A Year United in Fragmentation:

An Examination into the History of Modernist Aesthetics and their Culmination in 1922

Dallas Bullard

Undergraduate Departmental Honors Thesis for English Literature

Committee:

Dr. Bruce F. Kawin (ENGL), Dr. Cathy L. Preston (ENGL), Dr. Rimgaila Salys (GSLL)

Advisor: Dr. Bruce F. Kawin

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Abstract

When I was first introduced to Abel Gance's *La Roue,* I was rather interested in the fact that it was released in 1922. I knew that this was also the year that James Joyce's *Ulysses* and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* were published. I began to wonder why this year produced such significant works of modernism. I repeatedly asked a professor of mine, Bruce Kawin, a number of questions about 1922. My core questions were: "Why then?" and "What happened before?" At some point, Professor Kawin suggested that I write an honors thesis on 1922. After some discussion about what the thesis should contain, I decided that I was interested in the history of modernist aesthetics. I wanted to determine what occasioned the emergence of modernism and why it arrived at an apex in 1922.

With this goal in mind, I began reading and watching a number of significant modernist works that were released before 1922. In addition to this project, I tried to isolate a number of historical factors (outside of artistic tendencies) that may have occasioned the creation and evolution of modernist aesthetics. I discovered that the events of 1922 were the culmination of an evolution of aesthetic tendencies. Also, modernist aesthetics were the response to a particular consciousness that was occasioned by a number of significant historical events that occurred around that time. In discussing this, my thesis aims to provide a some coherence to the vast and complex artistic movement known as modernism.

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SECTION 1.0 – INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Virginia Woolf may have been correct, but she also may have been somewhat misleading. In her 1923 essay entitled "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Woolf wrote: "On or about December 1910, human character changed. [...] The change was not sudden and definite[...], but a change there was, nevertheless; and, since one must be arbitrary, let us date it about the year 1910" (Woolf 2). Woolf is attempting to isolate the moment at which modernism took hold of the collective artistic consciousness. She rightly acknowledges that the date is arbitrary, but it's a fine year to choose. However, her statement has led many people (particularly within academia) to look at 1910 as the so-called "beginning of modernism" (Stevic). However, the beginning of modernism should not be the focal moment of modernism. The moment of focus should be one of culmination. And that moment arrived much later.

Within the realm of cinema, people often look toward Sergei Eisenstein's famous *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) as *the* landmark work of modernist cinema. However, this attention is also misdirected. However, in the case of film (unlike literature), the attention is directed to a time that is too late, rather than too early. The moment of culmination, deserving of the utmost

critical attention, happened earlier. Not coincidentally, the most important works of modernist literature and film were released within a single calendar year. That year was 1922.

The 20th century artistic movement known as modernism reached its apex in 1922. This apex is the historical moment wherein the movement reached a mature culmination. Within this apex moment, creative innovation has not been exhausted, but ceases to be as pronounced. Creative innovation persists before the apex. Following the apex, innovation gives way to expansion. That is to say, there is a period (a year in this instance) for a movement wherein aesthetic developments are crystallized. In the case of modernism, the aesthetic achievements of 1922 embody, with clarity, the aesthetic tendencies of modernism.

The aforementioned "formula" is clearly reductive, but it is a useful tool in understanding the manner in which modernism developed. This paper aims to understand how the aesthetics of modernism came to exist and why they reached a relative culmination in 1922. Pursuant to this goal, I will trace the historical developments that gave rise to a modernist consciousness and account for evolution of the aesthetics that resulted from that consciousness. There are many aesthetic tendencies within modernism. For the purpose of this paper, I've chosen to discuss the three that are the most widespread and significant: fragmentation, making the "old" into the "new," and the inclination toward writing about subjectivity and consciousness. These techniques are all components of the central project of modernism: the totalization (complete understanding) of the human condition. With the development of the aforementioned tendencies, modernism reached its apex in 1922 with the publication and release of the movement's most significant works of film and literature: James Joyce's *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot's “The Waste Land,”

and Abel Gance's *La Roue*. These works represent the apex of modernist aesthetic development and are worthy of extended examination.

SECTION 2.0 – HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS

There has always been a relationship between literature and the culture that produces it. Literature can respond to the concerns of a culture or to recent developments in science. Conversely, literature can have a profound influence on the societal zeitgeist of a particular historical period. During the historical period before and during the emergence of modernism, both of these relationships were functioning.

In order to understand how modernist aesthetics came to exist, one must understand the historical events that gave rise to a particular consciousness. Outlined below is a series of historical events that had a tremendous impact on the formation of a consciousness that resulted in the emergence of modernist aesthetics.

Determining the first "influential" development in the formation of modernist aesthetics will certainly involve some degree of arbitrariness. It is difficult to establish a moment wherein "direct influence" begins. However, as Virginia Woolf decided that she must begin somewhere (December 1910), I must do the same. I've begun with the earliest event in a series (of events) which deeply disrupted the worldview of the Western world.

SECTION 2.1 – ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

The middle of the 19th century saw the publication of what would become one of the most significant scientific texts ever published: Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. This landmark piece, published in 1859, established a number of scientific truths. The most significant of these truths was related to evolution. Darwin articulated the details of the engine by which biological evolution occurs: natural selection. Natural selection essentially posits that there is significant diversity within the population of a species. Individuals of a population that are "less suited to survive" and thus, less likely to reproduce have traits that will eventually be eliminated from the population. Conversely, individuals that are more likely to reproduce (due to variation) possess traits that will be perpetuated (selected).

On the Origin of Species is a massive scientific document. Using extensive evidence from the natural world, ranging from insects to birds to turtles, Darwin made inferences about the formation (or "origin") of the species that existed on the planet. Darwin posited that species evolved through the process called natural selection, wherein certain traits were selected and some eliminated. Pursuant to these claims, humans and any other living species are the products of millions of years of evolution that involved species convergence, divergence, extinction, emergence, etc.

Darwin's publication was met with much public outrage. Darwin's claims meant that humans were not in a privileged position. They did not inhabit some realm external to the rest of animals. Rather, they were an evolved species. They had animal ancestors just as any other species did. Humans ceased to be entirely "other" in relation to other "animals." This had a profound effect on humanity's perception of itself.

The consciousness that emerged in the post-Darwinian world gave rise to texts that explored this preoccupation. One such example is H. G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. In *Doctor Moreau,* Edward Prendick (the protagonist), after witnessing the horrifying experiments of Dr. Moreau, cannot endure the presence of other human beings. After seeing the sentient, human-like creatures of Moreau's island, the line between human and animal has been blurred. He cannot see the face of a human without seeing the ape-men of Moreau's island.

On the Origin of Species had a profound impact on the scientific community, but also the general culture. The identity of humanity was questioned and the physical nature of what it meant to be human was destabilized.

SECTION 2.2 – THE GOLDEN BOUGH

Even before the disastrous events of World War I (which shook faith in religion), the foundation of religion was disrupted by James George Frazer's monumental text, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. In this text, Frazer seeks to identify the structures and patterns that are present within religious systems. Frazer, an anthropologist, contends that religions were derived from human psychology rather than from a divine being. Religions could be understood as "cultural phenomena."

The Golden Bough is a massive text. It was first published in 1890 as 2 volumes. The second and third editions included three and twelve volumes, respectively. Because of the size of *The Golden Bough,* it is impossible to exhaust the breadth of Frazer's work in this paper. According to critic John Vickery, Frazer sought to "reveal the full significance of mythology,

which otherwise might have remained an airy fancy with no social or psychological relevance to modern humanity " (qtd. in Muntean 1). To be extremely reductive, Frazer contends that religions (both "primitive" and contemporary) and mythologies have shared characteristics: virgin birth, scapegoats, sacrifice, death-rebirth, deistic vengeance and so forth.

The effect of *The Golden Bough* was tremendous. John Vickery describes *The Golden Bough*'s effect with clarity: "[*The Golden Bough*] enlarged our understanding of the behavior of societies by laying bare the primitive concepts and traditional folk customs which, as a subliminal element of culture, underlie so many of our institutions " (qtd. in Muntean 5). Not only did it disrupt the validity of religion as a divine truth, it provided a platform by which individuals could directly confront religion and mythology. These fields were of great interest to authors like W.B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot.

The Golden Bough had a huge influence on academia (particularly in studies of anthropology, sociology and religion), as well as the larger culture. At the time, its effects on the general population were staggering. Frequently, when confronted with a world that is intimidating, confusing or frightening, people turn to religion. Frazer attempted to demonstrate that the inclination toward religion was part of a primitive mentality, rather than a divine salvation.

SECTION 2.3 – ALBERT EINSTEIN

Some of the most famous developments in all of physics were realized at the onset of the 20th century. The most salient of these discoveries were made by Albert Einstein. In 1905, the

Annalen der Physik published a series of papers, by Einstein, that are now known as the *Annus Mirabilis* (Latin: extraordinary year) papers. These papers served as the foundation for much of modern physics. These papers established among other things, the theory of light quanta, matter and energy equivalence, the structure of the universe, the gyromagnetic ratio of the electronic, and special relativity (Tixaire).

Einstein's impact within the realm of physics was stunning. Einstein provided a new conceptual model of physics in order to account for the data which was problematic for Isaac Newton's equations (which had been considered immutable for over 200 years). The complexity of these ideas extends significantly beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is important to understand the immense impact that Einstein had on the society. After general relativity was empirically proved in 1919 (in an experiment involving a solar eclipse), Einstein was launched into international super-stardom. According to reporter M. Alex Johnson, "when he talked about the larger world, people listened" (Johnson). According to popular conception, Einstein had successfully rewritten the laws of physics. While this is a bit of an exaggeration, his contributions were tremendous (Johnson).

