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**Linguistic Features of Modern English Poetry**

A Research Project

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**Abstract**

This research is concerned with linguistic features of modern English poetry. which plays an important role in English contemporary literature. Modern poetry refers to the verse created by the writers and poets of the 20th and 21st centuries. The actual definition of “modern” varies, depending on the authority cited. Recognizable aspects of modern poetry include an emphasis on strong imagery and emotional content and less reliance on the use of rhyme. It aims to examine the linguistic features that modern English poets like T.S Eliot, Edward Storer and Elizabeth Bishop have used in their poems. T.S. Eliot exercised a strong influence on Anglo-American culture from the 1920s until late in the century. His experiments in diction, style, and versification revitalized English poetry. The impacts of Elizabeth Bishop and Edward Storer as modern English poets are explained as well. Modern English poetry refers to poetry written in English during the 20th and 21st centuries, a period characterized by a diversity of styles, themes, and literary movements. Modern English poets have experimented with new forms, structures, and techniques, challenging traditional notions of poetry and pushing the boundaries of language and expression.

Modern poetry is significant to everyday life because it dares us to break free from the safe strategies of a discreet mind, enabling us to honor the unknown, both in us and in the world. In poetry, a small amount of words may contain a lot of intensity. Compression allows fewer words to have more power. Therefore, studying the linguistic features of modern English poetry can provide valuable insights into the ways in which language is used in artistic expression, and can deepen our understanding of the creative potential of language. Before going into detail, the research introduces modern English poetry and the most important characteristics of the modern English poetry are mentioned in detail as written in simple language, the language of every day speech which are mainly dissected and they are Alliteration, Simile, Metaphor, Emotive language, Allusion and Imagery.

**1.** **Introducing Modern English Poetry**

English Modernist poetry is a mode of writing that is characterized by two main features. The first is technical innovation in the writing through the extensive use of free verse. The second is a move away from the Romantic idea of an unproblematic poetic 'self' directly addressing an equally unproblematic ideal reader or audience. Modernist poetry in English is generally considered to have emerged in the early years of the 20th century with the appearance of the Imagist poets. In common with many other modernists, these poets were writing in reaction to what they saw as the excesses of Victorian poetry, with its emphasis on traditional formalism and overly flowery poetic diction. In many respects, their criticism of contemporary poetry echoes what William Wordsworth wrote in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads to instigate the Romantic movement in British poetry over a century earlier. (Mohan G, modern English poetry)

 In general, the modernists saw themselves as looking back to the best practices of poets in earlier periods and other cultures. Their models included \* ancient Greek literature, Chinese and Japanese poetry, \* the troubadours, Dante and the medieval Italian philosophical poets (such as Guido Cavalcanti), and the English Metaphysical poets.

Much of the early poetry produced by these writers took the form of short, compact lyrics. However, as modernist poetry in English developed, longer poems came to the fore. These long poems represent the main contribution of the modernist movement to the 20th century English poetic canon.

 The questioning of the self and the exploration of technical innovations in modernist poetry are intimately interconnected. The dislocation of the authorial presence is achieved through the application of such techniques as collage, found poetry, visual poetry, the juxtaposition of apparently unconnected materials, and combinations of these. These techniques are used not for their own sake but to open up questions in the mind of the reader regarding the nature of the poetic experience. (Robert Frost, North of Boston).

 These developments parallel changes in the other arts, especially painting and music, that were taking place concurrently. Additionally, Modernist poetry disavowed the traditional aesthetic claims of Romantic poetry's later phase and no longer sought "beauty" as the highest achievement of verse. With this abandonment of the sublime came a turn away from pastoral poetry and an attempt to focus poetry on urban, mechanical, and industrial settings.

 The new heroes would not be swains laboring in the fields, but office workers struggling across London Bridge, and the new settings would not be "romantic chasms deep and wide," but vacant lots, smoked-over cities, and subways. Another important feature of much modernist poetry in English is a clear focus on the surface of the poem. Much of this work focuses on the literal meaning of the words on the page rather than any metaphorical or symbolic meanings that might be imputed to them.

