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MODERNISM AND WORLD WAR II

The Second World War marked the beginning of the end of literary modernism in Britain. However, this late period of modernism and its response to the War have not yet received the scholarly attention they deserve. In the first full-length study of modernism and the Second World War, Marina MacKay offers historical readings of Virginia Woolf, Rebecca West, T. S. Eliot, Henry Green and Evelyn Waugh set against the dramatic background of national struggle and transformation. In recovering how these major authors engaged with other texts of their time – political discourses, mass and middlebrow culture – this study reveals how the Second World War brought to the surface the underlying politics of modernism's aesthetic practices. Through close analyses of the revisions made to modernist thinking after 1939, MacKay establishes the significance of this persistently neglected phase of modern literature as a watershed moment in twentieth-century literary history.

MARINA MACKAY is Assistant Professor of English at Washington University in St. Louis.

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