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EXPLORING DYNAMICS OF OSCILLATION AND NAVIGATION: A METAMODERNIST ANALYSIS OF ELLMANN'S DUCKS, NEWBURYPORT

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the metamodern dynamics of oscillation and navigation as presented in Ellmann's (2019) novel Ducks, Newburyport. The study uses meta modernism as theoretical lens in general and notions regarding oscillation and navigation in particular as propounded by Vermeulen and Akker's (2010) in their article Notes on Meta modernism. Using stream of consciousness technique, the novelist navigates the unnamed protagonist's inner reality which is intricately intertwined between sincerity and sarcasm, optimism and despair. The study focuses on the oscillation that is embodied in the protagonist's decisions, her voyage through these oscillations, and her navigation through narrative terrain. The findings of the study reveal the narrative shifts between themes, capturing the intricacies of contemporary life and the interaction between introspective thoughts and societal issues. The findings of the study further reveal that the protagonist of the novel navigates her identity and the complexities of self-discovery in metamodern setting. Ultimately, the novel's meta modernist strategies underscore the instability and multiplicity of contemporary experience, challenging readers to reevaluate their assumptions about narrative, identity and reality.

Keywords: *Meta modernism, Oscillation, Navigation, Ducks, Newburyport (2019)*

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1. Introduction

Meta modernism is a cultural, philosophical and aesthetic movement that emerged in the 21st century that is characterized by oscillation between modernism and postmodernism, irony and sincerity and multiple perspectives. It blends elements of both embracing the grand narratives and sincerity of modernism while acknowledging the irony and skepticism of postmodernism. Dumitrescu (2016) narrates skeptically the emerging term meta modernism in which she wants to put attention towards the cultural fatigue by stating 'Oh, another -ism! Haven't we had enough?' This phrase gives a new outlook to critical thinkers while dealing with new ism. Vermeulen and Akker (2010) define Meta modernism as a continuous action, a constant repositioning between positions and mindsets, similar to a pendulum swinging between the polarities indicated above. Cooper (2017) contends that metamerism may be regarded as a movement that goes beyond postmodernism and is at the same time intermediary to both modernism and postmodernism. He further gives interesting comparison between, modernism, postmodernism and meta modernism in the following table:

Table 1: Comparison of modernism, postmodernism and meta modernism (Beyond, Meta modernism)

Modernism	Postmodernism	Meta modernism(Post-Postmodernism)
Thesis	Antithesis	Synthesis
Objective	Subjective	Multiple Subjectivities
Construction	Deconstruction	Reconstruction
Grand Narrative	Subjectivity	Metanarrative
Mechanical	Relational	Developmental
Absolutism	Relative	Perspectival (Frames of Reference)

Meta modernism is a powerful concept resulting in a multiplicity of contrasting ideas and styles that balance between the modernist and the postmodernist premises. This observed movement is more similar to an oscillatory or cyclic motion where one is always moving or changing a gear. Oscillation is thus an operation that acts as a strategy within meta modernism that incorporates both modern and postmodern signification without being entrapped by its binary categories and promotes flexibility and the purposeful utilization of multiple frameworks. This oscillation is not limited to literature only but has expanded into the academic discourse especially in religious studies as well. In literature, the concept of meta modernism has been practiced in McEwan's novels Atonement (2001) and Saturday (2005), where the characterizations of reality are in between modernist and postmodernist styles. Therefore, this synthesis constitutes a meta-modern world view as a concrete and highly versatile paradigm within the context of literary studies.

This study focuses on oscillations in more of a Nietzschean (1872/1967)) sense using the terms Apollo and Dionysus. In that way, it explores the conflicts between tradition and truth, between signs and bodies, between poetry and biology; and identifies the primordial aspects of human existence that are not cultural and are present in the human experience all over the world. Both the basic contradictions of human existence are the core issues to the study's claims. It implies that in order to comprehend the human being, it is necessary to find a place between them and strict collaboration and rituals on the one hand, and chaos and liberty on the other one. For instance, Gellner (1992), whose investigation of the shifting between culture and science resulted in the discovery of perhaps, universally rational and morality. In the same way, Devereux (1978) and Leach (1976), switching between focus on psychic intensity and extensity, gave essential information concerning the potentials of human psyche and the relationship between culture and society and the bodily practices. The purpose of this study is to explore the elements of oscillation and navigation as presented in *Ducks, Newburyport* by Lucy Ellmann.

