



The Return of Modernism: An Analysis of The Relation between the Metamodernist Debate and Two Novels by Ali Smith

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Abstract

The aim of this master's thesis is to add to research for the metamodernist debate, by analysing how two twenty-first century novels by Ali Smith, *Hotel World* (2001), and *How to Be Both* (2014) relate to the modernism of the twentieth century. For this research, author research on Ali Smith, a close analysis of both her novels, and reception research will be carried out in order to analyse whether the author profiles herself as modernist, and if this can be seen in both the novels themselves and the reception. In order to outline the metamodernist debate, Tim Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker's, as well as David James and Urmila Seshagiri's articles and book on metamodernism will be discussed. Bourdieu's theories will also be used in order to explain the importance of reception research. This thesis will argue that Smith does not actively relate herself to twentieth century modernism, but does use modernist techniques in both of the novels. Furthermore, the argument will be made that both author and reception research add to the metamodernist debate, while still being part of separate realities within literary studies.

Key words: metamodernism, modernism, postmodernism, reception, Ali Smith, *Hotel World*, *How to Be Both*

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Introduction

In the second decade of the twenty-first century there has been a resurgence of novels that are being labelled as modernist. Why precisely this resurgence is happening is not yet known, but it has led to a debate about what to call this phenomenon and specifically about whether these contemporary authors are reaching back to modernism or postmodernism. The height of modernism took place during the 1920s in the period between the First and Second World War, which is generally referred to as High Modernism and was heavily influenced by the loss and trauma caused by the war. The fact that writers are revisiting modernist techniques in their novels is a relevant development since they are going back to an old tradition that has long since passed. Therefore, it seems that something must have happened to spark this return and whether this is a socio-political development, technological advancements, or war is not clear at this point. One of the topics of the debate is how to label this return to modernism and the use of modernist techniques such as fragmentation and stream-of-consciousness.

Tim Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, as well as David James and Urmila Seshagiri, have written articles about the resurgence of modernism, which they call metamodernism. These articles form two different branches in the debate mentioned above. In the 2010 article “Notes on metamodernism”, Vermeulen and Van den Akker argue that metamodernism is a concept which “oscillates” between modernism and postmodernism and describe it as a “structure of feeling” (2). They state that “metamodernism should be situated epistemologically *with* (post) modernism, ontologically *between* (post) modernism, and historically *beyond* (post) modernism” (2), which suggests that they believe that it is possible to go back to modernism, while also acknowledging the fact that modernism is something of the past. In their 2014 article “Metamodernism: Narratives of Continuity and Revolution”, David James and Urmila Seshagiri argue that “metamodernism regards modernism as an era, an aesthetic, and an archive that originated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (88). They do not see metamodernism as something that oscillates between traditions, but as a new tradition that takes inspiration from a previous one and then places it in a new context. To further analyse this resurgence of modernism, Usha Wilbers and Dennis Kersten are researching the reception of a selection of contemporary novels labelled as modernist, in order to analyse whether this resurgence is also reflected in the reception. Ali Smith is one of the authors which Kersten and Wilbers are researching, as two of her novels so far have been labelled as modernist, but have been written in the twenty-first century.

One of the main inspirations for this research, apart from the metamodernist debate, is Pierre Bourdieu's work. In his 1993 book *The Field of Cultural Production*, Bourdieu discusses the concept of the cultural or literary field and as Randal Johnson mentions in the introduction to this work. One of Bourdieu's central concepts is the importance of "the role of culture in the reproduction of social structures, or the way in which unequal power relations [...] are embedded in the systems of classification used to describe and discuss everyday life" (2). He argues that in order to understand cultural works "both the material and symbolic production of cultural works, which entails taking into account the multiple mediators which contribute to the works' meaning and sustain the universe of belief which is the cultural field" (Johnson 20). With this statement, he argues that a work cannot be analysed by only looking at the work itself, but also look at what is needed for the production of the work, as well as how critics receive it. Furthermore, the different actors that consecrate texts by giving it symbolic capital (prestige), as well as economic capital (money), need to be analysed as well. Part of the question that this research tries to answer comes from this concept, which is to analyse how Ali Smith relates to the literary modernism of the twentieth century. This fits into Bourdieu's theory, because he believes that "symbolic aspects of social life are inseparably intertwined with the material conditions of existence, without one being reducible to the other," (4) arguing that it is essential to analyse all actors in the cultural field, since all these actors combined determine the symbolic capital. Other than being inspired by Bourdieu's theories, this question also fits into the aforementioned metamodernist debate, which will be discussed further in chapter 1. Taking Bourdieu's concept of the field of cultural production and combining this with the metamodernist debate then allows to ask the question: how do Ali Smith's two novels *Hotel World* (2001) and *How to be both* (2014) relate to the literary modernism of the twentieth century and the debate as a whole, looking at both the content of the novels, as well as the reception of the work. In order to answer this question, this research will provide a close analysis of the two novels on the use of modernist techniques and references to the modernist period. After that, this research will use Bourdieu's ideas and will analyse author interviews and articles about Ali Smith in order to form an idea of how she profiles herself as a modernist author and how these interviewers profile her in relation to modernism. Following this, the reception of the two novels will be analysed, in order to provide insight into how both online and professional critics see the novels. In a concluding chapter, these insights are combined to answer the question raised above, as well as provide a suggestion as to how this outcome fits into the metamodernist debate.

The hypothesis is that the author consciously uses modernist techniques in her novels. Although she specialised in modernism during her studies, the lack of interviews she gives about her novels imply that she does not actively profile or label herself as a specific author. As for the reception, the hypothesis is that online critics will refer to modernist techniques in their reviews, but will not refer to the novel as modernist or link these techniques to modernism. This hypothesis is based on the expectancy that they might not know the literary genre or recognize it as being a part of the genre. For the professional reviews, the expectancy is that they will make references to the modernist period or literary genre since these reviews are generally written by people working in the field, who would, therefore, be aware of the literary genre.

The outline of this thesis is as follows: Chapter 1 will provide a more elaborate outline of the metamodernist debate. One of the primary sources that will be used in order to provide a basis for this research and about the development from (post)modernism to the so-called metamodernism is *The 2000s: A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction* by Nick Bentley et al. This is a collection of essays that discuss how the act of writing and reading changed in the 2000s as a result of multiple socio-political and economic changes and how this signified the end of postmodernism. In order to chart the ongoing metamodernist debate, the article mentioned before by Vermeulen and van den Akker, and the article by James and Seshagiri will be used to show different insights and different notions of the interpretation of metamodernism. Both of these articles will be used as a basis for the discussion of the metamodernist debate since they are the basis for the two different branches in the debate. The article “Introduction: Metamodernism” by Dennis Kersten and Usha Wilbers will also be discussed to add to this. Chapter 2 will analyse how Ali Smith profiles herself as a modernist author and how she is profiled in articles and interviews. Chapters 3 and 4 will then look at two novels by Ali Smith and provide an analysis of the modernist techniques she uses in these novels. Following this, chapter 5 will analyse how critics view *Hotel World* and *How to be both*, in order to show the reception of the works and whether or not Smith’s engagement with the label of modernism can also be found in the reception. Followed by a discussion of whether the way she profiles herself and the way critics view her works is also reflected in the novels. Ultimately, all these elements will be synthesized in order to provide an answer to the posed research question of how Ali Smith engages with the literary modernism of the twentieth century, how this is reflected in the reception and how her works can be labelled as ‘metamodernist’.

Chapter 1

As Linda Hutcheon discusses in her 2002 work *The Politics of Postmodernism*, postmodernism has seemingly come to an end, although “its discursive strategies and its ideological critique continue to live on – as do those of modernism [...]” (165) In her conclusion, she asks readers to find a new name for the ‘post-postmodernism’ that has come in its place (166). Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker were the first academics to use the term “metamodernism” to respond to Hutcheon in their 2010 article “Notes on Metamodernism”. They discuss the fact that “the postmodern years of plenty, pastiche, and parataxis are over” (1) and that it is still not clear what has replaced postmodernist literature. The fact that the era of postmodernism is over is clear because as they discuss, current trends and tendencies “express an (often guarded) hopefulness and (at times feigned) sincerity that hint at another structure of feeling, intimating another discourse.” (2) Vermeulen and Van den Akker discuss the term metamodernism in relation to architecture, art and film, and believe that metamodernism “oscillat[es] between a typically modern commitment and a postmodern detachment.” (2) They describe metamodernism as a ‘structure of feeling’ which makes it seem more philosophical rather than something concrete. In combination with this structure of feeling, they interpret metamodernism as something that oscillates, meaning that it is continuously moving, and according to them, this movement is between modernism and postmodernism. They use the prefix ‘meta’ because they “contend that metamodernism should be situated epistemologically *with* (post) modernism, ontologically *between* (post) modernism, and historically *beyond* (post) modernism.” (2) In terms of postmodernism, they argue that there is no such concept as ‘the’ postmodern, but that it includes multiple different tendencies, which all have in common their “opposition to ‘the’ modern – to utopism, to (linear) progress, to grand narratives, to Reason, to functionalism and formal purism, and so on.” (4) They believe that, although postmodernism has come to an end, postmodern tendencies still occur, although they are being used differently, taking on a “new *sens*, a new meaning and direction.” (4) Relating this to metamodernism, Vermeulen and Van den Akker argue that it is “inspired by a modern naïveté yet informed by postmodern s[c]epticism, [and with this] the metamodern discourse consciously commits itself to an impossible possibility.” (5) This fits into their argument of metamodernism as something that oscillates like a pendulum, swinging between both tendencies, but never fully reaching either one; it is both modern and postmodern, but also neither of the two.

As Vermeulen and Van den Akker have discussed in their article, many academics have attempted to rename this post-postmodernist development. One of these is Gilles Lipovetsky, who believes that postmodernism is being followed by hypermodernism, stating that “today’s cultural practices and social relations have become so intrinsically meaningless [...] that they evoke hedonistic ecstasy as much as existential anguish.” (3) Other suggestions have been Alan Kirby’s digimodernism and pseudomodernism, Robert Samuels’ automodernism and Nicholas Bourriaud’s altermodernism. Vermeulen and Van den Akker’s “metamodernism” seems to currently be the ‘most-suited’ name for the post-postmodernist era, since it argues that “the metamodern negotiates between the modern and postmodern,” (6) and there has been a return to modern as well as postmodern tendencies in art, architecture, film and also literature.

In 2017, Vermeulen and Van den Akker published a new book on metamodernism in collaboration with other researchers called *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect and Depth after Postmodernism*, in which they revisit and update their previous views and arguments about metamodernism. One of the main ideas in this work, in comparison to their previous article, is a stronger relation between metamodernism and postmodernism. Whereas their previous article consistently argued for this oscillation between modernism and postmodernism, the emphasis in this book lies mainly on postmodernism. They argue that “metamodernism is a structure of feeling that emerges from, and reacts to, the postmodern as much as it is a cultural logic that corresponds to today’s stage of global capitalism.” (5) Vermeulen and Van den Akker’s use of the phrase ‘structure of feeling’ in their 2010 article was a very philosophical sounding phrase, and its definition is rather vague. This is one of the elements that they have further elaborated on in their 2017 work. To provide more insight into the meaning of this ‘structure of feeling’, they relate the structure of feeling back to Raymond Williams’ use of it. He argues that a structure of feeling is “a particular quality of social experience...historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or of a period’.” (qtd. in Vermeulen and Van den Akker 8) Vermeulen and Van den Akker closely relate metamodernism to postmodern, and their definition forms one branch in the metamodernism debate.

In order to gain a better understanding of the relation between literature and metamodernism, it is important to look at a different branch within the metamodernist debate, namely the ideas posed by David James and Urmila Seshagiri in their 2014 article “Metamodernism: Narratives of Continuity and Revolution”. They discuss that “a growing

number of contemporary novelists [...] place a conception of modernism as revolution at the heart of their fictions, styling their twenty-first-century literary innovations as explicit engagements with the innovations of early-twentieth-century writing.” (87) This quote shows that they argue that some of these contemporary writers use modernism as the basis for their work, but place it in a new context to give it new meaning, therefore also using modernism as a source of inspiration. As becomes clear from the text, James and Seshagiri refer to modernism when discussing the early-twentieth-century writing and argue that modernism has gained new relevance in contemporary literature (88). With their article, they aim to return to “the logic of periodization [which offers] a retrospective understanding of modernism as a moment as well as a movement.” (88) However, periodizing modernism poses a problem, since this would mean that everything outside of its historical place in time could never be considered modernist. Like Vermeulen and Van den Akker, James and Seshagiri also use the term metamodernism but describe it as a development which “regards modernism as an era, an aesthetic, and an archive that originated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,” (88) whereas the former argue that metamodernism refers to an oscillation between modernism and postmodernism. Although James and Seshagiri argue in favour of periodization, they discuss modernism as an archive from which writers can take elements and then “make it new” by updating it to a contemporary context. In short, James and Seshagiri argue that the “metamodernist practice redistributes the innovative energies of its predecessors. It pays tribute to modernist style [...]; it inhabits the consciousness of individual modernist writers [...]; and it details modernism’s sociopolitical, historical, and philosophical contexts.” (93) This explanation of metamodernism implies that they directly link it to modernism, in contrast to Vermeulen and Van den Akker’s argument that the metamodernist is closely related to postmodernism. James and Seshagiri argue that metamodernism distinguishes itself from postmodernism “through self-conscious, consistent visions of dissent and defamiliarization as novelistic inventions specific to the early twentieth century,” (93) thereby showing its relation to modernism instead of postmodernism. This is one of the main differences between these two sides of the metamodernist debate, besides the fact that James and Seshagiri’s article discusses metamodernism in relation to literature and Vermeulen and Van den Akker do not relate it to literature.

