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Introduction

Modernism emerged out of a historical moment ripe with cultural ferment. As painting, fiction, sculpture, poetry, film, and drama struggled to "make it new" in Ezra Pound's well-known imperative, writers were fascinated with the changes in culture that surrounded them.[1] Whether they lamented the passing of older forms of mass culture, as one finds in T.S. Eliot's paeans to the music hall performer Marie Lloyd, or enumerated the new possibilities opened by travel and industry, as one finds in *Blast*, modernist artists kept their eyes on both mass and high cultural forms and alluded to them in their work.[2]

In the past decade, scholars of modernism have become increasingly attuned to tracing modernist allusions to popular forms, and an interdisciplinary study of modernism has become the new norm. As Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz observed in their 2008 article "The New Modernist Studies," "*expansion*" has come to characterize the field over the last few decades.[3] A glance at the table of contents for any issue of *Modernism/modernity*, the field's premier journal, or a conference program for the annual meeting of the Modernist Studies Association demonstrates that articles and papers on modernist writers and artists are accompanied by pieces on designers of the period's *haute couture*, examinations of RAF air shows, and analyses of the revolving door, to name just a few.[4] Moreover, the founding in 2005 of the journal *Modernist Cultures*, which "seeks to . . . examine the interdisciplinary contexts of modernism and modernity," demonstrates the hunger to understand the relationships among modernism, mass and visual cultures, forms of consumption and entertainment, and the movements of ideas and peoples around the globe. Such scholarship has increasingly moved away from a model

based on a "great divide" – Andreas Huyssen's phrase for what he argues was instead a complicated relationship between modernism and mass culture[5] – to nuanced accounts of interpenetrating concerns and ongoing exchanges across cultural strata. Moreover, the new modernist studies has taken to heart the need to specify practices that might previously have been lumped under terms such as "culture" or "society," suggesting that, for example, the composition of Chanel N°5 might provide a better entrée into understanding modernist poetry than generalized accounts of advertising and consumption offer.[6]

While the interdisciplinary turn in modernist studies has produced volumes of exciting scholarship, it presents a high barrier to students and scholars, who are now expected not only to familiarize themselves with texts like *Ulysses* and *The Great Gatsby* and with movements such as Futurism, Symbolism, and the Harlem Renaissance but also to understand the significance of the Charleston, the gramophone, little magazines, "talkies," the bias cut, and numerous other cultural phenomena. Moreover, the relative ease of travel between the UK and the Continent (and between Europe and the United States), the circulation of media around the globe, and the international perspective adopted by many writers dictates that a national specialization – still the standard of many undergraduate and graduate programs – limits a student's awareness of the transnational culture of modernism. The field, once securely organized around a clear cohort of major writers, has exploded, not only in terms of the literary texts now considered worth examining but also in terms of the intertexts with which scholars are expected to be familiar.

This volume seeks to introduce readers to material and intellectual cultures that shaped the world in which modernist literature emerged. It focuses on the diverse inventions, products, ideas, entertainments, and creative forms that circulated roughly between 1890 and 1940 and constituted the culture that provoked and inspired modernist fiction, poetry, and drama.[7] *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Culture* does not draw upon literature as its primary archive, although the fourteen essays collected here point to moments in which cultural phenomena cross-pollinated modernist work. Instead, the essays draw from a wide range of archives to answer a set of specific questions: What innovations in each field reshaped the material world and individuals' daily lives? To what extent did cultural phenomena work across national boundaries or categories of individual identity (such as gender, race, region, and class) and where did they remain distinctly local? What fields and forms other

than the literary produced cultural innovations that might be thought of as modernist? And how might we understand the relationship between a historical moment ever receding from our own and the literature and art that we continue to study, teach, and enjoy?

