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Introduction

The term 'modernism', central to English-language criticism of early twentieth-century literature at least since Laura Riding and Robert Graves published their *Survey of Modernist Poetry* in 1927, has continually widened in scope. Contemporary scholars often describe modernism, understood as a cosmopolitan movement in literature and the arts reflecting a crisis of representation, as having arisen in Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century and developing up to, and even after, the Second World War. Even so classic and wide-ranging an earlier account as the collection that Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane edited in 1976, *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature, 1890–1930*, today seems strangely limited in its historical timeframe. Modernism now seems to be a movement whose roots go back well over a century and whose effects are still being felt today.

This broadening of the concept's historical boundaries has not always resulted in a similarly broad geographical perspective. The reassessment of modernism in the wake of postmodernism has led to the founding of the Modernist Studies Association and many similar scholarly groups; it has led to new explorations of the historical and social context of modern literature, notably with attention to questions of empire, gender, sexuality, political commitment, the role of avant-garde journals, and the status of long-neglected authors. Yet these recent studies of modernism have tended, somewhat perversely, to take an increasingly narrow "Anglo-American" view of modernism, focusing almost exclusively on literature written in English. Even major interventions in "transnational" modernism tend to focus almost exclusively on the literature of the former British Empire.[1] A comparable reassessment of European modernism is long overdue.

Departments of foreign languages and literatures have undertaken similar investigations, but these have not resulted in a comprehensive historical reconsideration of European modernism at large, although a fine scholarly survey was recently published under the auspices of the International Comparative Literature Association.[2] The current volume brings together

specialists working in a variety of national and regional literatures, many with training in Comparative Literature, to reconsider modernism as a European phenomenon. Our definition of modernism is deliberately broad and varies according to the local contexts of the literatures we study.

The reassessment of modernism in recent years has proceeded in tandem with broader critical discussions of cosmopolitanism. These discussions span the fields of literary criticism, philosophy, and anthropology, and they often echo concerns that were crucial to the modernists themselves – such as the competing claims of universal ethics and local politics, the delights and dangers of rootlessness, and the relationships between cosmopolitanism and global capitalism. Contributors to this volume have been asked to consider what this cosmopolitan movement in the arts can teach us about life as a citizen of Europe and of the world.[3] Modernism, as a field of study, has changed over the last generation. So too has Europe. The geographical center of our study here is considerably further to the south and east than those of many earlier accounts.

The crisis of representation evident in modernism has its roots in other crises: of faith, of reason, of liberalism, of empire. In an earlier volume, I explored the role of these crises in the development of English-language literature, with some reference to the European context.[4] A better understanding of how these forces shaped a broader European literature requires a collective effort. Although the essays in this volume are structured around the individual linguistic traditions in which the contributors have expert knowledge, they were written, and are meant to be read, with a comparative perspective in mind. We have tried to trace the international movement of ideas, forms, and artists themselves, from Rilke, Lorca, Joyce, Svevo, and Maiakovskii to lesser-known cosmopolitans, whether their travels were voluntary or involuntary. These contributions, and the discussion they generated at a meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association in 2009, have identified several key points for understanding the sources of European modernism: language, the unconscious, sexuality and gender, institutions, liberalism, Europe as other, empire, cosmopolitanism, and the challenges of periodization.

Language. Literary modernism has long been understood to be centrally concerned with the contingency of language and reference. This insight is often traced, fairly enough, to Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theories and the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, although it certainly has sources in the nineteenth century, such as Nietzsche and Flaubert. By the early twentieth century, the sense of language as contingent was widespread. The story of linguistic experimentation during a period when empires were breaking up and new nations were being formed underlines the truth of

the saying that the Yiddish linguist Max Weinreich popularized, "a language is a dialect with an army and a navy." On the fringes of Europe, and even in its center, modern writers were actively involved in supporting the cause of dialects or spoken languages that were aspiring to become national literary languages – in Catalonia, Switzerland, Celtic Britain and Ireland, and throughout Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time, the invention of universal languages like Esperanto; the introduction of the Roman alphabet in Turkey as part of a political program of Westernization and modernization; and even the belated linguistic unification of Italy (which Luca Somigli discusses in his essay in this volume) contributed to the modernists' awareness of the contingency of language. In his essay on Habsburg modernism, Scott Spector traces Hoffmansthal's questioning of referentiality in his famous Lord Chandos letter partly to the multinational character of the Habsburg Empire, centered on turn-of-the-century Vienna.

