



# Prose of the World: Modernism and the Banality of Empire

*Saikat Majumdar*

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Everyday life in the far outposts of empire can be static, empty of the excitement of progress. A pervading sense of banality and boredom are, therefore, common elements of the daily experience for people living on the colonial periphery. Saikat Majumdar suggests that this impoverished affective experience of colonial modernity significantly shapes the innovative aesthetics of modernist fiction.

*Prose of the World* explores the global life of this narrative aesthetic, from late-colonial modernism to the present day, focusing on a writer each from Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, and India. Ranging from James Joyce's deflated epiphanies to Amit Chaudhuri's disavowal of the grand spectacle of postcolonial national allegories, Majumdar foregrounds the banal as a key instinct of modern and contemporary fiction—one that nevertheless remains submerged because of its antithetical relation to literature's intuitive function to engage or excite.

Majumdar asks us to rethink the assumption that banality merely indicates an aesthetic failure. If narrative is traditionally enabled by the tremor, velocity, and excitement of the event, the historical and affective lack implied by the banal produces a narrative force that is radically new precisely because it suspends the conventional impulses of narration.

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