The essays that follow answer these questions and others for readers beginning to study or hoping to expand their knowledge of modernism's cultural moment, offering lucid introductions to *some* of the venues that inspired and were themselves shaped by modernism. There are, of course, many additional subjects that might have been treated in a volume like this one; topics such as music, architecture, interior design, broadcasting, exhibition culture, pleasure parks, newspapers, and advertising, to name just a few, are largely outside the scope of the essays that follow. What readers will find, however, are essays that offer new and exciting approaches to significant social, political, cultural, and material forms that were themselves innovative and new and that inspired – and were themselves sometimes inspired by – modernism.

Part of what makes coming to grips with modernist culture – and with modernism itself – difficult is that the very category of the "modern" underwent constant change.[8] Perhaps nothing makes the evanescence of the modern clearer than a reminder of how early the term came into use: as the *Oxford English Dictionary* demonstrates, the word was printed as early as 1585 and was thereafter "often contrasted with *ancient* and hence in historical contexts taken as applying [...] to the entire period following the fall of the Western Roman Empire."[9] While literary studies, art history, and other fields have reframed the term as a late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century phenomenon, it is important to remember that Western thought has long deployed the term "modern" as a way of understanding a break between the present and the past. This is not meant to evacuate the term of all meaning but rather to suggest we approach "modern" (and terms like "modernity" and "modernism") with some humility as well as the awareness that the qualities they describe are ephemeral. What counted as "modern" in a given year would scarcely be regarded as such ten or even five years later.

This claim is easy to substantiate by glancing at technology, which supplies a long history of innovations that were quickly outmoded by new developments. Wax cylinder recordings, for example, offered unprecedented opportunities to record music, important speeches, and even family gatherings; although this recording method had been

invented in 1877, it was thought sufficiently important to receive a whole chapter in *Modern Inventions and Discoveries* (1904), where it was celebrated as a "wonder."[10] Yet within the next ten years, cylinder phonographs would fall out of favor as the gramophone came to dominate the marketplace.

Related examples could be repeated *ad infinitum* in registers ranging from fashion to transport to interior design; men and women who lived through the period came to take innovation (and rapid obsolescence) for granted. F. Scott Fitzgerald would lament that by 1923, "the flapper, upon whose activities the popularity of my first books was based, had become *passé*."[11] This sentiment is startling – Fitzgerald's first book, *This Side of Paradise*, had only been published in 1920, and few observers would have thought the flapper passé three years later – but similar attitudes were widespread. Noël Coward, the British actor, singer, playwright, and composer, expressed such a sentiment when asked to reflect on the 1920s, refusing to identify "[t]he latest dance from America" because "it will have become outmoded and been replaced in the short interval before these words get into print."[12] Coward's sense that the modern – the pursuit of the new, the "latest," and the modish – was such shifting ground that it wouldn't withstand transfer into print is reflected in many of the essays that follow, which demonstrate that the 1900s, the period of the Great War, the 1920s, and the 1930s each had their own version of the modern. The essays here are therefore attuned to historically specific versions of modernity – to not only *what* happened but also *when* and *where*.

If "modern" and "modernist" designate ever-shifting terrain, the term "culture" is equally protean. The twentieth century inherited a fairly constrained understanding of the term, one that was exemplified by Matthew Arnold's 1873 pronouncement that culture was "the best that has been known and said in the world." After the turn of the century, however, "culture" expanded through the use of modifiers: Arnold's successors might speak of a "high culture," but others widened its ambit by coining, for example, "corset culture," "warrior culture," and "popular culture."[13] The essays that follow address developments in long-standing cultural forms – visual art, for example, had a secure place – but they also take up innovations in material objects (pessaries, the automobile, printing presses); in public spaces (the cinema, night club, and department store); in newly organized and expanded forms of leisure (ranging from sport to travel to popular theater); and in ways of understanding the world through belief systems (such as religion) and

attitudes toward the self (sexuality, the body). As the contributors to this volume demonstrate, modernism both responded to and took a shaping hand in this culture, and contributors gesture toward novels, poems, and plays that intervened in cultural formations.[14] For example, as Allison Pease's chapter on sexuality demonstrates, writers not only integrated aspects of new sexual theories into their works: authors like Radclyffe Hall would give readers powerful visions of sexual identities through their novels. Although our focus here is not on literature proper – we leave that work to other Cambridge Companions – these essays address dialogues between literature and culture.

