

Discourse on Modernism and the Question of Authority

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“When Socrates used to say to the Athenians that the ‘improvement of soul, care for wisdom and truth is the highest good for human being’ they merely sentenced him to death with hemlock. Western society nailed Jesus Christ to the Cross merely to get rid of Socrates.” Author

Abstract

Based on the studies of contemporary writers this paper presents a discourse on modernism especially in English literature, along with different socio-political and historical events related with modernism. *Modernism* like any other doctrine has had its beginning and phases of development until today as it appears now to us with different meanings and varied connotations. *Modernism* in the field of arts and literature refers to the time of late 19th century and first half of the 20th century, to the specific mode of writing of some writers and painting of some painters- as opposed to the previous convention of arts and literature- in the background of socio-political disorder of the First World War. In the greater dynamics of human history modernism is the significant phenomenon which at the same time presents human weakness such as frustration, deep despair, loneliness and spiritual crises of individual even in the midst of eye-catching material and technological development, as if human beings lost the centre of authority in a center less world. With the collapse of socio-political structures that began with the destruction of First World War, the Western society became victim of hopelessness and many other social ills damaging their hope and idea of *progress*. The idea of perfect future and progress of the world, which so far had been deemed to be possible based on human reason, was shattered due to the overwhelming effects of the war. Modern poets and authors not only portrayed different society’s ills, as created in post war Europe, in their writing, but also sought an authority based on which the society’s ills would be relieved or gone. Still, we have the experience of the same social ills as modernism had earlier; as we have the legacy of modernism even in the post modern era. In modern era “fragmentation” in literary writings was really the sign of individual’s or human being’s fragmented and disorderly or problematic existence for which the modern writers regret. But “fragmentation” is being more celebrated in the post modern era signifying more and more disintegration and dissolving entities in human relationships that really creates more uncertainty for the world. This paper attempts to understand how the modern writers presented and lamented the lack of authority by which the modern writers wanted to remove society’s ills. This paper also makes an attempt to explore as to how the modernism is made out throughout different phenomena of history that essentially can determine our future authority.

Introduction

Modernism is a term which has now more than one meaning. It is an idea in literature and painting or feeling or way of people’s life which did not start at once in literature or life. It is like any other doctrine or *ism* having its own root and continuous growth came into being, entered into human consciousness and is being carried forward with its larger phase covering all spheres of human life in the East and the West equally. It should be noted that any outside physical, economic, scientific, technological or cultural changes or changes in life style that take place in human history is closely connected with human desire, tendencies and needs of human beings in a given time or phase of history. German Philosopher Hegel finds “human passion” (Lavine, 1984, p.281) as the prime motivating force in the human world. Modernism, as we understand it today, is such a thing with a lot of connotations that everyday make us think and feel and utilize its meanings in different sphere of life. Though virtually in the field of arts and literature modernism refers to some modes of thought and characteristics of a particular time period in the background of western culture esp. late 19th and early 20th century, or literature of such writers as Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot and others, yet the meanings of modernism are varied and deceptive or bewildering because of its varied connotations in the present world. Modernist literature was a predominantly English genre of fiction writing, popular from roughly the 1910s into the 1960s. Modernist literature came into its own due to increasing industrialization and globalization. New technology and the horrifying events of both World Wars (but specifically World War I) made many people question the future of humanity: What was becoming of the world? What authority could save the world?

Writers and thinkers reacted to this question by turning toward Modernist sentiments. Gone was the Romantic period that focused on nature and being. Modernist fiction spoke of the inner self and consciousness. Instead of progress, the Modernist writer saw a decline of civilization. Instead of new technology, the Modernist writer saw

cold machinery and increased capitalism, which alienated the individual and led to loneliness. (Sounds like the same arguments we hear about the Internet age).

To achieve the emotions described above, most Modernist fiction was cast in first person. Whereas earlier, most literature had a clear beginning, middle, and end (or introduction, conflict, and resolution), the Modernist story was often more of a stream of consciousness. Irony, satire, and comparisons were often employed to point out **society's ills**. For the first-time Modernist reader, this can all add up to feel like the story is going nowhere.

A short list of some of famous Modernist writers includes Samuel Beckett, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, T.S. Eliot, William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, E.E. Cummings, Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Butler Yeats, Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, and Gertrude

Although generally called a movement, it is more valid to see modernism as an international body of literature characterized by a new self-consciousness about modernity and by radical formal experimentation. Several literary movements and styles, notably Imagism and Vorticism, were fostered within modernism, which flourished from around 1890 until 1940. There was also a period of so-called "high modernism," 1920-5.

Generally, modernists were driven by the belief that the assurances once provided by religion, politics, or society no longer sufficed. This belief intensified after World War I, when it seemed to many that history itself was coming to an end and that modern life was horrific, chaotic, and ultimately futile. Some modernists, notably T. S. Eliot, expressed a deep sense of loss and despair.

If modernism, to some extent, means rejecting all types old values, old religious faith, past culture as outdated, and receiving new so-called values or life style influenced by rapid progress in industrial and technological fields as better alternative to the past, then it means that human beings are not consistent in their tendencies and passion, rather they are restless and impatient because of their constant changing habits and desire.

