Narrative Disruptions: Reinterpreting Modernism Through Contemporary Media

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This article examines how the narrative disruptions characteristic of literary Modernism—fragmentation, non-linear storytelling, and unreliable narration—are reinterpreted and extended through contemporary cinematic adaptations of literary texts. Drawing on canonical Modernist techniques, the study explores their resonance in films such as TThe Great Gatsby (2013), The Hours (2002), and Atonement (2007), which adapt both Modernist and non-Modernist literary works. It argues that these films mirror the Modernist rejection of linear coherence by employing fragmented, multi-perspective storytelling to address contemporary cultural concerns. The article situates these disruptions within the theoretical frameworks of Modernist literary innovation and media theory, highlighting parallels between early 20th-century narrative experimentation and present-day cinematic storytelling. These case studies illustrate the evolving forms of narrative subjectivity and temporality, reimagining Modernist themes of time, memory, and identity through cinematic techniques like rapid montages, anachronistic soundscapes, and subjective voiceovers. By demonstrating that Modernist narrative techniques remain relevant in contemporary film, this study calls for an expanded Modernist canon that includes cinematic adaptations, underscoring the enduring impact of Modernist aesthetics on contemporary culture.

1. Introduction

This article explores the reinterpretation of Modernist narrative disruptions such as fragmentation, non-linear storytelling, and unreliable narration, through contemporary digital media, including social media, video games, virtual reality, and film. The significance of this study lies in its examination of how early 20th-century literary innovations continue to shape and resonate with today's digital storytelling practices, offering insights into the evolution of narrative forms in a technology-driven world. By bridging Modernist literature and contemporary media, this research highlights the enduring relevance of Modernist aesthetics and their adaptability to new platforms, contributing to a deeper understanding of narrative continuity and transformation across time.

1.1. Contextualising Modernism

Modernism as a literary movement can be defined as the cultural attitude set in the period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in response to industrialisation, urbanisation and the First World War (Eysteinsson 71). This movement, reacting to a rapidly changing world, sought to challenge traditional forms of storytelling and explore the fragmented nature of modern life. Writers such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and T.S. Eliot made critical contributions to the advancement of techniques directed toward narrative form construction, which were characterised by their disruption of linear, coherent storytelling. Woolf, especially in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), has used the style of stream of consciousness to portray the characterisation as direct awareness and continuity with the freedom of consciousness and time. Arguably one of the most significant pieces of literature that came out of the Modernist period, Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) rejects the traditional linear narrative by applying fluidity of the multiple narratives: interior monologues, and nonlinear time frames (McCray 18). This rejection of traditional, linear

narratives, where events are ordered chronologically, is a hallmark of Modernist literature. T.S. Eliot's poetry, especially his work *The Waste Land*, published in 1922, was a true masterpiece of Modernism as it exposed the world to fragmentation where voices and languages, historical and mythological references, etc., all aimed to depict the fragmentation of culture after the wars (Valverde 43). These writers, for this reason, dismissed the Victorian novel's precise, realistic temporal structure in favour of episodic time, fragmented structures, and an explicit rejection of linear narratives, with an unstable boundary between the narrating self and the world. In breaking from tradition, they pioneered "narrative disruptions," creating stories that reflected the complexity and ambiguity of their era, a concept that resonates deeply with the fragmented narratives seen in contemporary media.

1.2. Disruptions in Modernism

Modernist literature is characterised by what is famously known as 'narrative disruptions,' whereby authors consciously interrupt what is normally considered a proper narrative because they are trying to symbolise the fractured nature of consciousness and reality (Heise-Von Der Lippe 77). For instance, Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) moves from one time perspective to another and from one character's stream of consciousness to another, thus making the reader work on the construction of the narrative (Lapaire 90). These disruptions are not 'stylistic breaks'; they are representative of the fragmented human condition in the post-World War era, something that was immensely important for the Modernists. Rather than following a linear progression, Modernist writers employed fragmented narrative structures to reflect the disarray of modern existence (Kronfeld 87). As such, the shift away from the traditional

structure of telling a story was a unique and effective way that Modernist writers were able to reveal multiple vantage points as well as to present reality in parallel – something which is indicative of today's fast and uncertain world. In today's digital world, platforms like TikTok and Instagram mirror this disruption, offering fragmented narratives through short videos and disjointed timelines, which demand users piece together meaning from dispersed content. This is to challenge the reader's anticipations by disrupting the continuity in Modernist fiction, which in turn demands input from the reader for meaning-making (Kern 83).

