



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH,  
UTKAL UNIVERSITY, BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA**

**2-DAY NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**MODERNISM AND ITS  
AFTERLIVES: DEBATES,  
DISCOURSE, DEPARTURES**

**(100 Years of "Making it New")**

**11-12 MARCH 2022**

**Deadline for Abstract Submission Extended:  
15 Jan 2022**

**Communication on acceptance: 20 Jan 2022  
Submission of full paper if selected: 15 Feb 2022**

**\*Registration Fee:**

**Paper Presenters (India): INR 2200/-**

**Foreign Participants/Presenters: USD 150**

**For Utkal University Research Scholars: INR 1500/-**

**For M.A students of the Dept. presenting papers: INR 200/-**

**For Participation: INR 2200/-**

**Registration fee includes conference kit, certificate, working  
lunch and tea/coffee on both days of the conference**

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Utkal University**

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# Modernism and its Afterlives: Debates, Discourse, Departures



The year 2022 will mark one hundred years of the publication of two of the greatest texts of English literature, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The P.G. Department of English, Utkal University is especially keen to seize the moment by celebrating this centenary event in the form of a two-day national conference. The conference will explore modernism and its afterlives by moving into the thick of the debates, discourses, and departures it has spawned.

*The Waste Land* and *Ulysses* are the most influential texts of high modernism. Steeped in a language of crisis and outrage, experiment and innovation, *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses* signaled a conclusive rupture with the familiar functions of language, form, and content in literature. These texts, shaped by and responding to industrial and technological excess, rapid urbanization and imperial expansions, and, above all, to the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution, set in motion a radical aesthetics that, despite being marked/marred by an elitist politics, best answered to Ezra Pound's dictum of 'make it new'. Modernism also sounded the death knell of literary provincialism or 'little Englandism', as it has been called, and marked the moment of rise of a truly transnational, metropolitan literary production, thus provoking countries and cultures across the world to respond to it in a spirit of both solidarity and contestation.




## Literary Afterlife: Focus India

Influenced by Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf, literatures the world over underwent a profound reawakening. In India, for instance, the impact of English modernism was felt in Hindi literature in form of the rise of 'Chhayavad' (Shadowism) as against 'Pragativad' (Progressivism), in Bengali literature in terms of the rise of the 'Kallol Age', and, in Odia literature in form of the rise of 'Sabuja Age' which incorporated a progressive and realistic component. In addition, Odia literature from the 1940s to the 1950s went on to directly respond to the key modernist text, *The Wasteland* and other texts of modernist criticism by engaging in both their translation (*Poda Bhuin* by Gyanindra Varma) and creative adaptation (*Kalapurusha* by Guru Prasad Mohanty, *Ashtapadi* by Sitakant Mahapatra). Other Indian language-literatures will surely have their responses in terms of distinct literary movements and modernist counterparts in terms of translation and rewriting. One aim of the conference is to explore this literary 'afterlife' of modernism which, taken in broad sense, also includes postmodernism.

## Political, Social and Cultural Afterlife: Alternative Modernity

The conference also seeks to re-engage with the 'modernity' component of the high modernist moment by looking at the recent debates between 'colonial modernity' and 'alternative modernity'. The focus here is on the social, cultural and political reframing of modernity. These 'afterlives', launched against the dominance of 'colonial modernity', and known by an array of kindred terms such as 'alternative', 'multiple', and 'peripheral' modernities, have gained academic currency especially in the decades following the postcolonial turn in critical theory. Needless to say, they have launched some of the fiercest and most nuanced critiques of a Euro-centric modernity.



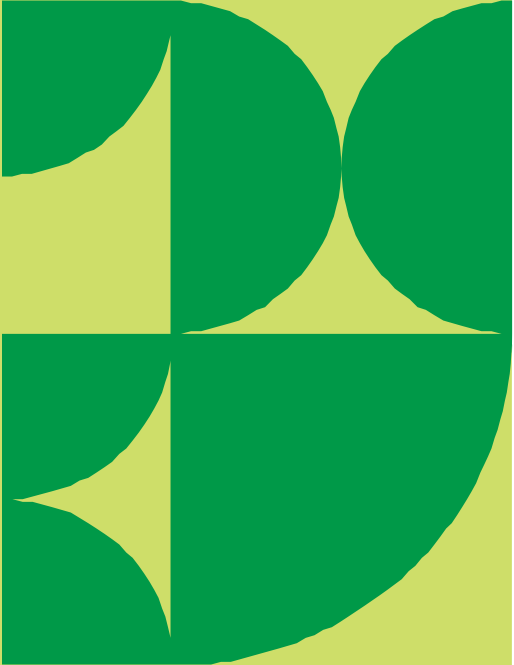
Central to the discourse of alternative modernities is the reevaluation of modernity, not as a uniquely European phenomenon, but an occurrence with various socio-cultural centers of origin. Likewise, it breaks away from the conventional narrative which equates modernization with westernization and challenges the assumption that modern values like the sense of the worth of individual life, reason, democracy and etc. are exclusive to the capitalist West (Dilip Gaonkar, Satya Mohanty). This idea is best captured in Mohanty's conception of alternative or indigenous modernity as "a project of historical retrieval and imaginative philosophical reconstruction."

It would seem, however, that in an important replay of the aestheticist bias of high modernism the discourse of alternative modernities is dominated by a culturalist bias. For critics like Arif Dirlik this indicates the failure of the project of alternative modernities to conceptualize modernity in more "systemic terms", leading to "historiographical parochialism" or "native centrisms". Similarly, Priyamvada Gopal's idea of "native tyrannies"—a residual colonial formation that postcolonial spaces have a tendency of slipping into in their top-down approach to governance—gestures towards the problems that alternative modernities are faced with if they are not vigilant and self-critical. The conference will hopefully generate a scope for imagining an alternative poetics of modernism.

## Towards a New Poetics for the Third World/Global South

In the wake of these evolving debates, the conference will explore the implications that both the literary and socio-political afterlives, alluded to above, have for literature's own specialized discourse, which is at once aesthetic, historical, and epistemological. What would 'make it new' in literatures of the Third World/Global South mean now, roughly a century later, especially in the context of the rise of the new literatures of 'magical realism' in the Global South?

Within this overall framework, the conference will engage with and explore the following issues:

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- Literary modernism in Indian vernacular literatures
  - *The Waste Land* in the Indian context
  - Modernism and literary experimentation
  - James Joyce and the language of allegory
  - Orientalism and colonial modernity
  - Alternative modernities and native aesthetics
  - Alternative modernities and magic realism
  - Alternative modernities and allegory
  - Literatures of the former colonies and their relationship with global capitalism

Abstracts not exceeding 300 words are welcomed by 2 January 2022 at [sdeepika.engl@utkaluniversity.ac.in](mailto:sdeepika.engl@utkaluniversity.ac.in)

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