In the introduction to *The 2000s: A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction* (2015), Nick Bentley, Nick Hubble and Leigh Wilson discuss, among other things, the end(s) of postmodernism. In this introduction, they acknowledge that postmodernism has been

exhausted but that “many writers in the first decade of the twenty-first century have continued to engage with narrative techniques, styles and approaches that speak in varying ways with (and against) postmodernism.” (13) They mention multiple terms that have been used in the literary field to label this phenomenon, including metamodernism, and argue that there is a “broad desire in literary and cultural criticism to move beyond the postmodern, while recognizing its continuing importance as a critical shadow cast over the first decade of the twenty-first century.” (17) Although Bentley et al. do not provide their own definition for what Vermeulen and Van den Akker, and James and Seshagiri have termed ‘metamodernism’, they do argue that the legacies of postmodernism which can be found in the works of multiple novelists of the 2000s can be divided into three different strands:

those novelists who continue to use narrative techniques associated with postmodernism but who have reintroduced a set of grounded ethical positions; those who have attempted to return (or continue) to work in a broadly realist mode as an implicit rejection of postmodernism; and those who have self-consciously returned to modernist techniques as a way of return to a pre-postmodernist aesthetics (17).

The problem with this categorization, however, is that no single work or writer will fit into just one of these categories. Although Bentley et al. try to categorize what comes after postmodernism, it is impossible to make a clear distinction. However, two of these categories do seem to fit the previously outlined ideas. On the one hand, Bentley et al. acknowledge that some of the British novelists of the 2000s continue to use postmodern techniques, echoing the ideas of Vermeulen and Van den Akker. On the other, the third ‘strand’ in the distinction in the quote above, which is that writers consciously use modernist techniques in their works, resonates with the definition for metamodernism given by James and Seshagiri.

The fact that Bentley et al.’s discuss both postmodernism and modernism in their description of what comes after postmodernism, could argue for either side of the metamodernist debate. It is important, however, to note that Vermeulen and Van den Akker do not discuss metamodernism in relation to literature, but only to art, architecture and film, whereas James and Seshagiri discuss the term only in relation to literature, as do Bentley et al. The outcome of this thesis could provide insight into whether or not the ideas of the former can also relate to literature if Ali Smith’s works prove to have more postmodernist tendencies rather than modernist ones. Bentley et al. have placed Ali Smith in the first strand of their three-strand division and discuss that she is one of the authors who has “continued to use the self-reflexive and metafictional complexities associated with postmodernism in [her] fiction, but

ha[s] also tried to come out of the other side of the relativism this implies with an alternative sets of ethical positions appropriate to the new millennium.” (17) Although Bentley et al. discuss Smith in relation to postmodernism, their explanation seems to be more in line with the ideas discussed by James and Seshagiri of taking something from a previous time period and placing it within a new time and giving it a new meaning. This thesis will mainly focus on the definition of metamodernism by James and Seshagiri since their ideas focus on literature.

This thesis will test the academic debate outlined in this chapter in order to see if this return to modernism, or so-called metamodernism, can be seen in two of Ali Smith’s novels. To be able to take this debate and test it, the two novels will be closely analysed on modernist techniques, but following Bourdieu’s theory on the field of cultural production, the author and reception of the novels will also be analysed. This type of analysis can show whether ‘metamodernism’ is also felt by the author herself and if critics and reviewers notice the use of techniques from a previous tradition in a new format. By incorporating author interviews, close analysis and reception research, this thesis will be able to provide insight into how other agents, academics and authors influence and analyse a work of literature and its reception, therefore giving a more rounded analysis of what Ali Smith is doing in her works, as well as argue how this fits into the metamodernist debate. The following chapter will analyse how and if Ali Smith profiles herself as a modernist author and how others profile her in articles and interviews. It aims to answer the question of how she relates to the literary modernism of the twentieth century, taking into consideration the ideas posed by Vermeulen and Van den Akker and James and Seshagiri, as well as, Bentley et al. In order to analyse this, author interviews and articles about Ali Smith will be analysed. After that, chapters 3 and 4 will provide a close analysis of *Hotel World* and *How to be Both* by Ali Smith. Since modernism “refers primarily to the tendency of experimental literature of the early twentieth century to break away from traditional verse forms, narrative techniques, and generic conventions in order to seek new methods of representation appropriate to life in an urban, industrial, mass-oriented age,” (Lewis xvii) the analysis will focus on whether or not the author does this by for instance looking at how the novel is structured, and if she uses modernist techniques such as fragmentation and stream of consciousness. For the reception research, which will be done in chapter 5, both online and professional reviews will be analysed. The online reviews will be taken from *Goodreads*; the professional reviews will be taken from British newspapers since the current metamodernist debate mainly focusses on contemporary British fiction. The criteria for the reviews included is that they have to be at least 100 words long and written in

English. Furthermore, they have to have been written within the first two years after the novels' publication, since this will show how the novels were received shortly after being published. The reviews will be analysed for words and phrases relating to modernism; the term modernism or a variation of this itself, such as 'postmodernism', 'modernist', 'stream-of-consciousness', 'fragmentation' and 'experimental'. This will be followed by a discussion of how the critics use these modernistic terms; whether they relate modernism to the literary technique or the historical period. Finally, the findings from the analyses will be combined in order to answer the question of how Ali Smith relates to twentieth-century modernism and how this fits into the metamodernism debate.

This chapter has provided an outline of the different branches in the metamodernist debate in order to provide a basis for the research that will be done in the following chapters. The method of analysis has also been discussed, and the next chapter will discuss how Ali Smith profiles herself as an author through the analysis of interviews about two of her novels.

Chapter 2

This chapter will analyse whether Ali Smith profiles herself as a modernist author, in order to examine how her self-styling influences the reception of the novel as modernist and how this relates to the metamodernist debate. Researching if Smith discusses her works in relation to modernism is essential, because if she actively does relate her novels to (post)modernism, it can influence the reception of the novel. If reviewers know that Smith intended to write a modernist novel, they might recognize this more often and more easily in her works, and they might focus the content of their review on this fact. This idea must be contrasted to the opposite happening: if Smith does not profile herself as a modernist writer, then the reviewers are not influenced by the author's views on the novel.

Ali Smith was born in Inverness, Scotland in 1962. Her first published work was a short story collection titled *Free Love and Other Stories* (1995), and since then she has published four more short story collections and has also written nine novels. Smith's *Hotel World* (2001) is Smith's second novel, and it was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction and the Man Booker Prize. The novel won both the Scottish Arts Council Book Award in 2001 and the Encore Award in 2002. The 2014 novel *How to Be Both*, which is her sixth published novel, was also shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2014 and the 2015 Folio Prize and it won the Goldsmiths Prize in 2014, the 2014 Costa Book Award and the Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction in 2015.

In order to answer the question whether any labels related to modernism are used in Smith's presentation of *Hotel World* and *How to Be Both* and how she profiles herself as an author, interviews have been closely analysed on the use of terms and labels related to modernism. The corpus consists of ten interviews and is not limited to written-out interviews only and the interviews all deal with either *Hotel World* or *How to Be Both*, as these are the novels that are analysed in this thesis. Eight of the interviews are written out, one is a video interview, and one is an audio interview. The video interview has been split into two parts on the website it was published on and will, therefore, be referred to as 'part one' and 'part two' when it is discussed. Two of the interviews discuss Smith's 2001 novel *Hotel World* and the other eight sources focus on her later novel *How to Be Both*.

The first interview that will be discussed is conducted by Jeanette Winterson, author of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, and the interview was published on her website www.jeanettewinterson.com on 11 March 2004. This is one of the two interviews given by

Ali Smith that touch on her novel *Hotel World*. In the interview, no connection is made between modernism and the novel. It does provide insight into the reason behind the lack of interviews available featuring Smith: Winterson writes that “Smith has no ambition to be known outside of her work.” (Winterson) It becomes clear from reading multiple interviews with Smith that she wants the novels to be viewed on their own and that she does not want their reception to be influenced by the author of the novel. “Her ambition is to shatter the way we usually see things,” (qtd. in Winterson) but she does not explicitly relate this to modernism or modernist techniques. In the interview, Smith also discusses that she is interested in making “[a]rt and not money.” (qtd. in Winterson) This disinterest in money ties in with the ideas posed in Chapter 2 about numismatic modernism, a term coined by Mary Horgan, featured in *Hotel World* and how Smith explores different ways in which money can be used and the different things it can symbolize. All in all, Smith does not relate her novel to modernism in this interview and also does not profile herself as a modernist author since she argues for the novel to be seen on its own without her influencing its reception. This means that she does not actively label the novel as modernist, postmodernist, or anything else, and for the metamodernist debate this would mean that Smith does not influence the place of *Hotel World* in the debate.

The second interview that touches on *Hotel World* was published in *The Guardian* on 19 April 2003, and is called “A babel of voices”. In this interview, Smith is asked if she sees herself as a lesbian writer, to which she responds by saying that “the label has everything to do with marketing, and nothing to do with the work itself.” (qtd. in “A babel of voices”) This ties into her idea of the novel standing on its own and being its own product without the influence of its author. By saying that labelling herself as a lesbian writer is a marketing strategy and has nothing to do with the novel itself, she seems to reject the notion of needing marketing to label a novel. The author of the interview, who is not named in the interview, mentions the influence of James Joyce on *Hotel World* and how the opening and ending of the novel are reminiscent of the monologue of Molly Bloom in *Ulysses*. Smith herself discusses *Ulysses* and how she shares “Joyce’s affirmative energy, his love of wordplay and enforced misunderstandings, that sense of community between the living and the dead,” (qtd. in “A babel of voices”) thereby linking her novel to modernism, as Joyce’s *Ulysses* is one of the most well-known modernist novels. She states that she likes to take risks in her novels, mainly in relation to form and language and the interviewer argues that Smith is “resurrecting Joyce’s notion of literature as a lark, a head-rush, a love letter to the world.” (“A babel of

voices”) This interview provides more insight into the labelling of the novel by the interviewer rather than Smith herself. The interviewer labels it as modernist by making connections to James Joyce. However, the interview does not provide any information on how Smith profiles herself since she does not discuss the novel in relation to modernism.

As becomes clear from these two interviews that revolve around the novel *Hotel World*, Smith does not actively profile herself as a modernist writer. She does refer to modernist techniques and writers, but the label ‘modernism’ or any variation of this is not used. Smith also clearly states that she believes that the novel is a product on its own and profiling herself as a specific type of writer influences its reception, which is one of the reasons why she does not actively give interviews or labels herself as a specific author.

The other six text-based interviews all relate to the 2014 novel *How to Be Both*, but three of the interviews make no mention of modernism or any technique related to the literary genre. The interviews that do not mention anything related to modernism are an author interview with Leah, published on www.fourcommunications.com in 2015, a Q&A on *How to Be Both* by Tim Masters for the BBC section *Entertainment & Arts* published in 2014, and an interview with Lucy Brooks in 2015 for the website www.culturewhisper.com.

The first interview about *How to Be Both* that will be discussed refers to modernism in the subtitle. This is Smith’s interview with Alex Clark for *The Guardian*, published on 6 September 2014. In the interview, Smith discusses her fascination with frescoes and what sparked her idea for the novel. She states that the novel is “about fresco form” (Clark) and Smith relates the fresco to the idea of layers and that “all stories travel with an understory.” (Clark) Closely analysing the interview shows that the discussion on modernism is not actively linked to the novel. Instead, it discusses Smith’s doctoral work which was on “the importance of the ordinary in modernist literature.” (Clark) Smith discusses how she sees modernism as something positive; “a celebration of our existence,” (Clark) in contrast to how modernism is usually seen as being pessimistic in nature. The interviewer, Clark, argues that this optimistic view on modernism explains the “joyfulness that pulses through her work.” Through this comment, the interviewer makes the connection between modernism and the novel, but Smith herself does not connect the two and therefore does not actively profile herself as a modernist author.