1.3. Contemporary Reinterpretations

Modernist literature has been, however, in the last twenty years, more often read through the filter of media analysis and thus has represented a renewed perspective within which to address the most critical aspects of the Modernist experimentations in the narration (Kronfeld 87). Concepts like digital storytelling and virtual reality, as well as those in interactive platforms, can be compared to Modernist literary works, where narratives are discontinuous and introduced in blocks. For instance, hypertext fiction, such as Michael Joyce's *Afternoon, a Story* (1987), allows readers to navigate through multiple storylines and fragmented texts, reflecting Modernism's deconstruction of conventional narratives (Rettberg 28). This interactive form of reading, where the audience plays an active role in constructing the narrative, mirrors the way Modernist writers like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf invited readers to piece together meaning from fragmented viewpoints.

1.4. Research Gap

Modernist narrative techniques have been widely discussed by scholars, and books such as Eysteinsson (2018) and Kern (2011) have outlined the rejection of linear coherence by the movement in favor of fragmented,

subjective forms. Other works like Kronfeld (2023) and Heise-Von Der Lippe (2021) highlight the role Modernist writers such as Woolf, Joyce and Eliot made as they leveraged disruption to depict the fragmented human condition. In the meantime, media theorists such as McLuhan (1964) and Manovich (2001) have examined digital platforms and their restructuring of narratives, and similarities between these two can be found in works like Ensslin (2023) and Rettberg (2021) on interactive fiction or hypertext fiction. Nonetheless, there is a lack of scholarly work that traces these Modernist techniques to post-1945 digital media, especially how apps such as TikTok, VR, and interactive films expand and distort these Modernist ideals. This paper fills the gap by looking at the way Modernist breaks are being reimagined through contemporary media language thus providing new insight into the legacy of Modernist breaks.

1.6. Research Questions

This article seeks to address the following questions:

- How do contemporary digital media platforms, such as social media, video games, and virtual reality, reinterpret and extend the narrative disruptions of Modernist literature?

- In what ways do Modernist themes of time, memory, and subjectivity find new expression through interactive and digital technologies?

- How can the inclusion of digital and interactive works expand the Modernist canon in the context of post-1945 modern and contemporary literature?

1.7. Scope and Contribution

Situated within the field of post-1945 modern and contemporary literature, this study examines the interplay between Modernist narrative

techniques—fragmentation, non-linearity, and unreliable narration—and cinematic adaptations of literary texts, focusing on case studies such as *TThe Great Gatsby* (2013), *The Hours* (2002), and *Atonement* (2007). By tracing how these films reinterpret Modernist techniques from both Modernist and non-Modernist literary sources, the article offers an original contribution to literary and film studies, proposing an expanded Modernist canon that embraces cinematic forms. This approach not only reinterprets Modernism's legacy through its adaptation in contemporary cinema but also underscores its ongoing influence on narrative innovation, providing a framework for understanding how literary Modernism informs and is transformed by cinematic storytelling.

This article is structured to explore the reinterpretation of Modernist narrative techniques in cinematic adaptations, bridging literary Modernism with contemporary film studies. Section 2 establishes a theoretical framework by outlining key Modernist techniques such as fragmentation, non-linearity, and unreliable narration and their relevance to cinematic storytelling, drawing on media theories to contextualise their adaptation in film. Section 3 analyses case studies of cinematic adaptations, demonstrating how these films reinterpret Modernist techniques to address contemporary audiences. Section 4 discusses the implications of these findings for literary and film studies, proposing an expanded Modernist canon that includes cinematic forms and suggesting directions for future research. This structure underscores the enduring influence of Modernist aesthetics on narrative innovation across media, with a focus on the literary-cinematic interplay.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Modernist Narrative Techniques

Modernist literature is identified by a cardinal element, which is the treatment of narrative mechanisms that mimic life in the prism of modernity (Eysteinsson 71). At the core of this narrative experimentation are such elements as non-linearity, the fragmented point of view, and the unreliable narrator, which aim to subvert and modify conventional narration. Among all the features typical for Modernist texts, non-linearity occupies a rather central position (Carr 61). Unlike the traditional technique of presenting the story in a linear manner, as is the case in the classical writings, the Modernists use a writing style that mirrors the disorderly organisation of the world and human existence. For example, in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), both temporal and spatial shifts in the story are employed, showing the nature of time and memory (Parke 23). Indeed, Woolf's employment of stream consciousness technique does not only interrupt the causal continuity but temporal as well; it provides the readers with impressions of time instead of a linear, objective time (Štefl 37). This mirrors how today's digital platforms, like social media feeds, are experienced in fragmented, non-sequential moments, where users are left to piece together a coherent narrative from scattered posts and updates (Geyerová 72).