Lucy Ellmann was born in Evanston, Illinois on October 18, 1956. The work of this author can be best characterized as an innovative narrative with rather deep philosophical insights and representations of the modern world. Born from the parents Richard Ellmann, a prominent literary critic, and Mary Ellmann, a prominent novelist and literary critic, she was nurtured in a surround that was soaked with literary debates. This upbringing ingrained the culture of the novelists in her, equipping her with skills in detail and comic humor. Issues of social and political nature are survived in Ellmann's works where elements of black humor and critical realism interweave her peculiar style of the postmodernist writer. This narrative approach allows her to delve deep into the

themes of identity, memory, and the human condition, presenting them in a nuanced and compelling manner. Over the years, Ellmann has received numerous accolades for her literary contributions, including the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for her novel *Ducks, Newburyport.*

The novel under study is one of the greatest attempts at portraying modern life through the protagonist's never-ending monologue. This is how the protagonist presents thoughts that oscillate between recalling specific moments of her life and pondering the most pressing issues of human existence. In the novel, there runs one continuous ongoing sentence, a stylistic technique that emphasizes the constant stream of ideas and worries in the main character's head. *Ducks, Newburyport* is an interesting novel not only because of its unique narrative structure but also in terms of the multiple themes and aspects of the contemporary world: environmental issues, political situation, personal account and many others. Returning to the effectiveness of the internal monologue and the phrase 'the fact that' used in the book, the reader is presented with a diversely layered view of the modern human life." Because elliptical narrative constructions and gendered markers of alienation should be read as a social critique and deep concern with culture-making solidifies Ellmann's place as an important writer of modern literature. It is important to note Ellmann's accomplishment does not end with *Ducks, Newburyport,* her previous books include *Sweet Desserts* (1988) which has emerged as the winner of the Guardian Fiction Prize, A *Lament* (1999) well demonstrate the range of her talents and abilities as a writer. This study intends to contribute to a fuller understanding of how the individual's path of introspection and involvement with the larger cultural landscape is portrayed in meta modernist perspective.

1.1.*Research Objectives*

- **a)** To examine protagonist's inner conflict that oscillates in connection to her own identity as in Ducks, Newburyport
- **b)** To understand the protagonist's navigating identity and complexities of self-discovery

1.2.*Research Questions*

- **a)** How does the narrative structure of Ducks, Newburyport within the meta modernist framework reflect the idea of oscillation?
- **b)** How does the unnamed protagonist navigate her identity and experience the complexities of self-discovery in metamodern context as presented in Ducks, Newburyport?

2. Literature Review

Meta modernism is an emerging, cultural and philosophical term that has significant importance in contemporary literature. Many scholars and researchers have worked on oscillation and navigation that gives a new outlook to understand the different relationship between modernity and postmodernity in literary studies. This literature review helps to understand more clearly the nature of complex ideas of metamodern literature that deals with narrative structure and character development.

Serpell (2007) advances our understanding of the ethics of fiction and twentieth-century American literature by analyzing the moral messages and the commented ambiguity. Besides, through the analysis of reciprocal exclusion and oscillation, one can see how the characters switch between two different opinions and decisions, and the examination of ethical projection extends one's knowledge about the characters' ethical responsibilities and appraisals. It gives a valuable angle to consider the issues of morality and human nature in these two significant works of world literature.

Schmidt (2014) looks at how performance and the cultural imagination from classic literature to modern movies combine to construct American identity. By using this lens, the analysis clarifies how historic and contemporary cultural narratives impact American identity, which is constantly changing rather than remaining static. The interaction between modern pop culture and classical fiction is emphasized, illustrating the continuous process of identity construction in American society. Furthermore, analyzing instances of subversion in American culture sheds light on its ambiguities and complexities.

Yousef (2017) discusses three types of modernism, postmodernism, and post-postmodernism, or more specifically, what is more often referred to as meta modernism. After being used by a broad range of literary critics for more than a century, modernism gave rise to its two corollaries, postmodernism and meta modernism. If modernism's defining traits were individualism honesty, and fragmentation, and while irony was a defining characteristic of postmodernism, engagement and oscillation may be considered the catchphrases of meta modernism.

Kersten & Wilber (2018) suggest that the oscillation between a distinctly postmodern detachment and a conventionally modern devotion characterizes this modernism. This emotional framework is known as meta modernism. The Greek-English lexicon defines the prefix meta as denoting concepts like with, between, and beyond. We use these meta connotations in a similar, if selective, way. Because of this, we argue that meta modernism should be positioned historically beyond postmodernism, ontologically

between postmodernism, and epistemologically beside it. According to meta modernism, modernism emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as an aesthetic, an epoch, and an archive. Therefore, the prevailing positions within this corpus of literature conflict with the scholarly view of modernism as a globally complex impetus that is both chronologically and spatially complicated.