The interview by Erica Wagner, published in the *New Statesman* in 2015, does not discuss the novel in relation to modernism. The interview mainly focuses on the plot of the

novel and the inspiration for the novel. This interview does not mention any literary techniques related to modernism, nor does Ali Smith profile herself as a certain author in this interview. The interview by Sarah Lyall, published in *The New York Times* in 2014, also makes no notion of the label ‘modernism’ but does include terms that are related to modernism to describe the themes and writing style in Smith’s 2014 novel. Apart from interviewing Smith, she has also included sections from an interview with Erica Wagner, one of the judges of the Booker Prize. She describes the structure of the book in relation to “the slippery nature of time; the connectedness of past, present and future; the fluidity of identity; the yearning to be understood and remembered, to understand and remember.” (Lyall) She also mentions that the novel has won the Goldsmiths Prize, which “opens up new possibilities for the novel form” (Lyall) and discusses that part of the praise for the novel stems from its experimental form. She states that Erica Wagner argued that Smith “has always wanted to tell a good story but also to question the methodology of storytelling.” (qtd. in Lyall) The fact that she mentions that Smith questions the way stories are told, is reflected in Smith’s work since she is experimental with her narrative form. Furthermore, Smith discusses how she became interested in frescoes and elaborates on how she saw an illustration that showed two different “layers of a fresco – an early, underneath version with a boy and a woman; the final version with just the woman, the boy having been painted over” (Lyall) and relates this to narrative structure. She also states that she had the story published in two different versions so that if the stories were swapped, “the stories would be self-standing, but each way around would deliver you a different take.” (Lyall) Smith also discusses the idea of being both, in relation to the title of the novel, and argues that people are “multiple selves. [People] are massively contradictory. [...] [and] you can’t be one thing without being, in some ways, the other thing.” Returning to the question of how Ali Smith profiles herself as an author, she does not profile herself as any type of author in this interview. The interview does make clear that Smith is doing something new with narrative structure and is experimental with her use of time in the novel.

The video interview was published in 2015 by the University of London on www.vimeo.com. In this interview, Ali Smith discusses her 2014 novel *How to Be Both* with Dr Tim Parnell, a senior lecturer at the University of London after she won the 2014 Goldsmiths Prize. The interview is split into two parts: the first part focusses on the novel as a whole and Smith as an author and in the second part Parnell and Smith discuss the epigraphs to the novel in detail. In part one, Parnell asks Smith whether she sees herself as an

experimental novelist, to which she responds by saying that she does not “understand [her]self as an anything writer, you just do what you do.” (00:02:38-00:02:41) He follows up on this question by asking her if she understands that what she does in her writing is consciously different from other writers, and if she is very aware of other traditions. Her response to this is similar to the previous answer she gave, as Smith states that “well it’s just because I’ve done nothing else with my life except read books.” (00:03:21-00:03:23) With both of these answers, Smith shows that what she does in her writing is not something that she does consciously, but rather that it is what she knows and has done her entire life. After this, Parnell asks her whether she sees herself as a modernist writer and if she would place herself within this tradition, and Smith says that she does not actively position herself in any tradition. She expands on this by explaining that she “can see that it would make sense for people to position [her] there,” (00:04:31-00:04:36) and says that when she thinks back on what she loves in literature, modernism is the literary genre that always brought her excitement. Part two of the interview mainly goes into detail about the epigraphs of the novel and since this does not reflect on how Smith profiles herself as an author, this second part of the interview will not be discussed further. The information she has provided through her explanations of the epigraphs will be used in Chapter 4 for the close analysis of the novel. Based on the answers she has given in this interview, it becomes clear that Smith does not want to profile herself as any type of writer, but that she does understand why readers might pick up on modernist techniques in her writing, as this has always been a literary genre that piqued her interest.

The audio interview was published on 28 June 2015, and it is an interview with Eleanor Wachtel for Canadian radio show *Writers & Company*, which airs on CBC Radio One. Wachtel begins the interview by describing Smith’s work and says that this is not an easy task. She describes Smith as “an original, inventive, virtuoso, full of wit and linguistic exuberance.” (00:00:18-00:00:25) Wachtel also discusses how Smith is often compared to great writers, such as Joyce, Woolf and Faulkner, but that she believes Smith is not like any of these but is merely compared to them because she is as good of a writer as they were. In the interview, Smith discusses why she based her narrative in *How to Be Both* on the fresco of Francesco Del Cossa and states that her interest lies with the way frescoes are layered and have underdrawings that existed before the top layer was painted. She describes how this shows a simultaneity of events, since both layers exist at the same time and states that “we cannot as novelists, or as people writing narrative, have [events] happen simultaneously as

one has to come after the other.” (00:05:17-00:05:22) This is the reason why she found the fresco structure so interesting since it provided a way to show these simultaneous events or at least “gesture to the relationship between the surface and the under, or the unsaid things and the said things in the narratives.” (00:06:02-00:06:05) Smith discusses that Del Cossa’s frescoes were an inspiration for the novel not only because of this simultaneity but also because of the ambiguity of gender in the frescoes and that genders are portrayed equally in these frescoes. Later in the interview, Wachtel asks Smith why she chose to have the novel printed in two versions, and Smith discusses that she “wanted at least to gesture to the ways in which history is happening right now and at the same time the past and to some extent the future are with us right now, just as immediately and alive as ever.” (00:30:48-00:31:05) She also explains that she used the fresco structure and printed the novel both ways to give both parts equal importance. She argues that it does not matter in which order the novel is read because what matters is what comes next and “if [the reader] hear[s] something else first, it may have been a different story.” (00:31:45-00:31:46) Neither Wachtel nor Smith mention the novel in relation to modernism in this interview, and they also do not refer to any modernist writing techniques that she may have used in *How to Be Both*. Although they heavily discuss the nature of the novel, and how it is a work of layers, as well as discussing how she presents time, the interview does not show any profiling by Ali Smith as being a modernist author.

Overall, it becomes clear from both the interviews on *Hotel World* and *How to Be Both*, that Ali Smith is an author who does not often give interviews. This is reflected in the number of interviews that have been compiled. She also never actively profiles herself as a particular type of author, and although she recognises that readers may see her novels as modernist, she has not consciously used modernist techniques or written a typically modernist novel. She explains that if this is the case, it is because she has always been fascinated by modernism, and it has been a literary genre that has made her enthusiastic about literature. Therefore, she only uses these techniques subconsciously in her writing; not for a specific reason, but just because that is what comes naturally to her. In terms of the metamodernist debate, the interviews do not provide insight into where Smith would be placed in the debate. She is referred to as an inventive and original author, but this is not explicitly linked to either modernism or postmodernism. Although research into the author and her intentions are part and parcel of research into the metamodernist debate, in this case, authorial research shows that they are part of two separate realities. Smith might be aware of the metamodernist debate

and might subconsciously use (post)modernist techniques in her novels, but the debate does not necessarily influence her writing.

The following chapter will provide a close analysis of *Hotel World* by Ali Smith, in order to analyse if the novel can be considered modernist and to discuss its place in the metamodernist debate.

Chapter 3

Ali Smith's 2001 novel *Hotel World* starts with the death of Sara Wilby, a nineteen-year-old girl who climbed into the dumb waiter of the Global Hotel as part of a bet and fell to her death as a result of this. This event sets the tone and intertwines the stories of the five protagonists in this novel. Before the novel is analysed, the plot will be summarised and outlined in some detail. This will show the structure of the novel, as well as the five narratives and how they interact with each other. This chapter aims to answer if and how Ali Smith uses modernist techniques in her novel and how this fits into the metamodernist debate. The themes that will be explored in this chapter are narrative technique and form, the idea of remembering, the setting and the meaning of money.

The novel is separated into six parts. The first part of the novel is titled 'past' and narrates the story of Sara Wilby and her tragic death. Following the title, the chapter is told in the past tense by the ghost of Sara Wilby, six months after her death. She recalls how she died and her last moments before it, trying to remember how long it took her to fall and trying to remember what the 'dumb waiter' was called. Her memory is slowly fading and in order to try and recall what exactly happened and how fast she fell, she "slipped into [her] old shape, hoisting her shoulders round me and pushing down into her legs and arms into her splintery ribs;" (15) visiting her own grave and talking to her dead body. The dead body of Sara Wilby starts to recount what happened that day; "I fell in love." (17) We see the story of how Sara met a girl working in a watch shop to get her watch fixed and fell in love. She worries about her feelings since she never expected that she would like girls and therefore decides that she will go into the watch shop the next day and ask for her watch back so that she will not have to see the girl again. However, this is not what happens: "the next day I went back to the watch shop. I stood outside it. The day after that I went to the watch shop, stood outside it. I did this for three weeks of working days, including Saturdays." (23) She cannot bring herself not to see the girl anymore, so instead, she watches her. Then Sara tells the reader about going to her new job for the first night, and how she climbed in the dumb waiter the second night, for the bet she made with a boy working Room Service to win five dollars. After this, we switch back to the dead body of Sara talking to the ghost of Sara because that is where the story ends and she dies. The ghost visits the places that her dead body talked about and realizes that her time as a ghost is coming to an end and that she will soon pass on. Towards the end, Sara's ghost is wandering around the hotel where she died and she notices some of the people that are there, switching to present tense:

Here's a woman being swallowed by the doors. She is well-dressed. On her back she carries nothing. Her life could be about to change. Here's another one inside, wearing the uniform of the hotel and working behind its change. She is ill and she doesn't know it yet. Life, about change. Here's a girl, next to me, dressed in blankets, sitting along from the hotel doors right here, on the pavement. Her life, change. (30)

These are three of the four women that narrate the other parts of the novel and foreshadows some of the things that are going to happen to them.

The second part of the novel is titled 'present historic' and is narrated by Else (Elspeth), the girl in blankets that Sara saw before she passed on. Else is a homeless woman, begging for money outside of the Global Hotel where Sara worked. Across the street she sees another girl, who receives more money than Else even though she is not begging for it. At one point, a woman in uniform comes out of the hotel and walks towards the girl, who then flees. Then the uniformed woman decides to talk to Else and offer her a room for the night in the hotel. Else ultimately takes this offer, after stealing the money the other girl had left behind. The woman in uniform is called Lise and she narrates the third part of the novel titled 'future conditional'. Here the reader is shifted forward in time where Lise, the receptionist of the Global Hotel, has fallen ill and is lying in bed waiting for her mother to pay her daily visit. Lise also has a flashback to the night where she offered Else a room, and we find out that she recognized the girl who ran away from Sara Wilby's funeral. Later in the novel, the reader finds out that the girl is Sara's sister Clare. Lise also remembers the smartly dressed woman that checked in that same night who turns out to be Penny, a journalist who narrates the fourth part of the novel titled 'perfect'. While trying to write a review about the hotel, Penny encounters a girl in hotel uniform outside of her room trying to pull something off the wall and decides to help her. At first, they cannot open it, because they do not have anything to take out the screws with, but ultimately Lise runs into Else, who was at that point staying in one of the rooms, and who gives them coins to unscrew the screws. Penny is disappointed to find out that there is nothing but a black hole in the wall behind the panel that the girl was trying to get off, but the reader soon finds out that this is where the dumb waiter shaft used to be, and the girl in uniform is Sara's sister, who wants to try and figure out how fast her sister fell to her death, by attempting to hear and time how fast other objects fall down it. The fifth part of the novel, titled 'future in the past', is told from the perspective of Clare Wilby and takes place right after she left the hotel and is talking to her dead sister about her night. After breaking down when she could not figure out how fast her sister fell, Lise the receptionist

found her and brought her to meet Duncan, the boy who made the bet with Sara, and he tells her that her death was a tragic accident and assures her that it was not suicide. He gave her the five dollars that he had promised Sara and Clare now realizes that she has to move on. The sixth and final part of the novel titled 'present' is not narrated by one of the characters, but by an omniscient narrator and describes the mornings of various characters, including the girl from the watch shop and how they are all starting a new day.

As argued in chapter 1, modernism was a literary movement where authors tried to break away from tradition and use experimental verse forms and narrative techniques, which is also what can be seen in Smith's novel. The novel is divided into six parts, but these parts do not have any subchapters and can jump from one subject to another, giving the narrative a fragmented structure. One of the main elements of her novel that could be labelled as modernist is the narrative techniques that she uses. The novel immediately starts in a stream of consciousness style of narration:

Wooooooooo-

hooooooooo what a fall what a soar what a plummet what a dash into dark light
 what a plunge what a glide thud crash what a drop what a rush what a swoop
 what a fright what a mad husked skirl what a smash mush mash-up broke and
 gashed what a heart in my mouth what an end. (Smith, *Hotel World* 3)

In this paragraph, Smith lets the thoughts of Sara Wilby's ghost flow freely, without any sentence breaks, and this same technique reappears in Clare's part of the novel. This part is written entirely in stream of consciousness with no punctuation whatsoever. Smith does not use this technique throughout the entire novel, but instead switches to a third person narration in the second part, while still portraying Else's inner feelings. This is another form of experimental narration: free indirect speech, which feels like stream of consciousness and portrays internal monologue, but does this as if the protagonist is talking about herself in the third person. The third and fourth parts are written using the same technique as the second part, but told from the perspectives of Lise and Penny. This type of narration is reminiscent of Joyce's *Ulysses*, as discussed by Pericles Lewis in *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (2007): "In *Ulysses*, although a third-person narrator does relate external events in the past tense, such passages alternate with the interior monologue or stream of consciousness of the characters, whose meandering thoughts Joyce records." (160) The sixth and final part of the novel is also written in the third person, but the narrator is unknown. There is a lack of

dialogue throughout the novel, but when it is there, Smith has chosen not to use any quotation or speech marks. This adds to the flow and stream of consciousness style of the text and makes it difficult for the reader to understand who is talking or whether it is spoken at all or merely a thought in the protagonist's mind. The type of narration that is used leads to unreliable narrators, since everything that the reader sees is from one of the narrators' perspectives and only their emotions, feelings and observations are conveyed. Unreliable narration is a technique that is often used in modernist works (159).

