Introduction

Das Werk ist die Totenmaske der Konzeption.
– Walter Benjamin[1]

THE WORK OF MODERNISM IN AN AGE OF CELEBRITY

Although Marilyn Monroe and James Joyce never met in person, they met each other and posterity in one of Monroe's publicity photos: Monroe pictured reading Joyce (see Figure 1).[2] Each cultural entity – the celebrity and the modernist – assumes its characteristic form as cultural capital. One signifies the woman at the keyhole, the cipher of celluloid, the celebrity star image; the other signifies the objective correlative of her brains, the magisterial book-in-print, the modernist's textual imprimatur. The homology lies at the crux of this book. Like the star image, the textual imprimatur is a metonym for its subject, a metonym that represents it as an object of cultural production, circulation, and consumption. Strictly speaking, modernists like Joyce were not cut from the same celebrity cloth as movie stars like Monroe. Unlike movie stardom, the matrix of associations supporting their reputations is not intrinsically image-based but predicated instead on a distinctive textual mark of authorship, a sanction for distinguishing a high literary product from the inflating signs of consumption.

For all the revisionist work about the canon during the last decades, only a dozen or so names and texts remain in heavy rotation when modernism is discussed.[3] Paradoxically, the expanded modernist canon shows that the rule of scarcity remains a powerful principle for organizing literary reputations, a rule which dovetails perfectly with the limited resources and meager shelf-space devoted to "serious literature." This operating principle, I submit, was founded during the interwar period on modernist works and doctrines as certain modernists worked to create and expand a market for elite authorial signatures. As F. M. Marinetti cast his defiance unto the

Figure 1 Monroe and Joyce, 1955.

stars, modernists like T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and Wyndham Lewis cast their reputations against an increasingly indifferent, transnational culture of celebrity, which unraveled traditional modes of literary self-fashioning. Hedging against celebrity and its fetish of biography, they transformed the authorial signature itself into a means of exposing – indeed, publicizing – modernist work in a variety of extramural generic and cultural registers.

Scrutinizing the "High Modernists" in their two characteristic haunts – canonical masterpieces and literary apocrypha – this book is interested in why, when, and how modernist visions and revisions of reputation inflect the production of modernist texts, their politics, and literary history. My concern is neither modernist celebrities in pop culture nor celebrity sightings in modernist texts; instead, I seek to account for two seemingly paradoxical, yet interrelated phenomena: the capacity of modernist texts to sustain an exclusionary notion of literary reputation, and the capacity of certain modernist careers to fix "masterpieces" in emerging economies of cultural prestige by calling upon a matrix of secondary literary labors. Prominent modernists – Eliot, Pound, Joyce, Lewis, to name the four under sustained consideration – were more canny about fashioning their careers – indeed, fashioning the very notion of a literary career – than is often appreciated. Even as literary *self*-fashioning became increasingly inscrutable, figures like Lewis, Eliot, and Pound mobilized their textual signatures – their authorial imprimaturs – into durable promotional vehicles for their careers, hybridizing bodily agency and textual form.

That is to say, Lewis, Eliot, and Pound had a stake in offering their imprimaturs and those of selected contemporaries like Joyce, Djuna Barnes, and Marianne Moore as the embodiment of representative distinction: it was a means to economize and thus monopolize the plenitude of the literary firmament and uphold a two-tier system of modernist labor. For the duration of their careers – and with particular intensity during the interwar period – modernists and their allies, working to create and expand a market for elite literary works, transformed the textual signature itself into a means of promotion. Imprimatur fashioning informed the *ad hoc* infrastructure of modernist production from its elite durable goods to its sanctioned, masculinist frameworks of reviewing, introducing, editing, and anthologizing to its kinds of devalued, feminized collaborative work apocryphally documented in modernist memoirs.