 This approach to writing is reflected in Ezra Pound's advice to young writers (in his 1937 book The ABC of Reading) to 'buy a dictionary and learn the meanings of words' and T.S. Eliot's response when asked the meaning of the line 'Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper tree in the cool of the day...' from Ash Wednesday (1927); he said "It means 'Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper tree in the cool of the day...". Also pertinent is William Carlos Williams' 1944 statement that 'A poem is a small (or large) machine made out of words.

 The roots of English-language poetic modernism can be traced back to the works of a number of earlier writers, including Walt Whitman, whose long lines approached a type of free verse, the prose poetry of Oscar Wilde, Robert Browning's subversion of the poetic self, Emily Dickinson's compression and the writings of the early English Symbolists, especially Arthur Symons. However, these poets essentially remained true to the basic tenets of the Romantic movement and the appearance of the Imagists marked he first emergence of a distinctly modernist poetic in the language. One anomalous figure of the early period of modernism also deserves mention: Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote in a radically experimental prosody about radically conservative ideals (not unlike a later Ezra Pound), and he believed that sound could drive poetry.

 Specifically, poetic sonic effects (selected for verbal and aural felicity, not just images selected for their visual evocativeness) would also, therefore, become an influential poetic device of modernism. Imagism the American poet Ezra Pound was introduced to this group and they found that their ideas resembled his. In 1911, Pound introduced two other poets, H.D. and Richard Aldington, to the Eiffel Tower group. Both of these poets were students of the early Greek lyric poetry, especially the works of Sappho. In October 1912, he submitted three poems each by H.D. and Aldington under the rubric Imagist to Poetry magazine.(Features of modernism, p 50)

 That month Pound's book Ripostes was published with an appendix called The Complete Poetical Works of T. E. Hulme, which carried a note that saw the first appearance of the word Imagist in print. Aldington's poems were in the November issue of Poetry and H.D.'s in January 1913 and Imagism as a movement was launched. The March issue contained Pound's A Few Don'ts by an Imagist and Flint's Imagism. The latter contained this succinct statement of the group's position:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing", whether subjective or objective.
	1. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.

3.As regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of the metronome. In setting these criteria for poetry, the Imagists saw themselves as looking backward to the best practices of pre- Romantic writing. Imagists poets used sharp language and embrace imagery.

 Their work, however, was to have a revolutionary impact on English-language writing for the rest of the 20th century. Between 1914 and 1917, four anthologies of Imagist poetry were published. In addition to Pound, Flint, H.D. and Aldington, these included work by Skipwith Cannell, Amy Lowell, William Carlos Williams, James Joyce, Ford Madox Ford, Allen Upward, John Cournos, D. H. Lawrence and Marianne Moore. With a few exceptions, this represents a roll-call of English-language modernist poets of the time. After the 1914 volume, Pound distanced himself from the group and the remaining anthologies appeared under the editorial control of Amy Lowell.

**2.Linguistic Features in the Poetry of Some Outstanding Modern English**

 **Poets**

In this section, linguistic features in the poetry of some outstanding modern poets will be examined**.**

**2.1 Linguistic Features of T.S. Eliot's Poetry**

**T.S. Eliot**, in full **Thomas Stearns Eliot**, (born September 26, 1888, St. Louis, [Missouri](https://www.britannica.com/place/Missouri-state), U.S.—died January 4, 1965, London, England), American-English poet, playwright, literary critic, and editor, a leader of the [Modernist](https://www.britannica.com/art/Modernism-art) movement in poetry in such works as [The Waste Land](https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Waste-Land) (1922) and [Four Quartets](https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Four-Quartets) (1943). Eliot exercised a strong influence on Anglo-American [culture](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture) from the 1920s until late in the century. His experiments in [diction](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diction), style, and versification revitalized English poetry, and in a series of critical essays he shattered old orthodoxies and erected new ones. The publication of Four Quartets led to his recognition as the greatest living English poet and man of letters, and in 1948 he was awarded both the [Order of Merit](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Order-of-Merit) and the [Nobel Prize](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nobel-Prize) for Literature.

 Eliot was to pursue four careers: editor, dramatist, literary critic, and philosophical poet. He was probably the most [erudite](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/erudite) poet of his time in the [English language](https://www.britannica.com/topic/English-language). His undergraduate poems were “literary” and conventional. His first important publication, and the first masterpiece of Modernism in English, was [“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”](https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Love-Song-of-J-Alfred-Prufrock) (1915).