Another feature of Modernist literature is that it presents the world in fragments. Frequently, the authors introduce the readers to several characters and reveal multiple perspectives on the same events, making truth and reality quite ambiguous. This technique is evident in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), in which the story is told successively from the perspectives of numerous characters in a single day (Joyce 80). This

attempt demonstrates perfectly how the individual human experience of daily life goes to show that there is more than a single way of viewing things. Such fragmentation not only contributes to the deep exploration of the character's personality but also emphasises the aspect of subjectivity that focuses on the fact that reality is a construction of multiple perspectives rather than a single truth. Furthermore, the postmodern hiring of unreliable narrators makes it even more challenging for a reader to interact with Modernist texts. In *TThe Great Gatsby* (1925), Fitzgerald uses narrators who are unreliable or who present highly subjective points of view, whereby readers are put in a position to doubt the information presented (Lee 259). This parallels the current issue of misinformation in today's media, where audiences must critically assess the reliability of what they consume. The use of unreliable narrators in Modernist works thus makes the reader an active participant in constructing meaning, a role that is increasingly relevant in the digital age, where individuals must constantly evaluate the credibility of online narratives. By exploring non-linearity, fragmentation, and unreliable narration, Modernist techniques anticipate the challenges of today's media-saturated environment, where narratives are no longer singular, linear, or always trustworthy.

2.2. Media Theory and Contemporary Media

The development of narrative modes in the Modernist literary context is crucial for understanding contemporary media, particularly in the context of media theory applied to cinematic adaptations. Linguistic pioneers such as Marshall McLuhan and Lev Manovich offer valuable frameworks for analyzing how films, as a medium, reinterpret Modernist conventions (Delfanti 65).

Marshall McLuhan's concept of the "medium is the message" underscores the idea that the medium through which a story is told

profoundly influences its content and meaning (Audisho 3). This principle is particularly relevant to cinematic adaptations, where the visual and auditory elements of film—such as montage, sound design, and voiceover—shape the narrative in ways that echo Modernist techniques like fragmentation and non-linearity. For example, in Baz Luhrmann's *TThe Great Gatsby* (2013), an adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel, the use of rapid montages and anachronistic music (combining 1920s jazz with contemporary hip-hop) creates a fragmented, disorienting experience that mirrors Modernist disruptions of linear storytelling (Sampson 153). Similarly, *The Hours* (2002), adapted from Michael Cunningham's novel, employs non-linear editing and interwoven narratives to reflect Virginia Woolf's stream-of-consciousness style, emphasizing subjective perspectives and temporal fluidity (Towers 41). These cinematic techniques allow films to break from chronological order, inviting viewers to actively construct meaning, much like readers of Modernist texts.

Another source that contributes to understanding how contemporary media rephrases Modernist storytelling is Lev Manovich's concept of the "database narrative" from *The Language of New Media* (2001). Manovich describes narratives as collections of discrete, interconnected elements rather than linear sequences (Manovich 17). This approach parallels Modernist fragmentation, as films adapt literary texts by presenting narratives through non-unified chronologies and multiple perspectives. For instance, *Atonement* (2007), adapted from Ian McEwan's novel, uses a non-linear structure and shifting viewpoints to reflect the unreliable narration and fragmented reality central to Modernist literature (Hays 60). The film's manipulation of time, achieved through editing techniques that

juxtapose past and present, mirrors the temporal discontinuities found in works like James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). Manovich's framework highlights how cinematic adaptations reorganize literary narratives into modular, interconnected segments, enabling filmmakers to explore Modernist themes of time, memory, and subjectivity in a visual medium.

