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PERICLES LEWIS is Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Yale University. He is the author of *Modernism, Nationalism and the Novel* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521535274

First published 2007
8th printing 2014

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Lewis, Pericles.
The Cambridge introduction to modernism / Pericles Lewis.
p. cm. – (Cambridge introductions to literature)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN-13: 978-0-521-82809-3 (hardback : alk. paper)
ISBN-10: 0-521-82809-0 (hardback : alk. paper)
ISBN-13: 978-0-521-53527-4 (pbk. : alk. paper)
ISBN-10: 0-521-53527-1 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Modernism (Literature). 2. Literature, Modern – 20th century – History and criticism.
3. Literature, Modern – 19th century – History and criticism. I. Title. II. Series.
PN56.M54L49 2007
809′.911 – dc22

ISBN 978-0-521-82809-3 Hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-53527-4 Paperback

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Abbreviations and editions used

Auden Generation	Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s*. New York: Viking, 1977.
Brecht on Theatre	Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. and trans. John Willett. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964.
Century of Innovation	Oscar G. Brockett and Robert R. Findlay, *Century of Innovation: A History of European and American Theatre and Drama Since 1870*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973.
Critical Tradition	David Richter, ed. *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*. 3rd edn. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.
Edwardian Turn	Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.
Eliot Selected Prose	T. S. Eliot, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1975.
Futurist Moment	Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
Illuminations	Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken, 1969.

James Joyce	Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, rev. edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.
Mimesis	Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953.
Modernism 1890–1930	Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, eds. *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature, 1890–1930*. London: Penguin, 1976.
Modernism Anthology	Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman, and Olga Taxidoe, eds. *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.
Let's Murder the Moonshine	F. T. Marinetti, *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. R. W. Flint. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1991.
Pound Era	Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971.
Strindberg: Five Plays	August Strindberg, *Strindberg: Five Plays*, trans. Harry G. Carlson. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983.
Theories of Modern Art	Hershel B. Chipp, ed. *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.
War Imagined	Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*. New York: Atheneum, 1991.

For literary works that are available in various editions, I have not given citations. Where I refer frequently to a particular edition or translation, however, I have included publication information in the suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter. For the texts of many of the English-language

poems I quote, see the *Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*, 2 vols., 3rd edn, ed. Jahan Ramazani, Richard Ellmann, and Robert O'Clair (New York: Norton, 2003). In all cases I have tried to refer to readily available editions. In quoting from authors' critical writings, I have made use of the excellent volume *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents* (*Modernism Anthology*).

Acknowledgments

Like most teachers, I have learned much from my students. I am indebted to the undergraduates and graduate teaching assistants at Yale University, particularly those in the "Modern British Novel" and "Major English Poets" courses, to whom I presented this material in its rawest form. Their responses to my lectures and seminars helped me to gauge how an introduction to modernism should work. A number of professionals at Yale assisted me with the design of the "Modern British Novel" course, on which about half of this book is based: Tim Young of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Pam Franks and Aja Armey of the Yale University Art Gallery, Michael Hatt and Gillian Forrester of the Yale Center for British Art, Ken Crilly and Karl Schrom of the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Danuta Nitecki and Ernie Marinko of the Yale University Library, and Ed Kairiss and Pam Patterson of Instructional Technology Services. Support from the Davis Educational Foundation made the design of the course possible, and support from the A. Whitney Griswold and Frederick B. Hilles funds at Yale subsidized the research and illustrations for the book. I thank Grolier, Inc. for permission to reprint a brief excerpt that appeared originally in the *Encyclopedia Americana*.

Modernism has fascinated me ever since high school, and I am grateful to those who first taught me about it: Norah Maier at the University of Toronto Schools; Mary Davison at McGill University; and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Marjorie Perloff, Jeffrey Schnapp, Michael Tratner, and the late Ian Watt at Stanford University. Colleagues in the American Comparative Literature Association and the Modernist Studies Association have also taught me a great deal, and Daniel Albright and Helen Vendler of Harvard University offered helpful advice on framing this project in the early stages. At Yale, Nigel Alderman, Elinor Fuchs, David Krasner, James Leverett, Joseph Roach, Marc Robinson, and Robert Slifkin kindly advised me on bibliography, while Jessica Brantley, William Deresiewicz, Elizabeth Dillon, Langdon Hammer, Catherine Labio, Barry McCrea, Haun Saussy, and Elliott Visconsi generously read and commented on drafts of various chapters. My colleague Amy Hungerford read the entire manuscript and provided much useful advice. I am also grateful to

Eric Hayot of the University of Arizona and Michael Walsh of Eastern Mediterranean University for their comments on portions of the manuscript. Jesse Matz, of Kenyon College, advised me on the project at various stages of completion and offered especially helpful guidance on the final draft, which he read with his usual perspicacity.