When T.S. Eliot died, wrote Robert Giroux, "the world became a lesser place." Certainly, the most imposing poet of his time, Eliot was revered by Igor Stravinsky "not only a great sorcerer of words but as the very key keeper of the language." For Alfred Kazin he was "the mana known as 'T.S. Eliot', the model poet of our time, the most cited poet and incarnation of literary correctness in the English-speaking world.

 " Northrop Frye simply states: "A thorough knowledge of Eliot is compulsory for anyone interested in contemporary literature. Eliot attracted widespread attention for his poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", which was seen as a masterpiece of the Modernist movement. It was followed by some of the best-known poems in the English language, including The Waste Land, "The Hollow Men", "Ash Wednesday", and Four Quartets. Important features of his poetry are as follows:

The Damaged Psyche of Humanity

 Like many modernist writers, Eliot wanted his poetry to express the fragile psychological state of humanity in the twentieth century. The passing of Victorian ideals and the trauma of World War 1 challenged cultural notions of masculine identity, causing artists to question the romantic literary ideal of a visionary-poet capable of changing the world through verse.

1. The Power of Literary History

 Eliot maintained great reverence for myth and the Western literary Canon, and he packed his work full of allusions, quotations, footnotes, and scholarly exegeses. In "The Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot praises the literary tradition and states that the best writers are those who write with a sense of continuity with those writers who came before.

1. The Changing Nature of Gender Roles

Eliot lauded the end of the Victorian era and expressed concern about the freedoms inherent in the modern age. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" reflects the feelings of emasculation experienced by many men as they returned home from World War 1 to find women empowered by their new role as wage earners.

1. Fragmentation

 Eliot used fragmentation in his poetry both to demonstrate the chaotic state of modern existence and to juxtapose literary texts against one another. In Eliot's view, humanity's psyche had been shattered by World War 1 and by the collapse of the British Empire. Collaging bits and pieces of dialogue, images, scholarly ideas, foreign words, formal styles, and tones within one poetic work was a way for Eliot to represent humanity's damaged psyche and the modern world.

1. Mythic and Religious Ritual

Eliot's tremendous knowledge of myth, religious ritual, academic works, and key books in the literary tradition informs every aspect of his poetry. He filled his poems with references to both the obscure and the well-known, thereby teaching his readers as he writes. In his notes to The Waste Land, Eliot explains the crucial role played by religious symbols and myths.

1. Infertility

 Eliot envisioned the modern world as a wasteland, in which neither the land nor the people could conceive. In The Waste Land, various characters are sexually frustrated or dysfunctional, unable to cope with either reproductive or non-reproductive sexuality: the Fisher King represents damaged sexuality, Tiresias represents confused or ambiguous sexuality, and the women chattering in "A Game of Chess" represent an out-of-control sexuality.

1. Music and Singing

Like most modernist writers, Eliot was interested in the divide between high and low culture, which he symbolized using music. He believed that high culture, including art, opera, and drama, was in decline while popular culture was on the rise. In The Waste Land, Eliot blended high culture with low culture by juxtaposing lyrics from an opera by Richard Wagner with songs from pubs, American ragtime, and Australian troops.

8. Objective Correlative

 T.S. Eliot defines objective correlative as "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion" that the poet feels and hopes to evoke in the reader. He constantly employs objective correlative in his own poetry (although Smidt complained that Eliot often resorted to private memories which had meaning for him alone). The Waste Land is based on an externalized structure of parallel myths which, though they differ in appearance, stress the dilemma of the human situation as Eliot perceived it.

9.Eliot's Style

Eliot's diction shows a high level of erudition, and he makes no attempt to lower it to reach a wider audience. He is particularly fond of using phrases and many verses in verses quoted from works in languages other than English "The Waste Inferno Land" are in German. While the opening verses of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" are the original Latin version of verses from Dante's. Eliot wrote in free verse and laden with literary devices of one form. Overall, Eliot's style is lengthy sort or another. He uses his knowledge of literature and of the English language expertly to develop poetry with an amazing flow despite its length and use of elevated diction, and his figurative language has a profound effect on the reader. I should have been a pair of ragged claws Scuttling across the floors of silent seas. (The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, p113)

* 1. **Linguistic Features of Edward Storer’s Poetry**

Edward A Storer was born in Alnwick on 25 July 1880 to Frances Anne Egan and James John Robson Storer. He died in Weibridge (London) on 11 February 1944. In 1907, he was on the Roll of the Law Society of England and Wales (London) qualified as a solicitor. However, he practiced only for two years because soon realized that poetry was his main interest.