My first chapter traces the descent of this form of capital from the rise of professionalism at the end of the nineteenth century to the fall of modernist careerism in the early forties. Thus, beginning with examples from Henry James's stories of literary life, I examine the messages about public literary persona, authority, and politics coded in expert narrative about authorship. I compare the Jamesian example with Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, perhaps the most frequently invoked modernist author–novel. Finally, considering Lewis's *Revenge for Love*, Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies*, Edward Upward's *Journey to the Border*, and Christopher Isherwood's *Prater*

Violet, I show the modernist model being remade and undone during late modernism.

My second chapter examines the relationship between the critical wings of modernism, the making of modernist reputation, and the circulation of modernist names as rarefied, fungible commodities in economies of great names. Specifically, I compare the uses and abuses of the authorial adjective (for example, "Jamesian," "Joycean," etc.) in modernist and practical criticism. The modes of criticism inaugurated by Eliot and Pound and elaborated by I. A. Richards and F. R. Leavis were predicated on certain assumptions about the scarcity of elite literary reputation. In the second chapter, I analyze how many of these assumptions – in particular, impersonality of critical method and autonomy of the objects of criticism – in fact disguise deep resemblances between public literary persona and the ideal, magisterial author presupposed in modernist theories of literary production.

By and large, women literary figures have been ill served by this apparatus. In my third and fourth chapters, I pursue this topic by investigating the recourse among modernists to the feminized, collaborative work of publicity. The key ingredient in elite modernist reputation, I argue, is not only the demonstration of high literary labor through imprimaturs and extant masterpieces, but also the capacity to frame work against contrastingly lesser labors of contemporaries, a scenario documented in accounts of modernist work in women's memoirs. The third chapter considers individual relationships staged between modernists. Examining the precarious position of women writers in Eliot's introductions and Pound's editing activities, I argue that their shared approach to the work of others calls for a revised interpretation of their celebrated shared work on *The Waste Land*. The fourth chapter turns to modernist intergroup relations and the dynamics of the new anthology system established in the 1910s and 1920s for advancing literary brands like the Georgians, the imagists, and Edith Sitwell's *Wheels* group. Here, I extend the thesis of the third chapter to the mechanisms of lionization, investigating a tendency in the anthologies' promotional logic to "find" certain figures and "lose" others, which I attribute, in part, to the factionalist ethos of its futurist origins.

My fifth chapter concerns the symbiosis of modernist reputation and the arts and culture superstructure emerging in interwar England. It examines the tension between Wyndham Lewis's prewar disdain for existing cultural institutions and his postwar bid to transform the London museum establishment into a modernist portrait gallery. I show how Lewis revises the prevailing portraiture ideal to accommodate the promotional logic of imprimaturs. Again, as in the four other case studies, modernism is already

at work crossing the border, closing the gap, and bridging high/low cultural divides. What is more, the purchase placed on managing a version of public notoriety increases as the duration of this notoriety increases, the growing span between the notoriety of the present and the original narratives of prewar lionization. Progressively, modernists strove to get the most effect from their existing renown in the popular press, over national radio, and from associations with cultural institutions, practices which served as feedback loops for publicizing and sustaining their careers, reputations, and imprimaturs.

ORDINARY MODERNISM

"How did this book get into my series?"

On Amazon.com, someone pretending to be Henry McBride – the seminal, long-deceased critic of modernist art – asks this of Lawrence Rainey's *Institutions of Modernism*, published in Yale's Henry McBride Series in Modernism and Modernity. Strangely enough, this joke, however recondite, seems to characterize a recent pattern of response to materialist accounts of modernism. The idols of the modernist past – according to certain latter-day ventriloquists, at least – are outraged. The presumption figures prominently in a particularly indignant review of Rainey's book by Roger Kimball. McBride's criticism, Kimball writes,

> was the polar opposite of the grim, politicized irrelevancies that Rainey provides. The fact that Rainey is General Editor of the Henry McBride Series adds insult to injury. McBride was famous for his easygoing humor, so perhaps he is smiling at the irony of it all instead of rolling over in his grave . . . [F]or the patrons of this series commemorating the achievement of a great critic – *Institutions of Modernism* must be regarded as an impertinence that is as offensive as it is calculated to be.[4]