The unconscious. Like the contingency of language, the unconscious might seem a discovery, or invention, of Central Europe. While Freud's explorations of the psyche were an individual achievement of world-historical significance, his debts too have been traced in part, notably by Carl Schorske, to the political situation in Freud's Vienna.[5] Other writers helped to spread awareness of the centrality of unacknowledged irrational impulses to mental life, a heritage once again going back to Nietzsche and to Dostoevskii, Dujardin, and Strindberg in the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, the Freudian conception of the self was diffused in very different ways by the Surrealists in France, the Bloomsbury Group in England, and the Frankfurt School in Germany. Meanwhile, Freud was parodied in the novels of Joyce, Mann, and Svevo, and challenged by the unorthodox psychoanalysts Otto Gross at Ascona and Andreas Embirikos in Athens, as Rudolf Kuenzli discusses in his essay on Switzerland and Roderick Beaton in his essay on Greece. In a modernist framework, the embrace of the unconscious was only one facet of a broader attempt to breach the traditional walls between life and art evident in Baudelaire's bohemianism, D'Annunzio's decadentism, Wilde's dandyism, the aestheticism of the George Circle, and the autobiographical poetry of Anna Akhmatova. In the manifesto of one among many ephemeral avant-gardes, the Czech poet Karel Teige captured the spirit of all such groups when he wrote that "Poetism is, above all, a way of life."

Sexuality and gender. Just as central to the radicalism of the modernists, but perhaps less often acknowledged in earlier scholarly treatments, was the exploration of new possibilities for sexual life (glimpsed but not always encouraged by orthodox psychoanalysis), or even the wholesale rethinking of the relationship between the sexes or the relationship between mind and

body, as glimpsed in movements such as feminism, nudism, and vegetarianism. As well, recent criticism has addressed the homosexuality of many leading modernists with increasing candor. The current volume considers not only the famous cases of Wilde, Gide, Proust, Lorca, and Cavafy, but also the early coming-out novel, *Wings*, by Mikhail Kuzmin, which Harsha Ram analyzes in his essay on Russian modernism. Other forms of sexual experimentation are central to the expressionist theater of Frank Wedekind and the fiction of Arthur Schnitzler. English-language critics have, over the last generation, recovered the work of many important women writers, including H.D., Gertrude Stein, Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield, and Elizabeth Bowen; this collection builds on that lead with a consideration of a range of women modernists from Akhmatova to Woolf, including Rachilde, Colette, Lady Augusta Gregory, Else Lasker-Schüler, Zinaida Gippius, and Rosa Chacel.