 He was one of the first promoters and theorists of [Imagism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imagism) along with [T. E. Hulme](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T._E._Hulme) and [F. S. Flint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F._S._Flint), but his contrasting relation with [Ezra Pound](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ezra_Pound) contributed to make him soon forgotten. His poetry was based on the value of the image to which language had to be adapted in conciseness and vividness through the use of simple and universally comprehensible symbols.

 Although he was eager to renew [English poetry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_poetry) in technique and subjects, he did not deny the value of tradition and [classicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classicism): [modern](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernism) and [Romantic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism) sensitiveness were both present in his work. His conception of poetry was expressed in a specific Essay published in Mirrors of Illusion: poetry is essentially "a nostalgia for the infinite". Like [Hilda Doolittle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilda_Doolittle) and [Richard Aldington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Aldington), he looked at the [ancient Greek poetry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_poetry) and [mythology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_mythology) with admiration and always maintained a classical character along with modernity in his poetry: epigrammatic poetry was a perfect synthesis of the two features. In this period, he translated many Greek poems. When he was in London he collaborated as a reviewer, critic and poet to many reviews and magazines: "[The New Age](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_Age)", "The British Review", "Poetry and Drama", "[The Egoist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Egoist_%28periodical%29)", "[The English Review](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_English_Review)", "Broom" and others.

In the early 20th century, Edward Storer, an English poet and author, made significant contributions to the Georgian poetry movement. even though he was eager to renew English poetry in technique and subjects, he did not deny the value of tradition and classicism: modern and Romantic sensitiveness were both present in his work. Although his writing has not received as much attention as T.S. Eliot's, it still has a number of linguistic traits. Here are a few illustrations:

1.Imagery: In order to produce imagery that would appeal to the reader's senses and emotions, Storer employed vivid and sensual language, like many other poets. He says, "The meadow-grass runs like a tide, / Wave on green wave; and, far and wide, / Over the meadow's space, / The daisies lift each a white face," for instance, in the poem "Daisies."

2.Metaphor: Storer frequently employed metaphor in his poems to express difficult concepts and feelings. For instance, he refers to the rooks as "The monks of the air / Chanting the office of dawn / High up in the blue" in his poem "The Rookery."

3.Rhyme: To give his poems a musical character that would heighten their emotional impact, Storer frequently used rhyme schemes. He utilizes an ABAB rhyme pattern, for instance, in the line "In the morning when I wake, / And the light is clear and cool, / I can hear the swallows make / Music on the wing at school" from his poem "Swallows."

4. Repetition: To accentuate important words or phrases in his poems, Storer occasionally used repetition. For instance, he uses the words "Three hills, three hills" repeatedly to convey a sense of continuity and wholeness in his poetry "The Song of the Three Hills."

Just a few examples of the linguistic devices used in Edward Storer's poetry can be found below. Even though he may not be as well-known as some other poets, his use of language shows talent and innovation that are worth exploring and appreciating.

* 1. **Linguistic Features of Elizabeth Bishop**

Elizabeth Bishop is increasingly recognized as one of the twentieth century’s most important and original poets. Initially celebrated for the minute detail of her descriptions, what John Ashbery memorably called her “thingness,” Bishop’s reputation has risen dramatically since her death, in part owing to the publication of new work, including letters, stories, and visual art, as well as a controversial volume of uncollected poems, drafts, and fragments.

 Elizabeth Bishop (1911–1979) published relatively few poems in her lifetime, at least compared to more prolific peers such as John Berryman and Anne Sexton, or her close friend, Robert Lowell. The four main collections published in her lifetime – North & South (1946), A Cold Spring (1955), Questions of Travel (1965), and Geography III (1976) – contain just seventy-eight poems (seventy-five if you count “Four Poems” as a single poem), none of them particularly long. Admired for her descriptive powers and the apparent modesty of her poetic persona, Bishop was not quite a Modernist or a confessional poet. At times she appeared an early Postmodernist, but in a completely different register from Language poetry.

