

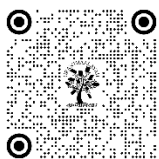


# TURNING ART INTO VISION: PROSE, POETRY, PAINTING INTERFACE OF LANDSCAPE ARTISTS, AND IMPRESSIONISTS

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## ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the interface of literature and painting through the prism of a 19th century art movement, better known as Impressionism. A movement in painting and literature, Impressionism stylistically made way for the beholder, listener, or reader to participate in recreating the experience of the artist. Its “new” method was to suggest the “impression” or effect on the artist rather than to make precise and explicit the objective characteristics of things and events. Emerging in France in the latter half of the 19th century with painters like Monet, Manet, Degas, Pissarro, Renoir and Cezanne, this art movement seems to have had a major impact on the world literary and cultural scene, facilitating and manifesting a symbiosis between sister arts, that is, painting and literature. To trace the gradual advent of Impressionism, the paper recounts the journey of English romantic landscape painters like Turner and Constable as we eventually reach the French Impressionists while concomitantly discussing how literary Impressionists, particularly modern novelists, deploy the stream-of-consciousness technique, and poets, often seen as “Symbolists” and “Imagists,” have contributed to the evolution of modernist literature and sensibilities.

**Keywords:** Impressionism, Landscape Painting, Monet, Ekphrastic Poetry, Post-Impressionism, Symbolist Poets, Imagist Poets, Stream of Consciousness

“Painting is silent poetry and poetry is painting that speaks” ---Plutarch

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Both poetry and painting are disparate and autonomous art forms. Tracing their interrelation and interface is a complex process. This paper attempts a diverse aesthetic presentation of landscape and nature through an analysis of English Romantic art and poetry followed by Impressionist art and literary impressionism in fiction and poetry. A painter’s canvas is a visual representation of his ideas, his perceptions. Painter and poet, both communicate in their ways either through words, sounds, colours, gestures or symbols and they are all forms of language. A painter’s canvas and a poet’s work of art speak for themselves. The borderline between these two art forms is sometimes loud, sometimes subtle. This paper

attempts to trace the intricacies and subtleties of these art forms, through the works of Romantic Landscape painters, and poets, followed by Impressionist art and literature, their philosophical or personal musings with their creation.

## 2. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Conservative critics of early nineteenth century England expressed their intolerance at the innovations of an English Romantic painter named Joseph Mallord William Turner, whose pictures they believed were violent in subject matter as in handling. *The Fall of an Avalanche in the Grisons* was first exhibited in his own gallery in 1810 and Turner's critics dismayed, raised a furore. Such critics never realized that this great Englishman was expressing his overwhelming feeling for the senseless violence of nature and the suffering of mankind in the face of a chaotic and cataclysmic universe.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 1** Turner (1810)

**Source** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph\\_Mallord\\_William\\_Turner\\_The\\_Fall\\_of\\_an\\_Avalanche\\_in\\_the\\_Grisons\\_-\\_WGA23166.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph_Mallord_William_Turner_The_Fall_of_an_Avalanche_in_the_Grisons_-_WGA23166.jpg)

In 1796, *Fishermen at Sea*, Turner's oil painting exhibited at the Royal Academy depicts a moonlit scene and the vulnerability of the flickering lantern foregrounding Nature's power over mankind and the fate of the fishermen in particular. The waves rocking back and forth are signifiers of an approaching storm and what is evident is the story of struggle, a disturbing insight in the face of Nature.

**Figure 2**



**Figure 2** Turner (1796)

**Source** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Fishermen\\_at\\_Sea](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Fishermen_at_Sea)

If this Romantic landscape painter, popularly known as the “painter of light”, Turner, did so, the Irish dramatist, John Millington Synge, a key figure of the Irish Literary Renaissance, too was visualizing nature as a creative and destructive force in his one-act tragedy, on the lives of Aran fishermen, in *Riders to the Sea*, (first performed 1904) a literary gem, depicting the "tyrant God" or Sea as both a creative and destructive force. Characters in Turner and Synge are perilously poised in the hand of an omnipotent power which seems to suck them back into the primal chaos.

