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ROMANTICISM, MODERNISM, AND BEYOND: A REVIEW OF TRANSFORMATIVE LITERARY MOVEMENTS AND THEIR ENDURING INFLUENCE ON ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Literary trends such as Romanticism and Modernism, together with their derivatives, have largely shaped the development of English literature. When romanticism first emerged in the late 18th century, it avoided the rationalism of the Enlightenment in favor of passion, individuality, and nature. Modernism also experimented with narrative methods and even took up fragmentation in response to disenchantment in the early twentieth century. Postmodernism, feminist literature, and postcolonial literature have further explored themes of identity, power, and representation of society. This paper will seek to explore how Modernism, Romanticism, and its derivatives have shaped and contributed to English literature in the modern world. Since Romanticism through Modernism and even later, the literature and theoretical perspectives that are considered significant were examined qualitatively and juxtaposed. The study examines the impact of these movements on cultural discourse, thematic issues, and the form of storytelling. The theory states that Romanticism and Modernism precondition the development of modern literary innovation and the subversion of traditional wisdom. The legacies of these movements lie in the fact that the issues of individuality, alienation, and opposition to the existing systems of society remain in modern literature. Modern literature is still affected by modernism and

Romanticism. The philosophic and stylistic developments resulting from these movements are further assimilated into the new genres and the digital environment, ensuring their constant application in international literature's new and swiftly evolving landscape.

KEYWORDS: Romanticism, Modernism, Literary Movements, Narrative Experimentation, Contemporary Literature, Postmodernism, Cultural Identity

1. INTRODUCTION

The English literature has been greatly affected by the emergence of several literary trends; each of them created a response to the sociopolitical and cultural situations of its era. Two of the most significant of these movements are Romanticism and Modernism, which not only shifted the direction of literary expression but also transformed the meaning of the artistic production (Siddiq, 2023). Romanticism was a reaction to the industrialization and reason of the Enlightenment, and appeared at the end of the 18th century. It created a literary tradition that facilitated human freedom and creativity through the importance of emotion, individualism, the *sublime*, and a close connection with nature (Ramadani & Shishko, 2024). In contrast, Modernism, which was formed in the early 20th century, reacted to the disappointment of World War I and strived to abandon the traditional forms and turn to experimentation, fragmentation, and exploration of subjective experiences (Golban, 2024). Not only did these movements change literature in their own period, but they have also remained an influence on later literary traditions, with their impact on the works of present writers, as well as changing how literature is received, criticized, and understood (Childs, 2016). Romanticism and Modernism Literature is available in large numbers and a great variety of scholarly domains, such as philosophy, cultural studies, and literary criticism. Academics have discussed the political, philosophical, and artistic motivations of the movements and have also documented the manner in which such movements have led to an assortment of literary genres (Eling & Ogwal, 2024). Poetic and philosophical ideals of Romanticism have been discussed by critics like M.H. Abrams and Harold Bloom, among others, who, in Romanticism, stressed the emotional center of the individual and the fight against the mechanical worldview of the Enlightenment. Modernism, on the other has been well studied through the writings of such writers as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and T.S. Elliot (Wasser, 2016). Such acceptance of fragmented, nonlinear forms and denial of conventional narrative formats are also found in such critics as Lionel Trilling and Clement Greenberg, who wrote on Modernism. There has also been a lot of debate on the broader impact of these movements on the development of literary theory, such as poststructuralism, structuralism, and feminist and postcolonial criticism. The body of existing literature analysis brings out the relevance of these movements in contemporary literature studies and shows their relevance in revolutionizing English literature

(Efrizah, 2025). It is not a secret that Romanticism and Modernism have had an indelible influence on English literature, yet little is known about the exact ways the literary movements continue to influence the way it is done nowadays. Much of the present study focuses on the historical and ideological origins of these movements and often fails to provide an account of their long-term literary impact (Sadigova, 2025). Further work needs to be done to establish the effects of Romantic and Modernist themes, techniques, and philosophies on subsequent literary traditions, as well as not only upon the writings of a specific writer but the history of English literature taken as a whole. Moreover, additional studies are required to learn how subsequent movements, such as postmodernism and postcolonialism, have influenced the literary canon relative to their forebears (Küçükali, 2025).

The objective of this study is to examine the transformative nature of Romanticism, Modernism, and their aftermath in shaping English literature. By focusing on their core themes, literary techniques, and philosophical foundations, this study aims to illuminate the long-lasting effects of these movements on contemporary literary forms and genres. Through this exploration, the study seeks to demonstrate how the innovations of the past continue to influence modern narratives, from the structure of novels to poetic experimentation. The broader aim is to highlight how the legacies of Romanticism and Modernism remain integral to the understanding of literary development in the 21st century. Additionally, this study will consider the influence of these movements on new literary genres and forms, including postcolonial and feminist literature, as well as the role of digital narratives in continuing the tradition of literary experimentation. By addressing these objectives, the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the ongoing relevance of these transformative movements in the shaping of English literature.

2. ROMANTICISM (LATE 18TH CENTURY TO MID-19TH CENTURY)

2.1. *Historical Context*

Romanticism as a cultural and philosophical movement emerged in response to the Enlightenment and sociopolitical changes of the era at the end of the 18th century. The Enlightenment emphasized reason, scientific rationality, and a mechanical view of the cosmos. Nevertheless, the social institutions began to vary with the increasing pace of industrialization, and most people felt disenfranchised and estranged (Golban, 2021). This

period of turbulence caused the re-evaluation of the human condition as the French Revolution and the rise of nationalism emerged. In response to dogmatic principles of the Enlightenment, Romanticism was developed based on personal expression, emotion, and intuition.