Einstein's ideas were not irrelevant to the realm of art. His theories had a large effect on the theory of knowledge. According to Professor Alberto Tixaire, "Einstein rejected an empirical explanation for the origin of physical concepts, which he considered a free creation of the human mind. But mere logical thinking does not provide us with knowledge of the external world, which only experience gives us" (Tixaire).

SECTION 2.4 – SIGMUND FREUD

The beginning of the 20th century saw the early publications of Sigmund Freud. The works of Sigmund Freud, such as *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) and *Totem and Taboo* (1913), had a deep effect on the psychology community, as well as the wider population. Freud's topics of discussion are plentiful, but for modernist aesthetics, the introduction of the unconscious (in a prominent role) is the most significant.

Before Freud, much of the psychological community espoused views in the realm of behaviorism. Behaviorism focused centrally on observable and measurable behaviors. These behaviors were analyzed and then corrected. Freud contended that the mind was comprised of the id (unconscious), the ego (conscious), and the superego (internalized ideals, values, and sense of right and wrong) ("The Id, Ego and Superego"). Freud claimed, in *A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis* (1917), that the "ego is not master in its own house" (qtd. in "Sigmund Freud Quotes"). In other words, much of human behavior is dictated by impulses and desires that are unknown to the conscious mind. Freud also claimed that these impulses, drives, and desires were predominantly formed during the early stages of childhood (Felluga). For Freud, events in childhood had a profound impact on the adult mind, particularly as it relates to psychosexual desires.

In Freud's time (up until the present), his ideas were subject to considerable controversy. Regardless of contemporary ideas regarding the validity of Freud's claims, he had an enormous impact on way people perceive their minds. He called into question the (long assumed) idea that humans were in control of their consciousness and their actions and that they were the locus of

their decisions and desires. This shattered a belief system that had been held for thousands of years. Thus, people began thinking about their minds and about consciousness in a new way.

SECTION 2.5 – WORLD WAR I

World War I had a profound effect on the development of modernism. It is rather difficult to appreciate the magnitude of the effect which World War I had on Europe in the early 20th century.

In Europe, the war served as a major inhibition for literary publication and film production. Consequently, the evolution of modernist aesthetics, within publications (books or films) came to a temporary halt. Prior to this "halt," modernist aesthetics were beginning to reach maturity. The halt in publication did not result in a halt in development. During the war, people continued to talk, paint, and write. The aesthetics continued to develop amid the events of the war.

Many modernist authors (in film and literature) resided in countries that sustained considerable damage in the conflicts of World War I. A great deal of literature was produced in response to the events that transpired in World War I. The poems of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon (among others) recount the horrific and brutal atrocities the First World War. Wilfred Owen, in the famous poem *Dulce et Decorum Est* describes the experiencing of witnessing a soldier's death at the hands of lethal gas:

Behind the wagon that we flung him in,

And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,

His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;

If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood

Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,

Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud (Ramazani 528)

The first world war was not a national rallying point or a source of glory. Instead, it was the source of unspeakable horror and misery.

However, the horrors of World War I were not limited to those in military combat. The Irish poet W.B. Yeats was deeply affected by the events of the war. In 1919, Yeats wrote "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death." In this brief poem, Yeats explores the thoughts of a Robert Gregory, a member of the British Royal Flying Corps (Ramazani 110). The war was a presence that could not be ignored. It was a horrific reality.

Following the war, people returned to writing and to making films, but the effect of the war was monumental. Europe was left in ruin, both physically and psychologically. The confusion and incoherence that seemed to be present in the air before, then became unbearable. After the several years of "restarting" (in terms of artistic production and publication) after the war, modernism exploded in 1922. Gertrude Stein wrote that the war made people more conscious and more willing to be contemporary with another. It would be an injustice to Stein to condense or paraphrase her work. She wrote the following (in "Composition as Explanation"):

And so there was the natural phenomena that was war, which had been, before war came, several generations behind the contemporary composition, because it became war and so

> completely needed to be contemporary became completely contemporary and so created the completed recognition of the contemporary composition. Every one but one may say every one became consciously became aware of the existence of the authenticity of the modern composition. This then the contemporary recognition, because of the academic thing known as war having been forced to become contemporary made every one not only contemporary in act not only contemporary in thought but contemporary in self-consciousness made every one contemporary with the modern composition. And so war may be said to have advanced a general recognition of the expression of the contemporary composition by almost thirty years. ("Composition as Explanation")

Stein is stating (in a Steinian way) that the war accelerated the artistic movement toward the "modern composition." The war made the modern composition contemporary and made artists more willing to be "of their time" and contemporary with one another.

SECTION 2.6 - RECAPITULATION

The aforementioned developments are discussed only in summary, but their effects should be clear. The environment of the early 20th century was one typified by confusion, fragmentation, and disillusionment. Systems were falling apart. Modernism was an artistic response to this cultural condition. The aesthetics of this response are detailed in the following sections.

SECTION 3.0 – MODERNIST AESTHETICS

The relationship between aesthetics and history is essential to the understanding of growth and evolution of modernist aesthetics. The following sections will outline the nature of the aesthetic tendencies that will be discussed throughout this essay. Although these are not the only techniques of modernism, they are among the most significant. This significance is measured by their relevance to a historical consciousness and the principal project of modernism.

SECTION 3.1 - FRAGMENTATION

Perhaps the most famous aesthetic component of modernism is fragmentation. Modernism's inclination toward fragmentation largely contributes to modernism's being commonly associated with "difficulty." However, fragmentation is not employed for the purpose of intimidating or confusing a reader. Rather, the use of fragments is a measured and deliberate stylistic choice.

It is important to establish what is meant by the terms "fragment," "fragmentary," or "disjointed." Most works of literature, prior to 20th century modernism, were organized around a principle of cohesion. For instance, Aristotle's *Poetics* details the "unities" of "action," "place," and "time." According to Aristotelian aesthetics, clarity and coherence are critical to an audience's appreciation of a play. The most famous works of Western literary history are governed by these same principles of cohesion and coherence. One can think of *Beowulf,* Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* Virgil's *Aeneid,* Dante's *Inferno,* Homer's *Odyssey,* Milton's *Paradise Lost,* Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales,* Aeschylus' *Oresteia,* Cervantes' *Don Quixote de la Mancha,* and Hugo's *Les Misérables*. These works and thousands more demonstrate the

persistent desire, within history, to maintain a sense of developed coherence. As is perhaps suggested by this brief list, the epic has remained one of the most dominant literary forms throughout history. The traditional epic poem is a consummate example of narrative cohesion. The epic follows the "heroic deeds and events" involving an individual as he undertakes a journey of tremendous significance to a particular tribe or culture (Meyer 2128). This journey is recounted with a definite progressive arc. There are obstacles, but no narrative disruptions. Modernist authors seek to disrupt this cohesion with fragmentation. This is accomplished in a number of ways. An author may vary the style of writing at various points throughout a text. He or she may refuse to adhere to principles of continuity and cohesion; events may be presented non-chronologically or without regard for causality. A text that is fragmented is one that appears to be made of pieces that don't necessarily cohere with one another. However, they do have an important relationship with one another that is discussed in following sub-section.

Film is an exceedingly younger medium, but has many of the same inclinations that can be observed in literary history. Cinema's youth makes tracing its development an easier task. Following the initial explorations of the film medium that occurred from about 1895 to 1902, filmmakers began to develop techniques for narrative story-telling. Georges Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) and Edwin S. Porter's *Life of an American Fireman* (1903) are some of the early attempts at continuity through editing. Improvements on so-called "continuity editing" continued to be made throughout cinematic history. Modernist cinema attempts to disturb this cohesion. This is frequently achieved through editing. Instead of *showing* the viewer a scene or a concept, a modernist filmmaker may *suggest* something to the viewer. This may involve rapid, rhythmic editing that places "fragmented" shots alongside each other. These shots may be fragmentary in the sense that they represent disparate entities/ideas. The disruption of temporality or space could

also make shots fragmentary. For instance, a shot may be fragmentary if it depicts a moment in time or space that is distinct from the shots that surround it.

The fragmentation that is present in modernist works is a reflection of the fragmentary consciousness that was experienced by artists, following the historical developments of the later 19th and early 20th centuries. The world seemed to be in disarray. It was fragmented. The literature then reflects that sense of fragmentation. Modernist artists, in their work, tried to make the fragments cohere. This is addressed in the following subsection.

SECTION 3.1A – FRAGMENTARY MONTAGE

The relationship between fragments is crucial to one's understanding of how fragments function within the context of modernist literature and film. Fragmentation does not result in a sort of hodgepodge with no organization. To the contrary, the fragmentary works of modernism are often organized around a thematic whole. More importantly, they often function in a "montage" relationship. The word "montage," in this context, comes from the French word for "editing" and is usually utilized in regard to film. However, it is equally applicable to the realm of literature. Montage involves presenting fragments (of words or images) alongside one another and inviting the audience to synthesize a meaning that is not inherent in the words/images when viewed independently. Essentially, fragment A, when presented in dynamic collision with fragment B, creates meaning C (that arises from a synthesis of A and B).