A focus on examining different cultural phenomena in their own right offers insight into the twin roles of cultural translation and cultural value in the early twentieth century. No local or national culture evolved in a vacuum; as essays by Helen Carr ("Travel") and others that follow demonstrate, it is partly the rapidity with which things moved around the globe or up (and down) cultural strata that created the sense of a "modern" culture. By cultural translation, I indicate the ways in which practices, productions, types of knowledge, and commodities moved across national borders and around the globe; as Len Platt's essay on popular theater demonstrates, for example, a production like George Edwardes's *The Geisha* (1896) not only enjoyed a phenomenally long first run in London but then went to cities ranging from New York to Cape Town to Singapore to Mumbai. While this example might suggest that cultural transfer went one way – from the center of the Empire outward – the show's *japonaiserie* underlines the role of Asian culture (however imperfectly understood) in inspiring a theatrical production that circulated worldwide. In other cultural venues – including fashion, dance, and religion – the transfer of previously "foreign" motifs and ideas into a Western idiom underlined an increasing transnational experience of the world, whether that experience took the form of voyaging to a new country or continent, wearing a paisley shawl, watching dancers (in film and on stage) who styled their performance after Eastern art, or learning about Eastern religions proper or hybrid belief systems that sought to integrate East and West.[15]

Modern culture moved across national boundaries in the early twentieth century, and it was equally marked by the movement of ideas and practices across cultural strata: across the so-called lowbrow, middlebrow, and highbrow.[16] These terms come into being in the early twentieth century – according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "middlebrow" first

surfaced in the 1920s – but the very act of attempting to demarcate the brows was a gesture against an increasingly untenable hierarchy of cultural value. Part of the generating force of modern culture, many contributors demonstrate, came from importing high cultural practices into mass forms of entertainment and vice versa. To take up just one example, Carrie J. Preston's chapter on dance explains that early film directors widely employed formally trained dancers, and they also encouraged actors and actresses to seek instruction from schools of dance, which offered techniques to express emotion physically. The movement of dance into and through cinema offers an example of a high cultural form providing inspiration for a genre that was both popular and avant-garde. If the early twentieth century witnessed a "battle of the brows," it was also a time of intense conversation within different forms and among the high, middle, and popular.

Often, of course, cultural transfer and the movement across cultural strata occurred simultaneously. As Judith Walkowitz writes in her chapter on urban pleasures, the Charleston – that dance that was to become so emblematic of modernism's cultural moment – began life in New York's Harlem nightclubs before moving "downtown" to the stages of Broadway. After crossing cultural strata on one side of the Atlantic, the dance was imported to London, and it ascended the cultural ladder through the auspices of the Prince of Wales, who learned the dance from a Café de Paris hostess. This complex synthesis of translation and what we might think of as cultural rehabilitation – turning what Walkowitz calls a "wild and vulgar" African-American dance into a step adopted by elites on both sides of the ocean – occurred through the actions of specific individuals (the Prince of Wales), nameless enthusiasts (the Café de Paris hostess, among others), and business owners looking to profit by promoting the latest, the most modern dance. Such crossing of national boundaries and cultural strata created the feeling of the modern not only through movement but also through a challenge to what had been considered appropriate or normal before.[17]

The essays in this volume are organized under three rough rubrics. The first section, "Shaping Worldviews," tackles large-scale systems of thought and belief that influenced daily life and individual identity for people around the globe. These essays, which address religion, science, sexuality, and internationalism, trace challenges to traditional understandings of the self as bounded by relation to a creator, a unique

ontological experience as human, a biologically dictated sex drive, and an identification with one nation and people. Modernist culture, these essays demonstrate, meant not taking for granted one's identity or place in the world, offering optics like the X-ray and opportunities for travel such as the need for humanitarian relief workers; together, shaping worldviews offered modernists and their contemporaries the chance to see *themselves*, sometimes literally and sometimes figuratively, anew.