Remembering, and specifically forgetting, is a central theme in the novel. Smith has prefaced her novel with five quotes, the first one being "Remember you must die." from Muriel Spark's *Memento Mori* (1959), which is from the postmodernist era. This quote is significant for the entire story because Smith counters this quote by saying "Remember you must live." (Smith 27) Multiple variations of this quote are iterated throughout the novel and on the first to last page of the novel she has written "remember you must live," "remember you most love" and "remainder you mist leaf," (237) which are also iterated earlier in the novel. The latter two of these quotes do not seem to make any sense, but this ties in with the theme of remembering in the novel, especially not being able to remember events, words, or in the case of Sara Wilby, how long it took her to fall to her death. The act of remembering is something that is done very consciously, and Sara often says that she cannot remember certain words or events. The fact that she forgets words adds to the fragmented structure of the narration and the closer Sara's ghost gets to her passing, the more sporadic her sentences become; "I will miss mist. I will miss leaf. I will miss the, the. What's the word? Lost, I've, the word. The word for. You know. I don't mean a house. I don't mean a room. I mean the way of the . Dead to the . Out of this . Word." (30)

Although Smith uses experimental modernist writing techniques, most of these techniques were also used in postmodernism. Modernism tends to have a pessimistic view; nostalgic and mourning for a past in which faith and authority were intact. Although there is a sense of this pessimism, especially in Sara Wilby's part, where she wishes she could remember things about her life, the novel ultimately has an optimistic outlook, saying that people need to move on with their life even after a tragic event has happened. Therefore the novel is arguably more postmodernist than modernist in this regard. Furthermore, in her 2016 article "About Change: Ali Smith's Numismatic Modernism" Mary Horgan argues that the story itself is set in "new postmodern Britain" (156) and discusses the way in which Smith uses money as a way to provide critique on capitalist modernity, which she calls "numismatic

modernism” (155). She argues that “The Global [Hotel] [...] is a physical manifestation of late capitalist society, an example of postmodern hyperspace,” (157) which uses the hotel as a setting for capitalist critique through the use of money. She discusses how Smith uses money as a “counter-language” (160) for commercialism. This commercialism is also heavily based on the use and meaning of money in the world, which she calls the “money motive” (160), but Smith also uses physical money and “the numerous coins and notes woven throughout the text form their own numismatic object narrative that intersects with the narrative of Smith’s characters.” (160) The narratives of the characters intersect in the Global Hotel and all of these narratives are connected in some way to the death of Sara Wilby, who lost her life over a bet where she could earn five dollars. Money is, therefore, what sets the novel in motion. In Else’s narrative, she is begging for money in order to be able to eat and perhaps find a place to sleep for the night, but it also reminds her of a time where she would place coins in her mouth with a boy and they would see what the different coins would taste like. Furthermore, when Else encounters Penny and Clare in the hotel, she recognizes Clare as the girl whose money she took and without saying anything, she puts the money of the floor for Clare to have. Clare, in turn, uses money as a means of measuring the fall of Sara, by throwing a coin down the dumb waiter shaft. In the end, Clare is given the five dollars by Duncan, the boy who made the bet with Sara, and she “permanently removes it from circulation and inserts it into an alternative economy of remembrance and intimacy, altering its meaning and transforming it from currency to talisman, or totem.” (160) This shows how money has multiple meanings in this novel and is not just used as a payment method. Money seems to be a recurring theme in Smith’s works and her novels “form an economy through which the numismatic is constantly thought through and remade, via seemingly endless intertextual exchanges.” (171)

As mentioned before, Smith opens her novel with five quotes, These quotes are: “Remember you must die” (no page number) from Spark’s *Memento Mori* (1959), “Energy is eternal delight” (no page number) from William Blake’s *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and the following from a poem titled *The Child Dying* by Edwin Muir, which discusses the death of a child, here referring to the death of Sara:

Unfriendly, friendly universe,

I pack your stars into my purse

And bid you, bid you so farewell.

That I can leave you, quite go out,

Go out, go out beyond all doubt,

My father says, is the miracle. (no page number)

From cultural theorist and architectural historian Charles Jencks’:

Traditional religions emphasize constancy,

the Modernists with their mechanistic

models emphasize predictability, but the

cosmos is much more dynamic than either

a pre-designed world or a dead machine...

each jump is a great mystery. (no page number)

and “The fall occurs at dawn” (no page number) from Albert Camus’ *The Fall*, a philosophical novel published in 1956. As discussed before, the quote by Spark is countered by Smith’s “Remember you must live,” (Smith 27) and as Alice Bennett argues in *Afterlife and Narrative in Contemporary Fiction* (2012), Jencks’ quote refers to the fact that “[t]he ‘more dynamic’ cosmos recognised by postmodernity must take in chance and probability and all the elements which make up life, rather than reducing life to a mechanistic cause of death, or a prelude to an afterlife,” (82) providing a more optimistic view. She discusses the idea of taking a leap of faith, and this is also what Smith means to say with “remember you must live”. Furthermore, the act of leaping goes directly against the quote by Camus about falling and as Bennett argues: “*Hotel World* is temporally situated in this arrested jump, almost between cause and effect, and this sense of uncompleted activities is reflected in the way tenses are used in the novel,” (83) and these tenses are reflected in the titles that Smith has given each of the parts in the novel. The fragmentation of the novel is strengthened by the jumps in time, from the night of Sara’s death to the night where Else stays in the hotel and a flashback to ten years prior, to a future Lise who is ill. The switches in tense used in the different parts of the novel accentuate these jumps in time. As stated before, the parts are titled ‘past’, ‘present historic’, ‘future conditional’, ‘perfect’, ‘future in the past’, and ‘present’. The tense in each part reflects this title; for instance, the second part discusses events that have happened in the past but uses present tense, so a present representation of history. This idea of time also comes back in the story itself, for instance when Sara is

wondering how long it took her to fall to her death, or when she talks about her watch and the girl in the watch shop. Smith takes the concept of time and uses it in a multitude of ways. At one point in the novel, Sara's sister Clare also tries to figure out how long it took for her sister to fall down the elevator shaft and does this by dropping several items into the hole in the wall. One of these items is a clock. In the first part, 'past', Sara says "Here's the story; it starts at the end," (Smith 3) which is precisely what happens in the novel and this is also reflected in the titles. The story is told from past to present.

Overall, *Hotel World* is situated in a complicated position in the metamodernist debate. The fact that the story is placed historically in the period of postmodernism, and that Horgan argues that Smith's use of money is a postmodern tendency, but the narrative techniques that she uses are generally considered modernist, argue for Vermeulen and Van den Akker's notion of metamodernism oscillating between modernism and postmodernism. The postmodernist idea behind the novel and the postmodernist quotes that precede the novel also argue in favour of Vermeulen and Van den Akker's metamodernism. The novel uses money as a way of providing critique on capitalism, which ties in with Vermeulen and Van den Akker's idea that "metamodernism is a structure of feeling that emerges from, and reacts to, the postmodern as much as it is a cultural logic that corresponds to today's stage of global capitalism." (2017, 5) An argument could be made for James and Seshagiri's definition of metamodernism since Smith has taken techniques from a previous tradition (modernism) and has reinvented these and placed them into a new time, which happens to be in a postmodern Britain. Going back to Horgan's article then, she argues that "Smith uses the prime material of our contemporary world – money – to propose a modernism that is at once continued and new," (171-172) and that it "creates a point of exchange between the postmodern and the modernist, continuing a modernist project by updating it, refitting it, and making it new." (172) She positions Smith's novel between postmodernism and modernism, but also states that she updates it, according to this, *Hotel World*'s metamodernism would be a combination of the ideas posed by Vermeulen and Van den Akker, as well as those by James and Seshagiri. Based on this analysis, metamodernism could be seen as a mix of reworked modernism and postmodernism, combining both of the branches.

The following chapter will provide a close analysis of *How to Be Both* by Ali Smith, in order to analyse if the novel can be considered modernist and to discuss its place in the metamodernist debate.

Chapter 4

Ali Smith's 2014 novel *How to Be Both* combines historical fiction set in the fifteenth century with a coming of age story set in the twenty-first century. The novel is divided into two separate narratives that together form one larger narrative. Which of the two stories the reader reads first depends on chance, since Smith's novel has been published in two formats; one starting with the story of sixteen-year-old George from the twenty-first century, the other with that of fifteenth-century painter Francescho del Cossa. Smith has titled both parts '1', as they can be read in either order. The additional names of the stories are 'Camera' and 'Eyes', and the meaning of these additional titles concerning the story will be discussed later on in this chapter. George, short for Georgia, is a sixteen-year-old girl who is remembering her mother, who has passed away. Her narrative shows how George tries to cope with this loss and one of the ways in which she remembers her mother is through a fresco by Francescho del Cossa. George's mother was so interested in these frescoes when she was alive that she took George and her little brother Henry on a trip to the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara, Italy to see the frescoes in real life. It also tells the story of how George develops feelings for a female friend and her struggles with this fact. The other part told from the perspective of the Renaissance painter Francescho, who grew up as a girl but changed her identity in order to become a painter. Francescho also lost her mother at a young age, and similarly to George tried to hold on to the memory of her mother. While George does this by thinking back on trips that she went on with her mother, Francescho quite physically holds on to the memory of her mother. She does this by wearing her clothes and being unwilling to change out of them until her father helps her understand that if she wants to become a painter, she will have to let go of these clothes and start dressing like a boy. The narrative moves between the present where she is dead and her ghost is watching George observe one of her frescoes and following George in her daily life, and the past, which tells the story of how Francescho became a Renaissance painter. Similarly to the previous analysis chapter in this research, this chapter seeks to answer if and how Smith uses modernist techniques, and discuss how this fits into the metamodernist debate. The themes that will be explored in this chapter are narrative technique, time, the representation of consciousness, nature versus architecture and this chapter will also analyse the idea of being both, in answer to the question that is posed by the title of Smith's novel.

Both of the stories in this novel start *in medias res*: "Consider this moral conundrum for a moment, George's mother says to George who's sitting in the front passenger seat. Not

Says. Said. George's mother is dead." (Smith 3) In George's story, the reader is plunged into a conversation she remembers having with her mother before she died. Although, Francescho's story also starts in *in medias res*; the difference is that Francescho's story begins with a poetic type of structure:

Ho this is a mighty twisting thing fast as a
 fish being pulled by its mouth on a hook
 if a fish could be fished through a
 6 foot thick wall made of bricks or an
 arrow if an arrow could fly in a leisurely
 curl like the coil of a snail or a
 star with a tail if the star was shot (189)

This type of structure continues for two more pages, until page 191, where the narrative goes back to a prose format. In these first pages, both the reader and the protagonist (Francescho) are confused about what is happening in the narrative. The story is told in a first-person narration, showing only Francescho's inner thoughts and feelings, which also means that the reader knows only what the protagonist knows. Both stories in the novel are experimental in their writing style, and while Smith adapts a stream-of-consciousness technique throughout the novel, the way she applies this to the narrative is different for both parts. George's story is told in a second-person prose and is more subtle in its use of stream-of-consciousness. It is more comparable to traditional prose, while still showcasing her inner thoughts and feelings. The difference between the use of stream-of-consciousness in George's story and Francescho's is that in the former the prose is much more succinct and to the point, whereas in the latter the technique is used in a lyrical way, reminiscent of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). Throughout the story, George is continually reminding herself that her mother's death is something that has passed, which is done by showing that George keeps correcting her use of the present tense to the past tense, as shown in the opening passage quoted above. She says to herself that it is 'said' instead of 'says' since her mother is no longer alive. Even though Smith uses stream-of-consciousness, it is executed in such a way that it still reads like regular prose, which is generally easier to follow and understand for the reader. In this part of the narrative clear distinctions are also being made to distinguish past events from present events. In Francescho's story, the stream-of-consciousness technique is used more traditionally. Not

only does Smith switch from a more poetry-like format to regular prose, but she has also omitted almost all punctuation in Francescho's story, apart from some question marks and colons, of which the latter have their own purpose in the story. The colons are something that Francescho adds in because it is something that her mother would do, to signal where there should be a breath. Francescho tells the reader of the time when her father gave her a piece of paper with her mother's writing on it and said that "the sentences have her turn of phrase about them, as well as – look, here, here and here – her habit of putting these 2 dots between clauses where a breath should come." (337) Smith does add full stops and other punctuation when Francescho remembers conversations she had with other people, and in some instances italics or brackets are used. The brackets are used when Francescho has an afterthought, for instance on page 194: "but ha ha oh dear God look at it piece of oh ho ho ho ridiculous nonsense (from whom my saint averts his eyes with proper restraint and dignity)." (194) To signify when is someone shouting Smith has used capitalisation, as can be seen when Francescho is describing how a small boy is shouting to convey messages spoken by the Falcon to a large crowd: "The walls will be THE WALLS WILL BE." (293) Italics are used to signal a written letter or note or refer to song lyrics, such as the note Francescho's father gives her, which she wrote when she was a child:

