



# Dark Humor and Social Satire in the Modern British Novel

*Lisa Colletta*

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Literary modernism traditionally focuses on the writings of self-consciously avant-garde writers who attempted to break with literary and aesthetic forms inherited from the nineteenth-century. This view of Modernism has overlooked much of the social comedy of the period, assessing it as satiric and therefore conservative, reinforcing the very cultural values it sets out to critique. Examining the work of Virginia Woolf, Ivy Compton-Burnett, Evelyn Waugh, and Anthony Powell in light of psychoanalytic theories of joke-work and gallows humor, Colletta claims that dark humor is an important characteristic of Modernism.

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