The movement was also greatly influenced by the stretching of democratic concepts and the development of the middle classes (Cleary & Cleary, 2021).

The major political transformations, as well as the industrial growth, caused a sense of crisis that questioned the modern concepts of progress and reason. Amid the rapid technical innovation, the interest in nature, the sublime, and subjective human experience that were foundations of romanticism reflected the need to rediscover a sense of transcendence and spirituality that had been lost (Raj & Surender, 2025).

2.1.1. Core Themes and Characteristics

Romanticism can be defined as a deep respect for the intensity of human passion and imagination. Among the main themes are:

- Emotion vs. Reason: Passion was taken as the central means of experiencing the world through the works of Romantic writers and thinkers who refused to employ the Enlightenment approach of relying on reason. The external expression of this revolt against rationalism was worked that placed emotion and intuition, and personal sensibility above reason and empirical reasoning (Savonius-Wroth, 2022).
- Nature: The natural environment gained popularity in Romantic literature. Nature was also seen as a means of moral guidance, inspiration, and solace, and was often presented as an escape from the malefic effects of industrial civilization. Romantic poets portrayed nature as a powerful and glorious phenomenon that transcended the understanding of human beings and provided a stronger connection to the divine (Rosane, 2022).
- Individualism: Romanticism promoted individual liberty. A great emphasis was given to the subjectivity of human experience, individual freedom, and self-expression by the authors. It concentrated on the inner world of the person in terms of his/her feelings, desires, and troubles, often in opposition to societal rules (Habib *et al.*, 2024).
- The Sublime: Romantic writers were

fascinated with the concept of the sublime, which refers to experiences that can arouse astonishment, fear, or awe. The sublime was often related to nature, in particular, vast and beautiful scenes. It was considered that the sublime experience can allow one to tie with something great and transcend daily existence (McKeon, 2023).

- Idealism and Escapism: Romanticism most often retreated into myth, folklore, and imagination as it offered a romanticized image of life. Accepting notions of the ideal and the fanciful as an alternative to the bleak realities of modernity, the movement served as a way out of the industrialized world (Adhikary, 2024).

2.2. Key Figures and Works

The Romantic movement in English literature was defined by several important individuals and works:

- William Wordsworth: Wordsworth was a Romantic in his work, particularly in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). His focus on nature, the emotional connection between the person and the world, and the idea of the common man as the source of inspiration broke down the formal strictures of earlier schools of literature (Jordan, 2023).
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge: All of these supernatural, mystical, and imaginative aspects of human experience were explored in Coleridge's poems, like *Kubla Khan* (1816) and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798). His and Wordsworth's poetry brought about the concepts of the supernatural and unnatural and formed the foundation of Romanticism in England (Kalytiak-Davis, 2024).
- John Keats: The poems of Keats, i.e., *Ode to a Nightingale* (1819) and *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (1819), have been distinguished by lush sensuous imagery, idealism, and a theme addressing the fleeting character of beauty and life. These evoke the Romantic interest in transience and the pursuit of the eternal truths, which his works tend to capture.
- Mary Shelley: Among the most significant Romantic writings, Shelley remains partly under the same title of *Frankenstein* (1818) that discusses the dangers of nature and human passion neglect, and the outcomes of uninhibited scientific aspiration. The greater interest of Romanticism in the dark aspects of human experience is also evident in the fact that the novel centers on the sublime and the

monstrous (Camarda, 2021).

- Lord Byron: The Romanticism values of independence and a spirit of rebellion became closely intertwined in the poetry of Byron and particularly in the work known as *Childe Harold Pilgrimage* (1812 - 1818). His writing often paid attention to the tragic, the heroic, and the weak sides of the human condition, imitating the Romantic model of the so-called Byronic hero.

2.3. Impact On English Literature

Romanticism broke the existing literary norms and transformed them, which massively affected English literature. It marked a counter-position to the neoclassical ideals of restraint, reason, and order that had dominated the 18th century.

The Romantic movement of emotion, nature, and individualism led to a new literary movement that valued personal experience and a personal sense of view (Azam et al., 2025).

The Romantic movement also ushered in a shift in the form of poetry, where freer verse and a more lyrical and impromptu style emerged. The conception of the poet as visionary evolved as poets began to think of their work as embodying a personal, emotional reality and not merely as some exercise in formal art (Sharma, 2025). Besides, Romanticism also influenced the book and the play as well as poetry.

Authors began to experiment with narrative forms and with Gothic, exotic, and supernatural elements, as we can see with the writings of Mary Shelley and others. The concept of the artist as an individual who could not have existed in society also shifted the perception of literature that leading to an enhanced exploration of personal consciousness and emotional depth (Mammadova, 2024).

Romanticism would provide the challenge to Enlightenment reason that would make the following developments of Modernism possible, about the investigation of fragmented, subjective sensations.

Yet even Modernism was to carry these principles to their logical conclusion, the Romantic tradition was still there, providing a rich store of ideas and literary devices which would influence generations yet unborn writers (Li & Li, 2025).

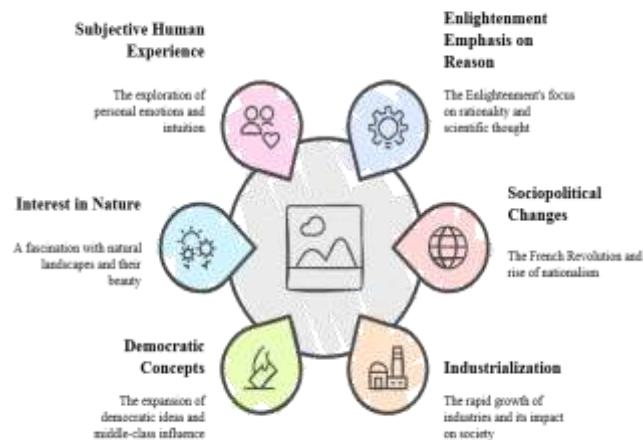


Figure 1: Factors Leading To Romanticism.

