these evolved into complete plays which were written in English instead of in Latin, produced under the auspices of the various trade guilds, and acted on stages set outside the church. The miracle plays written in England are of unknown authorship. In the fourteenth century there developed in cities such as York and Chester the practice, on the feast of Corpus Christi (sixty days after Easter), of putting on great "cycles" of such plays, representing crucial events in the biblical history of mankind from the Creation and Fall of man, through the Nativity, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Christ, to the Last Judgment. The precise way that the plays were staged is a matter of scholarly debate, but it is widely agreed that each scene was played on a separate "pageant wagon" which was drawn, in sequence, to one after another fixed station in a city, at each of which some parts of the cycle were enacted. The biblical texts were greatly expanded in these plays, and the unknown authors added scenes, comic as well as serious, of their own invention. For examples of the variety, vitality, and power of these dramas, see the Wakefield "Noah" and "Second Shepherd's Play," and the Brome "Abraham and Isaac."

Morality plays were dramatized *allegories* of a representative Christian life in the plot form of a quest for salvation, in which the crucial events are temptations, sinning, and the climactic confrontation with death. The usual protagonist represents Mankind, or Everyman; among the other characters are personifications of virtues, vices, and Death, as well as angels and demons who contest for the prize of the soul of Mankind. A character known as the Vice often played the role of the tempter in a fashion both sinister and comic; he is regarded by some literary historians as a precursor both of the cynical, ironic villain and of some of the comic figures in Elizabethan drama, including Shakespeare's Falstaff. The best-known morality play is the fifteenth-century *Everyman*, which is still given an occasional performance; other notable examples, written in the same century, are *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Mankind*.

Interlude (Latin, "between the play") is a term applied to a variety of short stage entertainments, such as secular *farces* and witty dialogues with a religious or political point. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, these little dramas were performed by bands of professional actors; it is believed that they were often put on between the courses of a feast or between the acts of a longer play. Among the better-known interludes are John Heywood's farces of the first half of the sixteenth century, especially *The Four PP* (that is, the Palmer, the Pardoner, the 'Pothecary, and the Peddler, who engage in a lying contest), and *Johan Johan the Husband, Tyb His Wife, and Sir John the Priest.*

Until the middle of the twentieth century, concern with medieval drama was scholarly rather than critical. Since that time a number of studies have dealt with the relations of the texts to the religious and secular culture of medieval Europe, and have stressed the artistic excellence and power of the plays themselves. See Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church* (2 vols., 1933); Hardin Craig, *English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages* (1955); Arnold Williams, *The Drama of Medieval England* (1961); T. W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude* (1962); David M. Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (1962); V. A. Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (1966); Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (1972); Jerome Taylor and Alar Nelson, eds., *Medieval*

English Drama: Essays Critical and Contextual (1972); Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play* (1975).

Modernism and Postmodernism. The term **modernism** is widely used to identify new and distinctive features in the subjects, forms, concepts, and styles of literature and the other arts in the early decades of the twentieth century, but especially after World War I (1914–18). The specific features signified by "modernism" (or by the adjective **modernist**) vary with the user, but many critics agree that it involves a deliberate and radical break with some of the traditional bases not only of Western art, but of Western culture in general. Important intellectual precursors of modernism, in this sense, are thinkers who had questioned the certainties that had supported traditional modes of social organization, religion, and morality, and also traditional ways of conceiving the human self—thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and James G. Frazer, whose 12-volume *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915) stressed the correspondence between central Christian tenets and pagan, often barbaric, myths and rituals.

Literary historians locate the beginning of the modernist revolt as far back as the 1890s, but most agree that what is called **high modernism**, marked by an unexampled scope and rapidity of change, came after the first World War. The year 1922 alone was signalized by the appearance of such monuments of modernist innovation as James Joyce's *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, as well as many other experimental works of literature. The catastrophe of the war had shaken faith in the moral basis, coherence, and durability of Western civilization and raised doubts about the adequacy of traditional literary modes to represent the harsh and dissonant realities of the postwar world. T. S. Eliot wrote in a review of Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1923 that the inherited mode of ordering a literary work, which assumed a relatively coherent and stable social order, could not accord with "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history." Like Joyce and like Ezra Pound in his *Cantos*, Eliot experimented with new forms and a new style that would render contemporary disorder, often contrasting it to a lost order and integration that, he claimed, had been based on the religion and myths of the cultural past. In *The Waste Land* (1922), for example, Eliot replaced the standard syntactic flow of poetic language by fragmented utterances, and substituted for the traditional type of coherent poetic structure a deliberate dislocation of parts, in which very diverse components are related by connections that are left to the reader to discover, or invent. Major works of modernist fiction, following Joyce's *Ulysses* and his even more radical *Finnegans Wake* (1939), subvert the basic conventions of earlier prose fiction by breaking up the narrative continuity, departing from the standard ways of representing characters, and violating the traditional syntax and coherence of narrative language by the use of *stream of consciousness* and other innovative modes of narration. Gertrude Stein—often linked with Joyce, Pound, Eliot, and Woolf as a trail-blazing modernist—experimented with **automatic writing** (writing that has been freed from control by the conscious, purposive mind) and other modes of language that achieved their effects by violating the norms of standard

English syntax and sentence structure. Among other European and American writers who are central representatives of modernism are the novelists Marcel Proust, Thomas Mann, André Gide, Franz Kafka, Dorothy Richardson, and William Faulkner; the poets Stéphane Mallarmé, William Butler Yeats, Rainer Maria Rilke, Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, and Wallace Stevens; and the dramatists August Strindberg, Luigi Pirandello, Eugene O'Neill, and Bertolt Brecht. Their new forms of literary construction and rendering had obvious parallels in the break away from representational conventions in the artistic movements of *expressionism* and *surrealism*, in the modernist paintings and sculpture of Cubism, Futurism, and Abstract Expressionism, and in the violations of standard conventions of melody, harmony, and rhythm by the modernist musical composers Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and their radical followers.