Elizabeth Bishop was an impressive poet whose use of words was both precise and expressive. Loss, grief, and the quest for identity are common topics in her poetry. The following language elements are frequent in Elizabeth Bishop's poetry:

1. Description: Bishop is renowned for her descriptive poetry, which uses exact language and sensory details to evoke strong mental images in the reader. She describes the fish, for instance, as being covered with "fine rosettes of lime, / infested / with tiny white sea-lice, / and underneath two or three writhing things, / that seemed to be tendrils, / were struggling to be free"

Her poems are written in a straight forward way and using conversational everyday ordinary language. (Ferber, M. Language and poetry, p 80)

 She carefully and finely crafted to reveal deep insight, paying close attention to language sound and imagery and it's through her detailed description she reveals to us profound insights about the world around us. A sense of loss and separation can be traced through many of her poems.

there seems to be a connection between her childhood experiences and some of the descriptions we see in her poems. (Ferber, M. Language and poetry)

**Bishop's two poetic styles**

 The first style is precise and detailed description. This is seen in poems such as the fish and filling station among others, Bishop creates distance between herself and the subject she is describing, the aim here is to reveal something about the object described that is deeper than the surface detail.

The second style in which she was encouraged by Lowell can be seen when she writes poetry that deals with obvious personal experience like the three poems mentioned before. in these poems we notice that she writes in a more stylized way, she adopts a third person narrator or she uses a formalized structured approach such sonnets, villanelles and cestinas. poems that have rules in them saying how that they must be written.

These silences cause some readers of Bishop's poetry discomfort. They're put off by her cold and distant description. But it is in this level of description that we see some of the most fascinating revelations in her poetry.

 The last line someone loves us all in filling station wouldn't have the same power and resonance without the minute description of the hirsute Begonia or the grease impregnated wickerwork. Another interesting idea is one that comes again from column Tobin. He says that in Bishop's work much was implied by what seemed to be mere description. So description was a way of avoiding self-description. Looking at the world was a way of looking away from herself. The self and Bishop's poems were too fragile to be violated by too much mentioning so in this.

 In this case maybe we too, as students should not violate bishop’s self and focus solely on her poetry, the craft and technique that is in evidence. Bishop makes great use of sound in her poetry. We see alliteration as well as sibilance, assonance, repetition, and rhyme used to great effect than much of her poetry. And these are all things that we will see when we examine each poem one by one. She generally wrote in free verse, which is poetry with no set or regular structure, which gives the moments of rhyme that she does use heightened focus. She often uses trimeter, 3 pairs of syllables in her poetry, which sometimes gives a sense of regularity and rhythm to the otherwise free verse. (Smart English Notes (2022)

**3.Conclusion**

Modern poetry has a long, varied and tangled history. By and large, the poetry of the 20th century may be put under this. Here the focus is on the poets who came into prominence roughly between 1900 and 1950. Needless to state that at the early stage, poets like Thomas Hardy, Gerard Manley Hopkins, William Butler Yeats, Ezra Pound, T.S Eliot and their progenies were the path breakers and finders. Their period as M.L Rosenthal rightly asserts was the ‘heroic age’ of modern poetry.

The great trio; Pound, Yeats and Eliot effected a clean break with the Victorian tradition. They deliberately moved away from the sensuousness and picturesqueness of Victorian poetry.

Modernist poetry in English started in the early years of the 20th century with the appearance of the Imagists. In common with many other modernists, these poets wrote in reaction to the perceived excesses of Victorian poetry, with its emphasis on traditional formalism and ornate diction.

 Much of early modernist poetry took the form of short, compact lyrics As it developed, however, longer poems came to the foreground. These represent the modernist movement to the 20th-century English poetic canon.

 Eliot as an example (1888-1965) is synonymous with modernism. Everything about his poetry bespeaks high modernism: its use of myth to undergird and order atomized modern experience; its collage-like juxtaposition of different voices, traditions, and discourses; and its focus on form as the carrier of meaning.

 Elizabeth Bishop could be considered a late modernist poet along with her notable contemporaries such as Robert Lowell, who she heavily corresponded with as a friend and fellow poet. Like Lowell, Bishop rose to prominence for her poetry post-World War II.

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