Out of the eternal gap between individual and universal desires of human beings and actual possibility of the fulfillment of such desires human beings have always been in a state of unhappiness and restlessness. The state of modernity is not also free from such restlessness. The restlessness is due to either's human beings' demand of his subjective world where desires work or to the rapid physical changes (by war, economics, revolution etc.) in the objective world. Men, being constantly a slave to, their own desires and passion without a full understanding of its ultimate benefit and consequences all the time, have reacted to their own surroundings in their own ways to bring about changes without following any common universal law of behavior-whether based on common religious faith or rational standard- that can be followed by all human beings in the world regardless of caste and creed or color or races. This is of course the complexity of human history. The examples of contradictory human beliefs and conflicting ideas are reflected in the greater scale in the two great wars, industrial revolution, communism or Darwinism or modernism and secularism in the western world that stirred the lives of the millions of people and presented a great picture of disorder and lack of a common authority in the world. And perhaps, at present the complexity is more deepened by Islam phobia of the westerners through the conflict between Islamic civilization and western civilization. Perhaps, it is because of the lack/absence of a universal and infallible authority of moral code of conduct or behavior everyday different social ills have increased in modern time in spite of magnificent scientific and materialistic developments. It is, perhaps, because of the lack of common pure divine or universally accepted secular authority, democracy has become now a dominant force speaking for justice, equality and humanity trying to unify all diverse views or opinion for the long lasting peace in the world. But, when we see war and fighting still going on in the world, we become suspicious of the success of democracy as true authority to mould the both external and internal world of individual. Once, the western people were disillusioned of a world of progress and prosperity based on the authority of human reason--- that actually developed in the so called age of enlightenment---- after the First world War and the Second World War. Needless to say, when we talk about modernism in the field of arts and literature or talk about democracy in the field of politics, we cannot but relate these two in the western background. However, it can be asserted that necessarily democracy or so called "Radical Democracy" and "Liberal Democracy"(Brooker,1992,p.25-27) cannot mould the personality of an individual as a whole though democracy is a popular political system; therefore, it cannot be an alternative to a religion(be it Islam, Hinduism or Christianity or even atheism) to solve deep psychological and spiritual issues of men and women and cannot answer those life affirming questions of values that preserve humanity and cannot resist life-denying ever present evils that constantly pose a threat to mankind---locally and universally.

Therefore, it is the irony of human fate that in no age were human beings perfectly happy and patient or satisfied with their achievements or with the fulfillment of desires because of human being's natural tendencies of moving towards so called perfection in every sphere of life, which actually remains unreachable, as idea of perfection of every age dies with the existing generation, and a new idea of perfection is born when the previous generation dies, and is lost again into vast eternity, though ideas of perfection yet continues with every coming age in new shape in new form, and every new generation becomes more restless with more progress than the previous generation. The constant inflow or flux of human thought and human society is due to the lack of a common infallible authority for all human beings. If we analyze modernity or modernism through these reflections, along

with cotemporary literary works, we can comprehend the true nature and legacy of modernism and its meaningful authority for the future.

However, throughout the centuries, along with Men's constant attempt to reach a perfect happy life or culture within a common or different cultural milieu having different conflicting and contradictory views locally or universally, human beings have also searched/sought for unity and uniformity or for a common understanding or common authority to rely on. In the field of literature one such example of the attempt to unite a disorderly nation like America after her independence in 1776, Whitman in the 19th century brought up his *Leaves of Grass* (1855), with his representative poem, "Song of Myself" in order to create a spiritual awareness or regeneration among the divided Americans. That was of course an attempt which characterized both the search of a cultural and religious authority. In the time of growing materialism and anarchy in the 19th century, Whitman, who believed that the role of the poet should be the role of a prophet, (Moon, 2002), got the name as the "second Christ" because of his poetic message of peace and love. A way was sought and attempt was made by Whitman to get an outlet from the realm of deep social anarchy as well as the deep psychological anarchy of individual awareness devoid of spirituality. The anarchy reached its peak with Abraham Lincoln's attempt to eradicate slavery in the 19th century that resulted in American civil war (1861-65) between the South and the North of the USA with the seemingly victory of the democratic North under the command of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln's attempt to eradicate slavery was a sign of the recognition of the *natural rights* of all human beings acknowledged by the American forefathers in *the Declaration of Independence*. The civil war was virtually a challenge to the American ideals of freedom and equality as propounded by their declaration of independence. So Whitman in his poem "Song of Myself" celebrates all varieties of people and culture of America with a new voice which was an attempt to create peace and harmony based on common human essentials and a belief that one God who created all varieties of people and things of the universe has a plan, and it is He who wants human beings to live with love and sense of brotherhood in spite of varieties among them. Whitman, who was a democrat, spoke for so called "spiritual democracy" to achieve the goals. Just as Whitman's spiritual fervor and his "prophetic scream" find a connection with those of Jonathan Edward's in his essay *Sinners in Hands of Angry God* published in the colonial period of America. Ezra Pound's aggressive cry for order in the 20th century represents, at the same time, the failure of Franklin's peaceful secular message of the age of reason and revolution of America.