The next section of the collection, "Visual Culture," pays extensive tribute to what some critics have described as the period's "ocularcentrism": to seeing as *the* mode of perception and knowledge above all others.[18] Chapters on consumer culture, film and cinema, visual art, dance, and fashion explore some of the period's opportunities to delight and manipulate the eye – to show modern culture to itself in spectacular forms. Whether spectators could move through these venues as shoppers walked through the new department stores, observe them on a screen, canvas, or stage, or experience them bodily through dance or fashion, visual culture fueled the experience of the modern by circulating and representing the new.

The final section of the volume, "Entertainments," rounds out the collection by exploring twentieth-century developments in leisure activities ranging from social dance to reading. If some modernist writers prided themselves on making "no compromise with the public taste," as *The Little Review* motto famously stated, the public taste itself was less a static entity than in search of novelty and venues for self-expression and -improvement. The essays grouped here take up urban pleasures, sport, travel, popular theater, and publishing, areas of cultural practice that provided new venues for gratification and for cultural experience. If, as Laura Frost has recently argued, modernists were largely united in repudiating pleasure (or making pleasure difficult),[19] the culture in which they created was simultaneously offering increasing kinds and numbers of pleasurable experiences. Such entertainments were not, however, apolitical or unchallenging: as the essays in this final section indicate, pleasurable venues shaped understandings of race, class relations, the relationship between the so-called West and the rest, and (in some cases) provided access to modernism itself.

The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Culture does not assume that those who pick it up will necessarily read it from cover to cover. Like other Cambridge Companions, it allows the reader to dip in and out of individual essays, and yet those who read it through will discover intriguing

points of contact across disparate topics. For example, many contributors highlight the significance of what might be called new social and cultural actors; women, Jews, African Americans, and other previously marginalized groups took on significant roles as social and cultural producers in modernism's historical moment. In "Militarism, Pacifism, and Internationalism," for instance, Ellen Ross examines the ways in which women found new forms of public engagement through such venues as policing, humanitarian work, and political advocacy. As Ross notes, (white) men had long found in the military and national or international politics an outlet for their talents and ambitions; what was genuinely modern about these arenas in the twentieth century was that women took traditionally feminine accomplishments (such as training in foreign languages) into decidedly untraditional directions. Allison Pease ("Sexuality"), Elizabeth Outka ("Consumer Culture"), and Ilya Parkins ("Fashion") similarly take up the newly important role of women as educators, social reformers, consumers, and designers in modern culture. Such examples shed light on the complex relationship between women and modernity, which (as Rita Felski has argued) was often thought of as itself feminine (a gendering that could be complimentary or critical).[20]

Other essays look at ways in which different types of new social actors networked; sometimes, the cultural aspirations of one group found an accord with (or even facilitated) the ambitions of others. Walkowitz, for example, notes how the practice and representation of female hedonism – of young, privileged women increasingly drawn to the nightclub scene – twinned with the activities of black musicians, bandleaders, and GIs to produce startling new images of interracial dancing. If images in the *Picture Post* and elsewhere did not directly confront sexism and racism, photographs of interracial couples highlighted the movement of the "color question" onto the literal and figurative dance floor. Although the offices of publishing houses might seem worlds away from shady nightclubs, George Bornstein's essay echoes Walkowitz's analysis of the intersecting cultural work of different social actors; as Bornstein writes, women and Jewish men moved into publishing in the early twentieth century, and their book lists often featured African-American, Irish, and other authors who had previously struggled for entrée into print. While these upstart publishers were not always appreciated by high modernist authors – Bornstein offers William Faulkner and T.S. Eliot as two examples – they played a leading role in the dissemination of works of the Harlem Renaissance as well as of British and Irish modernism in the

United States. As a whole, then, essays in this collection situate modern (and thus modernist) culture as a space in which groups that had previously been marginalized moved, however haltingly and unequally, into new prominence, sometimes in company with others.