Such works of art, whether literary or visual art, are tragic visions of a world expressed by subtler means. The works of Turner and Synge are a reflection of the overwhelming power of Nature and natural forces. They are a picture of the engulfing blackness of despair. The Sea for Turner, a painter; and Synge a playwright, represent impenetrable depths of inexplicable mystery. Turner rejected exquisite brushwork and smoothness of finish. The autonomy of the work of art and the independence of its creator, for which Neo-classical artists painstakingly struggled, were achieved, in a different sense by the Romantics, of which Turner, famous for his masterpiece, *Snowstorm: Hannibal and the Army Crossing the Alps* (1812), was the pioneer.

**Figure 3**



**Figure 3** Turner (1812)

**Source** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph\\_Mallord\\_William\\_Turner\\_-\\_Snow\\_Storm,Hannibal\\_and\\_his\\_Army\\_Crossing\\_the\\_Alps\\_-\\_WGA23167.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph_Mallord_William_Turner_-_Snow_Storm,Hannibal_and_his_Army_Crossing_the_Alps_-_WGA23167.jpg)

An accomplished watercolourist, Turner gave a completely new meaning to the concept of the 'Sublime' through the dramatic scenery he painted of storms, cataclysms, and disasters. Oxymoronic though, it may sound, this widely travelled artist drew inspiration from his exploration of the Alps, villages and passes of Switzerland and his visit to England, Scotland, and Wales. Like John Constable, the fleeting colours and the lonely wanderings of the intangible cloud coloured Turner's canvases and imagination. His landscapes bring to life the drama of the new industrial age. He passionately projects his furtiveness and exhibitionism, in *Rain, Steam and Speed-The Great Western Railway* (1844), a canvas that highlighted man's new technology, long vistas and misty perspectives. The painting also illustrates the general characteristic of Turner's late work--how the world of nature seems to dissolve into coloured vapour with the macrocosm of the universe.

**Figure 4**



**Figure 4** Turner (1844)

**Source**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rain\\_Steam\\_and\\_Speed\\_the\\_Great\\_Western\\_Railway.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rain_Steam_and_Speed_the_Great_Western_Railway.jpg)

The other leading English Romantic landscape painter is an artist so different in style that there lies a controversy about whether he should be classified among the Romantics at all. Unlike Turner, John Constable preferred to paint what was familiar to him---he painted the Suffolk landscape, Hampstead Heath near London where he lived for a long time and the seaside resort of Brighton. There is no apparent symbolism and what he paints is never used as a setting for some historical or legendary event. The subject, though, is not only what he sees but also the emotion it arouses. For Constable painting was but another name for feeling. His sketches are mostly cloud studies and his preoccupation with the sky is remarkable. Though Constable never enjoyed, at least in his lifetime, the reputation that was his due, his work did have an impact in France. In 1822 a French dealer called Arrowsmith saw Constable's great landscape *The Hay Wain* (1821) in a show at the British Institution. The contemporary French painters Theodore Gericault and Eugene Delacroix were immediately impressed by the freshness and freedom of Constable's style.

**Figure 5**



**Figure 5** Constable (1821)

**Source** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:The\\_Hay\\_Wain](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:The_Hay_Wain)

Constable knew William Wordsworth the romantic nature poet, personally. For him, as for Wordsworth, every season “unfolded transitory qualities” intimating immortality. The closest affinity between the two is their response to their early experiences of the natural world. Both Wordsworth and Constable's vision of universal harmony originated from the natural landscape. Like Wordsworth's nature poetry (*Tintern Abbey, Intimations of Immortality*) Constable's canvases are reminders of particular scenes and the emotions they evoked. Much of Wordsworth's poetry was inspired by the dramatic landscapes of Lake District in England. Devotion to the natural world and humble life characterised the works of Wordsworth and Constable. Such an interrelation is equally interesting to the literary historian and the art historian. Modern art indeed goes back to Constable, through the Impressionists.