The montage relationship can achieve something unique. An expression, utilizing montage, can "state" what language is otherwise incapable of expressing. Ezra Pound explicates this in one of the early mentions of montage. He referred to it as "superposition." Pound writes in

Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir about his poem "In a Station of the Metro": "The 'one image poem' is a form of super-position, that is to say, it is one idea set on top of another. I found it useful in getting out of the impasse in which I had been left by my metro emotion. I wrote a thirty-line poem, and destroyed it because it was what we call work 'of second intensity.'" Pound condensed his thirty-line poem to the following:

> The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
>
> Petals on a wet, black bough. (Ramazani 351)

Within these two lines, there is a collision of images. From this collision, there arises a visual and emotional experience that cannot be conveyed explicitly. Language is impotent. Montage theory was further expounded upon by Pound in *The ABC of Reading* (1934) and Sergei Eiseinstein in "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram" (1929). Pound used Chinese ideograms to explain montage, whereas Eisenstein used Japanese. Eisenstein connected the notion of montage with that of the Hegelian dialectic. G. W. F. Hegel's dialectical approach posits that in the development of ideas (or history), there first exists a thesis (Hegel called this the "abstract"). In response to the thesis, there emerges an antithesis that negates the original thesis (Hegel called this the "negative"). When the thesis and the antithesis collide with one another in conflict, there emerges a synthesis (Hegel called this the "concrete") (Fox 43). Eisenstein's idea of montage is closely connected to the Hegelian conceptualization of the dialectic. Two entities collide with one another and from their collision, there emerges a synthesis (in the case of montage, a meaning that wasn't inherent in the colliding phrases/images). The synthesis takes place within the mind of the viewer/reader. That is to say,

the viewer/reader derives the meaning from the collision of ideas (rather than being told or shown the meaning).

It is important to note that in both literature and film, an inclination toward fragmentation does not mark a departure from narrative itself. Rather, it is a disruption of narrative *cohesion.* The unity and wholeness of a work become agitated, but not nonexistent. Modernist artists did not experience a feeling of cohesion in their lives. Thus, there was an urge, among the modernists, to bring some coherence to the fragmentation in their art.

SECTION 3.2 – MAKING IT NEW

The second major aesthetic of modernism involves the tendency to draw upon elements from the past and make them "new." This involves taking an element of the past (be it literature, history, film, etc.) and re-energizing it. In the act of re-energizing or renewing a historical artifact, an artist can effectively "make it new." This phrase was coined by Ezra Pound in his book *Make it New* (1934) ("The Pound Error").

"Making it new," like fragmentation, may manifest itself in multifarious ways. Consequently, it is rather difficult to describe. An author may take a historical literary form (such as an epic or a love ballad) and transform it in an unprecedented fashion. A writer may, for instance, write an epic about going to work. The author may preserve the structural essence of the epic (a "tale of the tribe" about a hero leaving home and undergoing trials), while invigorating the form by focusing on a topic with contemporary relevance. Within the realm film, a filmmaker may re-imagine and alter the nature of a historical occurrence. Essentially, the

aesthetic of "making it new" revolves around an attention that is directed toward the past. Practitioners of modernism are interested in embracing, transforming, and renewing elements of the past, rather than rejecting or ignoring them.

In *The Cantos* (specifically "Canto LXXXI"), Ezra Pound writes:

That a Blunt should open

To have gathered from the air a live tradition

or from a fine old eye the unconquered flame. (Pound 85)

The act of gathering "from the air a live tradition" can be imagined as an expression of the modernist aesthetic of "making it new." For modernist artists, history was very much alive. At the beginning of the 20th century, the systems associated with art and culture were falling apart. Nothing seemed to amount to any coherence. Accordingly, the modernists looked to a history which had remained "unconquered." That which they knew of the past (be it literature, religion, or historical events) had remained intact. Thus, in the presence of systems that were falling apart, the modernists focused their attention upon those that had not crumbled.

This is not the first time in literary history that authors have demonstrated a desire to integrate aspects of older works. Movements like neoclassicism possess similar characteristics. However, the manner in which these integrations and transformation (of the old) take place is unique. Thus, although altering and integrating components of past works is not altogether a new idea, its implementation in modernism is unique. It is unique in that it does not focus on one particular subject (be it the classics or a specific historical event) as focal material. Furthermore, practitioners of modernism were not interesting in valorizing or apotheosizing past works, only

in re-energizing them. The "making it new" of modernism further differentiates itself through its formal association with the other aesthetics of the movement.

SECTION 3.3 - SUBJECTIVITY

The third aesthetic component of modernism is commonly known as "subjectivity." Within the period of modernism, there is a marked desire (within literature and cinema) to portray the inner consciousness of subjects. This may involve transcribing the thoughts of a character or following a particular character's point of view throughout a work. For literature of the modern period, this tendency often manifested itself in a technique known as stream-of-consciousness writing. Stream of consciousness involves a recording of a character's thoughts without an intermediary (aside from the author). This recording may or may not approximate the actual experience of consciousness. In short, writers would willingly let the thoughts of characters appear on the page without a narrative intermediary.

Subjectivity/stream of consciousness is conveyed in a much different manner within the realm of cinema. In the case of film, subjectivity can be expressed through shots which are a clear expression of a character's visual point of view. This point of view can be made clear through cinematography. For instance, the viewer may see a man looking toward a bouquet of flowers. In a subsequent shot, the bouquet of flowers may be shown from the perspective appropriate for the man’s spatial position. Based on the knowledge the viewer has of the man's position, they may conclude that this is a point-of-view shot. A film may also project the mind of a character onto the screen. Film critic Bruce Kawin discusses this in *Mindscreen: Bergman, Godard, and First-Person Film.* In the case of a "mindscreen," a memory, delusion, dream, or

fantasy is projected on the screen. The mind of a character becomes the diegetic reality of the film. This occurs in films like *Rashomon* (1950, Kurosawa) with its various story-tellers and *The Wizard of Oz* (1939, Fleming) with Dorothy's dream/fantasy (Kawin). Consciousness may also be shown expressively. That is to say, the mise-en-scène (everything in front of the camera) may be designed around expressing the consciousness of characters. This is the case in German Expressionism. In films such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Wiene, 1920) and *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (Murnau, 1922), the sets are external, symbolic, and expressive representations of the emotions, thoughts, and experiences of the characters in the films.

It is important to note that subjectivity (and these other aesthetics) did not materialize with the emergence of modernism. There are historical precedents for fragmentation, subjectivity, and "making it new." However, modernism represents a moment in literary and filmic history wherein these aesthetic traits seized a salient and widespread role. Furthermore, they amount to a central modernist project. That project is one of totalization. In a reality that no longer seemed sensible or coherent, modernist artists were interested in understanding the entirety of the human condition. The following questions were thoroughly investigated: How and why should one live his or her life? What does it mean to be human? Why do we live and exist? How does one tell a story? What is form and how can it be transformed? How does *everything* cohere in some grand unity? This project of totalization is perhaps *the* central concern of modernism.

SECTION 3.4 - RECAPITULATION

Historical events at the turn of the century occasioned a change in consciousness for a significant population in the western world. People were inhabiting a world that no longer seemed to make any sense. It did not cohere. Darwin disrupted the distinction of animal and human, as well as divine creation. Einstein dismantled the foundation of physics and altered the perception of time, space, and matter. James George Frazer unsettled religious beliefs . The atrocities witnessed in World War I further dismantled the supports of an already crumbling world view. Meaning and purpose was not clear and determined. Existence itself seemed to become incoherent. Modernism arose as a response to this state of human consciousness.

Each of the aesthetic techniques can be understood as a formal and stylistic response to the consciousness that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. Art (particularly film and literature) served as a means to make sense of what appeared to be an otherwise senseless world. Writers and filmmakers began depicting a world that was fragmented because, for them, the world was fragmented. Their art was a means of bringing some coherence to the fragmentation. They began "making it new," because the contemporary systems of thought no longer seemed to be relevant. Subjectivity emerged because reality, empiricism, and objectivity seemed to be unstable. The human understanding of how the world worked was shown to be faulty. The 20th century was a time of major paradigm shifts and new ideas. Assumptions were called into question. These aesthetic tendencies are thus components of a historical moment. They are a response to a world that no longer seemed to cohere.

SECTION 4.0 – THE EVOLUTION OF MODERNIST AESTHETICS PRIOR TO 1922

As was previously discussed, modernist aesthetics were largely a reaction to the historical developments of the later 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the aesthetic tendencies underwent an evolution before their culmination in 1922. Joyce, Gance, Vertov, and Eliot do not exist within a vacuum, but rather are the product of 10-15 years of aesthetic evolution. This evolutionary process will be illustrated through an examination of some of modernism's most important works.

As was the case with discussing historical influences, the selection of the "earliest" works in a history of aesthetics is invariably arbitrary. I've chosen to begin my history of modernist aesthetics in roughly 1909. By selecting this date, I've omitted some writings of authors such as Joaquim Machado de Assis, Joseph Conrad, Henry James, and E.M. Forster. These writings are absent from my discussion for multiple reasons. The early work of authors like James, Forster, and Conrad could possibly be dubbed "pre-modern." Books like *The Wings of the Dove* (1903) and *Heart of Darkness* (1902) were extremely influential on later works of modernism, but were not elements in a larger, identifiable movement. Furthermore, the aesthetic innovations of these works, though considerable, serve more as influences on modernist stylistics, rather than components thereof. The case for Machado de Assis is somewhat similar. *Dom Casmurro* (1899) by Machado de Assis brilliantly implements the techniques of modernism, but remains detached from a historical trend. Machado de Assis was largely unread by the English-speaking world until the 1950s (Krause 153). Thus, he remains a remarkable precursor, but not a participant in a larger evolution.