However, Ezra Pound who called Whitman his poetic forefather and expressed his debt to Whitman for American poetic legacy, turned to fascism in the 20th century because of American oppressive hypocrisy of democracy which virtually failed to solve the people's real economic and spiritual problem in the 19th and the 20th century. America, under the hypocrisy of democratic values continued her racism throughout the centuries. Example of this hypocrisy was finally exposed in the 20th century through the civil rights movements of 1960s and 70s as the Black Afro-American, who had been struggling so far for their rights since the end of civil war in 1865 or for last four hundred years. The blacks had been really transported from Africa to the Carrabin region and then to the USA and other countries as slaves. The Afro-American blacks had to come out with procession to establish and ensure their natural rights under the leadership of Martin Luther, an American clergyman, and Malcolm X. another black American who was the leader of the nations of Islam. In the age of science and technology still the blacks were fighting the issue of racism. American modern poet Robert Lowell refers to one such incident in his poem, "For the Union Dead", where still black students are fighting for rights to study in the white school: Lowell views the scenes on the television screen and writes:

The ditch is nearer.
There are no statues for the last war here;
on Boylston Street, a commercial photograph
shows Hiroshima boiling

over a Mosler Safe, the "Rock of Ages"
that survived the blast. Space is nearer.
When I crouch to my television set,
the drained faces of Negro school-children rise like balloons.

In the midst of unethical growth of commercialism and development of America (as represented by: "commercial photograph" meaning big bill board of Mosler Safe Company hanging at Boylston Street) Negro school children or the black community as a whole is fighting for their right still in the country in the 20th century. So the ditch (meaning "destruction") is nearer for such a civilization. Modern civilization has declined because human values declined. This is the case with Lowell or Ezra Pound's 20th century America.

Also, 20th century America, which saw an economic recession in 1930s and later her participation in the Second World War, was less different from pre civil war oppressive era of America, because America was still moving

on the greedy wheel of materialism and unethical values of capitalism based on usury. Ezra Pound in the 20th century turned to fascism against his own country, America, because of his strong stand against the inhumane capitalistic economic system based on usury under the covering of democratic political system. Moreover, America and whole capitalist world has again seen the failures of political and economic system under the covering of democracy in the recent 21st century through a recent recession that caused many people jobless and homeless both in America and Europe.

The western people were disillusioned not only by the First and Second World Wars, but also were disillusioned with Darwinism, communism, capitalism, materialism and democracy. The modern writers and cotemporary people were more disillusioned after the 1st world war and so on. So, the modern poets and authors expressed their complex thoughts in rather fragmented styles of their writings, as if fragmented styles were appropriate to expose the complex characters of that complex time. So, even within the broken and fragmented landscape of modernism with individual isolation and despair, always a gentle sigh for uniformity and authority is felt strongly from writers and poets of the time. In the midst of the increase of social ills, we find the writers exposing the spiritual crises of modern men and their isolation and despair. The lack of authority becomes clear in their constant presentation or uses of fragmented literary styles and intricacies of their language.

Many modern writers consciously or unconsciously turn to Christianity or Christian church to bridge up the gap between individual's spiritual world and his ordinary life showing subconsciously an inner urge for an authority. As American novelist Faulkner presents Jesus Christ in his novel *Fables* and Philip Larkin, though agnostic felt the necessity of the Christian church at least for the consolation of human soul. In opposition to Faulkner's religious world Fitzgerald presents a world of consumerism and devalued capitalism in *The Great Gatsby* where the romantic love is defeated in an atmosphere of social ills. There was no religion in *The Great Gatsby* except falsehood and deceptions. Gatsby listened to no authority but his own desires thereby met his tragic fall. In modernism there was always an imbalance between individual's spiritual and ordinary life, there was always a sense of need for something that could balance the imbalance and that *something* could be either Christianity (a religion) or any system or way of life or an authority.

In the poem "Church Going" Larkin writes about this human dilemma:

A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognized, and robed as destinies.
And that much never can be obsolete...

As already mentioned, as the corrupt or interpolated Christianity could not remove the gap/imbalance during the modern period keeping pace with human reason, as it failed in the medieval Age (of course, though Christianity was pure/intact during Jesus Christ), the sigh of individual subjective world increased and it turned into hot flame to destroy the many.

T. S. Eliot in "The Waste Land", called the Bible of modernism, presents the dark gloomy landscape of the modern waste land with its full disorder in personal and spiritual life of people. T. S. Eliot, however, while presenting discordant picture of the modern waste land in the absence of true Christianity or true values, sought for an order in terms of different religions, along with his constant references to the past, as he mentioned or referred to Hinduism and Buddhism with some ancient mythological gods or goddess. We have for the first time the historical dimension in "The Waste Land" of all poetry of Eliot. Eliot here is concerned with a civilization as well as an individual. Eliot like Robert Lowell or Benjamin (Bowen, 2003, p.40) does not believe the ideology of *progress*. "The Waste Land" is full of different things and juxtaposes and rearranges different materials seized from widely different places, cultures and times. The reader moves back and forth between scenes of sufferings and despair. In "The Waste Land" Eliot speaks of rape, of violence, loss and emptiness which are "documents of barbarism" (Bowen, 2003.p.41). Instead of telling a story, Eliot accumulates "significant fragments" by which the crime of the past survives and appears in the present. Therefore, it seems for the time being that search of an authority—cultural or religious-- is futile.