Neil (2019) depicts Ellmann's *Ducks, Newburyport* (2019) as a remarkable work of literature that defies conventional narrative norms with its original structure and insightful examination of modern American life. Ellmann explores themes of family, politics, the environment, and anxiety through the narrative of an anonymous protagonist told in between scenes with a lioness. The work enthralls readers with its humor, wisdom, and sharp social satire despite its frightening length and unique style. Ellmann's deft use of language and literary allusions gives the story depth and complexity while taking readers on a thought-provoking trip that sheds light on the complexities of contemporary society and the human condition.

Babenco (2019) eloquently contrasts the life of a contemporary housewife with that of a lioness, signifying the purity of the natural world. A stream of consciousness full of everyday observations and social criticisms is revealed by the protagonist's inner monologue as reflected in *Ducks, Newburyport* (2019). She struggles with phobias, fixations, and pathological anxiety despite having an academic vocabulary, which is indicative of the psychological damage informational pollution, has done to her. She engages with culinary formulas and cultural platitudes, vacillating between respect and derision for conventional wisdom. Finally the book is reported to have issues of consumerism, social illness, and the fight for personal authenticity in a society full of misinformation and garbage culture.

3. Theoretical Framework

Vermeulen and Akker (2010) present meta modernism as a discourse that seeks to address the unresolved issues raised by postmodernist thinkers, who often presented critiques without offering solutions. Their approach appears to navigate between postmodernism and contemporary trends, embodying elements of both but not wholly belonging to either category. They quote Holland’s contribution to the discourse by revisiting the connection between 21st-century fiction and modernism in the closing chapter of Succeeding Postmodernism. She posited that the rhizomatic fiction emerging in the footsteps of meta modernism represents a post-structural, metafiction alliteration of modernist fiction. According to Holland, metamodern writers employ postmodern techniques to pursue modernist objectives. She further elaborated on her formulation of

the metamodern think tank, emphasizing the tension in here into beings with or among postmodernist, modernist, realist, and earlier strategies and sensibilities within the contemporary structure of feelings (Vermeulen & Akker,2010).

Contemporary literary trends can be interpreted as an upcycling of past styles, conventions, and techniques, while postmodern writers often recycled canonical works, popular culture, and the legacies of past masters through parody and pastiche. Metamodern writers select specific elements from the historical scrapheap to imbue the present with new meaning and envision the future in fresh ways. The concept crucial to understanding the ontology of meta modernism is metaxis. Plato, drawing from ancient Greek philosophy, described metaxies as the oscillation between two states, exemplified by figures like Heracles, tragically caught between the realms of gods and humans, never fully belonging to either. In Greek, the prefix meta conveys notions of being with, between, and beyond. It signifies an oscillation, a movement between future, present, and past, here and there and somewhere, and between various ideals, mindsets, and positions. They acknowledge that meta modernism is epistemologically aligned with postmodernism, positioned ontologically between (post)modernism, and historically transcends postmodernism. Vermeulen and Akker (2010) are of the view that

Ontologically, meta modernism oscillates between the modern and the postmodern. It oscillates between a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naïveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity. Indeed, by oscillating to and fro or back and forth, the metamodern negotiates between the modern and the postmodern. One should be careful not to think of this oscillation as a balance however; rather, it is a pendulum swinging between 2, 3, 5, 10, innumerable poles. Each time the metamodern enthusiasm swings toward fanaticism, gravity pulls it back toward irony; the moment its irony sways toward apathy, gravity pulls it back toward enthusiasm. (p. 5)

Further, meta modernism finds its expression and meaning in the context of the global historical processes including ecological, economical, and political. These disruptions creates the desire for change among people and they begin to look for the new ways of emancipation of their experience. Meta modernism is therefore the integration of both modernist and postmodern notions and beliefs in the relativity of values and ideals while still being able to embrace them. Vermeulen and Akker (2010) have established that a new stereotype of emotions has emerged in contemporary culture and thus there was need for a new paradigm of the culture industry. Although the elements of the postmodernism's tactics and the shapes are still valid, they do not encompass the richness of the metamodern feeling. As Hutcheon (1995) rightly pointed out, "The debate has moved on, and the 'postmodern moment' is over but the discursive strategies and the

critique carried out by postmodernism are still very much an integral part of our present twenty-first century world; Similarly post-postmodernism also requires an identity of its own." (p. 3).

