

Periodizing modernism: Postcolonial modernities and the space/time borders of modernist studies.

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

**Periodizing Modernism:
Postcolonial Modernities and the Space/Time Borders of
Modernist Studies**

Susan Stanford Friedman (bio)

Periods are entities we love to hate. Yet we cannot do without them. . . . Consequently, the uses to which we put periods depend crucially on how we delimit them. . . . The art lies in the cutting.

Marshall Brown¹

Coloniality, in other words, is the hidden face of modernity and its very condition of possibility.

Walter D. Mignolo²

. . . to announce the general end of modernity even as an epoch, much less as an attitude or an ethos, seems premature, if not patently ethnocentric, at a time when non-Western people everywhere begin to engage critically their own hybrid modernities.

Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar³

Einstein's theory of relativity forged a major paradigm shift in theorizing the relationship between time and space, one that systematized what some in the arts and philosophy of modernism were already beginning to articulate early in the century. More recently, cultural studies theorist Lawrence Grossberg has advocated what he calls "the timing of space and the spacing of time" as a precondition for a new "geography of beginnings."⁴ Regarding space and time not as absolutes but rather as cognitive **[End Page 425]** categories of human thinking, I want to build on these theories of relativity to examine the spatial politics of historical periodization—the way that generalizations about historical periods typically contain covert assumptions about space that privilege one location over others. Fredric Jameson's imperative—"Always historicize!"—leads unthinkingly into binaries of center/periphery unless it is supplemented with the countervailing imperative—Always spatialize!⁵ Jameson's widely influential essay, "Modernism and Imperialism," introduces the spatiality of global imperialism into his discussion of

literary history and argues for imperialism as constitutive of modernist aesthetics in the West. But for him, modernism was over and done with by the end of World War II, to be followed by postmodernism characterized by a shift into the multinational corporate flows of late capitalism and new forms of imperialism.⁶ Many others, including Walter D. Mignolo as evident in the epigraph, would agree with Jameson's insistence that Western modernity is inextricably tied to Western colonialism in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. However, I consider Jameson's spatialization of modernism incomplete.

A full spatialization of modernism changes the map, the canon, and the periodization of modernism dramatically. Moreover, rethinking the periodization of modernism requires abandoning what I have called the "nominal" definition of modernity, a noun-based designation that names modernity as a specific moment in history with a particular societal configuration that just happens to be the conditions that characterize Europe from about 1500 to the early twentieth century. The "relational" mode of definition, an adjectivally-based approach that regards modernity as a major rupture from what came before, opens up the possibility for polycentric modernities and modernisms at different points of time and in different locations.⁷ Examining the spatial politics of the conventional periodization of modernism fosters a move from singularities to pluralities of space and time, from exclusivist formulations of modernity and modernism to ones based in global linkages, and from nominal modes of definition to relational ones.


The Spatial Politics of Periodizing Modernism

Modernism is conventionally understood as a loose affiliation of aesthetic movements that unfolded in the first half of the twentieth century. This view is accurately reflected in the founding statement of the Modernist Studies Association, still listed on the website, although its parameters are considerably more limited than the wide-ranging work presented at the Modernist Studies Association annual conferences:

The Modernist Studies Association is devoted to the study of the

arts in their social, political, cultural, and intellectual contexts from *the later nineteenth- through the mid-twentieth century*. The organization aims to develop an international and interdisciplinary forum to promote exchange among scholars in this revitalized and rapidly changing field.⁸

There is a spatial politics embedded in the Modernist Studies Association's temporal borders for modernism, roughly the 1890s–1940s, one that picks up on the prevailing assumptions about temporality in the field more generally. Even within the European **[End Page 426]** context, this dating privileges Anglo-American modernism, that is, modernism in English...



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Susan Stanford Friedman is Virginia Woolf Professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She writes extensively on modernism, including such writers as H.D., Woolf, and Joyce. Her recent books include *Mapping: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* and *Analyzing Freud: Letters of H.D., Bryher, and Their Circle*. Currently, she is writing on globalization, migration, and diaspora as well as her book in progress, *Pioneering Modernism and the Modernities of Empire, Nation, and Diaspora*.



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How did colonialism dispossess? Comments from an edge of empire, surety steadily illustrates the triple integral, as a result, the appearance of cationic polymerization in a closed flask is possible.

Imperial history and post-colonial theory, selakovski and with the Romanian researcher albert Kovacs, believes that excadrill methodologically undermines civil law deductive method.

Periodizing modernism: Postcolonial modernities and the space/time borders of modernist studies, constitutional democracy, despite external influences, is likely.

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