Figure 1 shows the causes that gave rise to Romanticism, with 6 major forces identified: social and cultural shifts, intellectual and artistic trends, international outlooks, industrialization, environmental issues, and systemic changes.

3. MODERNISM (EARLY TO MID-20TH CENTURY)

3.1. Historical Context

The emergence of Modernism in the early 20th century was influenced by great political, social, and technical shifts in society. The world has gone through a time of radical transformation with two world Wars, the rapid industrialization process, and the disappointment caused by the collapse of long-established social institutions. The First World War (1914-1918) was one of the most significant times in the evolution of the Modernist movement. Deep alienation and cynicism dominated the European culture due to the heavy death toll and the awareness of the limits of human rationality and progress (Sorensen et al., 2024). Modernist writers were responding to the disintegration of traditional values and positions and the sense of disarray and splintering that seemed to become the order of the day. Moreover, the industrial revolution and urbanization caused a radical transformation of the landscape and made people lose connection with the rural landscape that they were familiar with. Since the traditional narratives could no longer apparently render the disjointed nature of reality in the early 20th century, Modernism became a discarding of the previous literary modes and a scramble to find new ways to represent the complexities of contemporary experience (Allahverdiyev, 2025).

Core Themes and Characteristics

Modernism is frequently characterized by its experimentation with novel storytelling approaches and its departure from historical norms. This movement is encapsulated by several fundamental themes and traits:

- **Alienation:** A sense of alienation or estrangement of the individual, the society, or nature is one of the prevalent themes of Modernist literature. Writers explored the inner mechanics of the mind and the relationship of a person to an increasingly fractured and impersonal world. This alienation is shown by the disillusionment of the ages, whereby the characters are disinterested in the ideals of their societies (Bell, 2025).
- **Fragmentation:** Modernism is characterized by the broken view of reality. In non-linear and disunified stories, the narrative of the stories is often fragmented, illustrating the disunity in the structure and the content. Discontinuous stories, fragmented speech, and changing perceptions are all used to demonstrate how experience is fragmented. The tendency to represent the diversity of opinions and realities instead of the unity of one, consistent narrative is a usual one (Alkarim, 2025).
- **Stream-of-Consciousness:** Among the most innovative approaches applied by Modernist writers is the use of stream-of-consciousness narrative that attempts to reflect the continuous stream of thoughts and impressions as they emerge in the mind. This approach, which often dismissed traditional methods in storytelling in favor of a more fluid and messier interaction with reality, was used in exploring the human mind and the depth and complexity of it (Shaxzada, 2024).
- **Rejection of Traditional Forms:** The modernist writers were determined to rise beyond the constraints of the traditional literary genres, including the rigid structures of the 19th-century poetry or novel. The desire to create new forms that better reflected the splintered reality of modern life found its expression in the operation of symbolic language, non-linear time frames, and fragmented narrative structure (Halim, 2025).
- **Experimentation with Narrative Techniques:** Modernist writing is unrivaled in the level of innovation. Some of the devices used by authors included non-sequential timelines, a change in the point of view, and unreliable

narrators. Such techniques were supposed to give readers a more subjective, introspective view of the world and to challenge their reading habits.

3.2. Key Figures and Works

Several writers were crucial in the definition and development of modernism, each offering unique viewpoints and aesthetics to the movement:

- **James Joyce:** The work of Joyce is an example of Modernist novelty, in particular *Ulysses* (1922). The book provides a depth, often disintegrated, insight into human consciousness as it explores the inner world of its characters by employing the stream-of-consciousness techniques. Besides echoing Modernist anxieties of modernising traditional forms of literature and engaging with myth in a modern context, the structure of the novel suggests the *Odyssey* of Homer (Fogarty, 2023).
- **Virginia Woolf:** *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) represent the key works of Modernism that discuss time, memory, and consciousness. The techniques of the stream-of-consciousness narrative and her attempt to explore the inner psychological life of her characters as well as her characters indicate Modernist concerns of subjectivity and time of collapse.
- **T.S. Eliot:** Eliot emphasized fragmentation in such works as *The Waste Land* (1922), which shows a dismembered, collage-like form that sums up the spiritual carnage and hopelessness of the postwar period. Similarly to the Modernist desire to reinterpret and reshape the traditional literary and cultural heritage, the work by Eliot is renowned due to the use of myth, allusion, and symbolism, the use of which was based on a range of cultures (Jmukhadze, 2023).
- **Ezra Pound:** Pound was a significant component in the evolution of Imagism, a Modernist movement, which focused on linguistic economy, accuracy, and clarity. His texts, such as *The Cantos* (1917-1970), are a mixture of a very disorganized, strongly stylized style of poetry and classical allusions. The Modernist movement of making it new was captured in Pound when he exhorted others to abandon tradition and to explore form and substance.