Forgive my insolence if indeed it be insolence but I have held it all this time wrong of you : so much so that I have been unable some nights to sleep well for thinking on it : that you did strike me on the head that day for the pictures I had made of you in the soil and dust : honoured illustrious and most beloved of all fathers I beg of you do not think to strike me that way again : unless of course justly I deserve your wrath which in this instance I maintain, I did not. (336)

Francescho's part is fragmented in its structure, especially since there are no clear distinctions given when she switches from her story of her past life, when she was younger and starting out as a Renaissance artist, to her in the present, as a ghost who is following George and coming to terms with the fact that she has died. The fact that Francescho's story is told in a first-person narration not only provides an unreliable narrator but by applying this narrative style, Smith also shows the inner workings of Francescho's mind and how fragmented her thoughts can be and jump from one thing to the next. For instance, on page 196:

And, just saying, but whose saint is it anyway
that that boy with his back to me's spending all

his time

torch bearer, Ferrara, seen from the back.

Here, she does not finish her sentence because another thought comes to mind. On page 199 she thinks again of this boy:

I thought to myself *if I can catch that running boy I'll show this Falcon* whose eye (my own eye saw) was taken by the back of the boy *how good and how fast and how well I'd*

then they'd know how exemplary

and imbuse me accordingly

so I said as the boy disappeared *Mr de Prisciano, a pen and a paper and somewhere to lean and I'll catch you that rabbit faster than any falcon*

The use of italics provides the reader with a signifier that makes it easier to understand these sudden switches, since her thoughts and what she is saying flow into one another effortlessly and without any other signifier. This fragmentation of her mind changes throughout the story in relation to her consciousness. At the start of her story, her thoughts go everywhere, which makes the narrative confusing; this has to do with the fact that Francescho is also confused about what is happening. As the reader only sees the perspective of Francescho, the reader has just as much information as her and does not know that she is a ghost until Francescho finds this out herself. Her story starts with her as a ghost, but she does not yet understand that she is dead and has manifested as a ghost. As she starts to understand this and comes to terms with her passing, the structure becomes less fragmented. The narrative is written still in a stream-of-consciousness style, but her thoughts are more coherent and less sporadic than at the beginning of the story.

One of the central explorations in the novel is the idea of consciousness, specifically in relation to the idea of becoming conscious of oneself. Throughout the novel, there is an ongoing focus on the inner self, which is exemplified by the narration. The reader only gets to see things from the perspectives of George and Francescho and only understand how they see the world. This enables Smith to play with unreliable narrators, but it also shows how George and Francescho think and develop and grow throughout the story. As Nick Lavery discusses in his 2018 article “Consciousness and the Extended Mind in the ‘Metamodernist’ Novel,” “consciousness can be said to be extended [...] in the sense that it expresses a relation

between the conscious subject and the object of consciousness.” (Lavery 758) This quote discusses how consciously seeing something and not just looking at it, can change the perception of the object and therefore influences a person’s consciousness of the object. He argues that in *How to Be Both*, Smith expresses the relation between the conscious and unconscious through the use of second-person prose, since “the ‘you’ being addressed is determined by what is seen.” (758) Becoming conscious goes hand in hand with the development of the characters in the novel. For George, development means changing her perception of certain things to allow her to understand her mother. One instance in the novel where this change in perception can be seen is in a scene where she is looking at her mother’s jar of pencil shavings and asks her: “Why do you keep these?” (Smith 29) She answers this question herself and follows the question up by giving a description of what she sees: “Through the glass you can see the different woods of the different pencils her mother has been using. One layer is dark brown. One layer is light gold in colour. You can see the paint lines, the tiny zigzags of colour made into the shapes like the edges of those scallop shells by the twist of the pencil in the sharpener.” (29) George starts to understand the beauty of the pencil shavings by carefully examining what she sees in the jar and describing it to her mother. The beauty of the pencil shavings is the reason why George’s mother has kept them. In his article, Lavery argues that:

[t]he use of second-person prose embodies a similar kind of multiplicity within consciousness in fulfilling several functions at once. Firstly, it can be understood as an incorporation of her mother’s implied response to her question within George’s consciousness. [...] Secondly, it can be understood as expressing the way in which the conscious subject is determined by the object of perception. [...] Thirdly it expresses the mutability of the self, its openness to alteration by the object and by other’s perception of the object. (Lavery 758)

In short, Lavery is arguing that the way an object is perceived and the act of seeing, rather than just looking, can alter someone’s perception and can influence, in this case, George’s interpretation of the jar, making her understand why her mother kept it. Lavery’s argument about second-person prose, however, can only be applied to George’s story, since Francescho’s is written in first-person. In the novel, the act of seeing in relation to consciousness is explored in two different ways; George’s part in the novel, which is also known as ‘Camera’, explores how things are being seen in modern times, often through a camera, whereas Francescho’s part is named ‘Eyes’. In Francescho’s part, her ghost is

watching George and comments on the fact that George uses her iPad. Francescho does this in a way that provides criticism on modern day people and technology and says that “this place is full of people who have eyes and choose to see nothing, who all talk into their hands [...] and they look or talk or pray to these tablets or icons [...], signifying they must be heavy in their despairs to be so consistently looking away from their world and so devoted to their icons,” (229-230) showing the lack of connection people have nowadays to their surroundings; their lack of consciousness. There is a contrast between the past and the present; on the one hand, George is using technological devices to see and take pictures, while on the other hand, Francescho is a Renaissance painter, who creates frescoes. They both have a different way of ‘painting a picture’. The way George ‘paints’ a picture, through the use of technological devices shows a disconnect to the physical world. She is looking at the world instead of seeing it through her own eyes but through a piece of technology.

The relation and struggle between nature and architecture is another theme that is examined in the novel and specifically the “metaphorical interplay” (Lavery 762) between the two. On the first pages of the novel, the reader sees George in her room describing how there is mould coming through the walls and that “[e]verything in this room will rot. She will have the pleasure of watching it happen. The floorboards will curl up at their ends, bend, split open at the nailed places and pull loose from their glue. She will lie in bed with all the covers thrown off and the stars will be directly above her, nothing between her and her long-ago burnt-out eyes.” (Smith 13) Lavery argues that “seeing and affect are associated with nature, while narrative, language and the self are associated with architecture,” (763) and the passage above shows how nature, here portrayed through mould, is slowly destroying the architecture of her room (763). George’s development as a character and learning to deal with her grief can be seen through this relationship between nature and architecture. At first, she does not understand her mother and, as with the pencil shavings scene quoted above, she does not ‘see’ the world in the way her mother sees it. However, through the course of the novel and even in that same scene, she starts to try and see things through her mother’s perspective. On page 62 of the novel, George is describing a town in Italy that she is visiting with her mother as “a place of walls” (Smith 62) and paints a picture of the buildings. The difference between this scene and the previously discussed one is that nature is no longer destroying architecture. Instead, she now sees the beauty of nature and says that: “The walls are high and blank but it sounds as if beyond them is hidden garden. There are the long straight avenues of beautiful trees, as if it’s not a city of walls at all, it’s a city of trees.” (62) This scene shows George’s

development, and after the scene, seeing and affect are interlinked with narrative, language and the self rather than being at odds with the others. As Lavery discusses: “[t]hrough [Smith’s] use of architecture to represent an extended form of the individual’s intentional relation to the object, and of nature to represent the object’s shaping of the subject in the act of perception, [she] proposes a form of the extended self which alters itself in response to conscious experience.” (Lavery 764) Smith, as a result of this, shows how a person can be influenced and altered by their surroundings.

Another element that is explored in *How to Be Both* is the idea of what it means to be both, and whether things, or people can be two things at the same time. This idea of being both comes back in different elements of the story. The first way through which this is explored is gender; Francescho, who was born as a girl, pretends to be a man in order to be able to receive training to become a painter since women did not receive the same opportunities as men in the fifteenth-century. George is also born female and identifies as a woman, but her name is ambiguous and can be considered both male and female. In Francescho’s part, we see her watching George, and in the beginning, Francescho thinks that George is a boy, with girlish features. Only when she sees George’s face does she realise that George is actually a girl. On page 251, Francescho reflects on how she already thought that George might be a girl because there is a scene in the novel where Francescho is observing George and George is poked with a stick by an old woman because she was sitting on her garden wall. As George apologises, Francescho realises that her voice sounds like the “unbroken undisguised voice of what can only be girl.” (Smith) This same idea, of gender-bending or gender fluidity, can be seen in the frescoes that Francescho painted. When George and her mother visit Italy to observe these frescoes, George describes one of the people on the paintings: “[O]n the other side of the woman floating above the goat, there’s a young man or a young woman, could be either [...]. Male or female? She says to her mother who’s standing under these figures. I don’t know, her mother says [...] Male, female, both, she says.” (51-52) This scene shows the fluidity of gender; it is unknown whether the person in the fresco is male or female; they are both. On page 111, George and her mother are once again looking at one of the frescoes and comment on the “constant sexual and gender ambiguities running through the whole work.” (111) One of the figures in the fresco is also described as being both and they comment on how Francescho “used that figure of the effeminate boy, the boyish girl, to balance the powerful masculine effect of the worker,” (111) and how this figure “holds both an arrow and a hoop, male and female symbols one in each hand.” (111) Smith is

continually showing how gender can be fluid and that people can be both sexes at once. Secondly, the way that Smith has chosen to have the novel printed is also a way of being both: “the novel itself, through the ingenious device of printing half the copies with George’s perspective first, and half with Francesco’s, manages to ‘be both’ – different from itself and yet the same.” (Jordan, qtd. in Andermahr 251) The novel can be read either way, and the stories are exactly the same whether George’s or Francesco’s part is printed first or second, but at the same time, the order in which the stories are read influences the reader’s experience of the novel. Both of the stories can be read on their own, but together they form one overarching storyline. It is both: two separate stories and one large story. This duality and being both is also reflected in the inspiration Smith had for the novel, as has been discussed in the author research of this thesis. The structure of a fresco is reflected in the narrative structure of the novel. Frescoes consist of different layers, and when George is visiting the Palazzo Schifanoia with her mother, she reflects on these layers:

It is like everything is in layers. Things happen right at the front of the pictures and at the same time they continue happening, both separately and connectedly, behind, and behind that, and again behind that, like you can see in perspective for miles. [...] The picture makes you look at both – the close-up happenings and the bigger picture.
(Smith 53)

This simultaneity of events in the frescoes and seeing the entire picture, as well as its details, are also reflected in the narrative. The narratives of Francesco and George take place approximately 550 years from one another, but through the use of resurrection, which will be discussed in the next paragraph, the lives of these two characters intersect. The novel is circular in the way that on the one hand there is George, who is looking at frescoes painted by Francesco, and on the other hand, Francesco is observing George, observing her frescoes. Using this type of structure has allowed Smith to showcase both stories at once. Although one event is still written after the other, the fact that the stories can be read in either order shows how Smith attempts to illustrate the simultaneity of events. This also shows how she plays with the notion of time, which is another key element in her novel.