In addition to collectively exploring the impact of changing social actors on modernist culture, many essays highlight what we might think of as an expanded model of consumerism. As venues for literal commodity exchange increased in number and size, they were accompanied by a consumerist reorientation to noncommodity items and experiences – or rather, a complication of the status of both material objects *and* ideas as commodities. Elizabeth Outka's essay sets the stage for this line of inquiry, noting that as consumer culture *became* a culture, marketers evoked "ideas of authenticity and the genuine artwork" and promised "that products were not tainted by commerce – and yet were the latest thing and might be easily purchased." Through such purchases, consumers were encouraged to remake their own gender and class identity, Outka argues, as though a persona or social standing might itself be available in the new stores. Ilya Parkins's analysis similarly explores the ways in which fashion put pressure on the perceptual "divides among art, industry, and commerce." As she writes, high fashion in particular "offered a vision of the ways that commerce impinged on the supposedly rarified sphere of art"; as other contributors demonstrate, modernist culture also witnessed commerce impinging upon foundational systems of identification and belief. Suzanne Hobson's essay on religion and spirituality, for example, argues that the experience of modern religion and faith was uniquely characterized by a range of options from which would-be adherents might select. Some faiths were themselves aware of the need to "market" their particular brand in the face of stiff competition; Hobson cites, in particular, the example of Christian Science. This development – the sense that an individual could "shop" for a congenial spiritual practice instead of worshipping in the footsteps of her fathers – points toward the qualified freedom offered by a thoroughly consumer culture, but as Hobson takes pains to demonstrate, it also generated a backlash that drove some people (including, famously, T.S. Eliot) into the arms of the Catholic and Anglican Churches. Modernist culture emerges through these essays and others as offering unprecedented choices but also the anxiety that many people felt in the face of their increased options.

Another thread that emerges from the essays as a whole is the development of what Jessica Burstein calls the "inter-arts": creative practices

that merge multiple genres and forms. Burstein's immediate example is literary impressionism, but she also points to the deep relationships among painting, music, and poetry as well as to specific modernist productions that startlingly fuse, for example, sculpture and photography. As she writes, "Hans Bellmer made a doll but never showed it; it exists as a photograph." Similar examples recur across the collection. I have already mentioned Preston's attention to the interpenetration of dance and film; Susan McCabe's essay, on film and cinemas, points to silent film's borrowing from music and collage and concludes with a brief discussion of *Destino*, an animated short produced through the collaboration of Salvador Dali and Disney. Together, Preston's and McCabe's essays suggest that film's quintessential modernity stems not only from its emergence during the last decade of the nineteenth (and flourishing in the twentieth) century but also from its foundational conversations with other visual arts. The amalgamation of artistic and cultural forms these essays explore surfaces elsewhere in the volume, sometimes in surprising locations. Outka informs readers that not only did postimpressionist artists and others design advertisements for the new retail emporiums; early department stores also displayed original paintings and mounted art shows that were previously the purview of museums and galleries. This interchange of media and of genres of public space – art museum meets shopping center – points to a fundamental hybridity of modernist culture, which felt modern in part because of boundary crossings that challenged categorization of artistic products, forms of entertainment, and the organization of physical space.

The sense of modernity as boundary crossing, intersectional, and trans is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the emerging sense of alignment between the human body and the machine. As Ulrika Maude argues in her chapter on science, technology, and the body, modernist culture emerged at a moment when, in her words, there was a "newly discovered understanding of the human as itself biomechanical." Perhaps nothing captures the impact of this understanding better than "The Racing Reporter," Otto Umbehr's photograph of a hybrid man-machine that neatly represents the sense that modern humans, too, were more than *one* kind of substance. The ambivalence with which many artists, philosophers, and scientists regarded this biomechanical body did not prevent others from attempting to harness and "engineer" that body's properties for better performance. In his chapter on sport, Allen Guttmann demonstrates that ludic technology – new equipment and training – characterizes the