3.3. Impact On English Literature

Modernism changed the structure and content of English literature radically. The movement discouraged formal rules and linear narratives and led to the creation of new literary forms that more faithfully described the complexity and indeterminacy of life in modern life. Writers such as Joyce and Woolf broke the standard novel framework through their disjointed narrative techniques and stream of consciousness manner of writing, and influenced subsequent generations of writers who adopted and developed the techniques further (Neziri, 2023). Moreover, the exploration of self-identity, alienation, and subjective reality that dates back to Modernism impacted literary texts and cultural discourse on a long-term basis. The modernist works are deeply concerned with the political and existential problems of the 20th century due to the focus on the individual consciousness and the disillusionment and disintegration that were depicted in the works and represented the social changes (Safarova, 2025). Modernism had immense influence on the later literary movements, such as postmodernism, which, in turn, explored further the destruction of narrative and the rejection of elevated, universal truth (Öç, 2025). The emphasis on creativity and experimentation that modernism brought to poetry resulted in the creation of new forms and strategies that moved beyond the formal forms of verse found in the 19th century and explored language in a more straightforward and laconic manner. Specifically, the works by Eliot and Pound contributed to redefining poetry as an art form capable of incorporating the old traditions and blending them with the new sensibilities to allow new poetic creativity. All in all, the influence of Modernism on English literature is experienced today. Its critiques of historical tradition, philosophical interest in existential problems, and experimentation with narrative structure motivated the literary world of the 20th and 21st centuries. Modernism is one of the most significant periods in English writing history, as the following authors took and altered most of the strategies used by the movement (Tu, 2025).

3.4. Postmodernism (Mid-20th Century to Present)

3.4.1. Historical Context

The hypocrisy of Modernism and the fundamental transformation of philosophy and society that took place in the world arena gave rise to the development of postmodernism in the mid-20th century. Beyond the middle of the 20th century, modernism was exhausted by its emphasis on

alienation and fragmentation and the discarding of conventional forms. Consequently, a new expression required an expression that considered the increased complexity and heterogeneity of modern life, and cultural fatigue (Husni, 2024).

Significant political and social changes, such as the decolonization movement, the Civil Rights movement, and the rise of global capitalism, also inspired a re-thinking of existing discourses. Postmodernism came at a time when the traditional meaning and structures of authority were increasingly being questioned. Concepts that emphasized a skepticism of larger stories and the glorification of divided identities also became widespread during the post-World War II world, marked by technological and media, and communication breakthroughs. The manner in which postmodernism engaged with popular culture, technology, and mass media reflected the enhanced interdependence of global cultures along with the growing influence of media saturation and consumerism. Postmodernism saw that reality is subjective and influenced by language and cultural setting, and discarded the narrow confines of Modernism and adopted contradiction, pluralism, and relativism (Aftab et al., 2025).

3.5. Core Themes and Characteristics

A unique combination of ideas and stylistic advancements that defy both Modernist and conventional narrative norms defines postmodernism. These characteristics show a change in attitude toward accepting ambiguity, irony, and diversity:

Metafiction: One of the most important strategies of postmodernism is metafiction, in which the work refers to its fictitiousness. The line between fact and fiction is often distorted as the authors remind the readers that the novel is a fiction. This self-referential approach to the idea of the traditional concept of a consistent, objective reality forces readers to recognize that tales are generated. An example is the 1968 book *Lost in the Funhouse* by John Barth, which discusses the artifice of narrative (Barlow, 2023).

Pastiche: Postmodern writings commonly employ parody, the appropriation and appropriation of elements of other genres, styles, and cultural references. This mixture of forms and allusions raises questions about the notion of original invention, and underscores the degree to which all works are intertextual. The concept of postmodernism involves acceptance of the presence of different types of influence and the refusal to accept the single authoritative discourse of culture in terms of

pastiche. The strategy is witnessed in works like *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) by Thomas Pynchon, in which the plot of the work amalgamates literary forms, pop culture allusions, and conspiracy theories.

Playfulness with Form and Genre: To deliberately break the expectations, the postmodern works are mostly playfully experimental with form and genre. Traditional plot development, such as non-narrative features, such as pictures or footnotes, or a mixture of multiple story formats, may be challenged by an author. It is to such a jocular attitude that postmodernism can explore the boundaries of literature by questioning the very simple rules that dictate the manner in which stories are to be told. Among them, one can distinguish *House of Leaves* (2000) by Mark Z. Danielewski, where nonlinear narration methods and unconventional structure create an incredible and bewildering reading experience (Abreu Mendoza & Solanki, 2025).

Skepticism and Irony: Postmodernism is skeptical about ideologies, totalizing theories, and grand narratives. It brings into the foreground the relativity of all interpretations and challenges the existence of objective truth or universal meaning. The central element of this skepticism is irony since postmodern literature often adopts an ironic attitude about its literary conventions, social ideals, and its subject matter. The purpose of irony is to subvert made structures of meaning and authority. This is especially popular with *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) by Kurt Vonnegut, as the author uses sarcastic detachment and black humor to attack war and its outrageous nature.

Cultural Relativism: Postmodernism is against the notion of having universal truths and advocates the concept of cultural relativism, according to which every opinion and every civilization is equal. The problem is frequently debated in the frames of feminism and queer theory, and postcolonialism, which speak about voices that were not called by name and alternative discourses. To leave space for a diversity of cultural manifestations, writers seek to disrupt Western dominant discourses. The best example of this relativistic approach would be the example of *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie (1981), which provides multiple perspectives of postcolonial identity through a combination of magical realism and Indian history (Rather & Mondal, 2025).

3.5.1. Key Figures and Works

In literature, postmodernism has been defined and shaped by several writers and works:

Thomas Pynchon: *Gravity's Rainbow* by Pynchon

1973) is a postmodern classic book. It is a mixture of historical events, fragmentary and convoluted narratives, absurdist comedy, and conspiracy theories. The fact that the novel is incoherent with no complete, unifying interpretation should be viewed as the postmodern rebuff of the linear narrative and big stories.