The sections below do not aim to be exhaustive analyses of the respective works. Rather, I intend to explain the significance of a certain work within the greater evolution of modernist aesthetics. Consequently, I will focus almost exclusively on issues of form and technique within the works.

SECTION 4.1 – A CORNER IN WHEAT

The evolution of modernist aesthetics coincides, to some extent, with the development of the film medium. Film emerged as an art form and began to evolve during the period of modernity. Accordingly, some of the developments of early cinema are closely related to film's development of modernist tendencies.

In the period of early cinema (prior to roughly 1915), one figure looms larger than all others: D.W. Griffith. Griffith is most famous for his major epics*: Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916). However, his work beyond these films is of major significance within the context of modernism, as well as film history. Griffith began directing films in 1908. In 1909, Griffith directed nearly 150 films. Of these films, *A Corner in Wheat* is the most aesthetically significant.

A Corner in Wheat (1909) is loosely based on Frank Norris' 1903 short story "A Deal in Wheat" with one scene from his novel entitled *The Pit* (also from 1903). The film tells the story of a wheat mogul called the "Wheat King." He hopes to corner the global wheat market in order to raise wheat prices and accrue a fortune. The short film concludes with the Wheat King falling into a pit of wheat and suffocating to death.

This film stands apart from its contemporaries because of its use of cross-cutting. In film, cross-cutting involves cutting back and forth between "shots of one scene with another, at a different location, and sometimes in a different period of time" (Giannetti 83). Griffith was one of the first directors to integrate cross-cutting into his films successfully. *A Corner in Wheat* is one of the first known films to implement cross-cutting. The film cuts between shots of the luxurious life of the wheat king, the struggles of the poor population that can no longer afford to buy bread, and the misery of the wheat farmers. The presentation of these images "alongside" each other invites the viewer to compare them. When the viewer sees the suffering of the proletarians that can't afford bread alongside images of the opulent lifestyle of the Wheat King, they are invited to sympathize with the farmers/working class and condemn the actions of the Wheat King. This meaning is achieved through the presentation of sequential images.

For modernist aesthetics, cross-cutting is related to the idea of fragmentation. The cross-cutting of *A Corner in Wheat* prefigures the montage sequences of later films like Abel Gance's *La Roue* (1922) and Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). The cross-cutting of this film encourages a certain response from the viewer that could not likely be achieved from a single shot.

It's rather facile to take the early innovations of cinema for granted. However, the development of cross-cutting was a major one. This development potentiated the emergence of montage and parallel editing that is seen in Griffith's 1916 film entitled *Intolerance* (which will be discussed later in this section).

SECTION 4.2 – IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME

Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* stands among the most significant texts of the 20th century. It is a monumental work not only within the realm of modernism, but in all of literary history.

Proust began writing *In Search of Lost Time* in 1909. The first volume, *Swann's Way*, was published (in French) in 1913. The publication of the subsequent volumes continued after World War I (the second volume, *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*, was published in 1919) until the final volume was published in 1927 (though Proust died in 1922). The volumes were not written chronologically; Proust began with *Swann's Way* and then wrote the last half of *Finding Time Again*. Then, he proceeded to write the middle of the novel. This information is significant because it situates *In Search of Lost Time* in a temporal period that ranges before and after the central year of 1922. Though only four volumes were published before or during 1922, it is fruitful to examine the text as a whole when addressing its aesthetic merits.

In Search of Lost Time is undeniably a novel of consciousness. The novel is written from the first-person perspective of a (mostly) unnamed narrator. The narrator, in retrospective style, transcribes the events and thoughts of his life in a roughly chronological order. He describes the experience of going to sleep, of waking up, of first falling in love, of disappointment, of artistic development, of experiencing time, and most importantly, of existing outside time. Within the realm of modernist aesthetics, its importance is related to its emphasis on subjectivity. Beyond this, the novel is a profoundly beautiful and thorough exploration of the human condition.

Proust's text is focused on the aesthetic of subjectivity. The novel is one of consciousness, but not a stream of consciousness. Thoughts, specifically memories, are among

the central subjects of Proust's novel. However, the writing of Proust does not seem to represent the immediate thoughts of the narrator. Rather, the thoughts of the narrator are beautifully poetic. They have been transformed from raw consciousness into styled prose. The subjective nature of Proust is perfectly illustrated in what is perhaps the most famous passage of the book, the "madeleine episode." I've greatly condensed the passage in the following: "I carried to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had let soften a bit of madeleine. But at the very instant when the mouthful of tea mixed with cake crumbs touched my palate, I quivered, attentive to the extraordinary thing that was happening inside me. [...] And suddenly the memory appeared. That taste was the taste of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray, [...] my aunt Leonie would give me after dipping it in her infusion of tea or lime blossom" (Proust 45-47). In this passage (that actually extends for several pages), the narrator recounts an experience of his. He talks about his thoughts and the experience of involuntary memory. It is consciousness discussing consciousness.

I was once told that the day one becomes middle-aged is the day one realizes that they will never read Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. Upon reading the text, I often felt as though I were reading the thoughts involved in my own life. The central project of modernism is related to understanding the entirety of the human condition and in short, how one can make sense of their own existence. Proust engages with this in an epic of consciousness. And he does so with unparalleled grace. According to the dust jacket of *Swann's Way*, Virginia Woolf once stated: "My greatest adventure was undoubtedly Proust. What is there left to write after that?" (Proust).

SECTION 4.3 – TENDER BUTTONS

One year after Proust's *Swann's Way*, Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* was published. *Tender Buttons* is, for the unfamiliar reader, a seemingly impenetrable, discursive prose poem. The poem is comprised of three sections: objects, food, and rooms. These sections detail what their names indicate, respectively. Gertrude Stein was a major figure in modernism and her influence extends well beyond this brief discussion of *Tender Buttons*. Gertrude Stein was one of the first American expatriate authors at the beginning of the 20th century. Many other Americans emigrated to Europe during this period and her salon "attracted" the likes of Ernest Hemingway (to whom she served as a mentor), Ezra Pound, and Sherwood Anderson, among others.

In *Tender Buttons*, Gertrude Stein uses words in a rather unusual way. Stein is interested in accessing the real *essence* of what things truly are, be it a carafe or a meat loaf. The connotations associated with words can interfere with the expression of the object as it *truly* is. Furthermore, the denotative meaning of a word may also do so. With this in mind, Stein uses rhythm, tonality, repetition, and an abstract approach to language in order to create a portrait of objects, food, and rooms.

In *Tender Buttons*, the reader has the rare opportunity to see consciousness "at work." The consciousness that the reader witnesses may or may not be Stein's; that is ultimately of little import. What is important is that the reader is given something close to an unmediated (or perhaps "uncontaminated") flow of consciousness in response to entities in the external world. There is no "logical" narrative progression. Instead, there is conspicuous fragmentation as Stein moves from one object (or food) to another. Stein writes about "a plate": "An occasion for a plate, an occasional resource is in buying and how soon does washing enable a selection of the

same thing neater. If the party is small a clever song is in order. [...] A splendid address a really splendid address is not shown by giving a flower freely, it is not shown by a mark or by wetting" (*Tender Buttons*). Regarding her word choice, Stein wrote that she was "very much taken with the beauty of the sounds as they came from [her]...an extraordinary melody of words and a melody of excitement in knowing that [she] had done this thing" (qtd. in Dydo 178). This poem represents a consciousness that has been, to some extent, freed from some of language's limitations. It is lively, natural, and uninhibited.

Reading *Tender Buttons* is no facile task. This is because Stein disposes of the most familiar of literary conventions. This is a modernist inclination. Stein rejects the traditional conventions of literature and instead, creates something new.

SECTION 4.4 – "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" was published in 1915. Along with "The Waste Land" (1922) and *Four Quartets* (1943), "Prufrock" is one of Eliot's best known works. "Prufrock," the first poem that Eliot published, appeared in the renowned Chicago-based publication *Poetry* in 1915. Among others, Ezra Pound was immediately impressed. In a letter to the editor of *Poetry*, Harriet Monroe, Pound wrote: "He has actually trained himself *and* modernized himself on *his own*" ("Practical Cat" 78). This quotation by Pound is indicative of a number of important concepts. First, Pound suggests that modernism is an aesthetic process, that it is something alive and functioning. Second, the poem is exceptionally impressive (especially when considering the fact that it was Eliot's first publication). It is among the earliest major examples (along with the work of Stein and Pound) of modernist fragmentation in literature.

Furthermore, the poem quite clearly implements the techniques of "making it new" and of subjectivity.

As the title may suggest, the poem follows the musings of a fictional character named J. Alfred Prufrock. The poem contains the musing consciousness of a nervous, oversensitive, and sexually dysfunctional man. Eliot's poem is undoubtedly fragmented. This fragmentation represents the consciousness of Prufrock and Prufrock (the character) may, in turn, represent a modernist consciousness. The poem traces Prufrock's thoughts from an etherized being compared to the evening (line 3) to the refrain: "In the room women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo" (lines 13-14). Explanations of thoughts are mostly absent; the poem relies on the participation of the reader. Eliot writes: "To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and, 'Do I dare?' / Time to turn back and descend the stair (lines 38-39). The reader must guess the external events happening around Prufrock. The consciousness doesn't speak to the reader with clarity, as it does in Proust. Instead, the reader is injected into a fragmented and confusing conscious mind.

