace from about 1850. Modernism proposes new forms of art on the grounds that these are more appropriate to the present time. It is thus characterized by constant innovation. But modern art has often been driven too by various social and political agendas.