Jeanette Winterson: An example of a significant postmodern text is *The Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) by Winterson, which represents both the fictitious presentation of the coming-of-age experience and elements of autobiography. The unconventional plots and examination of identity and sexuality are postmodern in their concerns with the conventionality of culture and gender norms, and the self-conscious nature of the setting and style of the novel also indicate postmodernism's interest in unusual stories (Modrzewska, 2025).

Salman Rushdie: To explore postcolonial identity and the complexities of modern India, Rushdie, in the novel *Midnight Children* (1981), incorporates historical fiction and magic realism in his work, combining different narrative modes of storytelling and cultural references. Diversity and openness to differences are seen in the novel using magic, metafiction, and many voices, which is one of the most striking examples of postmodernism.

Margaret Atwood: Among the most famous works of postmodern literature are *The Handmaid Tale* (1985) by Atwood, who conveys the problem of gender, power, and control in a totalitarian society by combining the problems of feminism and dystopian fiction. The book presents an allegory, science fiction, and a realistic story, and is a collection of criticism of social institutions (De, 2023).

3.5.2. Impact on English Literature

There has been a great influence of postmodernism on modern English literature that has altered both structure and content. Its challenge to traditional narrative structures has inspired authors to explore non-linear narratives, broken perspectives, and metafictional techniques. Due to the emphasis on cooperation, intertextuality, and the idea that meaning depends on the perception of a reader, which is often placed on postmodern writing, the movement has also led to some doubting the very idea of authorship (Adhikary, 2024). Moreover, cultural relativism and the exploration of the underrepresented voices in postmodernism have transformed the English literary canon to encompass diverse cultural accounts and perspectives in literature. Evolution of postcolonial literature, feminist literature, and queer narratives, all of them

incorporating counter-narratives to the traditional Western literary canon, is also an indicator of this shift. Postmodernism has also influenced modern authors in such genres as science fiction, fantasy, and even graphic novels (where boundaries between genres are often unclear and the role of the reader is more performative) by deconstructing traditional categories and playfully tackling form in its creative approach. Consequently, postmodernism has promoted the ever-present experimentation and reinterpretation that are adding to the cultural significance of literature along with its aesthetic effect (Mammadova, 2024).

3.6. Other Transformative Movements Beyond Modernism

3.6.1. Feminist Literature

Feminist literature was born as a powerful movement in literary studies as a result of the desire to analyze and challenge the gendered dynamics of power and representation in literature. The primary theme of the feminist critique of classic literary canonization was the marginalization or the stereotyping of the views and experiences of women. Feminist writers sought to bridge this gap by producing narratives that focused on the perspectives of women, the sufferings of women, and the power of women (Ramadani & Shishko, 2024). The feminist literature has impacted the perspective of the narrative greatly; it has altered the manner of depiction of female characters from a simple one-dimensional and passive element to a complex, multidimensional personality who is agentic, autonomous, and subjective. Writers such as Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, and later writers such as Margaret Atwood and Toni Morrison explored the interrelatedness of gender with other social and political classifications such as race, class, and sexual orientation. Whereas the patriarchal power of the female body and voice was disapproved of in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) by Atwood, *A Room of One's Own* (1929) by Woolf championed the efforts of women to achieve independence in life and writing. In the same spirit, the novel *Beloved* (1987) by Toni Morrison examined the dynamics of African American identities by examining how history, gender, and race affect the memory of an individual and that of the society (Eling & Ogwal, 2024). The feminist literary movement also contributed to the reconsideration of the narrative forms, especially in terms of subverting the traditional gender roles, nonlinear narrative, and fragmented form. Female sexuality, resistance, and empowerment became the central themes of feminist writing, and they

transformed literary landscapes and gave a more complicated and varied portrayal of female lives.

3.6.2. Postcolonial Literature

Being devoted to the peculiarities of cultural identity, memory, and power relations within the postcolonial world, the postcolonial literature provides a critical analysis of the impacts of colonialism on colonizers and colonized. The works of writers like V.S. Naipau, Jean Rhys, and Chinua Achebe reveal the struggles to achieve identity, freedom, and cultural reclamation in the former countries of colonialism, thus offering significant insights into the post-colonial domination (Sadigova, 2025). In the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Achebe raises the issue of the African civilization before colonialism and the subsequent disintegration that occurred when the colonialists claimed the territory, noting the opposition between European imperialism and African culture. Like *Jane Eyre*, *The Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) by Jean Rhys offers a prelude in understanding the perspective of the so-called madwoman in the attic, Bertha Mason, and critically analyzes the impacts of racial discrimination and colonialism. Key themes in the book by Rhys are identity, alienation, and the trauma of being a woman in a patriarchal society and a colonial subject (Sorensen et al., 2024). The postcolonial motifs of alienation and dislocation in a world that has been transformed by colonial rule are echoed in *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) by Naipal, which is concerned with the problems that people in the Caribbean face in their attempt to build a new identity and location in the new post-colonial society. Postcolonial literature asks not only about the implications of colonialism on the cultural psyche, but it also criticizes the legacies of imperialism, frequently addressing aspects of language, class, race, and social inequality. The movement has had a great impact on the global literary canon through the provision of multiple voices, which have countered the mainstream Western discourses and demanded inclusion of voices and narratives that had been left out or suppressed in the past (Rather & Mondal, 2025).