I am particularly indebted to five research assistants who drew on their own considerable expertise to aid me in putting together this study: Megan Quigley helped me to develop the framework for the book; Maria Fackler advised me on gender and literary theory and arranged permissions; Matthew Mutter patiently contributed to my understanding of modern poetry and intellectual history; John Muse tactfully guided my reading and interpretation of modern drama; Anna Lewis helped to amass the Chronology and Notes. All five offered substantive advice on various drafts. Of course, any errors of fact or judgment that remain are my own.

The staff at Cambridge University Press, particularly Elizabeth Davey and Maartje Scheltens, have been very helpful. My editor at Cambridge, Ray Ryan, showed an interest in this project from the start, and I am grateful to him and to the readers he assembled for their stimulating responses to an early draft. I have relied on the love and support of my family, including my parents, sisters, and in-laws. My wife, Sheila Hayre, has encouraged me in this and all my other projects. I dedicate the book to our children, Siddhartha and Maya; I hope that one day soon they will read it with pleasure.

Pericles Lewis
New Haven, Connecticut
July, 2006

Preface

The term *modernism*, in its literary sense, became current in English shortly after the First World War to describe new experimental literature, notably works by T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and Virginia Woolf. Since then, it has continually expanded in scope. The expression now encompasses a wide variety of movements in modern art and literature, including, in some definitions, naturalism, symbolism, impressionism, post-impressionism, cubism, futurism, imagism, vorticism, dada, and surrealism, as well as a number of writers and artists not associated with any one of these movements. In its broadest sense, modernism has become the label for an entire tendency in literature and the arts, sometimes indeed for a whole period in cultural history, stretching as far back as the middle of the nineteenth century and continuing at least until the middle of the twentieth. Modernism has thus become a term of very wide application. While it does not have quite the expansiveness of names for earlier periods in cultural history, such as the Renaissance or the Enlightenment (whose solidity is demonstrated by the use of the definite article), it approaches the breadth of romanticism, a term that also embraces various sometimes opposed cultural phenomena and that can likewise be used to name either an international movement or an entire historical period. Despite the danger that such a term will become so vague in its reference as to be rendered meaningless, I believe that the word modernism designates a central phenomenon in cultural history. The task of this book is to introduce that phenomenon to nonspecialists and to describe it in as much concrete detail as possible, assuming no prior knowledge of the subject on the part of the reader.

What, then, is modernism? In English the word 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. Other terms have been used for related phenomena: "modernity" in philosophy, "modernization" in sociology, "modern music," "modern art," and "modern history." Literary modernism is intimately bound up with these other phenomena, and these links will be explored

in detail in this book. In particular, modernism in literature went hand in hand with modern art, and I shall include modern art under the rubric of modernism, while sometimes calling attention to the differences between literature and the other arts. The focus, however, remains on literary modernism. Other European languages use other terms for the same general tendency in literature: *avant-garde* in French, *Expressionismus* in German, *decadentismo* in Italian. In Chinese the expression *modeng*, a transliteration of the European "modern," used widely in 1930s Shanghai, came to be replaced by the less foreign-sounding *xiandai zhuyi*, as the concept of modernism became naturalized. In Spanish *modernismo* referred as early as 1888 to a movement closely allied with symbolism and led by the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío. What links all these movements is the shared apprehension of a crisis in the ability of art and literature to represent reality.

Modernism offered an artistic and literary response to a widespread sense that the ways of knowing and representing the world developed in the Renaissance, but going back in many ways to the ancient Greeks, distorted the actual experience of reality, of art, and of literature. The crisis involved both the content and the form of representation. That is to say, it concerned the appropriate subject matter for literature and the appropriate techniques and styles by which literature could represent that subject matter. Some modernists went so far as to argue that literature should not represent any subject matter at all – it should represent only itself; they emphasized the sounds of words or their appearance on the page, rather than their referential function. My working definition of modernism will be: the literature that acknowledged and attempted to respond to a crisis of representation beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. The earlier roots of this crisis and the varied nature of the modernists' responses to it will be explored in the Introduction below. The emphasis in some recent scholarly work on "modernisms," the multiple, competing movements of the modernist period, does fruitfully address the complexity of the concept modernism. However, I have maintained the singular formulation because I believe that it helpfully draws attention to the underlying unity of the literary and artistic problem facing writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: how to respond to the crisis of representation.