Best known for his anti-academe jeremiads, Kimball is no friend to the modes of intellectual inquiry current in academic discourse. His misrepresentation of the genesis of cultural studies, for instance – a "popular pseudo-discipline that resulted from crossing Marxist animus with deconstructionist verbiage" – is so procrustean it is best read as a barometer of his intellectual bad-faith.[5] Given such conspicuous ill will, it is less noteworthy that Kimball finds a work like Rainey's objectionable than that he singles it out as representative: the arch-symptom of the purported vices of "chic academic criticism."[6]

Rainey's fevered brand of archival materialism and altogether measured theoretical claims hardly exemplify recent trends in academic criticism (let

alone Kimball's caricatured sense of a "discipline in crisis").[7] In fact, Rainey makes a far more specific intervention – all the more offensive to Kimball because its specific purchase on the material underpinning of modernist culture threatens the *ex nihilo* brand of cultural authority he cherishes. It entails telling the unofficial, often all too commonplace stories of modernist cultural production, tracing a selection of modernist masterpieces – *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses*, *A Draft of XVI Cantos*, *The Collected Poems of H.D.* – to their initial sites of patronage, promotion, and publication. The case studies exhibit an astonishing pattern: modernism's crowning successes often depend on their promotion among non-readers, a network of cultural producers not necessarily concerned with putting the aesthetic artifacts themselves first. "Not-reading," he provocatively suggests, is instrumental to modernism's "institutional profile," and, thus, he cautions his readers with "literary critical training" to expect "little of the detailed examination of actual works that is sometimes held to be the only important or worthwhile form of critical activity."[8]

This *caveat emptor* anticipates the consternation of readers like Kimball who complain that "Rainey is really not interested in novels or poems."[9] What's really off the table, though, is the presumption that modernist novels and poems are self-positing works. Rainey's achievement is his recognition that understanding modernism as a mode and means of cultural production means moving beyond the hard carapaces of modernist masterpieces, beyond both the critical practices founded on a "unilateral focus on [their] formal devices" and sifting them for residue of "ideological constellations." Bracketing these concerns for "the actual works" – that is, the actual contents strictly defined – allows Rainey to move his examination to "the intervenient institutions that connect works to readerships, or readerships to particular social structures."[10] In practice, then, what Rainey calls "not reading" actually means reading other things and interpretation by other means. In his over-saturated end-notes, one finds a prodigious amount of reading: lecture programs, travel-guides, bibliographies, biographies, mass distributed periodicals, publishers' ledgers, newspapers, little magazines, family histories, memoirs, exhibition catalogues, letters, reviews, and criticism. As this course in *reading other things* implies, the history of modernism's "structural logic and development" is embedded in the very types of writing its logic and development tended to erase, that is, the kinds of discourse it habitually marks as subordinate, minor, un-literary, or, worst of all, commercial. Further, the full range and extent of the practices, conventions, and institutions that regulate modernist cultural production remain one of the principal blind spots of contemporary criticism.

This form of neglect pinches modernist studies especially hard, and the kind of outrage Kimball directs at *Institutions of Modernism* helps explain why.

The presumed offense boils down to this: modernist culture is ordinary. We arrive at the unthinkable formulation: modernist cultural production is, in fact, cultural production. One imagines paroxysms in the offices of the *New Criterion*. No formula seems more at odds with the familiar accounts of modernist cultural activity – from the "extraordinary literary and critical authority" and elite pretensions of minority culture Kimball finds so beguiling to its claims to aesthetic autonomy and purported resistance to the mass marketplace.[11] Yet, surely modernism is also, among other things, ordinary. As producers of culture, modernists were keenly involved with the exigencies of making a place for themselves in the world and for their products in the cultural marketplace. Look at Pound's letter to Eliot's father in 1915, for example, anxiously making the case that Eliot's prospects for a career abroad in "unpopular writing" actually constitutes sound economy.[12] Not only does being an unpopular writer provide a living equal to that earned by practitioners of respectable professions like law, medicine, or the clergy, but, Pound reckons, it also provides the added benefits of "an infinitely more interesting life."[13]