The poem draws heavily from literary history. The epigraph (in Italian) describes a meeting between Dante and Guido de Montefeltro (in Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*). The epigraph, when translated, amounts to Guido de Montefeltro revealing that if he had known Dante would leave Hell, he would not have told his story. This perhaps speaks to Prufrock's inability to express himself to others. This poem, though it references a "you and I" (line 1), may contain the thoughts of Prufrock, but it doesn't seem to be written by him. The poem is a stream of his thoughts, but he is not their scrivener. He can scarcely begin to speak to people and doesn't seem to be the kind of speaker to draw Italian epigraphs from the *Inferno*. According to Louis Menand's analysis of the poem, it is a "dramatic monologue, a standard nineteenth-century poetic

genre" ("Practical Cat" 80). It is supposedly a love song in monologue form, but the name "J. Alfred Prufrock" doesn't exactly conjure images of romance. Furthermore, the monologue is not one of passion or expression, but of impotence, repression, and confusion. This is precisely "making it new." I refer to Menand again: "What was important for Pound and Eliot was that the bones of the old are legible (or visual or audible) under the contemporary skin" ("Practical Cat" 80).

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" serves a prelude to this essay's later discussion on "The Waste Land" (1922). "Prufrock" contains many of the stylistic elements of "The Waste Land," but the latter remains a much more robust and profound illustration of those elements.

SECTION 4.5 – *THE CANTOS*

Within the literary realm of modernism, Ezra Pound is in a position of paramount importance. Pound has already been mentioned several times in this paper. Pound was instrumental in developing modernist aesthetics and the careers of his close friends. His friends included people like T. S. Eliot, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, and Bertrand Russell.

Pound is best known for his lifelong project known as *The Cantos*. *The Cantos* is an extremely lengthy poem that Pound wrote mostly between 1915 and 1962. The poem remains incomplete and some cantos (sections), of which there are 120, exist only as fragments. The earliest publication of part of *The Cantos* was in 1925 and Pound worked on it throughout his

life. However, because of Pound's presence within modernism, and his writing some of *The Cantos* before 1922, it can be considered part of the evolution that led up to 1922.

The Cantos, like "Prufrock," is an unabashed exercise in modernism. And Pound, like several other figures in modernism (most prominently, James Joyce), was interested in creating a modernist epic. Pound's poetic epic attempts to encompass the entirety of literature and the entirety of the world (historical and contemporary). Thus, the project of *The Cantos* is aligned with the central project of modernism: totalizing the human experience. Fragmentation exists in *The Cantos* between each canto (as their styles/subjects change drastically) and within cantos as well. Pound uses multiple languages, historical references, literary allusions, and political messages.

Pound begins the first canto with a 68-line quotation from Book 11 of Homer's *Odyssey*. This corresponds to Pound's undertaking of an epic poem and the journey involved therein. According to the corresponding footnote in the *Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*, "Odysseus is the type of enterprising, imaginative man, and this voyage represents in some sense a symbol or analogy of the poet's own voyage into the darker aspects of his civilization or the buried places of the mind" (Ramazani 368). In the 45th canto, Pound vociferously condemns usury (loaning money with interest): "with usura / hath no man a painted paradise on his church wall / *harpes et luz* / on where virgin receiveth message / and halo projects from incision" (Ramazani 379). In the 14th canto (one of the aptly named "Hell Cantos), the reader is introduced to Pound's vision of hell:"The slough of unamiable liars, / bog of stupidities, / malevolent stupidities, and stupidities, / the soil living pus, full of vermin, / dead maggots begetting live maggots, / slum owners, / usurers squeezing crab-lice, pandars to

authority" (Pound 25). Although these passages represent only an infinitesimal amount of the text, they do provide insight into the kinds of things that Pound is doing. He is drawing from literary history, language, and economic/political ideals. There exists no unifying theme beyond "the world" or "everything."

Pound's *The Cantos* is extraordinarily long and extraordinarily challenging, but it is worthwhile. In the realm of modern poetry, it is a tremendous achievement. Because of its breadth and complexity, it's difficult to discuss as a whole. For modernist aesthetics, its importance rises from its intent (totalization) and its exceedingly bold implementation of modernist techniques. It is with "Prufrock" and *The Cantos*, that literature moves into the unequivocally modern.

SECTION 4.6 – THE MADNESS OF DOCTOR TUBE

Abel Gance was born in Paris, France in 1889 and at a young age, became interested in literature (particularly that of Shakespeare, Racine, Corneille) (*Abel Gance, Hier Et Demain*). Gance's love for literature led to his desire to "dramatize his thoughts" and write plays. Gance felt that he must first become an actor in order to understand the ability of other actors. After some work as an actor on the stage, he acted in several films. When working at the Film D'Art, Gance requested that he be able to make his own films. He was permitted to do so and made a number of short films, including *La Folie du Docteur Tube* (*The Madness of Dr. Tube*, 1915) (*Abel Gance, Hier Et Demain*).

Gance wanted to create a film with an "original plot" that would "amaze" his audience (*Abel Gance, Hier Et Demain*). The film tells the story of a mad scientist that discovers a white powder that, when inhaled, causes its user to hallucinate. Dr. Tube tries out the powder on his dog and his servant. He later tries it on two women and their suitors. After several minutes of chaos, order returns to Dr. Tube's laboratory. The men and women have drinks while Dr. Tube begins working on his next invention.

The Madness of Dr. Tube is an early example of audacious subjectivity in filmmaking. The film makes enthusiastic use of mirror tricks in order to simulate (or represent) the experience of being under the influence of Dr. Tube's magical powder. Figures are shown as being exceedingly short or round or distorted in some other manner. This is achieved through the use of various mirrors. The movie is undoubtedly an exploration of perception and subjectivity. However, the case can also be made that the film is drawing from a type of modernist consciousness. That is to say, it may be significant that the perspective of Gance's characters is not one of stability or regularly. Rather, it is fractured, morphed, and distorted.

The Madness of Dr. Tube is among the first avant-garde films ever made. Gance ecstatically indulges in experimental types of perception. The film is comedic, but the narrative remains largely subordinate to its formal experimentations. These experimentations related to fragmentation and perception (subjectivity) are relevant to the further development of modernist aesthetics.

SECTION 4.7 - *INTOLERANCE*

With *Intolerance* (1916), this paper returns to the work of D.W. Griffith. The evolution of formal technique between 1909 (*A Corner in Wheat*) and 1916 (*Intolerance*) is staggering. *Intolerance* as intended to be a response to the controversy that Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) generated. *Intolerance* is an exploration of the theme of "intolerance" throughout history. This film stands as one of the masterpieces of not only modernist cinema, but all of film history.

The film follows four unrelated (in regards to narrative) stories: a "modern" story (20th century United States), a "Judaean" story (1st century), a "French" story (16th century), and a "Babylonian" story (6th century BC). These stories revolve around the intolerance of mankind toward itself and man's relative inhumanity. Each story is tinted a different color. They remain connected by an image of "Eternal Motherhood." She is shown rocking the cradle "of humanity and "serves as a symbol of continuity for the entire history of the human race, and a representation of the cycle of life and death" ("Intolerance, 1916"). The entire film spans over three hours and follows the details of each story. To summarize each story would be an unnecessary and lengthy process.

The fragmentation of *Intolerance* should be fairly evident. The film is comprised of four entirely distinct stories that are organized around a central theme. *Intolerance* may be one of the earliest examples of deliberate and salient montage. Throughout the film, there are frequent cuts from one segment to another. Griffith freely moves from one story to the next, crossing diegetic space and time, but maintaining a central theme. That isn't to say that each story contains the same structure and the editing simply draws parallels. Rather, the film aims to demonstrate how the actions of characters (motivated by "intolerance") lead to tragedy (be it the fall of Babylon or

the crucifixion of Christ). These stories and images, when presented alongside each other, amount to an overarching message and theme.

Clearly, *Intolerance*, draws strongly from history. The film is focused around the notion of timeless characteristics of humanity and humanity's relationship with itself. However, *Intolerance* is more than just a film about history. It is not a documentary, nor is it historical fiction. Rather it is a new way to examine the past, and present actions of humanity. Both before and after the release of *Intolerance*, there has been nothing like it. It is an example of a quintessentially modern project: understanding the nature of humanity throughout history and geographic regions.

Intolerance is a formal step before *La Roue*. The stylistic tendencies of Griffith's film can be seen (in an often more salient way) in Gance's contribution to 1922 (*La Roue*).

SECTION 4.8 – RECAPITULATION

The evolution of modernist aesthetics is a vast topic. The above accounts for a small percentage of the works being produced in the early 20th century. They are, however, among the most significant works in regard to the advancement of the stylistic techniques of modernism.

SECTION 5.0 – DZIGA VERTOV AND *KINO-PRAVDA*

Dziga Vertov's news-reel series *Kino-pravda* ("Film Truth") began its three-year run in 1922. Vertov was a significant modernist filmmaker that has had the misfortune of having his

legacy reduced to one major work: *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). Despite Vertov's status as being "lesser-known," his contributions to cinema (both Soviet and global) are of major significance. He, along with Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin, was one of the earliest practitioners of the "soviet montage" film style. However, although *Kino-pravda* began its run in 1922 (the focal year of modernism) and was created by a modernist filmmaker, it is not of the same aesthetic merit of works like *Ulysses, La Roue,* and "The Waste Land." Pursuant to this assessment, Vertov will be examined as a figure within the evolution of modernist aesthetics, rather than a figure involved in the 1922 apex of modernism. In accordance with Vertov's largest contributions to modernist aesthetics (prior or during 1922), this section will focus on Vertov's writing and *Kino-pravda*.