It is worth to note that different theorists have used different name to describe this new cultural period as hyper modernism, Digi modernism, pseudo modernism or auto modernism. However, Vermeulen and Akker labeled this new trend as meta modernism because it constitutes a postmodernism in some sense and a modernism in other. In their *Notes on Meta modernism*, they describe the metamodern sensibility as essayistic rather than scientific, rhizomatic rather than linear, and open-ended instead of closed. One can hear them arguing that a metamodern structure of feeling is the result of the erosion of ecosystems, financial frameworks, and geopolitics, and therefore people seek change. This new sensibility is also not just accepting the modernist utopian functionality, as well as is not denying the postmodern skepticism either. Rather, it moves between these two poles: commitment and detachment.

One should be careful, however, not to confuse this oscillating tension (a both–neither) with some kind of postmodern in-between (a neither–nor). Indeed, both meta modernism and the postmodern turn to pluralism, irony, and deconstruction in order to counter a modernist fanaticism." (Vermeulen & Akker, p.10)

This study seeks to examine how the current metamodern narrative is applicable to Lucy Ellmann's fiction in *Ducks, Newburyport*. Ellmann's novel reflects many of the features described by Vermeulen and Akker (2010) such as the struggle between the individual and the collective. Since the novel is based on a stream of consciousness style, which only presents a fiction of postmodern life with frequent jumps in time and place and does not follow their traditional structure, it is fragmented and depicts fragments of the modern self and the collective self. Indeed, *Ducks, Newburyport* offers a context of metamodern structure. This swinging between two positions is evident in the struggle that the protagonist goes through as well as her endless inner battles on matters of identity. Issues like destruction of the environment, political turmoil, and cultural disintegration that are explored in the novel also places the novel within the metamodern podium.

4. Textual Analysis

This section deals with how meta modernism swings back and forth from modernism to postmodernism, from sincerity to irony, and how the protagonist feels the state of consciousness in her navigation. From a close examination of the text that oscillates between different themes, scales, and tones, reflecting the meta modernist tendency to navigate between opposing ideas and styles. By constantly shifting between

these polarities, the text captures the dynamic and multifaceted nature of contemporary storytelling in the modern era.

4.1.*Elements of Oscillation in Ducks Newburyport*

Ducks, Newburyport (2019) depicts the fragmented, nervous, and profoundly introspective inner life of an unnamed Ohio housewife. The work, which is set in late-capitalist America, engrosses the reader in a complex web of political concerns, cultural memories, domestic chores, and intensely personal aspirations and fears. A persistent emotional and intellectual navigation is embodied in the protagonist's thought process, which is portrayed in a single lengthy sentence punctuated mostly by the phrase 'the fact that'. The metamodern mindset that Vermeulen and Akker (2010) define, in which people oscillate between irony and sincerity, hope and doubt, involvement and indifference, is strongly aligned with this narrative mode.

The oscillatory movement at the heart of meta modernism is reflected in Ellmann's use of an alternating structure in both thought and tone. The novel's opening line captures this relationship quite well **"For all of life is really recoil and leap, leap and recoil."** (Ellmann, 2019, p. 11) This statement has a lot of symbolic meaning even though it is uttered in relation to the mountain lion's actions, which are told in tandem to the protagonist's monologue. The idea of leaping and recoiling represents a deeper rhythm of life than just physical activity. Like the cat, the unnamed protagonist goes through phases of retreat and growth in life. She pulls away from tragedy, from conflict, from the enormous enormity of contemporary life, but she also leaps forward toward memory, toward insight, toward purpose. The metamodern oscillation between opposing emotional and philosophical poles is embodied in this frequent pendulum swing.

According to **Vermeulen and Akker (2010),** this kind of movement characterizes the metamodern attitude it is important to avoid the oscillating tension a both–neither with some kind of postmodern in-between. This is an important distinction. Unlike many postmodern figures, the protagonist does not linger in a state of resignation or detached irony. Instead, despite her confusion and overwhelm, she is interested and wanting. As she navigates the emotional terrain of parenting, identity, grief, and global worry, her consciousness never settles but instead sways constantly. The narrator's emotional and existential navigation is comparable to the mountain lion's physical navigation, which involves leaping and recoiling. Both the woman and the lion are negotiating uncharted territory, oscillating between fear and action, instinct and thought. As a result, Ellmann's story becomes a literary manifestation of what Vermeulen and

Akker refer to as a structure of feeling, which is characterized by movement, contradiction, and a sincere attempt to find meaning in a broken world.