In *Tintern Abbey* Wordsworth writes:

With a soft inland murmur. --Once again  
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
That on a wild secluded scene impress  
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect  
The landscape with the quiet of the sky. [Poetry Foundation. \(n.d.\)](#)

Wordsworth and Constable had a philosophy of Nature and Constable's philosophy distinctly paints men at work in a dunghill in the foreground, with the Tower of Dedham Church above and beyond. His paintings *The White Horse* (1819), *View on the Stour near Dedham* (1822), *A Boat Passing a Lock* (1822-1824) and *The Leaping Horse* (1825) later earned him much appreciation. Other paintings like *Hampstead Heath* (1820), *The Judges Walk Hampstead* (1820), *Cloudy Sky* (1825), *The Cornfield* (1826), *Wheat Field* (1816), *Golding Constable's Flower Garden* (1815) are a reflection of the harmony of life, not the stasis of death. These sketches represented the central moment in his highly personal relationship with his subject, and the picture of his tranquil recollection of and meditation on it. In every way, Constable was conscious of Wordsworth's ideas.

**Figure 6**



**Figure 6** Constable (1830)

**Source** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Constable\\_Hampstead\\_Heath,\\_c.1830,\\_734.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Constable_Hampstead_Heath,_c.1830,_734.jpg)

Wordsworth, a poet concerned with the human relationship to nature wrote about poetry that it is “the powerful overflow of powerful feelings” and poetry is “emotion recollected in tranquillity”. Life at Grasmere inspired his poem “I wandered lonely as a cloud.” Both narrated a timeless vision through their poetic reverence of nature.

The most representative painter of French romanticism, Eugene Delacroix, with his restless imagination was a model to other artists because of his enthusiasm for experimentation. His visible brushstrokes and techniques were later adopted vigorously by the Impressionists. In his masterpiece *Liberty Leading the People* (1830), he depicts the July Revolution of 1830. The woman in the painting who holds a bayoneted musket in her left hand and raises the tricolour— the French national flag, with her right, is an allegorical figure, a classical signifier of freedom. Victor Hugo’s famous novel *Les Miserables* (1862) may have been inspired by this painting. On the right side of the painting, a boy wildly wields two pistols. He wears a faluche—a black velvet beret worn by students and carries a satchel. He is thought to be the visual inspiration for Hugo’s character of Gavroche in *Les Miserables*.

**Figure 7**



**Figure 7** Delacroix (1830)

**Source**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eug%C3%A8ne\\_Delacroix\\_Liberty\\_Leading\\_the\\_People\\_\(28th\\_July\\_1830\)\\_-\\_WGA6177.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eug%C3%A8ne_Delacroix_Liberty_Leading_the_People_(28th_July_1830)_-_WGA6177.jpg)

In the art world, a nineteenth century artistic movement termed 'Impressionism' gradually evolved that gave birth to revolutionary artists. French Impressionism developed chiefly in France during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, first in painting and later in music---the most famous impressionist musician was Debussy. In 1874, a group of artists organized an exhibition of their paintings in Paris. The exhibition was a momentous gathering of *avant-garde* artists like Claude Monet and his most interesting associates: Camille Pissarro, Alfred Sisley, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, Berthe Morisot, the young Paul Cezanne and the elderly Edouard Manet. Though Manet refused to join the exhibition his canvases were highly admired by the participants unanimously.

Berthe Morisot offered a feminine point of view in her impressionist portraits. Women in her paintings were not sexualised but rather it is their self-reflexivity that

defined her impressionist canvases. Going beyond accepted ideas of femininity, Morisot captivated a feminine perspective from a female point of view. She foregrounded the life, family of 19th century women the way she experienced it. It sheds light on the cultural and societal reflections on women during her time.

**Figure 8**



**Figure 8** Morisot (1872)

**Source** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Berthe\\_Morisot\\_-\\_The\\_Cradle\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Berthe_Morisot_-_The_Cradle_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)

*The Cradle* (1872) is Morisot's major oil painting, which depicts an image of motherhood in all its grace and elegance and portrays maternal love. It depicts a mother's protective gaze, an endearing look at a child as she rests her head on her left hand, as the baby is off to sleep. The mother's protective right arm rests on the edge. The curtain reinforces the idea of intimacy, domesticity, and societal restrictions on women. The use of light on white and the transparency and purity of the colour white, combined with the dark shape of a human figure are significant. The subtle colour changes add to the peaceful ambience and emotional content of the painting.