Modernist culture is ordinary, then, in the particular sense Raymond Williams obtains in "Culture Is Ordinary." Modernist culture pairs descriptive claims about a whole way of life with prescriptive formulas about arts and culture. Modernism is more than just the instances of conscious "modernist" artistry. The "ordinary" idioms, practices, and institutions by which modernist aesthetic objects became known – that is, the ubiquitous tissue of promotion – are "modernist," too. Williams's famous polemic hinges on the synthesis of these descriptive and prescriptive meanings of the word "culture." On the one hand, the sociological, culture is "a whole way of life – the common meanings"; on the other, the axiological, it is "the arts and learning – the special processes of discovery and creative effort." "Some writers," Williams writes, "reserve the word for one or the other of these senses; I insist on both, and on the significance of their conjunction . . . Culture is ordinary in every society and every mind."[14] Modernist culture is ordinary yet everywhere mystified; that is where my book starts: the sociology of modernist axiology.[15]

Pound, for example, proves he is not detached from this logic of material causes when he tells Eliot's father in 1915 that a "man succeeds either by the scarceness or the abundance of copy."[16] Four years on, Eliot has the promotional strategy all worked out: there are

only two ways in which a writer can become important – to write a great deal, and have his writings appear everywhere, or to write very little. It is a question of temperament. I write very little, and I should not become more powerful by increasing my output. My reputation in London is built upon one small volume of verse, and is kept up by printing two or three more poems in a year. The only thing that matters is that these should be perfect in their kind, so that each should be an event.[17]

As I have already proposed, one of the chief obstacles to materialist accounts of modernism is the very critical apparatus erected by modernist writers like Pound and Eliot; publicists like John Middleton Murry, Edward Marsh, and Edwin Muir; and, eventually, academic allies like I. A. Richards, the Leavises, and the *Scrutiny* writers. That is to say, a critical regime that fetishizes peerless originality and conjures forth free-floating aesthetic artifacts obscures the difficult passage of the modernist text to its readers: not only the promotional uses of criticism but also a host of other necessary cultural labors. For this reason in particular – contrary to Rainey's emphasis on pseudo-aristocratic prerogatives of patronage – we should perhaps look to modernism's critical idioms for its most formidable institutions. These services were its most effective means of promotion. While such labors have never been wholly hidden from view, they have never been on display in modernism's canonical masterpieces either. Swept to one side of its arch literary compositions, books-in-print, and collected works, they have been nevertheless enshrined in the bibliographic record.[18] Prominently documented in the host of bibliographic endeavors modernists undertook in the period in addition to high literary labor, the collaborative promotion of modernist idiom is documented in modernist limited editions, small magazines, little reviews, introductions, editing, anthologies, and other cultural furnishings.

My book shares in a new turn in modernist studies towards what could be described as a post-romantic phenomenology of "influence" and the concomitant materialities of promotion: "influence" and promotion as imbricated vectors of cultural input and output.[19] The chapters that follow persistently emphasize authors and forms of authorship over, say, formalist or post-formalist accounts of modernist canons of masterpieces. Be warned, though – after an examination of the imprimatur in chapter one, more "not-reading" than "reading" (to appropriate Rainey's critical terms) of modernist masterpieces follows. While these matters do not quite represent a sea-change for modernist studies, they serve instead as fragments shored against its ruins, older critical constellations which merit rewriting, renewed scrutiny, and reformulation. When it comes to "influence" and

promotion, causation is complex, sometimes even multidirectional, mediated by a system of "exchanges" – to choose a suitably multidirectional and economic term – which is made possible by the warrants of literary names. The focus here is what could be roughly described as modernist self-fashioning, the instrumentality of signs of "authorship" not only for modernist projects and idioms but also for its critical posterity. When it comes to modernist studies, it seems, the name of the author won't go away. As so many entrance and exit visas, authorial names warrant the exchanges, the translations, the bearing of bodies and discourses. At best, authors are forever elusive, off-stage paring fingernails, feigning disinterest.[20] In their "diminished" capacities, however, they're arranging a host of contacts, ordinary labors, and promotional exchanges.