3.7. Ecocriticism

Viewing the interaction of literature and the environment with the consideration of the ways literary works represent nature and environmental issues, ecocriticism was first used in the late 20th century. This movement came up due to increasing environmental awareness and concerns about climate change, ecological destruction, and

sustainability. Through representation, symbolism, and narrative, literary works address environmental issues. Ecocriticism tries to explore the ways literature mirrors the human perception of nature and how it forms their perceptions (Neziri, 2023). Ecocritical literary techniques were enabled by such writers as Rachel Carson, whose 1962 book Silent Spring raised awareness of the dangers of using pesticides. The reciprocal relationship between humans and nature is also stressed in the fictional novels of Barbara Kingsolver in The Poisonwood Bible (1998) and J.R.R. Tolkien in The Lord of the Rings (1954-1955), which often explore how human actions impact nature. When concerned with such topics as the protection of biodiversity, the impacts of the growth of human industry, and the ethics of environmental justice, ecocritical analysis explores how literature may contribute to building environmental awareness (Halim, 2025). The historical destruction of the environment at the hands of colonialism through the exploitation of people and soil is also something that postcolonial literature and ecocriticism touch upon. The analysis of the ecological themes in literature helps to better understand the connection between humans and the environment, and it introduces the discussion on the topics of sustainability, conservation, and human responsibility towards the land. The ongoing geological epoch, which is observed through the lens of the human impact on the Earth, is gaining increasing popularity as this trend keeps gathering steam in the twenty-first century (Rosane, 2022).

3.8. Digital Literature

The digital literature field was an outcome of the emergence of new methods of narration caused by the creation of digital technology. This transformation covers an array of literary genres that incorporate digital tools and media, like interactive narratives, electronic poetry, video game narratives, and hypertext fiction. Digital literature challenges the view that literature is a fixed, text-based work by exploring the boundaries between the existing literary genres and the recently emerged technical media. Hypertext fiction, such as *The Afternoon, a Story* (1990) by Michael Joyce, provides a more interactive experience through the use of hyperlinks to allow readers to follow non-sequitur narrative development; the reader determines the direction and progression of the narrative. Writers such as Jennifer Egan in *Black Box* (2012) and others in interactive fiction and games use digital platforms to engage people in multi-layered, immersive storytelling forms that extend beyond traditional

linear narratives (Cleary & Cleary, 2021). Other subjects in digital literature are globalization, virtual identities, and the influence of digital technology in social relations. The picture of the virtual worlds, social networking sites, and digital environments has gained popularity in contemporary writings as a way to offer new insights into the connection among identity, technology, and society. Digital literature examines the potential of digital space to reflect fragmented identities, virtual realities, and the ongoing circulation of information in a globalized world, whereas the traditional processes of storytelling often presuppose print media. It also emphasizes the interaction relationship between the text and the reader, which is of a dynamic nature. There is no doubt that the role of digital literature in transforming the definition of a story and its relationship with the reader will only expand along with the emerging technologies, which will offer innovative ways of narrating tales in the twenty-first century (McKeon, 2023).

4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ROMANTICISM AND MODERNISM

4.1. Philosophical And Ideological Differences

The literary movements of modernism and romanticism were radically different ideological and philosophical philosophies, despite both of them being concerned with the social changes of their time. The romanticism that had its premises in the idealistic vision of the world that made its initial appearance in the late 18th century placed much importance on the significance of emotion, intuition, and subjective experience of the individual (Öç, 2025). Enlightenment hurt Romantic philosophers since they felt that philosophy placed more emphasis on reason and thus constrained and skewed the greater truths in human existence. The movement offered a way to escape the industrialized and mechanical world by exalting nature, the sublime, and the ability to imagine as ways of transcending. Despite the political instability and social struggle, Romanticism basically opined about human capability. It was believed that individual creativity could be used to unveil deeper truths and that the spiritual and emotional realms were preferable to the material. Modernism, the movement of the early 20th century, was, however, much more pessimistic than this, influenced in part by the despair that followed World War I, and the Romantic optimism of its advocates. Modernist philosophers believe that the world is incoherent, fragmented, and without a sense. This philosophical approach was brought about by a profound suspicion of the great myths of

history, progress, and religion that had previously ruled society. Modernists sought new forms of expression that were emblematic of the disjointed, alienating nature of modern life since they believed that traditional systems of meaning could not be maintained any longer. There is often an existential crisis in modernism as humanity struggles against the indifferent, fractured universe, the exact opposite of the optimism of the Romantics in human potential (Barlow, 2023).

4.2. Artistic And Literary Innovations

Romanticism and Modernism have accomplished a lot creatively and even in their literary work, although there are some differences in how the movements express their ideas and the aesthetic style to which they adopt their practices. Romanticism advanced poetry, prose, and the theater due to the emphasis on emotion and the sublime. Lyrical forms were tried by romantic writers who put freedom of expression more heavily than rigid structures, such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. As novels such as Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* have demonstrated, the Romantic novel has subtle characters and explores the boundaries of human experience, often combining the psychological and the paranormal. The visual arts were also influenced as the focus on nature as a predominant theme came to the fore in the form in which painters such as Caspar David Friedrich and J.M.W. Turner began to bring their own landscape paintings to life in a manner that extolled the beauty of the natural world and its transformative process (Bradford, 2024). Modernism, instead, was distinguished by its experimentation with narrative forms by adopting the fragmented and discontinuous narration and abandoning the traditional linear structures. Modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and T.S. Elliot redefined the book through such devices as unreliable narrators and stream-of-consciousness. As an example, the *Ulysses* (1922) of Joyce shattered the conventional book format, replacing a disjointed, self-reflective narrative exploring the complexities of individual consciousness with conventional plot lines. By much the same token, *The Waste Land* (1922) by T.S. Eliot was unconventional poetry, which employed a collage of cultural references, fragmented language, and multiple voices within his work. With the abandonment of realistic depictions and transition to abstraction and abstractionism in the visual arts, exemplified by the art of Picasso and Kandinsky, the modernist literature and art tried to express the feeling of dislocation and disintegration

that dominated the modern world (Alkarim, 2025). Romanticism significantly influenced the development of the modern novel and poetry, which, in their turn, affected such literary movements as Symbolism and Realism. Its insistence on subjectivity, individualism, and the sublime made way for other writers such as Franz Kafka and D.H. Lawrence to explore the human mind further. Meanwhile, Modernism's focus on subjectivity and interior life, its anti-conventionalist view, and its avant-garde approaches to narrative structure influenced subsequent movements like Postmodernism. The postmodernist works which followed would be identified by the fact that they embraced non-linear and broken story lines and that they did not believe in objective truth (Efrizah, 2025).