Impressionism gradually became a movement whose aim was to force the beholder to participate in recreating the experience of the artist rather than to make precise or explicit the objective characteristics of events. The term "Impressionism" for this kind of painting was first used sarcastically, by art critic Louis Leroy in a magazine entitled *Le Charivari* after coming across Monet's *Impression Sunrise*. Monet and his associates were disdainful of details which a rapid vision is unable to seize. Their paintings capture moments and impressions. The feature of Impressionist painting that struck most contemporary viewers was the artists' attempts to truthfully and objectively document the "real world" given the shifting effects of light and the effects of that light on colour. In literature, too, Symbolist and Imagist poets are often loosely referred to as Impressionists.

### 3. OBSERVATIONS

In literature, Imagism implicitly rejected Victorian poetry which tended to be narrative. Imagist poetry is a brief rendering of a poetic scene. Ezra Pound, an American-born cosmopolitan poet expands on the preface to *Des Imagistes* (an

anthology of Imagist Poetry) what he calls the “essentials” of Imagism: “To present an image (hence the name: “Imagist”). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of his art.” <https://sites.udel.edu/britlitwiki/imagism-and-modernism-and-beyond/>

The new impressionist painting that emerged was not, however, wholly new. English Romantic landscape painters Constable and Turner had a major impact on these Impressionist painters. Like Constable and Turner, Impressionist painters too attempted to capture the impact of rain, clouds, and sunlit scenes on their sensibility. Yet there was a modernist breakthrough in impressionist art that carved their path for unconventionality. In 1876, Edmond Duranty christened it “The New Painting”. It was a style and much more than a style: it was a new way of seeing. These artists achieved their distinctive effects through their use of colour and sketchy lines. They were disdainful of details, details which a rapid vision cannot seize. Impressionism showed the effects of sunlight on things at different times of day and impressionist landscapes and cityscapes are filled with sunshine, shimmering light, and air. Claude Monet's masterpiece, *Impression Sunrise* (1872) depicts a misty harbour in the early morning light. A highly accomplished impression, this epiphanic painting represented a moment of perception.

**Figure 9**



**Figure 9** Monet (1872)

**Source** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monet\\_-\\_Impression,\\_Sunrise.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monet_-_Impression,_Sunrise.jpg)

Claude Monet the painter said about *Impression: Sunrise*, “It couldn’t very well be described as a view of Le Havre.” Kuhl (2009). The precise subject matter was secondary to the impression experienced by the artist and artistic traditions retreated into the background in favour of what was seen. In ingenious ways, Monet's *Impression Sunrise* reminds us of the modernist novels of Marcel Proust, William Faulkner, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf in the first quarter of the twentieth century. These writers deployed the stream-of-consciousness technique of narration followed by a remarkable focus on sensory details and on movements and the quality of consciousness itself. Their works are literary impressionism for their novels are a personal and a direct impression of life. Ford Madox Ford, Joseph Conrad and to some degree Henry James, are also literary impressionists.



Monet's later landscapes, the water lilies, willow trees, and *The Japanese Bridge* (1899) seem almost abstract in their emphatic brushwork, their intense identification with the landscape or scenery before him.

**Figure 10**



**Figure 10** Monet (1899)

**Source** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Japanese\\_footbridge\\_by\\_Claude\\_Monet](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Japanese_footbridge_by_Claude_Monet)

Debasish Lahiri, an Indian English poet in his contemporary poem “In Monet’s Garden,” paying tribute to Monet, writes:

We have always been in gardens  
Long before our soles have grown green  
As grass with summer.

The painter knows  
That a garden is never,  
Truly,  
A garden.

...

A bed of lilies cast in the mid-day quiet,  
Framed by the breathing  
Of a wooden bridge  
In the still water.