The application of media theory to cinematic adaptations reveals how films extend Modernist narrative techniques. For example, in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), the non-linear presentation of fractured memories, achieved through disjointed editing and subjective camera work, forces viewers to piece together the narrative, echoing the reader's role in Modernist novels like Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) (Poulaki 24). This cinematic subversion of linear storytelling aligns with Modernist interests in subjective points of view and the constructed nature of truth, demonstrating how film, as a medium, amplifies the experimental methods of Modernist literature. The application of these Modernist narrative approaches in contemporary cinema proves that these experimental methods remain relevant, opening new possibilities for reading Modernist texts through their cinematic reinterpretations and enriching the discourse on storytelling as technology evolves (DeMaagd 66).

3. Analysis

3.1 Case Studies

3.1.1 Digital Storytelling and Modernism

The characteristic of modernist literature is the focus on time, memory and the subjectivity of the narrative, which is revealed through the non-linear structure. These themes have been taken up anew in the context of digital media forms, particularly interactive narratives as well as virtual reality (VR) narratives (Gualeni 73). The presentation to the reader and

viewer in the digital age presents Modernism with a new way in which to expand on its principles in a manner that is fresh and engaging. For example, video games or hypertextual fiction correspond to the Modernist strategy of reframing the narrative (Yoon 234). An example of works that reshape an understanding of gaming includes Dear Esther (2012), a video game by The Chinese Room. The game presents a narrative-focused game where the players have to discover the story of an island by playing instead of following a plot (Higgins 79). The episodic gameplay suggests the overall plot through collectables and brief cut scenes, which resembles how Modernist narratives, such as Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), employ suggestive images and occasional stream-of-consciousness (Cipriani 62). This kind of interaction between the player and the narrative corresponds to the actively engaged role that Modernist literature calls on the reader to adopt.

Virtual reality (VR) can also be applied to reinvent knots of Modernist art, especially in the area of the subject and memory (Dooley 67). In VR, users get to experience a story or a plot, sometimes from a first-person point of view, in a three-dimensional environment. Projects like Notes on Blindness: Into Darkness (2016), a VR adaptation of John Hull's audio diaries that describe his experience of blindness, disturb the dichotomy between seeing and not seeing, and, in this way, address the themes dear to Modernism, such as an emphasis on subjectivity and fragmented point of view (Bax 6). As with Woolf's focus on only perception, the VR established a user's only narrative and presented the experience as realistic while excluding outside events (Riva 29). The specific actions that the user takes impact the story and reiterate the Modernist narrative of a fluid and contingent reality.

3.1.2. Film and Television Adaptations

Cinematic adaptations of literary texts have employed film techniques to reflect and extend Modernist narrative forms, such as fragmentation, non-linearity, and unreliable narration, thereby reinterpreting Modernist aesthetics for contemporary audiences. This subsection analyzes three case studies—*The Great Gatsby* (2013), *The Hours* (2002), and *Atonement* (2007)—to demonstrate how these films adapt Modernist techniques from both Modernist and non-Modernist literary sources. By examining how these adaptations use cinematic tools like montage, non-linear editing, and subjective narration, this analysis illustrates the persistence of Modernist concerns with time, memory, and subjectivity, supporting the argument for an expanded Modernist canon that includes cinematic forms. Novels such as F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* have been turned into films several times, which opened rather promising avenues to examine how the cinematic medium can rework Modernist concerns. Baz Luhrmann's 2013 film adaptation of *TThe Great Gatsby* demonstrates how cinematic techniques can mirror and extend Modernist narrative experimentation. The novel, written by F. Scott Fitzgerald in 1925, already exhibits many Modernist characteristics, such as fragmentation and an unreliable narrator (Hays 60). Luhrmann enhances these elements through his use of rapid montages, anachronistic music, and visually exaggerated styles to capture the disorienting experience of modern life. His fragmented depiction of Gatsby's lavish parties, cutting rapidly between images of wealth, decadence, and chaos, mirrors T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), where juxtaposition creates meaning through fragmented imagery (Sampson 153).