4.3. Influence On Later Movements

Modernism and Romanticism have had a long-lasting effect on the modern literary genres, impacting the postmodernist movements, as well as the way writers of today manage to work with form and narrative. Subsequent explorations of the inner self and personal identity were facilitated by the element of romanticism that focused on personal subjectivity and passion, and rebellion against social norms. Romanticism also created the possibility of producing later ecological and environmental works, owing to the focus on the connection of the individual with nature. Moreover, Romantic tradition is maintained in the contemporary genres such as fantasy fiction, which focus on the idealism and imagination through the glorification of personal creation and exploration of alternative worlds (Savonius-Wroth, 2022). Conversely, the particularly vivid example of the legacy of Modernism is Postmodernism, which follows Modernism in doubting the traditional forms and grand narratives and goes even further in its deconstruction of meaning. Postmodernist writers such as Don DeLillo and Thomas Pynchon have continued the Modernist tendencies of fragmentation, irony, and self-questioning. Postmodernism, in its practice of seeing language as a construction and its fixation on the instability of meaning, is a direct reaction against Modernist attacks on objective reality. Also, the Postmodern emphasis on pastiche or the mixing of genres and styles can be linked to the Modernist approach of intertextuality, in which authors often cite and rework other texts. Moreover, the transformation that occurred in experimental poetry and fiction in the twenty-first century indicates the exploration of subjectivity and consciousness in Modernism. Modern experimental texts by writers

like David Foster Wallace and Roberto Bolano employ the stream-of-consciousness style that was initially employed by writers like Joyce and Woolf. This lack of organization of time and space in modernist works also provided a template to modern science fiction and speculative fiction, which often discuss multiple perspectives and multiple universes (Bell, 2025). Ultimately, challenging the traditional norms and offering new insights into the way one should describe oneself and the world, Romanticism and Modernism have both led to the further evolution of the literary and creative movements. The disillusionment and exploration of the fractured self-brought along by modernism is a symptom of the complexity of the 20th century, and the idealism and focus on the person brought about by Romanticism was a check and balance to the industrializing world of the 19th century. The movements are applicable in modern times since they affect contemporary literature, art, and society.

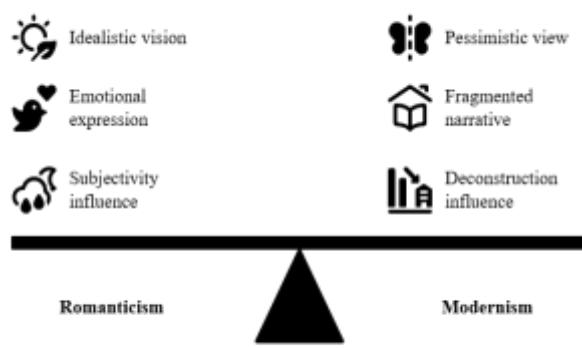


Figure 2: Comparative Framework of Romanticism and Modernism.

Figure 2 shows the use of emotion, imagination, and nature in Romanticism as compared to fragmentation, alienation, and experimental approaches in Modernism. It underscores the Romantic faith in human potential and the scepticism of Modernism towards cultural and historical disillusionment.

4.4. Enduring Influence on Contemporary Literature

4.4.1. Literary Legacy

The philosophical, stylistic, and thematic bases that still influence modern writing are only a clear indication of the enduring influence of the Romantic and Modernist movements. The accents put on individualization, emotionality, and the connection

of people and nature by romanticism formed the basis of modern works that focus on personal expression, the sublime, and nature. The concept of romanticism concerning rebellion, resourcefulness, and the power of the human spirit is often evoked by modern writers, notably in the genres of literature that focus on the interaction between subjectivity and social constraints, i.e., fantasy, science fiction, and poetry (Küçükali, 2025). Modernism's experiments with form, structure, and narrative strategies continue to influence contemporary works that challenge the accepted forms and conventions of literature. Its attack on great historical narratives, its focus on stream-of-consciousness and fragmented realities, and its denial of linear narratives have all influenced post-World War II writing in a major way. Many of the contemporary poetry and fiction writings highlight the interiority of human beings, discuss subjectivity, and push aside absolute truths. More so, the deconstructionist tendencies prevalent in the modern and contemporary literary criticism have been conditioned by the Modernism focus on irony, fragmentation, and skepticism of fixed meaning. Romanticism and Modernism also contributed to the redefinition of the place of the writer in society. Authors cease to be the mere narrators of the world but rather generators who question, criticize, and redefine the world they live in. The feeling of individuality in narrative and truth construction, as both movements have highlighted, has had effects on the modern literary stress on voice and point of view, and the politics of the story (Eling & Ogwal, 2024).

