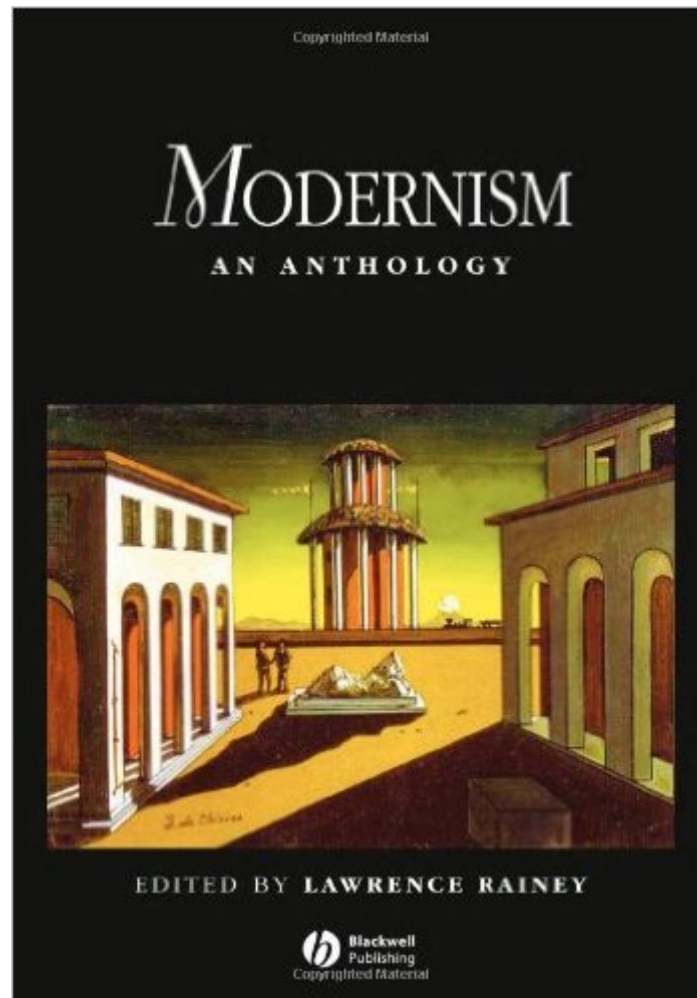


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Modernism: An Anthology



Synopsis

Modernism: An Anthology is the most comprehensive anthology of Anglo-American modernism ever to be published. Amply represents the giants of modernism - James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, Samuel Beckett. Includes a generous selection of Continental texts, enabling readers to trace modernism's dialogue with the Futurists, the Dadaists, the Surrealists, and the Frankfurt School. Supported by helpful annotations, and an extensive bibliography. Allows readers to encounter anew the extraordinary revolution in language that transformed the aesthetics of the modern world .

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It is truly a shame that most people who pick up this anthology will probably read it as an addendum for a class they are taking. In that respect, it is both a veritable well of knowledge and a framework for ongoing debate on the merits (or shortcomings?) of modernism. But for the casual reader, the one piqued by Eliot or Woolf or Williams, this anthology is extraordinary. The sheer depth and breadth of information encapsulated in essays, poems, excerpts, and short pieces should shed light on the difficulty of explaining-even categorizing-Modernism. Those who don't feel forced to read these revolutionary writers-even those who do-will surely glean some insight into the various modes of 20th century literary expression. What is especially intriguing about this anthology is the manner in which it is compiled. Four so-called "Continental Interludes" situate theories of Dadaism, Futurism, Surrealism (along with the Frankfurt School cabal) within the Modernist context. The various writers

are placed according to the mode of thought they espoused (or rejected). If you choose to read this 1,000 page tome in a linear fashion, you will gain a greater appreciation for the evolution and infrastructure of Modernism. Which doesn't necessarily mean to say you will completely understand Modernism at the end-though I firmly believe this convolution adds to the general appeal. Whether you are interested in the mythic structures of Yeats, Joyce's utterly idiosyncratic style, Gertrude Stein's avant-garde detachment, or simply Modernism as a whole, this book is quite informative. The amount of cross-referencing and cohesion is astounding: Williams writing about Joyce, Loy writing about Stein. It's all here. Annotations are immensely helpful, as are the (sometimes) extensive biographies. I especially enjoyed the section on Pound and his essay on the linguistic and poetic superiority of Chinese characters. There's something here for everybody.

Did you know that the surrealist Philippe Soupault died at the age of 3? Did you know that the narrator of "The Waste Land" cries, "Oh keep the dog far hence hence"? Did you know that Bloomsday occurs on June 10? You learn all kinds of amazing stuff like that from this book, because it appears not to have been proofread. More to the point, as an example: Rainey's introduction to the James Joyce section never gets around to explaining the significance of Bloomsday, but at the end it wanders off into a thicket of unnecessary detail about Joyce's cavalier attitude toward other people's money. So I take it that the book wasn't copy-edited either. My students also hate its fine print, and an anthology of modernism really ought to have a picture section. For the rest, this one is a typical Rainey job: idiosyncratic but learned, with some strange omissions and some wonderful, hard-to-come-by inclusions. Much can be forgiven the book that reprints all of Fenollosa's "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry," even if the index gets its title wrong.

This book has an impressive, comprehensive table of contents. But in order to cram in so much material, they've reduced the size of the type so that--to this middle-aged English prof--it is unreadable. So beware. Do not order this book unless you're prepared for really tiny type.

I really appreciate the brief biographies of the writers, which is a great insight and better understanding of their works. The footnotes are a bit excessive, however informative. I am reading this for school and all in all I am very impressed and it is making my class much easier!

If you're a Modernism student or teacher - this book is a must. It even includes most of the critical manifestos of the movement and is quite complete with Pound and Eliot.

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