This novel gives us a new outlook to protagonist's reflection on family, American culture, motherhood, personal trauma, environmental destruction and violence without any resolution. Like we know everything but things remain un-noticed. This gives a new perspective to readers to unfold ideas of contemporary era to witness how the main character of the novel oscillates between sincerity and irony, anxiety and hope, emotional grief and societal critique. As we can see in the given text:

The fact that after Dilly got killed, the kids painted a big warning sign with a big black cat on it and stuck it right by the fence, but nobody noticed it, the fact that they were all going too fast to see it (Ellmann, 2019,p.227)

This passage, highlights the metamodern oscillation between personal grief and societal critique that the protagonist reflects on the dangerous conditions of the road near their home, where accidents are common, especially during foggy or snowy weather. The narrative shifts between observations of the past accidents and the ongoing risk posed by speeding vehicles. This highlights the disconnection of people between human consequences. Despite efforts by the children to warn drivers with a homemade sign, their efforts go unnoticed amidst the fast-paced traffic. This act depicts light on the ironic behavior of contemporary people. This oscillation between past events and present dangers underscores the precariousness of everyday life and the persistent threat posed by reckless behavior on the road. Relating this to Vermeulen and Akker's (2010) perspective, *"One should be careful, however, not to confuse this oscillating tension (a both–neither) with some kind of postmodern in-between (a neither–nor)" (p. 10),* this passage exemplifies the oscillation between safety and danger, neither pure hope nor pure despair, and individual actions and societal indifference. The protagonist oscillates between memories of past accidents and the ongoing risk faced by their community, highlighting the constant flux between safety and danger characteristic of contemporary life. This dynamic interplay mirrors the oscillatory nature of meta modernist narratives, where characters navigate between opposing forces and shifting perspectives, ultimately reflecting the complexities of modern existence. Ellmann does not stop here with shifting perspectives; she also switches modern dating with her past traumas as we can see

The fact that one guy called me "reticent" once and I didn't even know what it meant, the fact that I thought it must mean something terrible, so embarrassing, the fact that I don't think dating's all it's cracked up to be, the fact that computer-dating sounds even worse (Ellmann, 2019, p. 270)

The narrator reflects on a prior date with Chuck, reminiscing about times had

together alongside the discoveries made. The attention to Chuck's enthusiasm for detailed black-and-white sketches of architectural components reveals a dimension of his personality and the usual elegance he has in common with another person. The narrator's first taste of ginger beer infuses the date with a zest for creativity and fun that conflicts with the awkward and uncomfortable emotions the narrator usually experiences. The narrator reports that relationship anxieties and insecurities emphasize contexts including slipping items, stammering, and feeling embarrassed. In discussing computer dating, the discourse centers around the difficulties and ambiguity tied to the ways we make companionship connections today.

Vermeulen and Akker's (2010) model proposes that the passage shows the charm betweenthe traditional mythologized view of courtship and our modern fear of dating. Thoughts of a solidouting with Chuck invoke a need for concrete relationships with others and mutual experiences, just as the classic digital notions of affection entail. At that same time, by recognizing computer dating one acknowledges modern dating strategies and their accompanying challenges, suggesting a negotiation between older and newer ways of interaction in the context of love. Theoscillation between classic and progressive dating techniques illustrates the greater theme of cultural diversity and the effort toward authenticity in metamodern stories. "The fact that I'm notused to having a moment to myself anymore really, uno moment, no problem, like, just to reada *book* or something, Real-Life Revenge Stories, How Protein Helps You,🎵*Figaro, Figaro, Figaro!*🎵" (Ellmann, 2019, p. 233)

This fragment expresses the main character's contest with her attraction to individual privacy and the frequent demands of her recurring obligations. What she desires most for solitudein confrontation with the unceasing interruptions from her responsibilities and family reveals the contradiction that exists between her aspirations and her familial and community roles. This situation reflects the oscillation theme of meta modernism, where personal identity is persistentlyin negotiation with diverse interior longings and exterior assumptions. The emphasis, the main character places on remaining calm in chaos epitomizes how the narrative examines meta modernism through analysis of her fluctuating and occasionally contradictory identity.

This section is depicted under the meta modernist framework that refers the changing quality of the protagonist's identity. As Vermeulen and Akker's (2010) identify meta modernism as having a movement that oscillates between diverse emotional and philosophical states. Her downplaying of her craving for isolation together with her daily tasks highlights this transition. Her focus on nomads illustrates the meta modernist understanding of moving sincerely and ironically, and through

personal goals and collective responsibilities. It reveals protagonist's identity is continuously evolving and revolving, which goes under the idea of a dynamic and multi-layered identity within the meta modernist framework.