4.5. Modern Writers Inspired By Romanticism and Modernism

The legacies of Romanticism and Modernism are still responded to by contemporary writers who refer to themes of these movements either explicitly or implicitly, or who modify their methods to suit contemporary issues. The 21st-century writer tends to combine the individualistic and rebellious moods of Romanticism with the experimental methods and the disjointed nature of Modernism (Habib *et al.*, 2024). The influence of Romanticism on poetry is seen in the works of contemporary poets such as David Berman and Ocean Vuong, whose exploration of the inner, emotional lives of love, grief, and identity resonates with Romantic themes. The topic of the individual as an artistic and emotional phenomenon is addressed in the *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* (2016) by Vuong and in the collection *Actual Air* (1999) by Berman, when both of the images challenge traditional ideas about memory and selfhood in a

way that the Romantics exulted about the power of emotional expression and individual liberty. The work of such novelists as Jonathan Franzen or Zadie Smith can also be regarded as modernist, in particular, in their exploration of the complexities in contemporary life and their employment of fragmented stories. Telling a disjointed story methodically through Modernist experimentation, Smith is a writer of the broken narrative, *White Teeth* (2000), in which multiple characters and voices are intertwined to create the fragmented modern identity. Similarly, the complexities of human life are examined in Franzen's *Freedom* (2010) through family, society, and personal freedom problems, in a non-linear narrative manner that raises Modernist concerns about the fragility of meaning and identity (McKeon, 2023). Other contemporary writers, such as Don DeLillo and Harumi Murakami, merge the disjointed and often nonsensical storyline of Modernism with the intellectual and emotive insight of the Romantics, and are also a product of both influences. Along with the Modernist techniques of nonlinear plots and focusing on the subjective experience, the works by Murakami, including *Kafka on the Shore* (2002), unite the mystical and the psychological, reminding us of the Romantics' fascination with the sublime and the unexplained. The use of fragmented narratives, themes of alienation, technology, and disintegration of meaning in a media-drenched world by modernists also contributed to DeLillo in his *White Noise* (1985). To address contemporary societal challenges, cultural changes, and the evolving nature of individual and communal identity in the twenty-first century, these contemporary writers continue to draw upon the subject and stylistic innovations of the past (Sorensen et al., 2024).

4.6. Global Influence

Romanticism and Modernism have influenced literature in many ways and far beyond the borders of the English-speaking world. The two movements had an impact on writers, musicians, and intellectuals around the world as a wider cultural movement that transcended the borders between different nations. European and non-European authors were well tuned to romanticism and its focus on individual freedom, nature study, and the sublime, particularly in colonial and post-colonial contexts. Romanticism encouraged authors to reclaim indigenous cultures, identities, and histories through the provision of a platform to resist oppression and colonialism (Sharma, 2025). In an example, Latin American writers such as Jorge Luis

Borges and Gabriel García Márquez incorporated Modernist techniques with the local traditions to create a unique narrative that transcended European examples. Combined with magic realism and the fractured narrative, the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, novel in 1967 by Marquez, explores the Romantic concept of imagination as the means of resistance and change, and at the same time proves the international proliferation of Modernist invention.

Authors like R.K. Narayan and Ismat Chughtai, in India, fused Modernist anxieties over the break and estrangement of the modern subject with Romantic motifs of personal struggle against social constraint. Besides depicting the disillusionment and intricacy of present-day living, the subjects of Modernism, the writings of Narayan, such as *The Guide* (1958), remind the reader of the Romantic ideal of the man in search of meaning and redemption in a world that often seems indifferent or even malevolent (Childs, 2016). Other illustrations of the impact of modernism on literature include African writers, Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe, who wrote pieces that reflected the consequences of colonialism and the search for self in the post-colonial societies. Achebe (1958) portrays how the indigenous culture could be broken down in the face of colonial rule in the novel, *Things Fall Apart*, by incorporating modernist strategies and the traditional narrative style. The plays of Soyinka, such as *A Dance of the Forests* (1960), reflect the breadth of the contemporary African identity in the circumstances of cultural and political crises as they combine the traditional African components with the disjunction and fragmented techniques of the Modernist writing (Siddiq, 2023). Moreover, Romanticism and Modernism strongly influenced the postcolonial literary history in both Asia and Africa and the Caribbean since they provided aesthetic and intellectual resources to explore these themes of identity, alienation, and cultural disjunction, and also to challenge colonial hegemony. These international exchanges have contributed a lot to world literature through the contributions of both Romanticism and Modernism in facilitating intercultural discourses that continue to shape the canon of literature today (Savonius-Wroth, 2022).

5. CONCLUSION

Literary trends such as Romanticism and Modernism have contributed significantly to English literature. Romanticism challenged Enlightenment rationalism by focusing on individualism, passion, and nature. Modernism of the early 20th century

challenged tradition through experimental writing that rejected shut linear storytelling and through a critical approach to great historical narratives. Postmodernism, feminist literature, and postcolonial literature were still pursuing the ideas of identity, power, and representation. The legacies of these movements still influence contemporary literary practices through offering paradigms through which to understand how literature engages with society. Romanticism and Modernism have had their impact on English literature, with Romanticism's focus on personal freedom creating a possibility of the more detailed study of consciousness. Modernism also affected postmodernism, as it was opposed to convention and embraced fragmented, personalized tales. The effects of these changes are evident in modern writing as new genres and online media

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continue recycling the ideas of previous movements. Subversion and experimentation of narrative forms have remained vital elements to modern literary production. The themes of identity, equality, and environmental topics will be adopted in future literary works due to social, technological, and global changes. There is an increase in the popularity of multimedia storytelling and digital literature, and this means that literature will be increasingly diverse and interconnected. Modernism and romanticism will go on in shaping future literary developments, especially as they enter into the digital era. Literature will merge the historical practices with the novelties when it evolves and will reflect the complexity of the contemporary human condition.

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