The constant presence of anachronous music combining 1920s jazz and contemporary hip-hop also underlines fragmentation, thus reflecting the

Modernist disregard for linear evolution and a mono-discretionary view of history (Kronfeld 153). Another example of a Modernist approach to storytelling that can be pointed to in Luhrmann's adaptation is the use of voiceover by Nick Carraway, the otherwise limited omniscient narrator of the novel. The voiceover, integrated into the movie, illustrates that Carraway is prejudiced, resulting in questioning of the audience's concepts of factuality, which is a characteristic of the Modernist novel, such as the one invented by Fitzgerald. Additionally, Luhrmann's exaggerated visual style, marked by surreal, dreamlike sequences, extends the Modernist preoccupation with subjective experience and interiority. For instance, scenes where Gatsby's mansion is depicted as a blur of surreal vision fulfil Modernist concerns, such as the impossibility of a stable perspective aiming at a coherent view of the world (Towers 41). Thus, the 2013 adaptation of *TThe Great Gatsby* enacts and amplifies modernism's methods, applying cinematic equipment for the representation of fragmentation, subjectivity, and the questionableness of reality.

Similarly, *The Hours* (2002), directed by Stephen Daldry and adapted from Michael Cunningham's 1998 novel *The Hours*, which engages with Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), reinterprets Modernist techniques through cinematic storytelling. Cunningham's novel employs stream-of-consciousness and non-linear storytelling, echoing Woolf's Modernist exploration of subjective time and consciousness (Turan 47). The film adapts these techniques by interweaving three timelines—Woolf writing *Mrs Dalloway* in the 1920s, a 1950s housewife reading it, and a 2001 narrative echoing its themes—using non-linear editing to create a fragmented temporal structure. For example, rapid cross-cuts between these periods mirror Woolf's stream-of-consciousness, where thoughts

shift fluidly across time (Parke 23). Joe Wright's *Atonement* (2007), adapted from Ian McEwan's 2001 novel *Atonement*, illustrates how non-Modernist literary texts can incorporate Modernist techniques, which are then amplified in cinematic form. Although McEwan's novel is contemporary, it employs unreliable narration and fragmented perspectives, hallmarks of Modernist literature (Zeven 661). The film adapts these through a non-linear structure and shifting viewpoints, particularly through Briony Tallis's unreliable narration. For instance, the Dunkirk sequence uses a continuous long take to depict a chaotic, disorienting war scene, reflecting Briony's distorted memory and echoing the fragmented reality of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) (Joyce 80).

Collectively, these adaptations illustrate the persistence and evolution of Modernist narrative techniques in contemporary cinema. *The Great Gatsby* amplifies Fitzgerald's fragmentation and unreliable narration through visual and auditory excess, *The Hours* adapts Woolf's non-linear and subjective storytelling through interwoven timelines and introspective visuals, and *Atonement* extends McEwan's Modernist-inspired techniques through non-linear editing and unreliable perspectives.

3.1.3. Social Media and Fragmented Narratives

In today's digital age, social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have emerged as contemporary spaces for fragmented and multi-perspective storytelling (Zhang 52). The fragmented nature of social media, with its quick, bite-sized content and multi-platform engagement, resonates strongly with the fragmented structure of Modernist literature. Just as Modernist authors went away from linear narratives to reflect the complexities of modern life, social media allows users to share disjointed, episodic glimpses into their lives, offering new possibilities for narrative disruption (Benegiamo-Chilla 8). One of the most evident forms of non-

sequential and even chaotic social media narrative is based on so-called "story" features accessible on Instagram. Instagram Stories are photos or short videos that users share and vanish within 24 hours, providing a relatively incoherent and interrupted storyline (Krieger 86). It is common to find users with seemingly unrelated incidents in a single day, and the audience has to guess the scenarios behind each picture. This is exactly how Modernism confronts the reader with a lot of partial views or separately documented incidents, as is the case of episodes of Joyce's *Ulysses* or Woolf's *The Waves*, where meaning is created through sudden, ephemeral images (Stahl 36).

Likewise, with the help of TikTok, non-linear narratives have returned, especially due to the use of short videos and the possibility of editing and remixing the content. TikTok's "duet" function, which enables newly introduced clips to perform in relation to precedents, generates a multi-perspective fragmented narrative that is reminiscent of Modernist use of multiple voices or layers within a single text (Kaye 82). Due to the specificity of the content generated by the account, the non-linear nature of the information feed and sheer account activity, the platform can be regarded as a reflection of the Modernist depiction of the fractured psyche.