4.2.*Navigation of Identity and Self-discovery in Ducks, Newburyport*

When we go deep down into the novel we see the unnamed protagonist criticizes some contemporary mothers and navigates her identity. That how her values are superior than new ones. Her tone is very ironic and cynical. That highlights her inner conflict and cultural contradiction. She compares her mother's advice with metamodern mothers. As we can see in the following text: "the fact that I take pride in my *baking*, at least now and again, but that's about it, and when I do, I do it in private, because Mommy taught us never to be proud, the fact that some moms teach their kids the opposite nowadays, bolstering 'em up nonstop like little gods, telling them how great they are at practically everything, E-G-O, E = $mc^{2"}$ (Ellmann,2019, p.21). In this passage, the protagonist reflects on the concept of pride, particularly about bakinga task she takes pride in, but only in private. The mention of her mother's teachings about never being proud contrasts with the contemporary parenting style she observes, where children are constantly praised and their egos bolstered. The stream-of-consciousness style seamlessly transitions from baking to broader reflections on societal attitudes toward pride and self-worth. The protagonist's internal monologue reveals an awareness of the shifting cultural norms, as wellas a critical perspective on the potential consequences of overinflated egos.

The bringing in of Einstein and the formula $E=mc^2$ introduces an ironic and hilarious element into the writing. It seems that the protagonist wonders if anyone has a right to feel pride, apart from someone like Einstein, whose achievements in science are widely acknowledged. The thoughts here on Einstein's pride are paired with the observation that positivity and excessive pride are not necessarily linked, indicating that there is a deep understanding of personal worth available that avoids the issues created by both overly proud and overly critical beliefs. Thoughts of the protagonist regarding pride and positivity underscore a major theme in *Ducks, Newburyport,* the dissonance between what we believe about ourselves versus societal expectations, and the trials of finding equilibrium while dealing with these forces.

The leading character's internal deliberations investigate the split between positivity and pride, equating this with the behavior of positive and negative electrical charges. This metaphor reveals the fragile stability she seeks in her life, by maintaining an appreciation for value without falling into arrogance. Attention is paid to her relentless endeavors to comply with social expectations about conforming to particular standards, referring to her interpretations of her accomplishments or approaches to being

a parent. The protagonist seems to take the generational alteration in attitudes toward pride and self-esteem with a blend of skepticism and curiosity. This arises through the positioning of her mother's teachings next to current parenting styles. In a meta modernist lens, this passage depicts the back-and-forth between self-uncertainty and self-confidence that defines the protagonist's internal world. The mismatch between valuing personal success and maintaining social conventions of humility characterizes the wider meta modernist experience, as people navigate the complicated nature of identity creation today. Throughout the story, we see the protagonist reflecting on pride related to her baking, which exemplifies a desire for both authenticity and personal expression, but this goal is limiting because of the humility and modesty she has inside.

Analyzing pride against positive and negative charges in electrical circuits stresses the meta modernist concept of balancing and fluctuation. Much like electrical circuits that work by regulating positive and negative charges, the formation of the protagonist's sense of self occurs through the conflict between pride and humility and between public esteem and private gratification. This lively exchanges how's the meta modernist focus on dealing with contradictions and finding insight into the complicated aspects of life today. This part illustrates the main character's struggle to characterize her identity truthfully, in light of the challenges posed by social standards and what she wants. As per Vermeulen and Akker's view. the protagonist varies between the expectation from society to celebrate domestic work and her dislike for it, showcasing the ambiguous and versatile characteristics of recent storytelling of the metamodern era. This ongoing transformation, in answer to societal expectations and personal self-scrutiny, brings attention to the seriousness of current living and identity, which matches the characteristics of meta modernist counter parts.

This novel unfolds many internal monologue of a middle-aged woman who is baking in the kitchen but her thoughts navigate from personal life to global anxieties. Here the narrator extracts the physical and psychological changes of society, that is symbolized by Daylight Saving Time (DST). "The fact that every time there's a time change, heart attacks, and car crashes briefly increase in number, ST, DST, the fact that I just don't think it's good for people" (Ellmann, 2019, p. 661). This passage describes meta modernist constant shift from enthusiasm and irony, sincerity and knowingness. Here the unnamed protagonist is fully aware of constant global changes of society. It's a brief yet telling moment of her awareness that there is always a time change and heart attacks from DST and people are becoming victim that is she finding even not good and safe. In order to find meaning and harmony in a world that doesn't fully provide either, she balances her lived experience against inherited systems in her internal monologue. Even if this inquiry is

mild, it represents a deeper metamodern navigation of identity that is emotive, critical, and flexible.

According to Vermeulen and Akker's (2010), the text has a quality that reflects navigating dependence on today's technologies with a nostalgic desire for the simplicity of yore. Positioning snow blowers near a snow service demonstrates a new answer to practical problems, whilst themes of health and well-being invoke as light amount of nostalgia for when community assistance was more important. The change between adopting technological innovations and craving traditional values shows the larger struggle between progress and nostalgia that describes metamodern narratives.