Time, in the novel, is linked with resurrection and in *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (2007), Lewis discusses how Joyce uses the idea of “the resurrection of the dead,” (163) to “typify the interplay between the narrative present and the always resurgent past of [his] characters.” (163) This idea of resurrection is also present in *How to Be Both* in relation to time in the form of the ghost of Francesco del Cossa. Francesco’s story in itself is an

interplay between the past and the present, as she narrates her story of how she became a painter and pretended to be a man, while Francescho is also telling how she is, at present, watching George in the twenty-first century as a ghost. Simultaneously, George's story also includes this combination of past and present, since she is in the present mourning her mother and trying to find a way to deal with this loss on the one hand, and on the other hand is constantly remembering times with her mother through flashbacks. Through George's memories, her mother is, in a way, also resurrected, and because the conversations between the two are added into the novel very naturally, it feels as if George's mother is still alive. This relation between life and death is reflected in the following quote from the epigraph to Smith's novel:

green spirit seeking life
 where only drought and desolation sting;
 spark that says that everything begins
 when everything seems charcoal (no page number)

The quote is originally from a poem by Eugenio Montale but was translated into English by Jonathan Galassi. In her interview with Dr Tim Parnell Smith discusses that this poem is about an eel and is dual-gendered. She explains that the poem is "all about the end of things and the destruction of things" (00:02:17-00:02:19) and that "it's about our mortality and the fact that we die and it's also about the fact that we are still alive." (00:02:49-00:02:52) This statement resonates with the scene where George is thinking of how the walls in her room are one day going to collapse around her. It also shows the relationship between life and death, not only through George's dead mother and how she is, in a way, still alive through memories but also through the resurrection of Francescho. A different quote in the epigraph to the novel links to the theme of time, as Smith herself has explained in an interview with Dr Tim Parnell after winning the 2014 Goldsmith's prize for her novel. The quote they are discussing is from Hannah Arendt's *Men in Dark Times* (1968):

Although the living is subject to the ruin of the time, the process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization, that in the depth of the sea, into which sinks and is dissolved what once was alive, some things 'suffer a sea-change' and survive in new crystallized forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they

waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living – (no page number)

In the interview, Smith explains that the whole idea behind this quote is the fact “that the past and present and future exist together at once” (qtd. in Parnell 00:08:09-00:08:10) and this ties into the idea of how time is portrayed in the novel; being both in the present and in the past and in the future. This notion of past, present and future existing at the same time is also explored in a conversation between George and her mother. When they are visiting Ferrara to view the frescoes by Francesco del Cossa, George’s mother asks “But which came first? [...] The chicken or the egg? The picture underneath or the picture on the surface.” (Smith 103) George answers this question by saying that the picture underneath came first because it was painted first. Her mother then argues that “the first thing we see, [...] and most times the only thing we see is the one on the surface. So does that mean it comes first after all? And does that mean the other picture, if we don’t know about it, may as well not exist?” (103) In this conversation, George’s mother debates whether what is painted first comes first, or if what is seen first comes first. This offers another type of duality, as both the painting underneath as well as the painting on the surface can be first and shows how past and present can exist at the same time. The idea of existing and ceasing to exist is also reflected in one of the quotes in the epigraph: “Just like a character in a novel, he disappeared suddenly, without leaving the slightest trace behind.” (no page number) This is a quote by Giorgio Bassani, an Italian novelist who lived in Ferrara and has been translated to English by Jamie McKendrick. The quote resonates with the life of the real Francesco del Cossa, as the Renaissance painter that inspired Smith to write the novel suddenly disappeared from the earth.

Overall, many of the themes and techniques Smith uses in her novel were also applied by modernists in their novels. As Lavery argues, the “engagement with [m]odernist forms and ideas complements [her] willingness to attempt to depict the subjective experience of consciousness,” (764-765) he also argues that she does maintain a “[p]ostmodern view of the self as determined partly by the operations of institutional power and culture.” (765) With these arguments, he seems to argue for Vermeulen and Van den Akker’s explanation of metamodernism, which discusses metamodernism as an oscillation between modernism and postmodernism, here achieved through the use of modernist techniques while keeping with a postmodern view of the world. However, the technological critique Smith provides in her novel can also be seen as a modernist notion, as it responds to the fast changing times due to technological advancements and the implications this has on society and society’s

connectedness to the world. Several arguments are in favour of Smith's work being modernist: her use of fragmented structure through the use of stream-of-consciousness combined with her play with words, as well as how she poses the question of being both; through gender fluidity and exploration, novel structure and time. Smith's work is innovative and experimental and therefore fits into the metamodernist ideas of James and Seshagiri, as she takes all the aforementioned modernist techniques and updates them to the twenty-first century. She does something new with these techniques, especially by combining poetry and prose, as well as choosing to have the novel printed in two different formats.

Chapter 3 and 4 have provided a close analysis of two of Ali Smith's works and have discussed their place in the metamodernist debate. The following chapter will analyse the reception of both of these novels, in order to see whether the conclusions that are drawn in this chapter are also reflected in the reception.

Chapter 5

To research the reception of *Hotel World* and *How to Be Both* online and professional reviews will be analysed. The online reviews have been sourced from *Goodreads*, and the professional reviews have been found in British newspapers since James and Seshagiri's branch in the current metamodernist debate mainly focusses on contemporary British fiction. As mentioned in chapter 1, the criteria for the reviews included in this thesis is that they have to be at least 100 words long and written in English. Furthermore, they have to have been written within the first two years after the novels' publication, since this will show how the novels were received shortly after being published. However, since *Hotel World* was published in 2001, but *Goodreads* did not exist until 2007, the reviews analysed for this novel are from 2007 until 2009 instead. To research the reception of Ali Smith's 2001 novel, thirty-two reviews have been compiled. Of these reviews, seventeen are professional reviews and fifteen are online reviews taken from *Goodreads*. The reviews will be analysed for the term modernism or a variation of this, such as 'postmodernism' and 'modernist' and for words and phrases relating to modernism, such as 'stream-of-consciousness', 'fragmentation' and 'experimental'. After a more general discussion of the analysed reviews, three professional and three online reviews will be analysed in more detail. These six reviews will be chosen based on the following criteria: they have to be at least 300 words long and feature characteristics related to modernism. This will be followed by a discussion of how the critics use these modernistic terms; whether they relate modernism to the literary technique or the historical period. How the terms are used is important in order to understand how reception fits into the metamodernist debate and how it relates to the author research done in Chapter 2. The professional reviews will be analysed first.

The average word count of the professional reviews was 496 words, ranging from 132 to 1347 words. In the seventeen reviews, the term modernism was used once and one other review used each of the terms postmodern, postmodernist and postmodern once. Although these terms are not used by most of the reviewers, ten of the reviews do include comments about Smith's writing style that can be linked to modernist techniques. Seven of the reviews, however, do not mention anything relating to (post)modernism or modernist writing techniques. The reviews that did include comments about Smith's writing style used terms like 'fractured/fragmented', 'wordplay', 'no punctuation', 'inventiveness', 'uniqueness', 'metaphysical' and 'experimental'. The following table provides an overview of the most

commonly used terms related to modernism in the professional reviews on Smith's novel

Hotel World:

Terms	Times mentioned
Postmodern(ism)	3
Lack of punctuation	3
Metaphysical	3
Modernist	2
Inventive	2
Fragmentation/Fragmented	2
Wordplay	2
Experimental	2
Avant-garde	1
Uniqueness	1

Three reviews have been chosen for the in-depth analysis, following the criteria as mentioned earlier, and these will be discussed in order of publication. These reviews are by David Robinson for *The Scotsman*, Carol Birch for *The Independent*, and Giles Foden for *The Guardian*.

The review by David Robinson, author and freelance journalist, was published on March 31, 2001. He starts his review by stating how the story opens; the death of a chambermaid and argues that although the idea of the novel, that “one person’s slight life is a thread, realised or unrealised, through the lives of four other people” is not an original idea, Smith is doing it “completely and refreshingly different.” (Robinson) He discusses that “Smith uses words to take us where mere stories cannot go,” (Robinson) and that throughout the story the meaning given to words by the world words is starting to disappear because Sara is losing her grip on words and the world. He also comments on her wordplay in relation to Muriel Spark’s “Remember you must die” from *Memento Mori*. Robinson discusses that in Smith’s novel, Sara has taken this idea and altered it to “Remember you must live” and as she slowly fades away, this turns into “Remember you most love” and finally, “Remember you mist leaf”, showing how the meaning of words slowly disappears as Sara deteriorates. Robinson states that although Smith’s novel “owes debts of honour to Joyce and Woolf[, she] repays them with interest, modernising the modernists for a new century.” This statement ties into the ideas posed by David James and Urmila Seshagiri in “Metamodernism: Narratives of Continuity and Revolution”, as Robinson’s description of Smith’s modernism follows the idea of modernism being an archive from a different century, which she then updates and adapts to the twenty-first century.

The second professional review is written by well-known author Carol Birch for *The Independent* and was published on March 31, 2001. She starts her review by saying that Smith's novel is "original and unusual, a fragile non-linear tale which dances elegantly around a single shocking incident." (Birch) While she does not use the term 'experimental' to describe Smith's writing here, the fact that she discusses the novel as original and unusual shows that Birch receives the novel as different and new, perhaps even experimental. The non-linearity of the novel links to how Smith plays with time in her novel; the shifts in time give it a fragmented structure. Birch comments on the fact that the reader is taken on a "journey through the consciousness of four other people," who are all connected through the death of chambermaid Sara Wilby. Although she does not mention the term modernism, focussing on the inner-self and one's own consciousness is a technique that is often used in modernism. She explains the death of Sara as a "pebble dropped into water, echoed in recurrent images of fallings both physical and emotional," (Birch) showing how one event in a person's life can echo through the lives of others around that person. Birch describes Smith as a "bold writer, [who] is not afraid to bent time and language. Very much a Joycean, she relishes the medium, plays games, word paints, does Molly-Bloomesque stream-of-consciousness with seemingly effortless style." By referring to Molly Bloom, a character from James Joyce's *Ulysses*, as well as referring to Joyce and his typical stream-of-consciousness narration, Birch labels Smith as a modernist without using the term modernism.

The last professional review that will be analysed is the one written by author and journalist Giles Foden for *The Guardian*, published on April 14, 2001. Foden starts his review by referring to Jim Collins' *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Postmodernism* (1989) in order to create a link to the use of fragmentation, specifically in relation to cultural authority. Foden states that Smith uses the hotel in *Hotel World* as a "means of testing connections between different social discourses" in connection with the idea of cultural fragmentation and cultural diversity. Furthermore, Foden discusses that the novel is filled with "literary allusions and cunning devices," as well as Smith's use of wordplay in her works. He mentions that Smith is a "writer who is committed to conveying otherness in interesting and exciting ways: every detail in the book [...], serves to question the capitalist assumptions of the Global [hotel]," (Foden) showing that Smith tries to criticize capitalism through her novel. He also discusses that the novel might be challenging to read for many people since readers like "falsely coherent subjects and illusions of unfractured language," (Foden) and this is precisely what this novel does not provide. Foden argues that in *Hotel*

World, the postmodern tendencies are “formally enacted,” rather than “symbolically rendered.” Based on the reviewer’s references to works on postmodernism, he labels Smith’s novel as postmodernist.

Based on these reviews, it is not clear where the professional reviewers would place Smith’s novel in the metamodernist debate. The overall notion throughout the reviews is that it is a work that uses modernist techniques and has modernist tendencies, with the exception of Giles Foden’s review, as he is the only reviewer to link the novel to postmodernism. From these reviews, it could be concluded that the work is indeed modernist, and as David Robinson argues: Smith is “modernising the modernists for a new century”. As many of the other professional reviews include terms such as ‘inventiveness’ and ‘uniqueness’ or related terms, their ideas seem to fall in line with those of James and Seshagiri.

For the online reviews, the average word count was 176 words, ranging from 100 to 358 words. On average, the online reviews are much shorter than the professional reviews. The reviewers also include a rating for the novel on *Goodreads* and on average the novel received 2.9 out of 5 stars from the fifteen analysed reviews. There was a single one-star rating, but most reviewers gave the novel three stars. None of the reviewers used the term modernism or modernist, nor was the term postmodernism or any variation of this used. The online reviewers do often comment on Smith’s writing style, mainly in relation to stream-of-consciousness, and also on her lack of punctuation and writing as being experimental. Four of the reviewers also linked her work to that of Virginia Woolf, whereas James Joyce was only mentioned once. One reviewer with the username Emily described *Hotel World* as having “swirling motifs of time and water,” and another as a “nebulous string of descriptive verse” (Nate). These descriptions show that although they might not recognize the novel or the techniques used as modernist, they do understand what Smith is doing with her writing style and how she is using these techniques. The following table provides an overview of the most commonly used terms related to modernism in the online reviews on Smith’s novel *Hotel World*:

Terms	Times mentioned
Stream-of-consciousness	8
Lack of punctuation	5
Woolf	4
Experimental	4
Playful	2
Joyce	1

Out of the fifteen online reviews, only three were over 300 words long and mentioned something related to modernism and therefore fit the criteria for the in-depth review. The three reviews that will be further analysed are by Kate, Paul Bryant and Phillip Edwards and will be discussed in chronological order.