Modernist, like post modernist, gives prominence to "fragmentation" and 'registers a deep nostalgia for an earlier age when faith was full and authority intact.' (Barry, 2010, p. 80). But in literature, most of the modern writers long for the past and this longing for the past of these modern authors interestingly create an ironic situation for them, as if they were "anti-modern" (Baym, 2003, p.1078). Also, modernist literature "interprets modernity as an experience of loss" (p.1078). Ezra Pound calls his major works *The Cantos*, 'a rag- bag' implying that this is all that is possible in the modern age (Barry, 2010). In absence of true and meaningful spiritual order in his time he searched for the order in the ancient life and culture in *The Cantos*. However, for Ezra Pound situation becomes worse when he began to support the fascist leaders of Italy and England. The economic recession of 1930s in the democratic United States and throughout Europe gave rise to a fascination for the fascist, virtually showing the failures of capitalist economic system based on usury under the covering of democracy (Baym, 2003). Ezra Pound goes back to the old history and culture and dreamt of the golden future of the world under the command of the fascist leaders. Ezra Pound constantly spoke against the Jews whom he

thought were responsible for oppressive economic system based on usury and were responsible for the misery of the millions of people.

In a translated poem, "The River Merchant Wife: A Letter", Ezra Pound shows in the Chinese background of 8th century, the strength of old values and Chinese culture where the wife of the River merchant is living more worthy life waiting for husband with true love in spite of her loneliness due to the absence of her husband at home than the so called "cultured woman"(-)in 'The Portat due Feme'(Portrait of a Lady)' who is living a hollow and empty life with "loneliness" in cultural background of 20th century London city meeting with her casual lovers having no meaningful family bonds:

The tarnished, gaudy, wonderful old work;
Idols and ambergris and rare inlays,
These are your riches, your great store; and yet
For all this sea-hoard of deciduous things,
Strange woods half sodden and new brighter stuff:
In the slow float of differing light and deep,
No! there is nothing! In the whole and all,
Nothing that's quite your own.
Yet this is you. (Portrait of a lady)

The wife of the river Merchant in the Chinese village, where even child marriage was practiced, behind the bucolic background of nature expresses her passion for her husband and waiting for him:

.....
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
Forever and forever and forever.
Why should I climb the look out?

At sixteen you departed,
You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,
And you have been gone five months.
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.

By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
Too deep to clear them away!
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
Over the grass in the West garden;
They hurt me. I grow older.

.....
And I will come out to meet you

Through the different social and cultural setting of two contradictory poems reflect that the values of love and affection in a growing materialistic and capitalist society (represented by "The Portrit of a Lady) in so called modernism or even post modernism era are no longer valuable or secondary to "things or commodities" (Lady's house is full of things) of the consumer's society. As a result, the rate of divorce, individual isolation, psychological problems of children in a nuclear family etc. are reflection of human beings' loss of "essential qualities"(Lavine,1984,-p.281) as Karl Marx mentioned in his criticism of capitalism. So in modernism we see a world without values which is going on even in the post modern world.

Another American modern poet of early 20th century: Sylvia Plath, who also committed suicide as did Virginia Woolf, blaming her husband Ted Hughes for having extra marital relationship with a German woman that causes her divorce, presents herself as broken and fragmented personality with deep spiritual crises. A bipolar with serious and destructive psychological mental makeup Sylvia Plath presents a landscape of violence, bloodshed, arrogance and rebellion which she revealed or predicted her suicide in the poems Daddy and Lady Lazarus. A deep disturbing psychological landscape is presented with semi-darkness of moonlit night with the image of a yew tree standing in the light of the moon creating a sense of fear:

This is the light of the mind, cold and planetary
The trees of the mind are black. The light is blue.

.....
Fumy, spiritous mists inhabit this place.
Separated from my house by a row of headstones.
I simply cannot see where there is to get to.
The moon is no door...

it is quiet
With the O-gape of complete despair. I live here.
.....
The yew tree points up, it has a Gothic shape.
The eyes lift after it and find the moon.
The moon is my mother. She is not sweet like Mary.
Her blue garments unloose small bats and owls.
.....
.....
The moon sees nothing of this. She is bald and wild.
And the message of the yew tree is blackness – blackness and silence.

“The Moon and the Yew Tree” is a beautifully written poem and its splendor lies in the fact that Sylvia Plath perceives so many beautiful sights and yet finds desolation in each. She has made an extensive use of symbols, personifications and diction that, quite clearly, depict her melancholy. The fundamental theme of the poem revolves around her bleakness owing to the untimely death of her father and strained relations with her mother. The acute isolation, in turn, calls on her to connect with her surroundings, with nature. The attempt, however, fails. Here, “The Moon” has been personified as her mother while “The Yew Tree” is the symbol of her father. “The O-gape of complete despair” suggests lack of communication between the mother and the daughter. The Yew tree is often found near churches, rendering them a holy aspect. Plath, however, sees it as ‘Gothic’ and as an epitome of ‘blackness and silence’. The atmosphere in the surroundings aggravates her feeling of loneliness. Also, “The moon is no door” suggests lack of hope, guidance and opportunities which is ironic because the moon is believed to show direction and illuminate the dark world. Also, the association of ‘holiness’ with ‘stiff’ indicates the lack of natural self and belief in religion and rejection of the idea of self-betterment, often linked with holiness. The poem thus, gives an impression of the poet’s state of melancholic mind that fails to comprehend the beauty of its surroundings owing to the despair and pain that dwells within her mind and soul. The lack of guidance and belief from her parents, a sense of detachment from God himself and after failed attempts to identify herself with her surroundings, at last, she is bound to retreat to ‘blackness and silence’. Simply the existing moral and social structures which she rebelled against could not save Sylvia Plath from destruction.