Institutions. The rethinking of the male canon has been perhaps slower in continental traditions, where the story of modernism is often told in terms of a continual cycle of Oedipal revolt of one group of young male artists against the generation of their fathers. C. Christopher Soufas, Jr. challenges the generational model in his account of Spanish literary history. The essays collected here inquire into the formation of various modernist movements, whether tightly unified avant-gardes like the Italian futurists or the Surrealists, "schools" of like-minded individuals in Vienna or Thessaloniki, or groups sharing broader cultural affinities, like the Bloomsbury Group, which Marina MacKay analyzes in her essay on British modernism. Sometimes such groups were formed by political circumstance; Turkey, England, and Spain each had its own "generation of 1914." Whether in world capitals or provincial towns, loose affinity groups often coalesced briefly around those many little magazines that, as Gertrude Stein liked to say, "died to make verse free": these included *Blast* in London, *La Voce* in Florence, *La Ronda* in Rome, *Dada* in Zurich, *Życie* in Warsaw, *Ta Nea Grammata* in Athens, and *Dergâh* in Istanbul. Where linguistic experiment was closely tied to nationalism, such journals tended to be more explicit in their political content, as with *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* in Dublin, *L'Avenç* in Barcelona, *Nyugat* in Budapest, and the Yiddish *Kritik* in Vienna; more broad-based journals, such as *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, *Der Sturm*, and *The Egoist*, achieved a different level of institutional stability. In her contribution, Ellen Sapega traces the emergence of Portuguese modernism through the history of the journals *Orpheu* and *Portugal Futurista*, while Nergis Ertürk shows how the republican government in Turkey encouraged the development of a Western-style modernism as a facet of political and social modernization.

Liberalism. The case of Turkish "Occidentalism" suggests the complexity of the various relationships between modernist writers and the institutions of representative democracy, political liberalism, industrial capitalism, and modern society in its broadest sense. If Western European modernists paradigmatically sought to "*épater les bourgeois*" ("shock the middle class"), this was easier to accomplish, and a more obvious goal, where the middle class held power. Yet modernism seems to have begun very shortly after the not always successful claims of political power made on behalf of the bourgeoisie in the revolutions of 1848. France itself would not have a stable liberal democratic regime until 1871; liberalism was in continual crisis in post-Risorgimento Italy, and it did not always thrive on the rocky soil of Wilhelmine Germany and Habsburg Austria-Hungary. As Marci Shore observes in her essay on Eastern Europe, liberalism in that region came late: "it was over almost as soon as it had arrived." Even in the nation of shopkeepers, the beacon of liberal politics during the nineteenth century, George Dangerfield would analyze "the strange death of Liberal England" in the years immediately preceding the First World War. While the modernists, and especially those belonging to the more experimental avant-gardes, often found themselves attracted to utopian and sometimes totalitarian political movements of the left and the right, a few, such as Thomas Mann and E. M. Forster, did make common cause with liberalism and the middle classes from which so many writers and artists had sprung. Those who became most enamored of political revolution often turned out to be among its early victims.

Europe as other. In the context of political modernization, it is notable that for virtually every modernist, including even those in the global financial capital London, the "center" seemed to be elsewhere. Paris was perhaps the only modernist city to consider itself culturally central, the capital not only of the nineteenth century (in Walter Benjamin's phrase) but also of the early twentieth. Nonetheless, Maurice Samuels points to the limitations of Paris's centrality in his essay on French modernism. A number of the essays in this volume suggest that apparently "peripheral" regions, such as Spain or Eastern Europe, offered particularly salient contributions to the development of modernism because of their special relationship to the question of modernization. In his essay on Scandinavia, Leonardo Lisi suggests that the Scandinavians' awareness of their peripheral status with respect to Europe made them unusually open to calls for aesthetic innovation and rupture. Russian writers like Aleksandr Blok engaged in a form of "self-orientalization" when they represented themselves as Eurasian, while Turkish writers practiced a certain "Occidentalism," projecting their desires and their fears onto Europe; in both cases, debate focused on whether the

European or the Asian side of the national character should predominate, or how the appropriate fusion should be achieved.

The volume's table of contents depends on a core/periphery model based loosely on the work of sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein, which has inspired much recent scholarship on world literature. Notably, in the "core" nations, modernism was often a critique of social and technological modernity, while in the periphery nations it seemed to be a path to more complete modernization – a fuller integration into that Europe which was always conceived as elsewhere. (It is clearly somewhat arbitrary to include the Habsburg Empire, Russia, or even Italy in the core rather than the periphery, but previous literary histories tend to have seen them as part of the core of modernism, even if not the core of Europe.) Contributors also note other patterns of flow, often following migration (Russians in Germany; Americans in Paris; peripatetic Eastern Europeans), that provide alternatives to the core/periphery model. Such movements were as likely to be centrifugal (in the nationalist movements of Central and Eastern Europe) as centripetal (drawing exiles and émigrés to Paris, London, or Berlin).[6]