Knowledge of Vertov's historical context is helpful in understanding his philosophy and the motivation behind making *Kino-pravda.* In 1917, the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia. At this time, Soviet ideals began to take hold throughout Russia. The Soviet project was concerned with creating the ideal, perfect person. The Soviets believed that through socialization and modernization they would prevail in a global revolution that would bring about the eventual emergence of the "perfect human." They believed in the Hegelian dialectic of history: that because of history's "iron laws," it was constantly moving toward greater perfection. This ideology is important to modernism within Russia and in particular, Dziga Vertov.

In *Kino-pravda,* Vertov was interested in capturing reality (truth) and using the film medium to present it (in a unique manner) to his audience. Vertov believed that by showing different fragments of Soviet life and history, he could provide a greater understanding of the human condition. In 1922, he released his first major manifesto entitled "We: Variant of a

Manifesto." In this essay, Vertov writes: "A composition is made of phrases, just as a phrase is made of intervals of movement." (*Kino-eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov* 5). Vertov conceived of the film form as an assemblage of phrases (which were made up of movements). This is one of the earliest examples of writing that explicitly addresses montage theory within cinema. Many Soviets were concerned with how they could achieve the ideal of the perfect human and what factors were inhibiting the progression towards this ideal. In the *Kinoks Revolution* manifesto, first published in 1919, Dziga Vertov wrote: "I would just like to establish that all we have been doing in cinematography up till now was 100 per cent muddle and diametrically opposed to what we should have been doing" ("The Writings of Dziga Vertov" 353). Vertov contended that cinema could be used as an instrument in better understanding humanity. He believed that the eye of the camera was superior to the eye of the human ("The Writings of Dziga Vertov" 356). This idea (of improving mankind through cinema) is related to modernism. The Soviet project of perfection and the central project of modernism are both related to the thorough and complete understanding of the human condition.

Vertov was undoubtedly a modernist. If one follows his career until *Three Songs About Lenin* (1934), this becomes increasingly evident. Vertov failed to mention Stalin in *Three Songs About Lenin* (a violation of Stalin's system of socialist realism) and his filmmaking career was effectively destroyed. While Vertov's most significant work came after 1922, he remains a substantial contributor to the development of modernist aesthetics, particularly within the Soviet Union.

SECTION 6.0 - *ULYSSES*

T. S. Eliot almost did not complete his landmark poem, "The Waste Land." This is just one instance of someone utterly discouraged by the publication of James Joyce's monumental work: *Ulysses*. Eliot remarked to his friend, Ezra Pound, that Joyce had already accomplished everything he had hoped to with "The Waste Land." Pound insisted that Eliot finish the poem so that he could accomplish in verse what Joyce had done in prose ("Practical Cat" 81-82).

Almost immediately after finishing *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, James Joyce began writing *Ulysses*. Portions of the text were serialized in an American journal called *The Little Review*. Joyce finished writing the novel in 1921 and struggled to find a publisher. Sylvia Beach, the founder of *Shakespeare and Co.*, published the novel in 1922. The novel achieved rapid fame for a number of reasons. Within popular culture, the novel was famous for being "pornographic." The book was banned in Ireland, the United States, and a number of other countries. The aesthetic tendencies of modernism came to some of their most audacious and robust manifestations in Joyce's 1922 novel.

It's an astonishingly daunting task to even begin an attempt of summarizing the entirety of *Ulysses*. The novel is, in essence, the story of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus (the protagonist of *Portrait of the Artist*). The novel follows Leopold (and Stephen, to a lesser extent) throughout one day in Dublin. The novel follows the thoughts, events, actions, and emotions that can happen in one day. In understanding everything that can happen to two people in Dublin on one day, one can gain an understanding of everything that can happen to everyone, anywhere, on any day. As Joyce once stated, "in the particular is contained the universal" (Power 64-65).

SECTION 6.1 – FRAGMENTATION IN *ULYSSES*

The fragmentation of *Ulysses* is of paramount importance to the experience of the novel. As was mentioned before, the novel is separated into eighteen distinct "episodes." These episodes, while being components of the same narrative arc and mostly chronological, are stylistically variant and discrete. Associated with most episodes is a particular scene, hour, organ, technique, art, color, symbol, and "event" (from Homer's epic, *The Odyssey*). These elements make up a schema (often referred to as the "Gilbert schema") that can guide a reader through the book. This schema was devised by Joyce himself and given to his friend, Stuart Gilbert, in order to help Gilbert understand the book. Gilbert later published the schema in his 1930 book, *James Joyce's "Ulysses": A Study*. Joyce was aware of this publication and advocated its release.

The nature of the episodes in *Ulysses* makes for an extraordinarily fragmented and challenging reading experience. As stated above, each section has a different "technique" (or "writing style"). For instance, the "Aeolus" episode consists of rapid, frantic conversation interspersed with newspaper headlines as Bloom tries to get an ad published in the newspaper. The chapter is laden with references to wind (as Aeolus is the keeper of the winds in Homer's *Odyssey*) and with political commentary (a frequent subject of newspapers). This section is followed immediately by the "Lestrygonians" episode which describes Bloom's lunchtime experience. The writing "technique" in this section is revolting consumption (in the *Odyssey*, the Lestrygonians are a tribe of giant cannibals). Upon watching people eat at Combridge's corner, Bloom thinks: "Couldn't eat a morsel here. Fellow sharpening knife and fork, to eat all before him, old chap picking his tootles. Slight spasm, full, chewing the cud. [...] Lick it off the plate,

man! Get out of this. That fellow ramming a knifeful of cabbage down as if his life depended on it. Good stroke. [...] Tear it limb from limb. Second nature to him" (Joyce 169-170).

The episodic structure of the book is not the only source of fragmentation. Within each respective episode, the fragmentation is clear. Within each episode, narrative direction may rapidly change. A conversation or a thought may give way to an unknown voice going off on a tangent about cosmology or politics. Essentially, the fragments of an episode amount to (through montage) the meaning of that episode. When the episodes are combined, they amount to gargantuan montage.

It is significant that *Ulysses* concludes with a resolution to the fragmentation. In Molly's final monologue (discussed in the "subjectivity" section), she concludes with an emphatic "I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes" (Joyce 783). This moment serves as an affirmation of the marriage between Bloom and Molly and a resolution to the disorder of the novel.

SECTION 6.2 – "MAKING IT NEW" IN *ULYSSES*

The artistic tendency of "making it new" is particularly salient in Joyce's novel. The most obvious example of this lies within the title and the structure of book that revolves around that title. "Ulysses" is the Latin translation of "Odysseus," the hero of Homer's epic, *Odyssey. Ulysses* is the modernist "version" of the Greek epic. It is, like *Odyssey*, an epic about family and life.

Structurally, Joyce implements components of Homer's *Odyssey*. The first three episodes of *Ulysses* approximate the first four books of *Odyssey* (commonly referred to as the "Telemachy"). Similarly, the last three episodes of *Ulysses* approximate the last (roughly four to six) books of the *Odyssey* (also referred to as "The Nostos"). The middle episodes make up the "adventure" books of the *Odyssey*. Each section corresponds, in a symbolic way, to a particular event/encounter in the *Odyssey*. For instance, in the "Hades" episode, Bloom and his friends visit a graveyard for the funeral of Paddy Dignam. This is comparable to Odysseus' journey to the underworld. In the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode, the reader and Bloom witness an argument between Stephen Dedalus and John Eglinton regarding an interpretation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The argument between Dedalus and Eglinton represents the classic arguments of Aristotle and Plato, respectively. Additionally, these opposing views represent the rock/Scylla (Aristotle) and the whirlpool/Charybdis (Plato). Dedalus and Aristotle rely on biographical information and facts. Eglinton and Plato rely on essence and mysticism.

Within Joyce's text, there is an immense and carefully crafted symbolic structure that is maintained throughout the course of the novel. There are thousands of references, both obscure and recognizable, to numerology, literature, science, history, economics, geography, linguistics, mythology, and foreign languages. “These references are woven into a dynamic symbolic structure. Bloom is tied, through allusions and references, to Odysseus, Rip van Winkle, King Hamlet, Socrates, and Shakespeare (to name only a few). Similarly, Stephen is connected to Telemachus, Prince Hamlet, Hamnet (Shakespeare's son), and Plato. Bloom's connection to Odysseus is particularly important. Odysseus is the classical hero. He is -- along with Aeneas (*The Aeneid*) and Achilles (The *Iliad*) -- one of the most iconic epic heroes. Leopold Bloom becomes the modernist epic hero in Joyce's great modernist epic. The epic has been described as

"the tale of the tribe" (by Ezra Pound) and *Ulysses* is the story of the modernist "tribe." Bloom leaves his home (as Odysseus leaves Ithaca) and is gone for a day (as Odysseus is gone for 20 years). He unites with his symbolic son: Stephen Dedalus (as Odysseus reunites with Telemachus). At the conclusion of the novel, Bloom has conquered the "suitors" (in the case of the novel, a man named Blazes Boylan) and affirmed his marriage.

SECTION 6.3 – SUBJECTIVITY IN *ULYSSES*

James Joyce often disposes of "narrator assistance." That is to say, a helpful narrative voice is frequently absent from the novel. Joyce freely introduces the consciousness of characters without the luxury of explanation. For instance, in the third episode of the novel (dubbed "Proteus"), the novel relays the thoughts of Stephen Dedalus as he wanders along the shore. The reader is not furnished a statement like "he thought" or "he pondered." Furthermore, Joyce provides no explanation for the thoughts of Stephen. And unlike the case of the narrator in Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, Stephen's thoughts are not delicately composed or even understandable. The reader is presented with fragments of Stephen's memories and emotions. On page 49, Stephen thinks: "Talk that to someone else, Stevie: a pickmeup. Bet she wears those curse of God stays suspenders and yellow stockings, darned with lumpy wool. Talk about apple dumplings, *piuttosto.* Where are your wits?" (Joyce 49). This sequence is surrounded by similar cryptic, discursive ruminations. Joyce offers no background information or explanation. Instead, he supplies the immediate consciousness.