Many questions arose from the institutional failures or from the failure of moral and political structures in different ages of human history, so did in modern age, and people, thinkers, men of literature, historian and philosophers including the commons reacted to these types of collapses in their own way and addressed those problems from various point of view. If we look at the recent history of the western world going back to early 20th century and so on, we find the tremendously moving history of First World War and Second World War that virtually created a hellish devastation for human beings and proved, at the same time, the failures of political ideology or structures that the western world had presumed to be right so far until the wars began (Lavine, 1984).

Even if modernism means rejecting the past, yet many modern writers pine for the past in their poetry in response to their disgust for the modern way of life which has brought up decline in human faith along with loss of serenity and peace of mind. Like Karl Marx, who was also very critical of Christianity(Lavine:1984), Ezra Pound’s comment on Christianity: as “Bastard Religion” rather focuses on the failures of Christianity as a powerful authority over the twentieth century western people to solve the crises created by usury system of which Ezra Pound was very critical at that time. Ezra Pound was fascinated by charismatic leadership of the fascist leader Mussolini and other because he thought that only the fascist would be able to pose a meaningful threat to the cotemporary oppressive capitalist system based on usury in the western world. It is as if Pound were looking for a powerful God in the form of a fascist ruler in the world where the faulty biblical Christian God had nothing to do. In the absence of God or an authority that could meaningfully touch or appeal individual self-consciousness, individual existence and survival of human existence became almost impossible in the modern western civilization. The existential trauma that characterized the contemporary human thought in the western world was well-exposed by Samuel Becket in *Waiting for Godot*, where Vladimir and Estragon were waiting for *Godot*, like other men and women in the western world, to come and save them from the eternal destruction. If ‘fragmented’ and ‘incomplete’ stories, as we see in Eliot’s “The Waste Land”, reflecting the mode of individual world of isolation, and the ‘fragmented’ absurdist forms of drama and fiction used by Becket and Franz Kafka are as response to the contradiction and divisions inherent in the late capitalist society (Barry, 2010), it is because of the lack of an authority on which men can rely to overcome the problems of isolation and contradiction. And it is the authority for which so called modernism longs for and searches in the past. In *The Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, the author presents nothing but a bloody and bleak landscape of the

capitalistic greed and exploitation by the white European in an isolated world of the Congo (Africa). Behind the so called honest motive of the European to civilize the black barbaric African, they hide their real business motive of *ivory*, a symbol of greed in the novel. What the narrator in the story sees through impressionistic style about white men is as follows:

“I have seen the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire; but, by all the stars! These were strong, lusty, red-eyed devils that swayed and drove men...” (The Heart of Darkness Part-1).

And Conrad also writes about white men’s aimless wandering in the Congo like “faithless pilgrims” who seemed to be praying to ivory rather than God, meaning worshipping their desires of greed:

“The word “ivory” rang in the air, was whispered, and was sighed. You would think they were praying to it.”

There is no God here except “Ivory”, a symbol of greed signifying “ills” of society.

“Heart of Darkness” actually presents the dark landscape of white men’s mind filled with dark forces of greed, cruelty and inhumanity against the actual bucolic dark, green landscape of African continent. Conrad shows how the European created hells on the green land of the Congo by their torture of the native black people. There was no order or authority or democracy (!) in that world. In *An Outpost of Progress* Conrad presents the same world of backwardness and ugliness using the ironic title: *An Outpost of Progress!* In *The Heart of Darkness* while backing in a place the narrator saw some black men termed as “criminals” dying:

“They were dying slowly-it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, and they were nothing earthly now, -- nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation.”

The question of the existence of God, meaning of life and death was still predominant issue in the field of philosophy in the early 19th century also in the early twentieth century from Kierkegaard, Nietzsche to Sartre as if western people were still struggling to find out the meaning of these issues.

Though many African natives are being killed in the Congo, many “millionaire bankers” and “Stock Brokers” are committing suicides in the USA and become news headlines because of economic depression.(Baym.2003, p.1077). The “loss of authority”(Baym,2003,p.1076) was deplored by many writers of contemporary America.

Ezra Pound’s liking for the troubadours or for the ancient writers and ancient culture, T.S. Eliot’s allusive lines on the mythical characters of the past in the poetry in relation with the crises of the modern period, W.B. Yeats’ admiration for, like Pound, the occult past and the land of Byzantine all show that a “cultural authority”(Davidson,2003,p. 57) was sought by the modern poets against the unruly forces of history. The constant reference by many modern poets to the past mythical character and scenario reflects the facts that those characters and that scenario of the past were livelier and more real with higher spirit of life in that bucolic background of the past than people living in the modern age with their every day hard and harsh reality in the so called materialistic and metropolitan background of tough buildings and big streets. James Thomson who has a direct influence on Eliot’s city poems (Brooke, 2003,p.86) writes about the pain and loneliness in city life in his poem, “The Doom of a City”:

The cords of sympathy which should have bound me
In sweet communication with earth’s brotherhood
I drew in tight and tighter still around me,
Strangling my lost existence for a mood.