Lahiri’s poem ends:

I could reach out and touch  
The stars and the sun  
In this pool  
But not the lily in it  
That grew into its reflection,  
Shallow  
And quite fathomless. Lahiri (2020)

In 1863 Edouard Manet painted his much-praised and much debated *Olympia* (1863) the nude courtesan, modelled on a well-known real-life model/sex worker, Victorine Meurent. The painting flouted contemporary aesthetic and ethical standards most aggressively.

**Figure 11**



**Figure 11** Manet (1873)

**Source**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manet,\\_Edouard\\_-\\_Olympia,\\_1863.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manet,_Edouard_-_Olympia,_1863.jpg)[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manet,\\_Edouard\\_-\\_Olympia,\\_1863.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manet,_Edouard_-_Olympia,_1863.jpg)

Manet depicts the unclothed, central figure as a cool, confident courtesan who looks boldly at her audience. Manet with his flagrant new style had not idealized his model nor borrowed her from Roman history or Greek mythology. It may have been inspired by the Renaissance painting *Venus of Urbino* (1538) by Titian but also a deliberate subversion of Titian's work. Later it was Claude Monet who saved *Olympia* for the nation with the support of colleagues from being sold to an American buyer. The picture was donated to the Musee de Luxembourg in Paris and is now a timeless icon of art history.

Post-Impressionism developed as an extension of Impressionism as well as a rejection of the style's inherent limitations. The term Post Impressionism was coined by English art critic Roger Fry for works of Paul Cezanne, Georges Seurat, Paul Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh, Henri de Toulouse Lautrec, and a few others. Turned down at the Salon in Paris, twice, once in 1863 and again in 1866, the "Father of Modern Art" the provencal, post-impressionist Paul Cezanne and his works exhibited violent and melodramatic subjects made with thick, dark paint. In *Mont Sainte- Victoire* (1885-87), Cezanne painted his favourite landscape. Very innovative in its way, it described his images in a letter to Emile Bernard in 1904 "a kind of empirical geometry" of "cylinders, spheres and cones." He reduces the mountains, trees, and Mediterranean homes of the Provencal countryside to fragmented yet synchronised shapes of colour.

Figure 12



Figure 12 Cezanne (1902-1904)

Source [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paul\\_C%C3%A9zanne,\\_Mont\\_Sainte-Victoire.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paul_C%C3%A9zanne,_Mont_Sainte-Victoire.jpg)

The painting is Cezanne's *avant-garde* approach to nature. The landscape artist's efforts established the foundation of the modernist trend towards abstraction and Cubism. Allen Ginsberg in one of his poems goes beyond Cezanne's Impressionist painting *L'Estaque* and writes "For the other side of the bay/Is Heaven and Eternity/ With a bleak white haze over its mountains. / And the immense water of L'Estaque is a go-between/for minute rowboats." ("Cezanne's Ports") In the Impressionist exhibitions of 1874 and 1877, Cezanne was subjected to devastating reviews. He eventually turned his back on Paris, retreating to a secluded rural existence.

Cezanne was believed to be an obscure "regionalist painter who is famous for his canvases *Still Life with Basket of Apples* (1893), *Still Life with Skull* (1898), *Three Skulls* (1900), *Study After Nature* (1876), and *A Village of Gardanne* (1885-86) Debasish Lahiri in "The Night of the Painter" dedicated to Paul Cezanne writes:

Breathing became the sea.  
Earth widened into water,  
Russet into crepuscular  
When the brushstroke dwelt  
On a breath  
In Cezanne's studio,  
Long enough,  
To frame a canvas  
With the wood of everything  
That is the universe. [Lahiri \(2020\)](#).

Cezanne's friend Emile Zola, a practitioner of the literary school of naturalism, criticized the Impressionist painters in the novel *Leuvre (The Masterpiece)* (1886)

through the figure of the great revolutionary fictional artist named Claude Lantier. Zola's novel is based on the lives of Impressionist painters like Monet, Manet and especially the energetically reckless Cezanne. The story of a ground-breaking artist unable to live up to his potential must have left Cezanne devastated and with this ended the friendship of Zola and Cezanne. A *roman-a-clef* in *L'oeuvre*, Zola also depicts the commodification of art and the Bohemian art world of nineteenth century Paris.