3.2. Modernism in the Context of Postmodernism and Digital Culture
3.2.1. The Blurring of Boundaries

Modernist and Postmodernist approaches are further intertwined in current media, regarding the inclusion of fragmented and non-linear structures as well. The main feature of Modernism was its departure from narrative realism and opting for such techniques as fragmented time settings, unreliable narrators, and an emphasis on individual perception (Joyce 80). These principles are extended and subverted through pastiche,

irony and self-reflexivity typical to postmodernism, which adds further complexity to the concept of a narrative arc. Today, opposition between these two movements seems to be blurring as many forms of new media, including film, literature and internet content, seem to tell stories that occupy the common ground of both these movements. For example, the use of non-linear, socially deconstructed time and episodic meta-structuring of Inception, or Westworld, is characteristic of Modernist impulses as well (Köller 163). Still, these media contain certain tendencies of the Postmodernist period, notably, the themes of reflection and meta-narration, which make the viewer doubt the reality and truth. In Inception, Christopher Nolan organises dreams within more dreams, which, similar to Modernist texts, features nonlinear and fragmented views of time (Crawford 64). Nevertheless, the film's emphasis on the act of telling stories – characters often question the existence of the so-created world – ties to Postmodernism's predilection for meta-communication, which deconstructs the narratives themselves.

Modern and Postmodern elements can both be visible in contemporary TV series like Mr Robot, created in 2015, and True Detective, created in 2014. Mr Robot has a disaggregate and confused storytelling approach and multiple angles of unreliable narration; nonetheless, it is Modernist in its writing style while being somewhat Postmodern in breaking the fourth wall and calling into question what is real (Wojtyna 48). True Detective uses fragmented time and unreliable narration that is characteristic of Modernism and discusses Postmodern concepts of existence. Such programs combine narrative innovation and irony, thereby exemplifying the interconnectedness of both movements and encouraging viewers to think.

3.2.2. Digital Age and hypertextuality

Modern technologies, specifically digital media, played a significant role in the expansion of possibilities for the use of narrative disruptions, primarily, hypertextual disruptions and other types of telling a story (Salter 31). Hypertextuality can be defined as the structure of digital content that can be perused by means of links rather than by following a direct sequence of links (Lavagnino 15). This makes reading an interactive and non-linear process, which is in line with the Modernists trying to disrupt the linear narrative. Novelists of the Early Modernist movement, like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, broke the line and began to construct stream-of-consciousness narratives that would mimic a human mentality and memory. Hypertext and digital media advance this kind of play to the extent that they create multiple readers' paths within the same text, which means that readership is intrinsically non-linear. Interactive fiction and hypertext novels offer readers the possibility to navigate through the texts they read (Kouta 586). For instance, Michael Joyce's *Afternoon, a Story* (1987) is an early example of hypertext fiction that allows readers to choose between diverse paths, which mirror Modernist writing (Bansal et al. 28). Through the links provided, the reader can navigate through the material, which is not linear as is the case with Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). This direct involvement in constructing narrative order and flow constitutes user-interactivity and parallels the Modernist thought about disrupting linearity in a story, but also aligns with the Postmodern approach of decentralising authority over the text to the reader.

However, with the digital age comes even more varieties of hypertextual narrative experiences in blog formats, social media sites, and even video games (Page 22) and Thomas 2011). Such platforms allow the

user to move through layers of content, using such tools as hyperlinks to present stories in fragmented and multifaceted ways. In particular, social networks can be defined as a new kind of mosaic narratology. Social media apps like Twitter or Instagram, where random, short-lived posts form a narrative, present fragmented and episodic narratives in a similar manner to how modernist authors employed stream-of-consciousness and disjointed points of view to depict the inner lives of their characters. Consumers can move from one post, image, or comment to another, which disrupts the consistency of the storyline as a hypertextual interface (Salter 31). Hypertextuality has also been especially popular in digital art as well as interactive storytelling, when the reader or viewer has more control over the story that is being told. For example, in some movies like Black Mirror: Bandersnatch (2018), where the audience gets an opportunity to decide on what happens next in the film (Nee 1488). This form of hypertextual storytelling challenges the linear format of film and television in much the same way that Modernist artists challenged the linear structure of prose with multiple timelines and perspectives.

3.3. Reinterpreting Key Modernist Themes in Contemporary Media

Digital and interactive media in the contemporary world have reinterpreted and developed significant themes of the Modernist period, including time, memory, subjectivity and identity (Smethurst 156). As in Modernism, these themes provide the basis for new experiences engendered by technology and forms of interaction with virtual narratives that offer novel possibilities for investigating how people become aware of and construct their world.