The spirit of life in modern day society of capitalism and consumerism feels suffocated in the so called fummy atmosphere of restaurant where we are all (like) Prufrock in between of our everyday imbalance of mind and desire; and also like those women talking about artist Michel Angelo sounding empty words having no real value or worth, but talking rather for escaping from loneliness:

Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

Modern men are slaves to their desires like Prufrock and, therefore, create hells for them to live in complete shudder and uncertain convalescence. American Poet Robert Lowell (1917--1977) was shocked at commercial and the materialistic change that shook his native town Boston and transformed it from a green grassy field into a city of iron –bulldozer and cars with high rise buildings as a sign of capitalistic greed:

My hand draws back. I often sign still
for the dark downward and vegetating kingdom
of the fish and reptile. One morning last March,
I pressed against the new barbed and galvanized
fence on the Boston Common. Behind their cage,
yellow dinosaur steam shovels were grunting

as they cropped up tons of mush and grass
to gouge their underworld garage. (For The Union Dead)

In another poem, *Skunk Hour*, Lowell presents the decayed and contaminated landscape of voyeurism, lust and immorality similar to the world of Eliot created in “*The Waste Land*”. Against the previous bucolic background of life now in the time of modern urbanization and industrialization life is still empty and finds itself in the hell or in the midst of sepulcher as we find Stephan Dedalus in James Joyce’s *The Portrait of Artist as a Young Man*. Dublin with its buildings seemed to be a city of sepulcher to James Joyce just as Lowell finds his city as grave yard.

Lowell Writes:

One dark night,
my Tudor Ford climbed the hill’s skull,
I watched for love-cars. Lights turned down,
they lay together, hull to hull,
where the graveyard shelves on the town. . . .
My mind’s not right.

A car radio bleats,
‘Love, O careless Love’ I hear
my ill-spirit sob in each blood cell,
as if my hand were at its throat
I myself am hell,
nobody’s here--

Europe enters the modern period through the renaissance, which began in Italy in the 14th century. The renaissance was the effects of the ultimate failures of the different medieval socio-political structures including Christian church and its authority that failed to cater for people’s hope and aspirations. As a result, a transition was necessary and whole Europe saw a kind of transition from a dark superstitious religion based divine society into a rationalistic worldly society where God or divine power is no longer the sole authority over men but human reason (Evans, 2014 (web)). Though because of the renaissance the reformation movement began and finally came into being another sect into Christianity, i.e. Protestantism, it rather split people into two and also weakened their belief in religion. So religion –whether Catholicism or Protestantism--began to slip away from people, and gradually religion/Christianity became a formal ritualistic practice rather than an authority over them that can guide people to solve all problems of their life. In this way a secular rationalistic political system began to appear in which Divine authority is replaced by human reason as the only means to determine what is morally right and wrong for society. Though the tendency of avoiding religion virtually began with the *renaissance humanism*, it continued to be stronger and stronger with French Philosopher Descartes, Hobbes, Lock and other writers in the 18th century during the age of enlightenment (Barry, 2010, p.82).

Whether it was for the weakness of the bible or corruption of the men of church of the medieval age, people lost their confidence in religion; and as this gradually increased throughout the age of enlightenment of the 18th century when truly the modernism began and so on, people actually lost a foundation of values thus endangering themselves and their existence. As to the corruption of medieval church, its Popes and priests Machiavelli, the Italian philosopher of the Renaissance period, writes: “we Italians then, owe to the church for our being irreligious and corrupt” (Stump: p.196) .

Social Darwinism or evolution theory and other scientific theories caused a lot of damage to people’s belief in God. Especially, Darwin’s dictum: survival of the fittest; or the evolution theory goes against the biblical lesson of Human being’s one single root-the pair of Adam and Eve. Virtually Darwinism brought up animalism into human world against human universal brotherhood, which finally appeared in the First World War (1914) and the Second World War (1939) (Evera, summer, 1994). Nietzsche found in Darwinism nothing but bringing down human being to the level of Animals keeping no “distinction between human being and animals” (Stunph, p.392). Darwin only focused on the conflicting or quarrelsome nature of human beings rather than qualities of love and sympathy. Darwin perhaps forgets that love and sympathy are also active forces in both the world of human beings and nature or animals.

German Atheist Philosopher Nietzsche (1844-1900) foreshadows earlier in his writing the coming destruction of the people devoid of complete spiritual and religious spirit or devoid of moral foundation. He is famous for the saying, ‘God is dead’ (Lavine, p.324). He is the man who said, “The Last Christian (Jesus Christ: meaning also, true follower of Jesus Christ) died on the cross’. Now, what remains is the distorted form of Christianity which cannot save the western people from destruction. The following ominous lines, which actually reveal the

complete loss of “truth and values”(Lavine,P.325) from religious point of view, occur just few years before the First World War:

We have killed him.....you and I! Whiter are we moving now?...Does not night come upon us continually?(Lavine:324)

The “night” signifying destruction, as assumed by Nietzsche, really came to the westerners. In the First and the Second World War deaths of millions of people show us that people went back to the Hobbsian world of the state of nature where ‘might is right’ - human being fighting against human beings instead of the world of reason where all human beings should have respect for other people’s life and property. Virtually, First World War and Second World War proved the failure of human being’s too much faith in reason which actually had began in the enlightenment age of 18th century. Millions of human beings are killed in the two great wars not because of the lack of so called modernism or sophistication but the lack of true reason and a natural divine authority-independent of time, place and races-- over human beings.

It is an irony that sometimes people refers to *medieval barbarism* in the sense of disapproval, but why can’t we call the killing of millions innocent people in the two great World Wars as ‘modern day Barbarism’? Also, deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan in recent history show us how ‘Modern Barbaric’ men can be. This really shows the lack of authority and also failures of so called modern democracy. First World War and Second World War virtually represent the failures of human institutions based upon rationalism or human reason of the so called enlightenment era instead of a common and pure divine authority over human beings. And, recent history of Iraq and Afghan Wars not only reflects the failures of modern democracy and imperialistic greed but also uncertainty of a peaceful future world after modernism and post modernism era where people fell more alienated and lonely in spite of high sounding words of globalization and information technology or technology in any form whatsoever. The two wars in the late 20th century virtually represent that lack of authority the necessity of which was extremely felt by the early modern poets who had also mourned for the lost values in the modern world. However, modern writers sought for a cultural authority rather than a divine authority.

