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A Handbook of Modernism Studies ed. by Jean Michel Rabaté
(review)

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or the result of a deeply held belief in the ideality of the deepest structures of being. No matter what, I recommend working through these issues for the pleasure and reward of its poetic examples, and for the enriched philosophical, aesthetic, and poetic vocabulary the text ultimately offers. Finally, for those among us skeptical of the metaphysical (or post-metaphysical but surprisingly idealist) traditions of the twentieth century, Watkin absolutely succeeds in positioning Agamben's aesthetic thought as a genuine *entrée* into not only Agamben's metaphysical and political thinking but indeed into the entire tradition.

Kathleen Eamon, *The Evergreen State College*

Jean Michel Rabaté, ed. *A Handbook of Modernism Studies*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. 480 pp.

There is a term missing from, but strongly implicit in, the title of Jean Michel Rabaté's admirable edited volume, *A Handbook of Modernism Studies* – that term, ironically, is *new*. The essays collected in the volume address an array of emerging trends in the so-called “New Modernism Studies” (more often rendered as the “New Modernist Studies”), not just exemplifying these developments, but also reflecting on them with a series of deft intellectual genealogies, literature reviews, and scholarly overviews. That Rabaté, or perhaps his editors at Blackwell, might want to avoid using the term in the title of the handbook is understandable. After all, the New Modernist Studies faces the same difficulty that modernism, with an obsessive drive to “Make it new!,” always faced: soon enough, the new is no longer new. In the cases of both artistic and academic production, the movement of time tends to either canonize and institutionalize, or render obsolete and forgotten, so that activity in each field is always marked by the shadow of its own future, its own ossification or demise. Yet this situation also gives the work done in both fields its urgency and, for the cultural workers from the early twentieth to early twenty-first centuries, a sense of the shared fate of modernism and modernist studies. The current vitality of the latter field, which began to assert itself in the late 1990s, is evident enough in the crowded marketplace of new companions, guides, and handbooks, including the two closest competitors for Rabaté's volume, *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms* (2010) and the *Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (2011). What sets the Blackwell handbook apart is not just its sustained attention to modernist studies as such, but its repeated reflection on the relationship between theory and literature, theory and the arts. Rabaté's introduction nicely exemplifies this effort in its account of Clement Greenberg's art criticism, which drew on Kantian philosophy to establish a theory of modernism that provided aesthetic criteria for new developments in the arts and in the process “[ai[d] down the law of the art

market" in the postwar years (9). The 25 essays that follow this introduction provide a valuable resource for students and scholars who are looking to better understand recent changes in this relationship and what exactly is new in the New Modernist Studies.

Although the volume is representative of a great number of perspectives on modernism, all the contributions seek to push modernist studies in novel directions and many seek to do so precisely by rearticulating the linkage between theory and literature. The most striking example of this approach, Eric Bulson's "Modernisms High and Low," argues that early twentieth-century avant-gardes established the basis for more recent theories concerning the production and reception of art under the social and economic conditions of capitalism. Similarly, in "Otherness and Singularity: Ethical Modernism," Marian Eide claims "that modernist literary experimentation, with its emphasis on revolution, cleared the way for a critical burgeoning of ethical theory in the mid- to late twentieth century," by making "readers aware of the inequities created by conformity to prevailing moral norms" (313). This is not to say, then, that the essays gathered here attempt to squeeze modernism into theoretical categories, but that, in most cases, they employ theory to reconfigure the typologies of modernism in more suggestive and capacious ways. This means examining various fields of critical inquiry, ranging from Marxian critique and ethical analysis to postcolonial studies, transnational studies, fashion studies, gender studies, queer studies, and genetic criticism. It also means returning to the themes of earlier generations of modernist scholars – myth, consciousness, formal innovation – and even to the terminology that modernist writers and artists themselves developed to describe their work, all in order to reassess the modernist lexicon in the light of new areas of study. For instance, in "Streams Beyond Consciousness: Stylistic Immediacy," Vicki Mahaffey offers an alternative genealogy of familiar modernist narrative techniques, attending to not just Édouard Dujardin's short novel *Les lauriers sont coupés*, but Dorothy Richardson's seminal narrative *Pilgrimage: Pointed Roofs*. This shift in attention allows Mahaffey to "argue that instead of speaking of 'stream of consciousness' fiction, we should perhaps consider a more expansive category, something like fiction that stages the animated, moment-to-moment experience of one or more characters against the backdrop of a larger frame of reference" (42). In the process of making such claims, the essays in the volume indicate a greater and greater expansiveness in the field of modernist studies, while calibrating that expansion in relation to earlier moments in the history of the field and its various discourses.

All this raises the question of how the student of modernism might *use* such a voluminous handbook, if it is to live up to its title and provide guidance for moving the field forward still further. To be sure, one might dip into chapters here and there, filling in areas of knowledge or catching up on new developments in a particular area of interest within modernist studies. That said, the genuine impact of the book emerges only when the essays are

taken collectively, as one attempts to account for the tensions, if not outright contradictions, that arise when the various essays are read alongside one another. Even more promising, however, is the possibility of viewing the essays through the lens of particular contribution. To take only the most obvious possibility, one might adopt the framework laid out in James F. English's "Cultural Capital and the Revolutions of Literary Modernity, from Bourdieu to Casanova," which employs the sociology of culture to view modernism "as a particular structuring of the 'field' of cultural production," which aligned to a great degree with the interests of a dominant bourgeois class – even as the essay catches glimpses of the utopian potential of resistance and freedom in various modernist efforts to move beyond such socio-economic determinism (365). Certainly, Bourdieu's concepts of "distinction" and "cultural capital" apply to the work of the New Modernist Studies to the extent that it leverages a "form of power narrowly held by individuals who participate 'in the dominant order' and who tend, even in their most radical practices, to 'unconsciously endorse dominant values'" (371). But just as certain, as the volume repeatedly demonstrates, the work of cultural production and the work of cultural critique alike represent the possibility of moving beyond the capitalist interests that control how culture is generated, circulated, and received. In all their heterogeneity, these essays are akin to the aesthetic objects they describe insofar as (to play on a phrase from Catherine Flynn's "Marxist Modernism: from Jameson to Benjamin") they raise the question of the link between modernism and modernization in ways that are productive and significant today. To put this another way, Rabaté's volume establishes the value of modernism and the New Modernist Studies after postmodernism, as the cultural field – with uncanny facility – renews itself again and again.

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