The first online review that will be analysed is written by Kate, published on August 12, 2007, and she has given the novel a two-star rating out of five. She starts her review by explaining what made her pick the book up, mainly the pink cover and the fact that it was a finalist for the *Man Booker Prize*. She discusses how she feels fooled by the novel, since there was no character development but the storylines “remained self-contained conversations to the author’s self, with different names and situations substituted.” (Kate) This description ties in with the notion of consciousness, and the fact that the characters do not look further than their own ideas. Kate continues by discussing Smith writing style as being stream-of-consciousness, which made it “difficult to separate each chapter’s narrator from the previous one.” Furthermore, she comments on the lack of punctuation in the novel and the grammatical structure of the text and says that Smith does this to “personalize” the narrative. According to Kate, she does this unsuccessfully. She continues to compare the novel to an episode of the Simpsons, where a particular scene is continuously repeated, but each time from a different perspective. She ends by stating that Smith’s novel “is an interesting concept, and had it more structure or explanation, it might have been more worthwhile.” (Kate) Although this reviewer did use the term stream-of-consciousness, she does not relate this to modernism.

The second online review discussed for the in-depth analysis is by Paul Bryant, published on September 27, 2007, and he gave the novel a two-star rating out of five. Bryant describes the novel as experimental, but also explains that writers who use experimental technique provoke the “train-spotter in [him].” He discusses that this makes him recognize parts of the novel as being similar to other writers’ works. He mentions Joyce, Woolf, Johnson and even Barthelme and therefore implies that Smith is not doing something new in her work, but is actually taking pieces from other works and putting them together to form something else. The fact that Bryant mentions modernist authors, as well as describing her work as experimental, shows that he has some knowledge of modernist writers and techniques even though he does not use the term itself. He continues by saying that the different parts in the novel are “claustrophobic interior ramble,” (Bryant) which shows that he recognizes the focus on the inner-self of the novel. Lastly, Bryant also mentions that the novel includes “dizzying leaps of perspective.” This description, while not using these terms, describes the

fragmented structure of the novel. Based on Bryant's references to modernist authors and his discussion of her writing techniques, he recognizes the novel as being modernist. He does state that Smith is not doing something new with these modernist techniques and therefore it does not entirely fit into James and Seshagiri's definition of metamodernism, as they argue that metamodernist writers do something new with techniques used in modernism.

The final online review that will be analysed in detail is the one by Phillip Edwards, published on *Goodreads* on April 14, 2009, but previously published on *dooyoo.co.uk* in September 2001. Edwards rated the novel four stars, and although this is the most extensive review in terms of length from the selection, at 358 words, the only term that Edwards mentions that is directly related to modernism is stream-of-consciousness, which he links to the part where the reader sees the perspective of Sara's sister Clare. He starts his review by introducing the novel and the plot. The main thing he focusses on in his review is the lack of exploration of the one male character that the reader comes across, Duncan; the boy who made the bet with Sara that led to her death. He discusses that it left "[a]n emptiness, like that which is present in the lives of all the characters: there is little interaction between them, and when their paths do cross, it is as strangers – strange ships passing in the night." (Edwards) This idea of being strangers, and not really knowing one another, ties into the idea of consciousness and focus on the inner self rather than on the outside world, which is a prevalent theme in Smith's novel. Although the reader experiences five different perspectives, through five different characters, these characters do not know anything about each other, apart from perhaps Sara who gets a glimpse into all of their lives as a ghost. Overall, Edwards does not relate Smith's novel to modernism, as his focus lies more on the plot of the novel rather than her writing techniques.

Overall, the online reviewers do seem to recognize the novel as employing modernist techniques, but they mainly focus on the use of stream-of-consciousness and lack of punctuation. Based on these reviews, it is not clear where these reviewers would place the novel in relation to the metamodernist debate, as this is not something they explicitly do. The online review by Paul Bryant, for instance, seems to say exactly the opposite as the professional review by David Robinson, since the latter discusses that Smith "makes it new", as explained by James and Seshagiri, while the former argues that she is using old techniques, reminiscent of earlier modernists, but does not reinvent them. All in all, it does become clear that the overall notion of both the professional and online reviewers is that the novel is indeed modernist and uses modernist techniques, even though the term itself is rarely used. Although

one reviewer argues for the postmodernist nature of the novel, the overarching conclusion is that it is modernist. Placing it in the metamodernist debate is difficult, but most reviewers do recognize Smith's writing style as experimental, inventive and unique, while still reminiscent of already existing textual traditions. Based on this description, the novel would then be placed on the side of James and Seshagiri as Smith tries to reinvent modernism while using traditional modernist techniques.

To research the reception of Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* the same method will be used as has been outlined before. The reviews have been selected from 2014 until 2016, the two-year period after the publication date of *How to Be Both*, and had to be at least 100 words long. While compiling the reviews, it became clear that there are significantly more *Goodreads* reviews on *How to Be Both* compared to *Hotel World*. This might be due to the fact that the website *Goodreads* did not yet exist when the latter was published, or because Smith's works have become more popular due to her many prize nominations, one of which is the Man Booker Prize, as discussed in Chapter 2. As with *Hotel World*, reviewers of *How to Be Both* have noted on multiple occasions that they picked the book up due to its nomination for the Booker Prize. One example is, Alex Kennard, one of the *Goodreads* reviewers, who stated that he is "eternally grateful to this year's Booker competition for introducing [him] to this unrivalled author." A total of forty-five online reviews have been compiled for the analysis. In terms of the professional reviews, there were significantly less compared to her previously discussed novel. Many reviews had been republished in shorter versions in different papers, but after filtering these out, the professional reviews added up to only six. After a general discussion of the reviews, three professional and three online reviews will again be analysed in further detail, by discussing which modernist terms and techniques are featured and which aspects of the novel the reviews focus on. This will be followed by a discussion of whether the reviewers acknowledge the novel as being modernist based on these reviews. Finally, the placement in the metamodernist debate is discussed on the basis of how the reviewers explained Smith's use of modernist techniques and her writing style.

The average word count of the professional reviews was 578 words, ranging from 241 to 1048 words. In the six reviews, the term modernist was only used once, and the term postmodernist or any variation of this was not used at all. Although the term was only mentioned once, all six reviewers discussed the novel in terms of modernist techniques or tendencies. Some of the terms that are used to describe her writing are 'word play', 'textual innovations', 'non-chronological', 'inventive', 'experimental' and 'allegory'. The following

table provides an overview of the most commonly used terms related to modernism in the professional reviews on Smith's novel *How to Be Both*:

Terms	Times mentioned
Non-chronological	3
Word play	2
Inventive	2
Innovation	2
Experimental	1
Modernist trappings	1
Allegory	1

For the in-depth analysis, three reviews have been chosen, based on the criteria that they have to be at least 300 words long and have to include references to modernist techniques. The reviews will be discussed in order of publication. The three reviews are by Arifa Akbar for *Arts & Book Review*, Talitha Stevenson for *The Evening Standard*, and Laura Miller for *The Guardian*.

Theatre critic Arifa Akbar's review was published on August 16, 2014. She starts her review by saying that someone has put a postcard in her edition of the novel on which was written: "This is not a mistake." (Akbar) This postcard refers to the fact that the novel can have two starting points, depending on which edition the reader receives, as well as that "[Smith's] textual innovations could be mistaken for mistakes, from the microcosmic – non-chronological narration, anarchic sentences, grammar and word games – to the bigger structural 'disturbances'." (Akbar) Akbar, however, argues that Smith's use of these techniques is executed too well to be considered mistakes. She describes Smith as being textually innovative, meaning that she is doing something new with her writing. Akbar discusses that Smith is not only innovative with her form but also that she "throws in a further kinking of the fiction genre in which a non-fictional tone intercepts the story at times," merging non-fiction and fiction. Akbar argues that the novel is "one that becomes two novels, with discrete meanings, through its (re)ordering," reflecting on how reading the novel in a different order can change a reader's perspective on it. At the end of her review, she notes that this novel shows the reader that the order in which a story is written "can change our understanding of it and define our emotional attachment." (Akbar) Based on this review, it seems that Arifa Akbar does not recognize the novel as being either modernist or postmodernist, while she does note on Smith's innovativeness and use of wordplay in her

novel. Therefore, the novel would be placed in the James and Seshagiri branch of the debate, based on Akbar's review.

The second professional review that will be analysed in more detail is written by author and journalist Talitha Stevenson and was published on August 28, 2014. She starts the review by giving a short introduction to the story and commenting on the non-linear chronology of the novel by stating that "[b]oth stories whizz the reader back and forth in time." (Stevenson) When describing Francescho's storyline, Stevenson mentions that Smith has "invented a mode of speech" for the character, again focussing on the fact that she is doing something new in her writing. She also discusses the fact that "realms of time exist simultaneously" (Stevenson) in the novel, being in the past and the present at the same time. She shows this by giving the example of when George is in a car in Italy with her mother mentally, but she is actually physically at home in England. Stevenson criticizes Smith's work by comparing the dialogue between George and her mother to Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*, but states that "it lacks an underlying intellectual framework." It seems that, based on this comparison and Smith's lack of explaining the way past and present can exist simultaneously, she finds Smith's work underdeveloped and that there are too many ideas cramped in this one novel. She ends her review by saying that readers should see the novel as two separate stories instead of one. Although Stevenson does state that Smith is innovative, and even invented a mode of speech for Francescho, she does not seem to link these techniques explicitly to a literary genre. This review does not actively argue for the novel as being a part of the modernist genre, but the use of these labels for the novel are reminiscent of modernist techniques.

The last professional review that will be analysed is the one written by author Laura Miller for *The Guardian*, published on September 13, 2014. The first six paragraphs in Miller's review consist of a summary and analysis of the novel; she explains the plot, the two storylines, how these storylines intertwine and also discusses the concept of the two different parts of the novel and how they can be read in both orders. Miller also discusses the layering Smith uses in her novel, referring to how the two stories intertwine, as well as the "simultaneity of experiences that seem to be separated by time." She mentions that the novel is experimental, but that Smith "approaches her formal adventures with a buoyant, infectious warmth and her feet planted firmly on the ground," making it feel "like a frolic [...], until its depth, heart and intelligence are revealed," (Miller) if Francescho's storyline is read first. She follows this by arguing that although the novel has many 'modernist trappings', it is actually

an allegory and explains that through the fresco painted by Del Cossa since it contains multiple allegories around gods and zodiac signs. Miller links this layering to the title of the novel and discusses that “despite allegory’s reputation as simplistic technique, it is in fact the quintessential storytelling way of being both; rich on the surface and replete with layers of underlying significance.” In contrast to the review by Stevenson, Miller argues that the two parts of the story do form one novel, and although the novel is written so that it can be read in two ways, once the reader has read one part first they can never experience what it would be like to read the other part first. Overall, Miller does seem to acknowledge Smith’s use of modernist techniques but argues that it is an allegory instead and does not label the novel as modernist. This is a confusing argument that is made by Miller, as an allegory can still be modernist and use modernist techniques.

Based on these reviews, it is not clear if the reviewers see the novel as modernist, but they do recognize some of the techniques she uses. The fact that they use the words inventive, innovative and experimental to describe Smith’s writing, they do acknowledge that she tries to do something new with her novel and be an innovative writer in the field.

For the forty-five *Goodreads* reviews, the average word count was 336 words, ranging from 102 to 1424 words. On average these reviews were shorter than the professional reviews, although the longest online review was longer than any of the professional ones. The average rating the *Goodreads* reviewers gave the novel was 4.3 stars; one two-star rating and the remainder of the reviews gave mainly four- and five-star ratings. The term modernism or a variation of this was not mentioned in any of the reviews. They did use “stream-of-consciousness” on nine occasions, and one time the variation “stream of words” was used. The *Goodreads* reviewers tend to mention this technique often, whereas the professional reviewers did not use the term at all in their reviews. Out of the forty-five reviews, fourteen did not mention anything related to modernism in their reviews. The reviewers that did use terms related to modernism used terms as ‘stream-of-consciousness’, ‘experimental/experimentation’, ‘playful’, ‘poetic’ and ‘lyrical’. They also often comment on her lack of punctuation, incoherent structure, layering of time and haphazard use of tenses. One reviewer linked her work to Virginia Woolf and another to Christine Brooke-Rose, who is known for her experimental style. The following table provides an overview of the most commonly used terms related to modernism in the online reviews on Smith’s novel *How to Be Both*:

Terms	Times mentioned
Experimentation/Experimental	10
Stream-of-consciousness	9
Playful/playing with form	4
Donna Tartt	3
Poetic	2
Lyrical	2
Inventive	1
Innovative	1
Woolf	1
Brooke-Rose	1

The three reviews that will be analysed in-depth are those by Blair who rated the novel four stars, Karen who rated it five stars and Paul Fulcher who rated it four stars and they will be analysed in chronological order.

The first review by Blair was published on August 20, 2014. She starts her review by giving a summary of the structure of the novel and explains that the stories mirror each other and that the order of the parts is randomised. She argues for the fact that readers should read the book twice, once starting with 'Eyes', and once starting with 'Camera', in order to see all the references and overlapping events in the stories. Blair discusses the many parallels in the stories, and how "the past affects the present, they are about gender and sexuality, as well as the usual literary themes of loss, the passing of time [...], etc." She describes Smith's writing style as 'playful' and 'clever' and says that she "does a lot of wonderful things with language and meaning," (Blair) referring to Smith's experimental way of writing. She also states that in comparison to Smith's 2011 novel *The But For The, How to Be Both* is a more original work when looking at the form and style. None of the *Goodreads* reviews mention modernism, but the terms Blair uses to describe Smith's writing style can be linked to modernism.