Prior to Nietzsche, Danish philosopher Kierkegaard actually felt an urge to return to that pure divine authority (Lavine: p.322-323) that had been breached earlier. After the renaissance, however, attempt was made to repair or reform the Christian faith through the Reformation movement, to avoid destruction and depression that was very imminent for the world, especially for the western world. During modernism unfortunately, the western world turned the true teaching of Jesus Christ and his character gradually into a mythical stature from the character of an apostle of God in line with the ancient Greek and Latin mythology. Christianity became just a myth (Baym, 2003, p.1079).

In the 19th century Kierkegaard’s and Nietzsche’s opposing views and conflicting outlook on religious faith and its necessity for modern men actually represent not only the growing conflict between individuals’ faith and faithlessness in the time but also the universal dilemma or struggle (the urge) of human beings in relation to men’s attempt in balancing between the mundane and the spiritual between the body and soul in general. It also represents the new polarization in cotemporary Europe or western society between the growing atheism and agnosticism on one hand and the spiritual urge of people on the other. The agnostic British poet Philip Larkin and religious Dylan Thomas well reflected these conflicting views. The irony was that the deformed, manipulated and interpolated Christian religion and its holy book, the Bible (“The most dangerous book on the face of the earth”-George Bernard Shaw) failed to fulfill the spiritual demand of people living in the age of science and technology. It had become clear earlier in the Victorian period when Arnold gave priority to poetry over the religion, Christianity, in his essay *The Study of Poetry*. Due to the absence of a meaningful, logical and scientific and pure divine authority that could shape the human reason to the right direction, disorder and discordance increased in human thought and mind. In modernism People fell into the same conflict between their own individual self consciousness of desire and an eternal universal self of divine authority, and finding no way of balancing between the two, men are becoming more and more restless and self-destructive, even in the midst of eye catching development of science and wide spread material progress. (The rate of suicide, crimes, and problems of alcoholism of any developed country opens the truth. That men are becoming more and more isolated and alienated in the modern world is true.

As a sign of modernism when, the industrial revolution changed the whole Europe and gradually the change also affected the US in the 19th century dehumanizing the masses with its material progress and development creating a huge gap between the reach and the poor, and when, exploitation of child labor was at its peak and human beings began to behave like machines, romanticism arose as an opponent force against the hard-dehumanized social structure. Kant’s “mind based’ philosophy (Lavine33) and the French revolution that resulted in Romanticism in Europe which claimed the need of human feelings and emotion and a spiritual comeback as began with William Black (a poem called “The Chimney Sweeper” by Black presents picture of industrialization).Finding no other alternative as cure to child labor exploitation in his time, William Black leaves some words of consolation for the oppressed children thus signifying the necessity of a divine power and social and economic justice at the same time. Romanticism is gone but the effects industrialization continues. In

the modern era presence of more sophisticated machinery creates more dehumanized atmosphere.

Karl Marx's ideas formed the basis of communism across Europe and a communist Revolution took place in Russia in 1917. Marx imagined of a world without God where men will be the God with dignity. His ideas of class struggle, and later communist atrocities against the enemies of communism, are the natural responses to inhuman western capitalism devoid of morality or faith in God, a response to spiritual and moral bankruptcy of capitalism even though communism itself failed to solve many crises. But the ultimate failures of atheistic communism in the western world or elsewhere rather increased the demand of more effective economic and political structure based on true justice and equality. The criticism of communism as was seen in the "Animal Farm" by Orwell so was seen the criticism of Capitalism in Miller's "Death of a Salesman". Because of the failures of communism capitalism has become stronger and final alternative to communism. So capitalism has now stopped to emphasize truth and justice over profit and greed. Perhaps, democracy has become more powerful and popular as an authority with a view to solving the crises of capitalistic greed and profit making tendency in relation to balancing the lack of truth and justice in the modern age.

However, democracy has failed to ensure or improve the socio-economic and political justice up to maximum in modern world, because democracy, though it can reform political institutions, cannot mould the personality of an individual as a whole spiritually. So, democracy has failed, is bound to be failed to solve all crises of modern world. Democracy can not be a full and infallible code of manners or authority.

Earlier in the 19th century when in America, Emerson and Henry David Thoreau and other romantic writers were concerned with excessive materialistic tendencies of people and as result these romantic authors began to propagate new type of spirituality with emphasis on simplicity and purity of individual souls as opposed to orthodox Christianity, (think about Emerson's "Over soul") again; in search of actually a pure divine authority that had been already destroyed by so called different scientific and philosophical theories.

A European transition from the middle age into modern world through the renaissance that began in the 14th century Italy created many Dr. Faustus afterward who, ignoring the essential divine authority in the limited life span of their life, declared a war against the vast eternal power of unlimited time with unlimited questions in the eternity. And, finding no answers to these questions at all from their weakest power of reason they created different false and confusing ideas which caused a lot of injuries to people's faith and confidence. As Descartes, French rationalist philosopher of the 17th century, said about contemporary education and his own:

"From my childhood I lived in a world of books and... I was eager to learn from them. But as soon as I had finished the course of my studies... I found myself saddled with so many doubts and errors that I seemed to have gained nothing" (Lavine:1984, 91)."