The final episode of the book disposes with everything *except* stream of consciousness. This section, referred to as "Penelope," contains the uninterrupted consciousness of Bloom's

wife, Molly. This soliloquy, though lasting over 40 pages, is comprised of only eight "sentences." Traditional punctuation, capitalization, and syntax are entirely absent. This section is pure consciousness. The following is a short example of what is contained within this episode: "[...] I suppose he thinks I dont know deceitful men all their 20 pockets arent enough for their lies then why should we tell them even if its the truth they dont believe you then tucked up in bed like those babies in the Aristocrats Masterpiece he brought me another time as if we hadnt enough of that in real life without some old Aristocrat or whatever his name is disgusting you more with those rotten pictures children with two heads and no legs [...]" (Joyce 772). This is a pure approximation of human thought. Joyce is able to capture how thoughts appear in consciousness and how they dart around and dissipate. In Joyce's articulation of human thought, he is without equal.

Within one of the novels' most famous sequences, the Circe episode (which takes the form of the play), the minds of Stephen and Bloom -- through hallucination -- dictate the actual narrative events of the episode. For instance, when Bloom begins to feel emasculated, Bella Cohen (the madam of the brothel) transforms into a man (named Bello) and transforms Bloom into a subservient woman. One exchange is as follows:

BLOOM: (*Enthralled, bleats.*) I promise never to disobey

BELLO: (*Laughs loudly.*) Holy smoke! You little know what's in store for you. I'm the tartar to settle your little lot and break you in! [...]

(*Bloom creeps under the sofa and peers out through the fringe.*) (Joyce 531)

This section also features the consciousnesses of Stephen and Bloom interacting with one another. (It is worth noting that this occurs at several other points in the novel as well.) This is almost like the "mindscreen" that sometimes exists in cinema. The consciousness of the character begins the diegetic reality of the narrative. However, it is complicated by the fact that multiple "mindscreens" are taking place simultaneously. This marks a major innovation in the area of modernist subjectivity.

SECTION 6.4 – RECAPITULATION OF *ULYSSES*

Ulysses has been the subject of innumerable books and essays. At any given moment in the text, multiple rhetorical and aesthetic systems are functioning simultaneously. This short section has not even begun to enter into the cavernous depths that are the critical works surrounding the novel. However, this section of the essay provided some insight into, as Joyce called it, this "all-inclusive most farraginous chronicle" (Joyce 423).

SECTION 7.0 – "THE WASTE LAND"

T. S. Eliot published "The Waste Land" in 1922 and in doing so, created the quintessential "modernist" poem. As was mentioned in the *Ulysses* section, Eliot attempted to do in verse what Joyce had done in prose (with the publication of *Ulysses*). It was only under the encouragement of Ezra Pound that Eliot finished the poem. "The Waste Land" is an extraordinarily dense text comprised of fragments. Nearly every sentence or word seems to be charged with multiple valences of meaning. It is a collage of mythological and literary references

assembled together in a disjointed, chronicle. For 1922 and for modernist literary aesthetics, "The Waste Land" (along with *Ulysses*) is a consummation of the movement.

SECTION 7.1 – FRAGMENTATION IN "THE WASTE LAND"

"The Waste Land" is organized into sections, which differ drastically from one another. Each section is also wrought with seemingly stochastic variance and fragmentation. Within the poem, the reader is guided from the pain of rebirth ("April is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing / Memory and desire, stirring / Dull roots with spring rain") to a quote from *Tristan and Isolde* to an unknown couple arguing to the Grail quest to "Shantih, shantih, shantih" (Ramazani 474, 475, 477, 487).

At the time of writing "The Waste Land," Eliot's life was in chaos. Eliot was struggling with a marriage that was in disarray. Critic Louis Menand writes in an article about Eliot: "The trouble with the marriage was not infidelity. [It was] asphyxiating mutual dependency. They were both anxious brittle people" ("Practical Cat" 79). Eliot wrote in his unpublished memoir: "To [my wife Vivienne], the marriage brought no happiness...To me, it brought the state of mind out of which came 'The Waste Land'" ("Practical Cat" 78). Eliot's poem is a way of responding to the turmoil in his relationship, as well as the confusion associated with a modernist consciousness. As such, "The Waste Land" is a vision of Eliot's world after the events of the early 20th century, World War I, and his chaotic marriage.

Like Molly's final "Yes" in *Ulysses*, Eliot's poem attempts a resolution. For Eliot and the rest of the modernists, there was hope for their project (that is the project of understanding the human experience). Accordingly, Eliot's poem does not end in utter disarray.

SECTION 7.2 – "MAKING IT NEW" IN "THE WASTE LAND"

As was the case with *Ulysses*, to state that "The Waste Land" "makes new" the literature of the past is an extreme understatement. Nearly every phrase seems charged with some significance. For instance, the famous first line "April is the cruellest month, breeding" is an allusion to the opening of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (Ramazani 474). For the sake of being succinct, this section will focus primarily on two of the most significant extended examples (of "making it new"): the Fisher King/Holy Grail motif and the "What the Thunder Said" story from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

The "Holy Grail" motif draws from medieval mythology (in particular, the Arthurian legend). The legend is told by a number of authors with significant variation between them. Besides this fact, the legend itself is rather cryptic. The "Holy Grail" is the goblet used by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper. The Fisher King resides within the Grail Castle (the location of the Grail). In most iterations of the story, he is afflicted by some ailment or grave injury. The injury of the Fisher King has a detrimental effect on the fertility of the world. The king's ailment results in his kingdom being transformed into a wasteland (nothing is able to grow). The Grail Knight (most frequently Percival/Parsifal) must travel to the Grail Castle (which can only be found by those worthy) and upon seeing the Grail and other holy items, he must ask the Fisher King: "For whom does the grail serve?" After he first finds the Grail Castle, Percival fails to ask the

question and the castle disappears. Years later, he is able to return to the castle and successfully asks the question, thus healing the Fisher King and restoring fertility to the land and alleviating desolation. Percival then learns that he is the grandson of the Fisher King and the rightful heir to become the new Grail/Fisher King.

References to the legend described are found at various points throughout Eliot's poem. And in fact, it should be evident that the task of Percival is rather similar to that of Eliot (rejuvenating the wasteland). The Fisher King, as a motif, is referenced several times throughout the poem. The most direct allusion is found on line 202: "*Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole*." According to the footnote in the *Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*, this is a quotation from Paul Verlaine's *Parsifal*. This French poem "evokes Wagner's opera about the Grail quest" (Ramazani 480). Translated, the line reads: "And O those children's voices singing in the dome!" (Ramazani 480). This refers to an incident wherein Percival has withstood the temptation of a female enchantress and will be granted entrance to the Grail Castle. The children's voices are being carried from a dome of the castle. Potential salvation is near. Throughout the poem, there are numerous instances to fishing. These references point to Eliot's interest in maintaining this symbolic motif throughout the poem.

The "What the Thunder Said" section serves as the resolution to the chaos of the poem. "The Waste Land" is Eliot's struggle to bring some coherence to his life. He places various stories and references alongside each other. This final section is Eliot's means to bringing a peace to the poem and to the larger "wasteland" of his existence. Eliot's own footnotes for the poem indicate that "DA" on line 41 refers to: "'Datta, dayadhvam, damyata' (Give, sympathize, control. The fable of the meaning of the Thunder is found in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. According

to the footnote in *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*, the fable (from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*) is as follows: "The Creator God utters the engimatic syllable DA to three groups. Lesser gods, naturally unruly, interpret it as 'Control yourselves' (*Damyata*); humans, naturally greedy, as 'Give' (*Datta*); demons, naturally cruel, as 'Be compassionate' (*Dayadvham*)" (Ramazani 486). The footnote goes on to explain that the "DA" "DA" "DA" is repeated today in the form of the sound (or voice) of thunder. Thus, each person should live their lives according to the principles of control, giving, and compassion.

This section ("What the Thunder Said") is the conclusion of the poem. It is the resolution. This section is Eliot's means of healing the wasteland. He accomplishes this cleaning through religion. As Eliot works through the fragmentary desolation that is the post-World War I "wasteland," he has an urge to arrive at some salvation. For Eliot, the salvation is in the "shantih, shantih, shantih" (Ramazani 487). Eliot translated the Sanskrit word "shantih" as "the Peace which passeth understanding" (Ramazani 487). Eliot combines elements of Western and Eastern religions (Christianity and Hinduism) to reach some understanding of *how* to be human and *how* to attain the "shantih, shantih, shantih."

SECTION 7.3 SUBJECTIVITY IN "THE WASTE LAND"

Addressing the technique of subjective writing within "The Waste Land" is a difficult task. Unlike "Prufrock," the narrator in "The Waste Land" is not constant. The narrative voice seems to belong to various characters that don't have any logical, coherent relationship. To compound the confusion, these voices represent disparate ideas. In short, because of the heavy fragmentation of Eliot's poem, narrative voices are difficult to distinguish. They change and

transform rapidly and without warning. For instance, the speakers of "April is the cruellest month" (line 1) and "My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me" (line 111) seem disparate and disconnected.