Before proceeding, however, it is necessary to consider another term that remains current and suggests the end-point of the modernism that this study takes as its central object. For more than a generation, artists, writers, and critics have frequently claimed to be beyond modernism, in an era of "postmodernism." Although early literary uses of the term postmodernism emphasized continuity with modernism, this literary usage was soon eclipsed by a broader philosophical or sociological analysis of the "postmodern condition,"

a condition contrasted with that of philosophical modernity, a category that goes back at least to the Enlightenment or even to the Renaissance (relabeled "the early modern period"), and whose central figures were the seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes and the eighteenth-century philosopher Immanuel Kant. In the broadest terms, philosophical postmodernism criticizes the Enlightenment faith, prevalent from Descartes to Kant, in sovereign human reason. The philosophical debate over modernity *vs.* postmodernity, notably in the works of the philosophers Jürgen Habermas and Jean-François Lyotard, came also to dominate discussion of literary modernism and postmodernism. The noted critic Fredric Jameson acknowledged the origins of the postmodern "crisis of representation" in literary modernism in his influential foreword to Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1984). The geographer David Harvey took up the phrase in his *Condition of Postmodernity* (1990), once again tracing the crisis to literary experiments beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. Thus the philosophical attempt to define an age after modernity acknowledged its origins in the literary work of modernism, with its critique of traditional modes of representation.

In some later works on postmodernism, however, a false analogy presented literary modernism as the literary defense of philosophical modernity or even of sociological modernization. In fact, literary modernists, though often celebrating the dawning of the modern age in a general historical sense, were themselves engaged in a critique of some of the assumptions underlying philosophical modernity. Notably, the nineteenth-century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, himself a relentless critic of Enlightenment conceptions of reason, inspired both the literary modernists and the philosophical postmodernists. The historian J. W. Burrow has described the late nineteenth century as the era of the "crisis of reason," and the effects of this crisis, the philosophical counterpart of the literary "crisis of representation," are still with us in our own time, whether we label it modern, postmodern, or simply contemporary. Recognizing the continuity of our cultural situation with that of the modernists, literary critics and art historians have been paying renewed attention to modernism over the past generation. In the 1980s some of the champions of postmodernism rejected modernism as the product of an arrogant elite. More recent scholarly work has embraced a broader conception of the movement, both historically and culturally. Scholars have traced the roots of modernism back into the nineteenth century, found modernist currents outside the European mainstream, and explored the interaction among the various modern arts. They have also manifested a growing interest in the relationship between the arts and social and cultural history: gender, sexuality, technology, science, politics, empire, cross-cultural encounters, and the publishing industry. *The Cambridge*

Introduction to Modernism offers a synthesis of this new, historical understanding of modernism. Instead of isolating the "great works" of modernism, this book emphasizes the immersion of modernist literature in a culture of experiment. Rather than understand the modernists as elitists, hermetically sealed off from the broader culture, I explore their engagements with that culture and the distinctively literary solutions that they found for the central problems of their time.

In deciding how to present modernism to those who may be encountering it for the first time, I have faced several challenges. A study of this length cannot offer a comprehensive history of all the forms of modernism. Instead, I explore certain concepts that remained central to modernism across art forms and national boundaries, while emphasizing the multiple shapes that these concepts took in particular cultures. Previous surveys of modernism have tended to fall into two groups. There are those European-oriented studies that focus on the avant-garde movements (what Peter Nicholls, in the title of his 1995 "literary guide," aptly called *Modernisms*) and others that focus more narrowly on English literature from the imagists to W. H. Auden (as for example in Michael Levenson's edited collection of 1999, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*). Both approaches are valid, but each tends to present a rather one-sided view of modernism. Those who emphasize the European avant-gardes generally treat the most cosmopolitan of writers in English, such as Pound, Eliot, and Joyce, in detail, but they tend to neglect major figures in English-language modernism, such as Auden, Samuel Beckett, Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, Woolf, and W. B. Yeats, who had little involvement with any particular "-ism" and varying degrees of interest in Europe. Conversely, those who treat the major English writers in isolation lose the sense of modernism as an international phenomenon and thus offer a relatively homogeneous picture of what was really, despite its underlying unity of purpose, a heterogeneous set of movements. This study attempts to steer between these two extremes by situating the major works of English modernism that students or general readers are most likely to encounter in relation to developments in non-English-speaking countries. In this context, I am unable to treat non-Western literature in depth, but I do address the shaping of modernism by the Western powers' conquests and losses in the colonized world. When treating European matters, I have emphasized those that had a direct impact on English literature. In the chapter on modern drama, the most international of literary forms, I have paid special attention to European developments. Where relevant, I have discussed developments in the United States, but most of the Americans who play a major role in my story pursued their careers in England or France. The exception is the

chapter on modern poetry, an area in which Americans had a disproportionate influence.