The fact that he liked to help the poor, and we're poor, bail-out, buy-out, cook-out, clean-out, freak-out, cockfight, Fright Night, Friday night, the fact that then there's all the dusting, sweeping, ironing, making beds, washing sheets, towels and clothes, itch, sore eye, ironing pile, tending the chickens, feeding the gold fish, washing the windows. (Ellmann, 2019, p. 18)

In these lines, the main character's thoughts invoke images of stress related to daily life, although one could call them tedious. She goes through a list of chores, such as feeding goldfish or ironing, and equally demonstrates the chase for dust bunnies, hence showing how families take up her mental space. The show, such as 'the fact that' was used to illustrate the repetitiveness of the chores to portray how she had a hard time dealing with all the chores in the house. This reflects the very confusing state of mind of managing different aspects of her life, as her thoughts seem rather random. This kind of shifting back and forth between different strands of material defines her family work and memories in her life in addition to portraying her daily life.

As per Vermeulen and Akker's (2010) view, this passage depicts the protagonist's sincerity or irony and dilemma in a quite typical day. She genuinely states her tasks, but she is not afraid to laugh at herself so she maintains a balance of responsibility and the ridiculousness of it all. Finding this balance is part of meta modernism which combines sincerity with irony and pragmatism. The protagonist flits between thinking about world issues and herself/her tasks such as making a special croissant in Poland and cleaning her house. Her search for meaning in the mundane and the laughter and the drama she perceives in the most menial tasks as well as corporate issues is illustrated in the passage. Protagonist's struggle doesn't stop here she grabs reader's attention towards pronunciation of contemporary era which she ironically describes by hitting youngsters in the given lines: I'm forgetting how to say things too, the fact that I spend too much time with youngsters, "Feburry," "li-bry," "twelth," the fact that it seems to take years to get that Fin there, Twelfth Night, (Ellmann,2019,p.19). Here, the protagonist's inner

monologue provides her thoughts and feelings about family and using language and conducting traditions. She says her parents were married on the Glorious Twelfth and her children have never known and probably can't even pronounce it correctly. It is an aspect that focuses on the contrast between the young and the old, and the loss of some cultural aspects. The protagonist says to herself, she starts to forget words by mimicking the young children that mispronounce even simple words. It is about her character development, their background, her ideas on the change of time about the life of a family, and language that her obsession with the change of time comes out clearly.

From the metamodern point of view, this passage explores the fact that the protagonist shifts between longing for the past and the present life. The use of expressions such as the Glorious Twelfth and leaving up the Christmas tree until Twelfth Night is seen to derive from a desire to preserve and maintain some form of link with the past. Yet this is contrasted with the witty, but rather touching portrayal of how language decay has set in with her children, by which may be implied the steady going to waste and fading of the good things of life. This ambiguity of earnestness and playfulness, desire and resignation, is cast within the frame of the meta modernist consciousness. The protagonist works through her various identities and her understanding of herself and her life by accepting these binaries, and by embracing the many perspectives towards her life that the metamodern narrative offers. This passage sums up her difficulties when it comes to reconciling continuity with the present that shapes it as culture and family for change seek to struggle. As we go deep down we see metamodern mother who has forgotten her freedom as we can see in the text:

The fact that once you're a mom you start to notice how people waste their freedom, waste it, Stars With No Makeup On, the fact that that's all Jack Lemmon wants to do in The Apartment, go to bed and watch a movie but there's nothing on TV..(Ellmann,2019,p.195)

Analyzing this passage, one can observe that the author struggles with understanding her own emotions and desires to be kind to others as well as to judge them. She mentions that being a mother, one can understand how people waste their freedom, it reflects her motherhood compassion in which a mother sacrifices her freedom. In doing so many things mothers forget themselves. Here a reference from 'Stars With No Makeup On' and 'The Apartment' isn't random. It symbolically depicts the self-identifications of mothers where they navigate their identity from the daily observation by watching movies. This is where **navigation** can be understood through the meta modernist lens that truly comes into play. It's about moving through so many contradictions like: being grateful yet exhausted, fulfilled yet uncertain, engaged with the world yet overwhelmed by it.

Reading through Vermeulen and Akker's (2010) perspective, the characters exemplify navigating processes of cynicism and hope, judgment and compassion. Thus this passage exemplifies what Meta modernism does between irony and sincerity. While the protagonist is critical of how other people spend their freedom, the same character is empathetic and wishes them well in terms of finding joy in little things. This twofold view aligns with the concept of the metamodern way toward the complexity & the holding of the opposites. The allusion to the portrait of the Jack Lemmon in the movie Apartment looks for some normalcy in an increasingly complicated world is a good way to describe this type of meta modernism. Boggled between judgments and submission, for something as high as a persona to strive and yet want simplicity in life; this is the essence of human beings and how metamodern people try to understand the world of today.