3.3.1. Time and Memory

Modernist literature, such as Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927), emphasised fragmented perceptions of time and memory,

breaking from linear storytelling to explore the fluidity of time and the subjective experience of memory (Landeweerd 89). This theme persists in present-day media with new media technologies that enable interactive structures and non-linearity of narrative, which in turn can manifest in reinterpretations of time and memory. For instance, video games such as The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (2000) allow the players to control the flow of time and travel between key points in a closed three-day cycle to change events (Håkansson 75). This mechanic mirrors Modernist explorations of subjective time by allowing players to experience past, present, and future in a non-linear fashion, confronting the fleeting nature of time and the role memory plays in shaping events (Kwinter 88). This is due to the innate repetition of the time loop in the gameplay and the thematic focus on choice and memory, which define the identity of the character, similar to the Modernist concerns about the instability of consciousness.

In the same manner, VR content like The Invisible Hours (2017) presents the viewers with stories that are capable of shifting through time, allowing the participants to navigate through the events as they happened from different angles. Unlike conventional dramatic structures that provide spectators with a clear sequence of unambiguous events, VR frees it from a linear temporal structure, allowing for the subjective interaction with memory and time, which was one of the major goals of the modernist authors in literature (Quinlan 26). It is with these different forms of media that the Modernist concept of subjective time is highlighted, in terms of how memories are made and remade.

3.3.2. Subjectivity and Identity

The modernist approach also questioned traditional concepts of individuality as well as subjectivity, focusing on the fragmented self (Sato 148). Modernists like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf focused on the interiority of their characters and depicted fragmented consciousness and multiple selves. As for contemporary media, these themes are continued in identity exploration further through avatars, Multi-User Domains, and the concept of identities in the digital age. In MMORPG games, for example, World of Warcraft (2004), or Second Life (2003), the user creates an avatar which serves as his or her identity within that game environment (Strobel 38). Such avatars enable the players to play with different aspects of their identity, which may be disconnected, incoherent, or shifting. The concept of having numerous avatars in cyberspace can also be compared to the Modernist approach to the fragmentation of personality when characters' inner selves are frequently different from the outer ones (Nikpour Khoshgrudi 21). In modernist literature, such characters as Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) were struggling with the problem of individual identity in modern society and, nowadays, the problem of identity is reflected in the numerous social media networks where people create multiple virtual avatars (Bura 60).

Furthermore, Instagram and even TikTok allow individuals to post a number of self-edited snapshots from fragmented worlds in front of an audience (Cohen 121). The multiple, often conflicting, personas that people create online mirror the Modernist exploration of subjective experience and the instability of identity. The fragmented nature of online representation raises questions about authenticity, performance, and the

multiplicity of selves, issues that were central to Modernist concerns with subjectivity (Rixon 30).

3.4. Implications for Literary Criticism

3.4.1. Expanding the Modernist Canon

New forms of Modernist literature mediated through the contemporary culture explore the Modernist ideas, plot and themes in a manner that interprets the whole Modernist paradigm in a novel way (White 46). Modernist literature traditionally consists of works by such authors as James Joyce, T.S. Eliot and Marcel Proust with their fragmentation of plot, the use of interior monologue and other techniques. However, the application of Modernism techniques in new media like video games, digital art and interactive fiction indicates that Modernism is not limited to early twentieth-century literary works (Raymer 27). They can be viewed as a wider phenomenon that has not stopped developing with regard to specific artistic trends, appearing in new technological environments. In such work, one sees the opportunity to renew Modernist discourse in the context of new digital media, strategic points of time, memory, and subjectivity. For example, in the game Outer Wilds (2019), the player participates in time loops and self-realisation through gaming and thus addresses Modernist topics of time and identity. Such interactiveness can provoke comparable cognitive processes to those that Modernist literary works evokes in readers, but the medium also allows players to engage with the kinds of non-linear narratives which are typical of Modernist literary works to a greater extent (Ensslin 70). Therefore, such works allow the blending between the literary and digital arts, so that works such as these expand on the definitions of the Modernist movement beyond the more traditional media.