In any case, the usual suspects are well represented here. This book makes the looming presence of the familiar exchanges of modernist author-geniuses in modernist studies the very object of its analysis – those figures who fit into Pound's famous taxonomy of literary posterity as "masters" and "inventors," or who Foucault might have called the founders of modernist discursivity.[21] More tellingly, perhaps, the rest of Pound's taxonomy is also well represented: "the diluters," "the workers in 'the style of the period,'" "the belle lettrists," "the starters of crazes." To the Poundian rogues' gallery, we should add the indispensable literary workers Robert McAlmon disparagingly refers to as "intriguers" and "politicians" in the unexpurgated version of *Being Geniuses Together*.[22] Demystifying the mysterious processes between modernist bodies and discourses entails a quite literal and rigorous understanding of exchange, I think, one that directly accounts for the regulative institutional, technological, and, yes, economic frameworks that make modernist culture possible.

TOWARDS AN AXIOLOGY OF MODERNISM

Undertaking no less than a unified field theory of symbolic equivalence and exchange, Jean-Joseph Goux writes that in the

> drift of value objects, of interchangeable parts, a hierarchy (of values) develops, a principle of order and subordination which places the great (manifold and polymorphous) majority of "signs"... under the sacred command of a select few among them. In certain points of condensation, value seems to gather, capitalize, centralize itself investing certain elements with a privileged representativeness and even with a monopoly on representativeness within the diverse set of which they are members. The mysterious genesis of this privilege is effaced, leaving their monopoly absolute, absolved, exempted in their transcendent role as standard and measure of values.[23]

Plug modernist names in the foregoing as so many condensation points and the cunning of Goux's formulation for modernist studies becomes apparent. Condensation – a word with suggestive chemical, meteorological, and psychoanalytic connotations – both points to the accumulation of exaggerated hierarchy around *certain privileged* authors and undermines it as a kind of bogus sublime from which underpinnings of denser states of matter can be recovered ("the genesis of this ascendancy," "the genesis of every *institutionalization*," "to reconstitute the dictates of this stage direction"). Conceptually speaking, condensation is materialist; unlike sublimation, it moves from the immaterial to solid states of matter. Thus, it provides a keen analytic razor for seemingly incorporeal problematics such as modernist authorial immanence. Modernist imprimaturs condense (capitalize from the cultural field at large to *privileged representativeness* to *monopoly on representativeness*) because of an incentive-laden hoarding of value that was a deliberate part of its promotional logic.

Certainly, at the individual level, the assignment of literary value can be volitional, as, at communal level, it can be communicative.[24] In the history of the drift of value objects, it is also possible to track more comprehensive forms of interestedness, the promotional will to value as a form of modernist agency, for instance. I propose, in other words, to track the points of origin and terminus of drifts by better studying recent currents. The agents of modernist value are numerable and specifiable. The condensation of exaggerated cultural value around them depends not only on necessary promotional work but also on its habitual effacement. My contention is that something akin to surplus value, to invoke the specter of Marx, brings modernists into being as spectral forms of exaggerated hierarchy and confers upon them exchangeability. The materialist message is, to be brief, that modernist value capitalizes. It capitalizes through the systematic devaluation and effacement of a host of promotional and other literary labors first by modernist others and later in multiple scenes of reading and assorted cultural encounters. Detached, disembodied reputations have the visionary appearance of bodily agency and textual form, because of a host of necessary literary and semiotic labors. Whether reputations serve as capital or coins comes down to issues of availability. In their more solid form, they serve as capital, stores of value, hoarded assets available for use in the production of further value, expertise, and prestige. As coins, liquid assets, they serve as a medium of exchange and unit of account – standards for defining value relationally. That reputations serve both cultural roles – means to hoard and to exchange value – is borne out through the second current alluded to earlier, namely the drive to inexorable devaluation.