A prominent feature of modernism is the phenomenon called the **avant-garde** (a French military metaphor: "advance-guard"); that is, a small, self-conscious group of artists and authors who deliberately undertake, in Ezra Pound's phrase, to "make it new." By violating the accepted conventions and proprieties, not only of art but of social discourse, they set out to create ever-new artistic forms and styles and to introduce hitherto neglected, and sometimes forbidden, subject matter. Frequently, avant-garde artists represent themselves as "alienated" from the established order, against which they assert their own autonomy; a prominent aim is to shock the sensibilities of the conventional reader and to challenge the norms and pieties of the dominant bourgeois culture. See Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1968). Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1984) is a neo-Marxist analysis both of modernism and of its distinctive cultural formation, the avant-garde.

The term **postmodernism** is often applied to the literature and art after World War II (1939–45), when the effects on Western morale of the first war were greatly exacerbated by the experience of Nazi totalitarianism and mass extermination, the threat of total destruction by the atomic bomb, the progressive devastation of the natural environment, and the ominous fact of overpopulation. Postmodernism involves not only a continuation, sometimes carried to an extreme, of the countertraditional experiments of modernism, but also diverse attempts to break away from modernist forms which had, inevitably, become in their turn conventional, as well as to overthrow the elitism of modernist "high art" by recourse for models to the "mass culture" in film, television, newspaper cartoons, and popular music. Many of the works of postmodern literature—by Jorge Luis Borges, Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, Thomas Pynchon, Roland Barthes, and many others—so blend literary genres, cultural and stylistic levels, the serious and the playful, that they resist classification according to traditional literary rubrics. And these literary anomalies are paralleled in other arts by phenomena like pop art, op art, the musical compositions of John Cage, and the films of Jean-Luc Godard and other directors.

An undertaking in some postmodernist writings—prominently in Samuel Beckett and other authors of the literature of the *absurd*—is to subvert the foundations of our accepted modes of thought and experience so as to reveal the meaninglessness of existence and the underlying "abyss," or "void," or "nothingness" on which any supposed security is conceived to be precariously suspended. Postmodernism in literature and the arts has parallels with the movement known as poststructuralism in linguistic and literary theory; poststructuralists undertake to subvert the foundations of language in order to demonstrate that its seeming meaningfulness dissipates, for a rigorous inquirer, into a play of conflicting indeterminacies, or else undertake to show that all forms of cultural discourse are manifestations of the reigning ideology, or of the relations and constructions of power, in contemporary society. (See *poststructuralism.*)

For some postmodernist developments in literature, see literature of the *absurd, antihero, antinovel, Beat writers, concrete poetry, metafiction, new novel.* On modernism, refer to Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, eds., *The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature* (1965); Irving Howe, ed., *The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts* (1967); Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture* (1968); Paul de Man, "Literary History and Literary Modernity," in *Blindness and Insight* (1971); Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (1971); David Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode* (1976); Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (1995); Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900–1916* (1994); Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, eds., *Modernism: 1890–1930/A Guide to European Literature* (1991); Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (1998); Michael Levenson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (1999). See also the journal *Modernism/Modernity.*

On postmodernism, see Clement Greenberg, *The Notion of Post-Modern* (1980); J. F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (trans., 1984); Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (1986); John McGowan, *Postmodernism and Its Critics* (1991); Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism* (1991); Ingeborg Hoesterey, ed., *Zeitgeist in Babel: The Postmodernist Controversy* (1991); Stuart Sim, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* (2001); Victor E. Taylor and Charles E. Winquist, eds., *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism* (2003).

On the massive impact on culture and literature of the two World Wars, see Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (1989), and *The Great War and Modern Memory* (2000).

On modern and postmodern drama: Austin Quigley, *The Modern Stage and Other Worlds* (1985); William B. Worthen, *Modern Drama and the Rhetoric of Theater* (1992); Debora Geis, *Postmodern Theatric(k)s* (1993).

Motif and Theme. A **motif** is a conspicuous element, such as a type of event, device, reference, or formula, which occurs frequently in works of literature. The "loathly lady" who turns out to be a beautiful princess is a common motif in *folklore*, and the man fatally bewitched by a fairy lady is a motif adopted from folklore in Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci" (1820). Common in lyric poems is the **ubi sunt motif**, the "where-are" formula for lamenting the vanished past ("Where are the snows of yesteryear?"), and also the *carpe diem* motif, whose nature is sufficiently indicated by Robert Herrick's title "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time." An **aubade**—from the Old French "alba," meaning