The second review is written by Karen and was published on September 14, 2014. In her review she provides a summary of the novel, but instead starts off by stating that "[i]n *How to be both*, Ali Smith provides a masterclass in how to play with the form of the novel and stuff it with layers of meaning and yet still make it highly readable," (Karen) thereby immediately commenting on Smith's way of writing and her success with this technique. Karen describes the novel as having a "finely constructed dual narrative in which each story dovetails with and reflects the other and where the very duality of structure is fundamental to a key theme in the novel," arguing for the fact that the two stories should be seen as forming one large story with multiple layers. She analyses the theme of seeing in relation to a

conversation George has had with her mother about the layers in Del Cossa's frescoes. However, she does not seem to go further than this short analysis and an example of one of the themes in the review of the novel. Although this was one of the longer online reviews on the novel, and it seemed to link the novel to modernist techniques through the use of playful narrative, a more in-depth analysis shows that the reviewer goes into detail about some of the themes of the novel and describes it as 'playful', but does not link it to a literary genre.

The final review that will be analysed is written by Paul Fulcher and was published on September 15, 2015. From Fulcher's review, it becomes clear that he is reading the novel because it was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and that he is reading all the nominated books for the prize. He describes how Smith was inspired to write this novel by a picture of Del Cossa's fresco in a magazine. Fulcher states that her books are often innovative and that in *How to Be Both* she "attempts to replicate the fresco technique in literature," referring to the different layers in the stories. He comments on the structure of the novel and how the stories can be read either way but also discusses the fact that perhaps Smith has not exactly succeeded in what she was trying to achieve in her novel. He strengthens this argument by saying that "the number of interviews she has given explaining what she was attempting to do would suggest she is [not] convinced either." (Fulcher) He also questions if the novel would be just as good when 'Eyes' would be read first and then 'Camera' instead of the other way around, since the references made would not be understood until the reader has read the second part of the novel. He points out that George's story is written more conventionally, compared to the style of Francescho's part, since the latter is "more difficult to follow both in style – it starts and ends in a stream of words – and because so much is based on observing but not understanding George." (Fulcher) Here he refers to the modernist technique of stream-of-consciousness, albeit in different words, and the confusion that is present in Francescho's story due to her lack of understanding about what has happened to her and what George is doing. Although Fulcher, as the other two reviewers, does not specifically label the novel as modernist, his descriptions, especially the use of stream-of-consciousness and the blurring of time, show that he recognizes the modernist techniques she uses in her novel.

It seems that, although the online reviewers for *How to Be Both* use more terms related to modernism throughout the forty-five reviews than the professional reviewers. The in-depth analysis shows that they generally do not actively label the novel as modernist or acknowledge the techniques used as modernist. Noticeably, the online reviewers elaborate more on themes and writing style in their reviews than the professional reviews, who often

give a basic overview of the novel, but do not go in-depth about what Smith is trying to achieve with her novel. Based on the reviews, it is difficult to place the novel in the metamodernist debate due to the lack of links to modernism. However, since they often refer to the work as being inventive, experimental and innovative, the novel would fit more in the branch of the metamodernist debate that is based on the article by James and Seshagiri, where modernism is seen as an archive of which elements can be taken and updated to the twenty-first century.

Overall, the online and professional reviewers for *Hotel World* recognize the modernist techniques that Smith uses in her novel, specifically her use of stream-of-consciousness and the lack of punctuation. The term “making it new” was also used by David Robinson, whereas Paul Bryant argues that Smith uses the techniques but does not reinvent them. The novel is mainly recognized as modernist by most of the reviewers, although the term itself is hardly used, it becomes clear from the way they describe her work and refer to modernist writers that they understand the relation to modernism. One of the reviewers argued that the novel is postmodernist instead of modernist, but overall it seems that the reviewers are in agreement about the modernist nature of the novel. In comparison, both online and professional reviewers for *How to Be Both* do not actively recognize the novel as modernist, even though they use terms related to modernism. They do often describe the work as inventive but do not relate this to modernism or postmodernism. In terms of relating the metamodernism debate to the research into the reception of the novel, it seems that the reception is part of a different reality than the debate, but does have an influence on it. Reception influences the metamodernist debate since it is one of the aspects that is being researched within it, the two are not part of the same reality because as can be seen in the reviews, the reviewers are not aware that there is a metamodernist debate. Since most of the reviewers do recognize the modernist aspects of mainly *Hotel World*, it shows that they are aware of the return of modernist techniques. This return of modernist techniques is what the metamodernist debate is about. The author research is part of another different reality than the debate and the reception research but also influences the other realities. The author research influences the other two components because if an author actively profiles themselves as modernist, this might influence the reception of the work. If this is the case, readers might have seen this active profiling and know beforehand that the work is supposed to be modernist, so they will most likely pick up on modernist techniques or links to modernism more easily. Since, in the case of Ali Smith, she does not profile herself at all, as she believes

that a work should stand on its own, this influences the reception by not influencing the readers. Overall, the reviewers do add to the metamodernist debate, as this type of research can show whether or not both online and professional reviewers feel the resurgence of modernist literature.

Conclusion

This thesis examined how Ali Smith's two novels *Hotel World* and *How to Be Both* relate to the literary modernism of the twentieth century. Furthermore, it analysed how Ali Smith and her novels fit into the metamodernist debate. The debate is a result of the return of modernist literature in the works of twenty-first-century contemporary authors. Author research, close analysis and reception research were the modes of research used in order to answer the main research question, as well as to test the metamodernist debate. The metamodernist debate has been outlined by describing the different branches that make up the debate. The first branch consists of the ideas posed by Tim Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, who defined metamodernism as a literary genre that oscillates between modernism and postmodernism but is mainly focused on postmodernism. The second branch is based on the ideas of David James and Urmila Seshagiri, who argue that metamodernism is linked to modernism instead of postmodernism. They specifically argue that metamodernism uses modernist traditions but "make it new" by placing it in a new context and updating it to the twenty-first century. A third party is Bentley et al., who add to the debate as they acknowledge that some contemporary writers have continued to use postmodernist techniques, but also discuss that some of these writers are consciously using modernist techniques too. Therefore, Bentley et al. seem to argue for both branches in the metamodernist debate. Vermeulen and Van den Akker do not relate metamodernism to literature, and this thesis could provide insight whether or not their ideas can also be related to literature, based on the conclusions drawn from the author interviews, the close analysis and the reception research.

From the author interviews on *Hotel World*, it became clear that Ali Smith does not profile herself as a modernist author. She does discuss how James Joyce's wordplay and his portrayal of the relation between the living and the dead have been an inspiration for her. By linking her novel to Joyce, Smith alludes to a modernist nature of her novel. However, she does not actively profile herself as an author in a specific genre but instead allows the novel to speak for itself. This is exemplified by the fact that Smith rarely gives interviews, which is why there were only two interviews that focussed on *Hotel World*. There were more interviews for *How to Be Both* than on *Hotel World*, but still only a few. In the video interview on the novel, she discusses that she understands why people see modernist techniques in her works and states that she uses these subconsciously, simply because she has always been enthusiastic about the literary genre. Smith does clearly state that she does not profile herself as a modernist author, or any type of author. The main focus in her interviews

is on the novels themselves what they were inspired by, rather than on her as an author. Based on the author research, Smith does not actively place her novels within the metamodernist debate herself.

The close analyses of the novels provided a different insight into the novels' place in the metamodernist debate. The overall conclusion about *Hotel World* showed that placing the novel in one branch of the debate is difficult. The story itself takes place in postmodern Britain, and the portrayal of money in the novel, as argued by Mary Horgan, is a postmodern tendency. Smith uses money as a way of criticising capitalism, which resonates with Vermeulen and Van den Akker's idea that metamodernism reacts to postmodernism and today's global capitalism (2017, 5). However, arguments are also made for the modernist notion of the novel; Smith has used modernist writing techniques, such as stream-of-consciousness, and has updated these techniques to the twenty-first-century by doing something new with them, especially in relation to time and how two narratives can exist at the same time. As Mary Horgan wrote, the notion of money can also be argued to be a modernist notion as it "propose[s] a modernism that is at once continued and new." (171-172) Therefore, *Hotel World* is situated between the two branches in the metamodernist debate, combining the ideas of Vermeulen and Van den Akker, and James and Seshagiri. This could then argue in favour of Bentley et al.'s ideas, that there are multiple options as to what has come after postmodernism. Based on this analysis, metamodernism could be seen as a mix of reworked modernism and postmodernism, combining both of the branches in the metamodernist debate.

How to Be Both on the other hand, is placed within the branch of James and Seshagiri. As argued in Chapter 3, Smith does maintain a postmodern view in relation to consciousness and the self. However, the main themes Smith touches upon in her novel are considered modernist and have been used by modernist authors during the Modernist Period. With her novel, Smith aims to show the development of consciousness and uses stream-of-consciousness to show the inner thoughts of the characters. Along with this modernist narrative technique, she also plays with words and their meaning, combines poetry with prose and presents a fragmented structure in her novel. Her novel is experimental and raises the question of what it means to be both and discusses this through an exploration of gender, novel structure and time. She innovatively uses these techniques and themes, which is why it ties in with the ideas posed by James and Seshagiri about "making it new" and using modernism as an inspirational archive, without copying previous modernist writers.

The reception research showed that reviewers are not aware of the ongoing metamodernist debate, or do not comment on the fact that they are, which provides difficulty in placing the novels in the debate based on their reception. Overall, the reviewers for *Hotel World* discuss Smith's modernist writing techniques and describe her as inventive, unique, and experimental. Although they do not actively relate her novel to modernism, or relate the techniques that she uses to modernism, the descriptions that they give of the structure of the novel and her writing style in their reviews, shows that they recognize these techniques, even if they do not recognize them as being modernist. They also make references to some modernist novelists, which shows that the reviewers are aware of the genre. Based on these notions, the novel would be placed in the James and Seshagiri branch of the metamodernist debate, as the focus is mainly on innovation of the existing modernist ideas.

Situating the reception of *How to Be Both* within the metamodernist debate proved more difficult based on the reviews. Both online and professional reviewers do not actively label the novel as modernist or recognize the writing techniques used as modernist. This novel is again described as being inventive, innovative and experimental, but no connections are made between the novel and the modernist genre or time period. Based on the use of the words experimental and innovative, the novel would fit within the James and Seshagiri branch of the debate, since they focus on the renewed use of the genre.

Both the reception of *Hotel World* and *How to Be Both* show that reception research is not interconnected with the metamodernist debate. They are part of different realities, while they do influence each other. Reception is one of the aspects that is researched within the metamodernist debate, in order to provide insight into how modernist elements of the novel are reflected in the reception of the novel. As research into the reception of Smith's novels shows, some of the modernist elements that were explored in the close analyses of the novels are reflected in the reviews. The author research is part of another different reality than the debate and the reception research, but it still influences both the metamodernist debate and the reception of the novel. The author research influences the other two components because if an author actively profiles themselves as modernist, this can influence the reception of the work since reviewers might already know that the work is modernist before reading it. If this is the case, they will most likely pick up on modernist techniques or links to modernism more easily. Ali Smith, however, does not profile herself at all, as she believes that a work should stand on its own, but this influences the reception by not influencing the readers.

To conclude, this thesis will return to the question of how Ali Smith relates herself to twentieth-century modernism, as well as her novels and how this relates to the metamodernist debate. As an author, she does not profile herself as modernist and therefore, does not actively relate herself to this literary genre or time period. The close analyses of the novels showed that, although Smith does not profile herself as such, she uses modernist techniques in both of her novels, specifically by using a stream-of-consciousness narration in order to portray the inner self of the characters, as well as portraying modernist themes in her novels. The epigraphs to *Hotel World*, are mainly linked to the postmodern era, which shows that she does actively connect this novel to postmodernism, rather than to modernism. The reception research showed that Smith is often referred to as being innovative or as doing something new in her novels. The reviewers make links to some modernist authors and modernist techniques are mentioned, but overall, the reception does not actively relate Smith to modernism. Therefore, it becomes clear that although she uses modernist techniques in her work, she does not relate herself to twentieth-century modernism. Smith is a novelist who is innovative and tries to do new things with her writing, whether in narrative structure or even the form of the novel. This is also reflected in both of the novels and their analyses. Therefore, if she would be placed in the metamodernist debate, she would fit into the branch of David James and Urmila Seshagiri, as she has updated modernist techniques and narrative structure to the twenty-first century. Although reception research and author research are part of different realities than the metamodernist debate, as argued before, they do add to the metamodernist debate. Reception research shows whether or not the resurgence of modernist literature is felt by both online and professional reviewers, and the author research shows how these contemporary authors profile themselves in relation to the metamodernist debate.

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