Furthermore, given that media today are multifaceted and involve a range of disciplines, other marginalised perspectives are allowed to come into play, with creators rewriting Modernist approaches with regard to their cultures (Hagino 74). This means that the use of digital storytelling makes it easier for people with diverse stories to tell their stories and make the current canons more diverse, less Eurocentric or dominated by male productions. This can be observed, for instance, in Kentucky Route Zero (2013-2020), which uses elements of magical realism and features a non-linear storyline combined with critical and exotic representations of the American postindustrial society that addresses issues of social injustice and the harsh economic realities of contemporary America. These works relate to the Modernist interest in alienation and fragmentation but do so within a framework of post-modern plausibility, making the category of Modernism significantly more diverse and international as opposed to the more conventional ideas of what constitutes it.

3.4.2. The Role of Digital Tools in Literary Analysis

Digital tools such as artificial intelligence (AI), data visualisation, and computational text analysis offer novel ways to enhance the study of Modernist narrative techniques (Yang 49). With the help of close reading, traditionalists have been studying fragmentary and other formally challenging Modernist texts, while with AI and other technologies, it is now possible to analyse the entire Modernist corpus and other bodies of texts for patterns, topics, and structures. For instance, the application of the current AI approaches, such as natural language processing NLP may be applied while investigating the Modernist text's fragmentation of the represented narrative voice (Pela 140). NLP might for instance be used in a study to analyse changes in narrative point of view across works such as Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) or William Faulkner's *The*

Sound and the Fury (1929) to reveal variations in character progression and the thematic focus as may not easily be deduced from basic analysis (Elkins 13). An example of such tools is that they help discern the trajectories of interaction between characters more accurately, and the highly complex plot structures typical of the Modernist novel, which must bear some relation to the experiencing of time, memory or an individual consciousness (Williams 47). It can also add to comprehension by displaying the way scattered stories are articulated. For instance, the distant sources may show the spatial structure of a Modernist novel, focalisation, and chronological leaps (Acharya 1). With these maps, scholars can perceive patterns and gaps which may not be easily detected after scrutiny of a text, thus making maps a new perspective complementing the reading of works.

4. Conclusion

Contemporary cinematic adaptations of literary texts extend Modernist storytelling by employing techniques such as fragmentation, non-linearity, and unreliable narration, reimagining these literary strategies for modern audiences. Films such as The Great Gatsby (2013), The Hours (2002), and Atonement (2007) both adapt Modernist and non-Modernist literary sources to re-thematise time, memory and subjectivity through film language to weave together non-linear editing, subjective voiceovers, and visual montages. These variations reflect in what ways the Modernist narrative strategies can be dynamic and can provide new insights into the traditional ideas by using the visual and the auditory potential of the film. On top of this, the exposure to different cultural discourses through these films is breaking the Eurocentric emphasis on the conventional study of Modernism and helping to create a more comprehensive perception of the

movement. These cinematic translations reveal that the Modernist canon is a burgeoning existence, which means that Modernism is not a stagnant historical experience but a dynamic structure.

The results of the current paper demonstrate major similarities between Modernist narrative fissures and modern cinematic adaptations and how such elements as fragmentation, non-linearity, and unreliable narration can be supported and modified in such movies as The Great Gatsby, The Hours and Atonement. This study is a contribution to literary and film scholarship in suggesting a broader definition of Modernism that includes cinematographic productions, linking literature of the first half of the 20th century with film production in the 21st century. These findings have severe implications for the wider literary and theoretical discourses. They subvert the conventional notion of Modernism, implying it as a system of meanings, which are dynamic and constantly changing across the periods and are capable of being adapted to the medium of cinema. This viewpoint turns out to be added to the arguments about narrative theory, making scholars reexamine the whole idea of narrative conventions in the context of cinematography approaches. Moreover, in situations where various cultural stories are synthesised through film, this work reminds us to reconsider the Eurocentric bias of classical Modernist histories, which encourages people to take on a more globalised and inclusive approach to the movement. The opportunity to investigate how the new technologies of the cinema, e.g., high-quality editing or immersive sound design may add to Modernist theme of disjointedness and scattered subjectivity to create a bigger picture of narrative innovation in the film remains also the hot spot of the future research. The recommendations on how these technologies might transform the interaction between the audience and

literary adaptations would be a pertinent point toward a follow-up study if they were more detailed.

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