In his later years, it was Ernest Hemmingway, who was attracted to Cezanne's Post Impressionist school of painting. The American writer Hemmingway was also taken aback by Cezanne's still lives and landscape painting. Both Cezanne and Hemmingway come closest to each other in their celebration of creativity. With Cezanne, Hemmingway (*The Old Man and the Sea*) shares an affinity to rediscover the potential of life. Cezanne provided modern art with the necessary impetus, to carry it forward and art proceeded towards total abstraction in the works of Pablo Picasso. Both Cezanne and Hemmingway strove after perfection and were concerned with the problems encountered in artistic interpretation. It is in the celebration of creativity that the two come closest to each other.

A modernist painter and writer tended to collapse meaning into an instant of time. Ezra Pound's rationale for imagism is that "an 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." Much like the poet Thomas Stearns Eliot, the Impressionist painter Claude Monet's introspective stance had an objective correlative: his subjects-landscapes, cityscapes, portraits---are recognizable. They are not picturesque or spectacular. Monet and fellow artist Edward Degas were interested not in some external notion of objective reality but in the actual physical appearance of a scene to a perceiving eye. An Impressionist painting and its imagery may well align with Eliot's "The winter evening settles down/With smell of steaks in passageways. /Six o'clock. /The burnt-out ends of smoky days" as the modern poet Eliot, went on to paint the grim realities of city life in *Preludes* (1910- 11). He further writes:

And now a gusty shower wraps  
The grimy scraps  
Of withered leaves about your feet  
And newspapers from vacant lots;  
The showers beat  
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,  
And at the corner of the street  
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.

And then the lighting of the lamps. [Poetry Foundation \(2020\)](#).

Striking in its energy and calling attention to themselves as paintings, the impressionists and their canvases remind us of Eliot's idea of impersonality in art or the metafictional dimension of postmodern novelists like Graham Swift or John Fowles. Fowles does alert us to the fictionality of his fiction in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The character of Sarah, believed to be the deserted French Lieutenant's Woman looking out to the Sea at Lyme Bay, seems to be created by colours and brushstrokes of Impressionist painters. The setting of the novel evokes the purest and most remarkable of Turner's atmospheric paintings--the seas and skies, charged with mysterious grandeur, which defy description and can be

compared only with Beethoven's or Mozart's symphonies. If Turner's art may be described as capturing nature in the most profound expression, in the most intimate sense, then in its self-reflexive style it evokes the poetry of William Wordsworth.

Rightly did Henry James state: "Fiction is an impression" and it is so has been argued by writers like Thomas Hardy, Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, and Marcel Proust. But they did not mean that fiction should keep to the sketch, the fragment, the moment, the surface, the sense that it should be "impressionistic". In painting, impressions seem to be momentary brushstrokes. For Conrad "fiction is an impression conveyed through the senses" (<https://inspireportal.com/joseph-conrad-on-fiction-art-and-the-power-of-the-written-word/>) and impressionist literature is a reflection of modernist aesthetics. Impressionist descriptions abound in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899):

The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream, and lights began to appear along the shore. The Chapman lighthouse, a three-legged thing erect on a mud-flat, shone strongly. Lights of ships moved in the fairway a great stir of lights going up and going down. Ad farthest west on the upper reaches the place of the monstrous town was still marked ominously on the sky, a brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars. [Conrad \(2007\)](#).

Irish writer and a successful playwright of late Victorian London, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1891) is a vivid impressionist novel along with its stylistic component of "Aestheticism". Wilde it seems was influenced by the aesthetics of Impressionism. He tried to achieve harmony, a cadenced approach to beauty and his novel projects several shades of an altering mood, captivating an emotion of a fleeting moment. Oscar Wilde's language evokes the picturesque and gradually picturesqueness emerges as a leading feature of his prose style. Like an impressionist painting in *Dorian Grey*, the picturesque and the decorative are delicately balanced. Wilde's "portrait" in the novel is a portrait from the canvas of an impressionist and not precisely the portrait of a particular person. The portraits in the novel are fast sketches of the sensory perceptions that are provoked by a passing emotion or momentary thought.