Empire. Even more than the crisis of liberalism, the crucial historical context for these political considerations is the decline of empire. If, during the high tide of literary modernism, Britain reached the apogee and started to envisage the decline of its imperial power, leaving its mark on the works of Joseph Conrad, W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, E. M. Forster, and others, the decline of empire in continental Europe was much more pronounced and sudden. In the course of 1917–18, four great transnational empires – the Wilhelmine, Habsburg, Romanov, and Ottoman – quite suddenly dissolved. Much recent criticism of English-language modernism has been concerned with the British Empire and its break-up.[7] Studies of European modernism seem to have paid less attention to the aftermath of empire. This volume calls attention to the broader post-imperial character of modernism, not by drawing on a one-size-fits-all post-colonial theory, but through historical analysis of the unique situations in various regions of Europe. The essays take up some of the issues created by this sudden redrawing of the map of Europe, including the rebirth of Poland, the growth of irredentism in Italy, the emergence of smaller nation-states throughout the former territories of the Romanovs and Habsburgs, and the emergence of the modern Turkish Republic. In Western Europe, France (like Britain) began to foresee the possibility of losing its overseas empire, while Portugal and Spain looked back nostalgically to their former imperial power. Italy unwisely, and fatefully, undertook its own imperial adventures in Libya and Ethiopia.

Cosmopolitanism. The inhabitants of the erstwhile Habsburg and Ottoman lands, born into multinational empires and often transformed

willy-nilly into citizens of tiny nation-states, were cosmopolitans perforce. So too were the three generations of Irish writers who revolutionized literature in English ("a language not their own," Joyce called it). As Megan Quigley shows in her essay on Irish modernism, these writers often had to leave Ireland in order to have their plays produced or their novels printed, although some, like Joyce and Beckett, left their homeland behind quite willingly. Certainly the cosmopolitanism of a German-speaking Jew in Prague differed in character from that of a Cambridge-educated intellectual in Bloomsbury; and certainly there were modernists who clung with ferocity to their local attachments; but for the most part, the writers this volume considers saw themselves as engaged alike in a universalistic enterprise. As recent debates about cosmopolitanism have reminded us, it is possible to perceive the international aspirations of global elites as part of a quest for global democracy, or as facilitating the exportation of Western capitalist values to the rest of the world.[8] Modernism arose in a period of accelerating globalization in the late nineteenth century. From its origins, it faced criticism from those who deemed it too cosmopolitan – lacking local or national ties, politically uncommitted, and open to dangerous foreign influences. Sometimes "cosmopolitan" was a code word for Jewish; and several contributors underline the centrality to modernism of Jewish writers, such as Kafka, Joseph Roth, Georg Lukács, Svevo, and Lasker-Schüler, as well as the appeal of Judaism as a theme even for gentiles, like Joyce, or those of mixed parentage, like Proust. Modernism was a fundamentally cosmopolitan movement, in the root sense of that word, a movement of citizens of the world and of world-cities, from Woolf's London to Belyi's Petersburg to Cavafy's Alexandria.[9] The prevalence of pseudonyms among the famous names of modernism – Joseph Conrad, Guillaume Apollinaire, Blaise Cendrars, Tristan Tzara, Man Ray, Italo Svevo, Flann O'Brien, Witkacy – points in part to the role of migration in the formation of modern literature, but equally perhaps to the writers' desire to invent new, cosmopolitan identities for themselves. A surprising number of modernists could claim that their national origin made them uniquely cosmopolitan; thus Fernando Pessoa wrote that "The Portuguese are original and interesting because, being strictly Portuguese, they are cosmopolitan and universal." More than a few would have celebrated Leopold Bloom's vision, in Joyce's *Ulysses*, of the "new Bloomusalem": "New worlds for old. Union of all, jew, moslem, and gentile . . . General amnesty, weekly carnival with masked license, bonuses for all, Esperanto the universal language with universal brotherhood . . . Mixed races and mixed marriage." In the event, these utopian visions were not to be realized.