Faustus of *Doctor Faustus* by Marlow represents the true spirit of the renaissance. Dr. Faustus who bore extreme desire for limitless knowledge and finally sold his soul to the devils in return for worldly pleasures or sensuality with the power of 'black magic' virtually represents the modern weaponry used in the First World War and Second World War and Faustus himself represents all modern scholars and knowledgeable persons or all modern people who had so far deemed to have a vision of a utopian world based on their reason but finally were disillusioned and were despaired like Faustus after the war. 'Despair' was rather deepened in the modern era in spite of too many 'devils' or things that modern men possess and enjoy in the consumer society. Moreover, the scientific knowledge of 18th and 19th century Europe with the same desire like Faustus to control the whole world, having finished the relationship with the divine authority, brought up physical destruction and psychological trauma for mankind with permanent 'despair'. Renaissance *humanism* devoid of spirituality turned human beings gradually into dehumanized 'cold machinery' reflected by the Futurism, an art movement of the modern period, having ruthless power to destroy as mankind saw it in the First and the Second World War. Just as Faustus responded to the call of *the bad angel* rather than *the good angel* thereby bringing his own destruction, in the same way the western powers responded to the *social devils*, that is, the bad angels such as usury, capitalism, imperialism and so called western narrow view of nationalism as of Hitler and other, instead of a global value of humanity or divine authority. Driven by own desires and passion Faustus, who neglected religion or divine authority, brought up individual sufferings and destruction, but on the other hand, all the war mongers of the 20th century during the First and Second World Wars and false socio political structures in Europe driven by their false notions and ideas without a pure common authority created widespread destruction and despair for and all individuals in the west and other parts of the world.

If we look at modern and post-modern era of the western society, the craving for authority is equally felt in inside and outside of individual and social life as well as in literature. The absence of 'authority' and "celebration of fragmentation" (Barry, 2010, p.81) in post modern literature rather show the problems in their larger shape and in a greater scale. The rate of suicide, crimes and violence and murder, and the problems of incest, prostitution and alcoholism all signify the inner weakness of any strong developed country and the lack of authority in the western world or elsewhere. The questions of pornography, lesbianism and debate on the necessity of gay marriage in the western world or elsewhere have added to these problems. All these issues or problems signify nothing but the fatally *fragmented* and more *isolated* world of individual human consciousness

in fuming atmosphere of an uncertain world without strong values. Social ills which are just present characteristically in modern era are rather being multiplied in postmodern era without clarifying its final destination. Lowell's "Man and Wife" presents the domestic crisis of husband and wife due to manic depression and alcoholism of the author, as we see in O'Neil's bleak drama *A Long Day's Journey into Night*.

On the other hand, present western hegemony all over the world, along with their propaganda of democracy and supremacy of science and technology, is the result of the lack of their global wisdom in the true sense of the word *wisdom*, which insists on the Socratic notion that "true wisdom consist in knowing that you know nothing" (Lavine: p.15) in opposition to that hegemonic notion of knowledge that contradicts with global sharing of knowledge of all human beings outside western territory regarding culture and religion or moral values besides knowledge of science and technology. With their supremacy of science and technological knowledge the western world is trying to create an authority in the present world with the same hegemony and sense of supremacy that was present even in the mind of Hitler in a different form, bringing the world into the pit of hell. The western society is just hiding the greed of capitalism under the color and curtain of different slogans just as Hitler himself hid his greed for the empire under the disguise of the supremacy of *Aryan* German race or nationalism. So again the future of the world is foggy and uncertain just like pre First World War and Second World War conditions. The democracy cannot be a savior of mankind as we have seen already in the world phenomena in the recent history. Definitely, a true democracy based on justice and equality with full concern for global human dignity independent of race, color, caste and nations contradicts with the present "devalued world of commodity of modern Europe" (Bowen-45) and western capitalism and consumerism. Here lies the root of problem for today's modernism. So it is going to be the same story--- story of wars all over the world, though Hitler is no more as one universal and just authority independent of race, color and creed, is still absent from the western society and from the world as a whole.

Conclusion:

As Barry writes, "*postmodernism* stresses the uniquely fragmented nature of much contemporary experience" (32), in the same way Feminism shows signs of dissolving into so called gender studies, with gay and lesbian texts coming into being as distinct literature. Fragmentation which was an ill-sign for the modern literature and time is celebrated by postmodernism with the appearance of gay and lesbianism which are ill-signs for the modern and post modern era reflecting the terrible challenge to the human civilization. But modernism has no answer to this distortion of individual consciousness. Furthermore, the characteristics of *rootlessness* and *exile* in post modern and post colonial literature reflect the more global disintegration of families and more fragmentation of individuals and individual's consciousness. Therefore, If men continue the development of science and technology through human cloning and robotics, the future relationship of human being could be more fragmented and broken, and if one day men would marry a robot instead of a human boy or girl and commit suicide for the love of a robot, what would do the modernism except leaving a way for that to happen and witness the ultimate fragmentation of human beings? Literature of that time would be also different with more sophisticated language with sophisticated characters. Still, the question of authority that is felt necessary in the modern and postmodern era to cure the society's ill remains fresh and lively. We have to wait for the answer as to what authority the mankind is going to follow in the future

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