"The fact that parents who are too scared to tell their kids to do what's right just should not be parents, the fact that I'm scared of telling kids what to do, the fact that I'm terrible at discipline"(Ellmann, 2019, p. 209). In these lines, the protagonist struggles with issues to do with raising children especially, fear and the hardness of correcting them. She first of all, provokes the readers and tells them that all those parents who are afraid to give directions to their children should not be parents at all. But she instantly transfers this complaint to her failings and fears about disciplining her kids. This inner turmoil adds another dimension to them of parenthood and child rearing and the personal trials and traumatizing exposure of the main character. This shows how it is embarrassing for any parent to admit to being terrible at discipline because most parents are challenged on how to act either as disciplinarians or nurturers when parenting in modern society. According to Vermeulen and Akker's (2010) view, this falls right in between the lines of assertiveness and uncertainty that characterizes meta modernism. Such as examining the main character at the start and oscillates almost instantly to contemplation again emphasizing, the modernist allure of struggle that results into certainty versus doubt. This is a confirmation that there is hidden sophistication and duality in today's daily life. This simple swap between external condemnation and internal contemplation is a good example of the metamodern quality of considering multiple positions and uncertainty. The parenting conflict is not just a character's issue, but a general one; thus, the novel responds to the metamodern concern with the intertwinement of the private with the public.

In the following lines, the protagonist describes the major yet current and appealing issue that almost everyone and everybody faces in metamodern era. "Phone call, a big ask, the fact that I don't know where my cell phone is, the fact that I don't know

where it is, the fact that cell phones always trying to escape their owners." (Ellmann, 2019, p. 15) A small yet significant moment of identity navigation is captured in these lines. The protagonist describes her simple yet rich concern about misplacing her phone. Here, straightforward worry about losing her phone is the starting point of the protagonist's introspection, which swiftly develops into a multi-layered, nearly philosophical meditation on technology, agency, and alienation. While the funny personification 'cell phones always trying to escape their owners' suggests a deeper loss of control and autonomy in a hyper-connected society, the repetition 'the fact that I don't know where it is' conveys fear and confusion. This moment represents oscillation between detachment and reliance in the metamodern environment. The protagonist uses her phone as a symbol of order and connection, but she also displays a sense of alienation from it, a tension that reflects her inner struggle for stability and identity. Vermeulen and Akker (2010) claim that a both/neither structure of feeling is a balancing act between postmodern sarcasm and modern earnestness. This comment is a wonderful example of that swing because it is humorous (the idea of phones "escaping" is ridiculous) and serious (a real problem). It explains the metamodern conflict that describes the oscillation between accepting technology advancement and opposing its alienating effects. The mentioned lines are humorous and sardonic on the surface but it also subtly comments on how our identities are becoming more and more intertwined with things that both define and undermine us. By transferring intention and emotion onto the technology, the protagonist manages this entanglement, implying both attachment and annoyance. The fluid, changing character of self- understanding in the metamodern era, when human experience is simultaneously filtered through irony, intimacy, and abstraction, is reflected in this journey, which is neither linear nor definitive. Her inner voice, which is influenced by this faint fluctuation, shows how ordinary observations can be used to navigate the more profound intricacies of the self and society.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes the protagonist's swing between emotional states between sincere and ironic, hopeful and desperate. This is an iterative reflection of the various transitions of the Meta modernist paradigm, where one can now shift from the older and new approaches, to understand how the construction of identity happens in fluidity. Thus, the structure of the narrative also mimics the conflict between such forces within the protagonist, which makes it a really profound analysis of the modern identity. Meta modern's main focus is on a never-ending search as a self-created task of the main character, who keeps moving in the territory of shifting identities and changing appearances. Ellmann depicts that unnamed protagonist does not find her identity in a

linear way but experienced many doubts and changes. This navigation is described as a continuous and unfolding process not only in response to the intra-psychic and external worlds, which can help to define protagonist's experiences and choices, but also about the process of self-realization in a changing and complex world, in-line with the given concept. The novel has an unstructured approach to the subject of personal identity, shows interaction and transition between the private sphere and the public, social sphere of the present day, and presents the protagonist's search for individuality in the process of constant change. These findings help to understand the role of meta modernism in contemporary literature. It's a direct reflection of metamodern spirit that oscillates and navigates between sincerity and irony that neither settles into modernity nor in postmodernity.

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