Periodization. The trials of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* in 1857 serve as a convenient starting-point for modernism,

marking as they do the growing antagonism between advanced literature and state censorship, as well as the growing disillusionment with the legacy of 1848. The following decade saw the publication (but not yet production) of Ibsen's great modern play *Peer Gynt* (1867, performed 1876). Yet if these works seem obvious precursors of modernism, should not Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), with its playful use of first- and third-person narration and its unforgettable portrayal of the modern city, also belong to the genealogy traced in this volume? In the final two decades of the nineteenth century, that characteristic modernist form, the manifesto, became widespread, representing such arguably proto-modernist movements as naturalism and symbolism. It was in the decade leading up to the First World War that the manifesto as art-form achieved its finest efflorescence in such movements as futurism, acmeism, vorticism, sensationism, and (during the war) Dada; after the war, surrealism, formism, and zenithism followed. Virginia Woolf claimed famously that "On or about December 1910, human character changed." There can be little dispute that the experimental literature produced between 1910 and 1930 deserves the label modernist (although the applicability of that term to less obviously experimental literature is indeed debatable). So when did modernism end? Clearly the coming to power of the Nazis in 1933 put an end to the movement in Germany, as did the start of the Civil War in Spain in 1936; more broadly, the politically committed anti-fascist literature of the 1930s tends to shy away from the overt experimentalism of the earlier avant-gardes or "high modernists." Yet many contributors to this volume make a case for the continuity of modern literature in various traditions even after the Second World War. Tobias Boes argues in his essay on German modernism that the identification of the term with the Weimar Republic (1918–33) is misleadingly narrow. The modernist legacy can clearly be discerned in the later work of Brecht and Mann, as well as in such diverse writers from across Europe as Paul Celan, Samuel Beckett, Nathalie Sarraute, Flann O'Brien, Carlo Emilio Gadda, Vladimir Nabokov, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Jean Rhys, Milan Kundera, Nikos Kazantzakis, and Orhan Pamuk. If the borders of Europe remain subject to change, so too do the boundaries of the multifarious expression of literary and cultural crisis that we have come to call modernism.

NOTES

1. See Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel, eds., *Geo-Modernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005) and "Modernism and Transnationalism," special issue, *Modernism/Modernity* 13.3 (September 2006).
2. Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska, eds., *Modernism*, Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages, vol. XXI (Amsterdam: John Benjamins,

2007), 2 vols. Two contributors to the current volume, Luca Somigli and C. Christopher Soufas, Jr., also contributed to the earlier collection.

3. Most of us are based in North America but are frequent visitors to Europe; we would not want to claim to advise Europeans on their current political arrangements.
4. Pericles Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (Cambridge University Press, 2007). Considerations of space and of linguistic competence meant that the earlier volume was essentially an introduction to English modernism. It is my hope that the current volume makes up for the deficiency of the earlier one in this regard.
5. Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1970).
6. The matters discussed briefly in this paragraph are explored at much greater length in Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," *New Left Review* 1 (2000): 54–66; David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton University Press, 2003). See also Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, 3 vols. (New York: Academic Press, 1974–89) and Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002).
7. See for example the excellent collection *Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish Literature, 1899–1939*, ed. Richard Begam and Michael Valdez Moses (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007).
8. For broad philosophical defenses of cosmopolitanism, see Martha Nussbaum *et al.*, *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, ed. Joshua Cohen (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton University Press, 2001); Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Norton, 2006). For a more critical assessment, see Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, eds., *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998). For the modernist context, see Jessica Berman, *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
9. Lewis, *Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*, p. 97.