The grand speaker of "The Waste Land" is Eliot himself. The poem is a type of mental essay wherein Eliot's struggles and consciousness are poured onto the page. In an interview, Eliot stated that, while writing "The Waste Land,"[he] wasn't even bothering whether [he] understood what [he] was saying " ("Practical Cat" 77). Eliot's poem is an exploration of his personal consciousness. In the same way that Prufrock (the poetic character) seemed to represent part of the modernist consciousness, in "The Waste Land," Eliot assumes the same role.

SECTION 7.4 – RECAPITULATION OF "THE WASTE LAND"

Ezra Pound suggested that T. S. Eliot finish "The Waste Land" because what Joyce had done in poetry, he (Eliot) must do in verse. Eliot was successful in that endeavor. "The Waste Land" remains one of the most iconic works of the 20th century. It holds this status because, like *Ulysses* for prose and *La Roue* for cinema, it encapsulates modernism brilliantly. "The Waste Land" stands as a thorough and robust exploration of the modernist condition and its related aesthetics.

SECTION 8.0 – *LA ROUE*

The innovations of Abel Gance cannot be understated. It is one of the great injustices of the film history canon that Abel Gance is denied his rightful position of monumental importance.

Some introduction to Gance has already been provided in the *La Folie du Docteur Tube* section of this essay. After completing a number of short films and moderate successful features, Gance released his first majorly successful feature: *J'accuse* (1919). This film was the first film "courageous enough to oppose the war" (*Abel Gance: The Charm of Dynamite*). This film made use of imaginative camera techniques and swift cutting. However, it was in 1922, with *La Roue* (*The Wheel*), that Gance made his first masterpiece. It is worth noting that many sources list the release date of *La Roue* as 1923. This is inaccurate as *La Roue* premiered in Paris over several nights in the December of 1922 (Abel 26).

La Roue (1922) has not been preserved in its entirety. For many years, there existed only unofficial "mutt" prints that were gathered from various film sources. In 2008, Flicker Alley released a DVD with restored footage that reaches about 4.5 hours. The original release was somewhere between 7.5 and 9 hours (Abel 26). As such, a considerable amount of the film is missing. Most of the missing footage is suspected to be contained in the third "fourth" of the film (if the entire film were split into fourths). Although the film is incomplete, this 4.5 hour version affords the viewer an adequate vision of the plot and the aesthetic innovations of Gance's masterful film.

La Roue tells the story of railway engineer and inventor named Sisif. At the onset of the film, Sisif witnesses a devastating train crash. In the aftermath of the crash, he finds an infant girl (called Norma) and adopts her as his own. He raises her to believe that his son (whose mother died in childbirth) is her biological brother and he, her biological father. As Norma grows up, Sisif realizes that he is falling in love with her. Sisif confesses this to his boss, Hersan, and Hersan uses the information to blackmail him into forcing Sisif into giving his approval for a

marriage between Hersan and Norma. Sisif complies, but is so dejected and distraught, that, while driving a train that will deliver Norma to Hersan, he crashes.

Due to degrading eyesight, Sisif must move up to Mont Blanc in the French alps. (This change of setting was actually prompted by the illness of Gance's wife during the filming of *La Roue*. A doctor ordered that she spend time in the mountains.) Norma, with her husband (Hersan), visits Sisif in the mountains. It is at this moment that the audience learns that Norma's step-brother, Elie, is also in love with her. He and Hersan get in a fight and both are killed. Sisif, first enraged by the death of his son, dismisses Norma from his home. She returns when his eyesight has faded entirely and lives in his presence, without his knowledge. Sisif eventually discovers her presence and they embrace. At the conclusion of the film, while Norma joins in a dance on the mountain, Sisif dies.

SECTION 8.1 – FRAGMENTATION IN *LA ROUE*

La Roue invented "Soviet cutting" before there was Soviet cutting. After the release of *La Roue*, Russian directors Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin traveled to France to personally thank Gance for opening their eyes to the possibilities of cinema (Fristoe). Gance makes use of rapid, rhythmic editing. On some occasions, the fragments function in a montage relationship. For the aesthetic of fragmentation within cinema, *La Roue* is the true beginning.

The aesthetic of fragmentation can be found in the first sequences of the film. After the opening credits, the camera begins following train tracks as they converge and diverge. The film then immediately changes to an image of two trains about to collide. There is a quick cut that is

followed by an image of a train falling off. However, the act of falling is not shown. Instead, there is a series of cuts that suggest a train falling off its track. The audience is not shown a long take. Rather, they are shown -- in the words of film critic André Bazin -- an "allusion" to an action (Bazin). This affords the scene a unique variety of potency. There is an emotional impression that would otherwise not exist.

At one of the climaxes of the film, the moment where Elie falls from a cliff to his death, there is an eruption of rapid cutting. This could be described as an impression of the consciousness of Elie in the moment before his demise. Within a period of several seconds, the viewer is bombarded with images of Elie and Norma (his memories of he and her together). After this frenetic moment, Elie falls. In these few seconds, Gance is able to crystallize the emotional experience of Elie and Norma. The impression could not be conveyed directly with a single image. Instead, the powerful impression is synthesized (by the viewer) from the collision of images.

SECTION 8.2 – "MAKING IT NEW" IN *LA ROUE*

La Roue is constantly engaging with recreating and altering old works of art (particularly literature). Gance's personal interest in literature manifests itself throughout the film. The most salient literary artifact is found in Sisif's name. Sisif's name is a reference to the mythological character of Sisyphus. In Greek mythology, Sisyphus (once a king), is condemned -- in the afterlife -- to the endless activity of pushing a boulder to the top of a mountain. When Sisyphus reaches the summit, the boulder rolls back down and Sisyphus must begin the task again

(Morford). Sisif is a particularly sisyphean character. He is endlessly tortured. He desperately desires a life that he cannot and will not ever attain.

The plot of the film could easily belong to a Romantic novel of the 18th or 19th century. Gance explicitly uses a quote from Victor Hugo (who happened to be one of his literary heroes). An intertitle reads: "Creation is a Great Wheel, which does not move without crushing someone. -Victor Hugo" The wheel is a metaphor for creation and for life. And of course, life is not without misery. Gance takes this sorrowful, somewhat familiar plot, and makes it into a new kind of "symphony." Gance takes the Romantic tragedy and creates universal drama "of trains, of progress, [and] of film" (*Abel Gance: The Charm of Dynamite*).

SECTION 8.3 – SUBJECTIVITY IN *LA ROUE*

The inclination toward subjectivity is observable throughout *La Roue*. This manifests itself in a number of ways. On several occasions, the audience is permitted to look through the eyes of Sisif. Gance makes an effort to show the viewer the consciousness of Sisif. The tortured experience of Sisif is representative of the pain involved in anyone's life. For example, early in Norma's adolescent, the audience sees Sisif peering out his window at Norma on a swing. The camera switches to a point-of-view shot that is focused on Norma's skirt and legs. This is one of the first clues about Sisif's feelings about Norma. Later in the film, after Sisif has begun living in Mont Blanc, the audience is permitted to look through his eyes on several occasions. At this point in the film, the physical degradation of his eyesight is reflected in the washed-out/faded nature of the images. In these moments, the camera actually attempts to depict the physical limitations of Sisif's perspective. Gance uses this unusual technique to great emotional effect.

One of the most magnificent shots of the film (and in all of cinema) -- the railroad roundhouse shot -- has a connection to the aesthetic of subjectivity. Within the roundhouse, every pathway is closed except one. There is one path remaining: the track to Mont Blanc. The roundhouse thus serves as physical representation of his consciousness. He has exhausted his options. He can no longer work. Sisif's standing in the middle of the roundhouse has no practical purpose. Rather, it is an external expression of a moment in his consciousness.

SECTION 8.4 – RECAPITULATION OF *LA ROUE*

La Roue is, in a word, a masterpiece. Gance was fixated on the idea of creating films in a revolutionary manner. He was obsessed with innovation and with creating a new cinema. Outside of film studies, *La Roue* remains largely unwatched. This is largely due to contemporary disinterest in silent cinema and the trouble (until recently) involved in acquiring a copy of the film. Nevertheless, it is one of cinema's great modernist works.

SECTION 9.0 – AFTERMATH OF 1922 AND CONCLUSION

Modernism was an enormous artistic movement that spanned literature, film, sculpture, architecture, painting, theatre, and more. This paper has addressed some of the most important aesthetic tendencies in two fields (literature and film), how they are deployed, to what end they are deployed, and how the development of these tendencies resulted in an apex moment.

Modernism did not end after 1922, but the greatest innovations took place within that year. As 1905 was the "miracle year" for physics, 1922 was the "miracle year" for literature and

film, as they relate to modernism. It was the culmination of the developments that transpired at the onset of the 20th century.

Modernism continued well into the middle of the 20th century. In literature, the modernism was perpetuated by authors such as Vladimir Nabokov, William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, William Carlos Williams, Dylan Thomas, Wallace Stevens, Samuel Beckett (in some of his work), and William S. Burroughs (in some of his work). In film, modernism continued to be explored by filmmakers like Sergei Eisenstein, Akira Kurosawa (in some of his work), Ingmar Bergman (in some of his work), Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Alexander Dovzhenko. The year 1922 is significant in that it was the big payoff for techniques that had been developing for over a decade. For modernist poetry, prose, and film, the works of "The Waste Land," *Ulysses*, and *La Roue* inhabit an echelon of unparalleled influence. That the three works were released within the same year is not a coincidence. I end similarly to how I began: with Virginia Woolf. Human character did indeed change and the change was "not sudden and definite," but gradual. However, the focus should not be on the beginning or the end, but rather, on the climax. That climax was 1922.

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