In psychological novels and their stream-of-consciousness technique a writer like Marcel Proust in *A la recherche du temps perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past* 1913-1927) or Virginia Woolf in *The Waves* (1931) can present through vivid peripheral details the immediate impression of experience derived from the senses without analysis or synthesis, the impression as it is seen or felt subjectively in a single fleeting moment. The subtlety and intricacy of *Remembrance* are noteworthy. Stream-of-consciousness is intended to render the flow of myriad impressions---visual, auditory, physical, associative, and subliminal---that impinge on the consciousness. Proust sought, as his title suggests, to write the past---time lost and seemingly irrecoverable---into the permanence of art. Like Henry James, James Joyce and T. S. Eliot, Proust is preoccupied with time, a chief impressionist feature. Indeed, Time is an ever-present fact in the work as the memory of the narrator shuttles back and forth without regard for chronology or mechanical time.

In *The Waves*, Woolf weaves together not a conventional plot structure, but significantly enough, "visual sensations." The impression then becomes a reflection of perceptual totality. An essential feature of literary impressionism is its emphasis on time, both times passing and the duration of moments in time. Impressionist paintings evoke similar sensations adding to their narrative element. Impressionist prose is marked by discontinuity. A stable world is fragmented, and Impressionist writers give expression to this fragmentation and discontinuity. There is no linear

narrative, no beginning, middle and end. Such freedom and boundlessness characterise the works of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* (1927) and *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) are signature classics that usher radical experimentation in twentieth century modern novels. Impressionism in painting is a celebration of light. Pissarro, Morisot, Monet, Sisley, Renoir, and Degas are Impressionists in the sense that they reproduce not the landscape but the sensory perceptions it evokes. Their literary impressionism is about shedding light on the life of their characters, and their interior monologues. Their complex lives and the subjective experiences of their characters create an inner landscape. Joyce deploys impressionism to describe transitory subjective impressions to reflect on the psyche of the protagonist. There is a complex evocation of the inner states of the characters Leopold and Molly Bloom and Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*.

The impressionistic style relies on abstract associations, the subjective point of view of the characters and the rendition of sensory details to recount the "impression" of a person or event. Cinematic montage characterises T. S. Eliot's *Preludes* and internal focalisation characterises Joyce's narrative style in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Like Joyce, Proust too discovered that when it was necessary to catch the play of mind and the flow of thought, the use of metaphor, symbol, and image---the language of poetry was essential. Thus, in trying to recreate the atmosphere of the mind, both Proust and Joyce may be treated as literary Impressionists. In Impressionist canvases, the heroic protagonist is the light, virtually nothing can be clearly distinguished in Monet's harbour view in *Impression: Sunrise*. No clear lines, no elaborate composition, no smooth brushwork. Monet said to an American painter named Lilla Cabot Perry, who settled in Monet's Giverny:

When you go out to paint, try to forget what object you have in front of your eyes, whether it's a tree, a house, a field, or whatever else. Think only: here's a small square of blue, there's a pink rectangle, there's a strip of yellow, and paint the shape and colour exactly as you experience it until you have reproduced your innocent impression of the scene". [Kuhl \(2009\)](#).

In his essay "The Painter of Modern Life", published in 1863, Charles Baudelaire offered the following definition of modernity: "Modernity is the transitory, the fleeting, the random, it is one half of art, whose other half is the eternal and immutable." [Baudelaire \(1986\)](#). The "ephemeral", the "fugitive" defined its first half. It was to this first half, the manifestations, and conditions of modern life, that artists should turn. Impressionism, therefore, as a movement has its strong claims to be 'modernist'. In its artistic experiment and novelty and a radical overhaul of existing forms of representation, Impressionist literature and painting ushered daring formal innovation and new content. In its essence, it has given form and symbolic expression to the consciousness of modernity.

#### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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