This comparative emphasis also applies to the genres of modernism. Major early studies of modernism, such as Hugh Kenner's magisterial *The Pound Era* (1971), tended to follow Pound and Eliot in treating poetry as the prime modernist genre. In the past generation, however, interest has shifted to the prose fiction and drama of modernism. This study gives equal attention to all three genres and recognizes that, while perhaps less abrupt than the transformations of poetry, the changes undergone by the novel and the theater in the modernist period contributed their share to the rethinking of representation. By treating all three genres extensively, I hope also to correct the impression of modernism as elitist that drove many postmodernist critiques. This study discusses acknowledged leaders of the avant-garde movements as well as a number of writers whose work, while attuned to the crisis of representation, remained relatively accessible to a broad audience. It is my intention to show that modernism, the reconfiguration of literary forms and genres for the modern age, went far beyond the coterie audiences of the avant-gardes. I thus replace earlier accounts of modernism as the invention of a few visionary geniuses with a more expansive understanding of the transformations of art and literature in the early twentieth century.

A survey of this breadth must necessarily be a work of synthesis, and I have relied in forming my own judgments on the expertise of earlier critics. These are acknowledged in the suggestions for further reading which appear at the end of each chapter, and in the Notes at the end of the book. However, I would like to call attention in particular to the fine overview of European trends in Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane's edited collection, *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature, 1890–1930*, first published in 1976, and the masterful trilogy on English literature and politics written by Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (1968), *The Auden Generation* (1977), and *A War Imagined* (1991). I have drawn heavily on these four works, updating them where necessary, but not hoping to surpass them. I recommend them as the best starting point for the reader who would like to explore the themes of this book further. Recognizing that British and European history are less familiar to some readers than they were a generation ago, I have discussed at some length the historical events most relevant to the development of modernism, notably the early feminist movement, the clashes over empire, the First World War, the Russian Revolution, and the rise of fascism and Nazism.

An introductory chapter surveys the intellectual history of the crisis of representation, as well as its more immediate roots in the newly industrialized and democratized culture of the late nineteenth century. The first section of

the book (Chapters One to Three) addresses the "Origins" of modernism in a roughly chronological fashion. Rather than stick strictly to chronology, however, I have organized each chapter around a major theme of modernism, such as the problem of the artist in modernity, the modernists' interest in "primitive" cultures and modern technology, and the workings of avant-garde movements. A central section, "Genres," treats the major types of modernist literature: poetry, prose fiction, and drama. This section is more analytical than historical, offering explanations of the main features of modernist literature along with explorations of salient examples. A final chapter and a conclusion address the "Fate" of modernism, including the relationship between literature and politics in the 1930s, the question of how postmodernism differs from or continues modernist practice, and the legacy of modernism for the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Both the postmodernists of the 1980s and more recent "historicist" literary critics have been suspicious of modernist claims for art's autonomy and of related celebrations of "art for art's sake." Historically minded critics, at least since Karl Marx, tend to believe that art serves particular ideological purposes and may even have political effects, though most would agree that these effects are seldom foreseen by the artist. Without prejudging the question of the autonomy of the work of art, I have attempted both to describe the development of modernist literary forms and to place the new and unusual qualities of modernist art and literature in the context of a rapidly changing society. While tracing ongoing crises in the means of representation and in the content of modernist representations, I do not try to determine the primacy of one over the other. This study, then, describes the development of literary and artistic works in their historical, cultural context, without claiming either that the context fully explains the works or that the works finally transcend the history of their production and reception. When asked about the impact of the French Revolution of 1789, Zhou Enlai, prime minister of communist China, is said to have replied "Too soon to tell." We are the heirs of the modernists – both of their literary and artistic achievements and of their historical situation – and it is perhaps too soon to say what are the ultimate consequences of the crisis of representation that they first explored.