Towards a Definition of American Modernism
Author(s): Daniel Joseph Singal
Source: *American Quarterly,* Vol. 39, No. 1, Special Issue: Modernist Culture in America
(Spring, 1987), pp. 7-26
Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2712627
Accessed: 28/02/2014 12:59

# TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF AMERICAN MODERNISM

DANIEL JOSEPH SINGAL

Hobart and William Smith Colleges

"ON OR ABOUT DECEMBER 1910, HUMAN CHARACTER CHANGED." SO DECLARED Virginia Woolf in a statement that virtually all subsequent writers on Modernism have felt obliged to quote. Though historians tracing the origins of Modernist culture have quarreled with Woolf's exact choice of date, they have increasingly come to agree that sometime around the turn of the century the intelligentsia in Europe and America began to experience a profound shift in sensibility that would lead to an explosion of creativity in the arts, transform moral values, and in time reshape the conduct of life throughout Western society. Modernism, Peter Gay reports, "utterly changed painting, sculpture, and music; the dance, the novel, and the drama; architecture, poetry, and thought. And its ventures into unknown territory percolated from the rarefied regions of high culture to general ways of thinking, feeling, and seeing." Indeed, notwithstanding the growing evidence that a new sensibility of "postmodernism" has recently made its appearance, many writers would contend that Modernism itself has served as the dominant culture of twentieth-century America from the period just after the First World War up to the present.[1]

Although there is assuredly no consensus on exactly what Modernist culture is, there does seem to be a growing accord on what it is not. Perhaps the commonest misconception is the practice of equating it with "modernization," a concept emanating from Max Weber and still fashionable among many social scientists. Put simply, Modernism should properly be seen as a *culture*—a constellation of related ideas, beliefs, values, and modes of perception—that came into existence during the mid to late nineteenth century, and that has had a powerful influence on art and thought on both sides of the Atlantic since roughly 1900. Modernization, by contrast, denotes a *process* of social and economic development, involving the rise of industry, technology, urbanization, and bureaucratic institutions, that can be traced back as far as the seventeenth century. The relationship between these two important historical phenomena is exceedingly complex, with Modernism arising in part as a counterresponse to the triumph of modernization, especially its norms of

rationality and efficiency, in nineteenth-century Europe and America. Despite that initial hostility, however, the Modernist stance toward modernization has typically been marked by ambivalence, with Modernists simultaneously admiring the vitality and inventiveness of technological progress while decrying the dehumanization it appears to bring in its wake. Thus, despite the etymological similarity, Modernism and modernization must be sharply differentiated; nor should "modern" and "Modernist" ever be treated as synonyms.[2]

Another problematic view of Modernism equates it exclusively with the philosophy and style of life of the artistic avant-garde at the turn of the twentieth century. "Modernism" in this sense usually connotes radical experimentation in artistic style, a deliberate cultivation of the perverse and decadent, and the flaunting of outrageous behavior designed to shock the bourgeoisie. The entire movement, according to this definition, was comprised essentially of a small number of highly talented poets and painters based in the bohemian quarters of certain large cities, such as Paris, New York, Vienna, and Berlin, culminating around the time of the First World War in the work of such "canonical" masters as Picasso, Pound and Joyce. A variation on this definition, put forth by literary critics like Irving Howe and Lionel Trilling, allows Modernism slightly more range by viewing it as an "adversary culture" originating in bohemia but later adopted by twentieth-century intellectuals in their growing estrangement from mass society, and ultimately reappearing as a virtual parody of its earlier self in the form of the 1960s counterculture. In either case, this perspective sees Modernist thought as essentially negative and rebellious in character, and far too amorphous ever to be susceptible to definition.[3]

As the present essay will attempt to show, however, there is a more recent and far more satisfactory approach to Modernism that takes issue with the "bohemian" interpretation, contending that those writing in the Trilling tradition confuse the tip for the whole iceberg by focusing on the more visible and spectacular manifestations of the culture during its period of ascendancy while missing its underlying structure. Far from being anarchic, Modernist thought in this view represents an attempt to restore a sense of order to human experience under the often chaotic conditions of twentieth-century existence, and it most assuredly does contain a unifying principle if one knows where to look. Not just the plaything of the avant-garde, it has assumed a commanding position in literature, music, painting, architecture, philosophy, and virtually every other realm of artistic or intellectual endeavor. Moreover, Modernism in this formulation has cast its influence well beyond the intellectual elite to encompass much of contemporary middle-class Western society. Its values, though somewhat diluted, are held by a majority of present-day Americans, and its style is manifested in such diverse contexts as suburban architecture, television advertising, and popular music. In short, the definition being proposed here suggests that Modernism deserves to be treated as a full-fledged historical culture much like Victorianism or the Enlightenment, and that it supplies nothing less than the basic contours of our current mode of thought.

* * *

To locate the inner dynamics of Modernism and to see how it came into being, it is necessary to return briefly to the culture against which the early Modernists rebelled. Victorianism, whose reign in America ran roughly from the 1830s to the early twentieth century, was closely associated with the rapidly expanding urban bourgeois class of that era. Its guiding ethos was centered upon the classic bourgeois values of thrift, diligence, and persistence, so important for success in a burgeoning capitalist economy, along with an immense optimism about the progress that industrialization seemed sure to bring. At the same time, Victorian culture, with its ideal vision of a ʻstable, peaceful society free from sin and discord, proved immensely helpful in enabling the members of this new middle class to keep their balance in a world that was changing very fast, in ways they did not always expect or understand.[4]

At the core of this new culture stood a distinctive set of bedrock assumptions. These included a belief in a predictable universe presided over by a benevolent God and governed by immutable natural laws, a corresponding conviction that humankind was capable of arriving at a unified and fixed set of truths about all aspects of life, and an insistence on preserving absolute standards based on a radical dichotomy between that which was deemed "human" and that regarded as "animal." It was this moral dichotomy above all that constituted the deepest guiding principle of the Victorian outlook. On the "human" or "civilized" side of the dividing line fell everything that served to lift man above the beasts—education, refinement, manners, the arts, religion, and such domesticated emotions as loyalty and family love. The "animal" or "savage" realm, by contrast, contained those instincts and passions that constantly threatened self-control, and which therefore had to be repressed at all cost. Foremost among those threats was of course sexuality, which proper Victorians conceived of as a hidden geyser of animality existing within everyone and capable of erupting with little or no warning at the slightest stimulus. All erotic temptations were accordingly supposed to be rooted out, sexual pleasure even within marriage was to be kept to a minimum, and, as Nancy F. Cott has shown, the standard of respectable conduct, especially for women, shifted decisively "from modesty to passionlessness." A glorious future of material abundance and technological advance was possible, Victorians were convinced, but only if the animal component in human nature was effectively suppressed.[5]

Equally important was the way this moral dichotomy fostered a tendency to view the world in polar terms. "There is a value in possibilities," Masao Miyoshi observes, " . . . but the Victorians too often saw them in rigid pairs—all or nothing, white or black." Sharp distinctions were made in every aspect of existence: Victorians characterized societies as either civilized or savage, drew a firm line between what they considered superior and inferior classes, and divided races unambiguously into black and white. They likewise insisted on placing the sexes in

"separate spheres," based on what Rosalind Rosenberg describes as "the Victorian faith in sexual polarity," which deemed women as "by nature emotional and passive," while men were "rational and assertive." Such dichotomies, it was believed, were permanently rooted in biology and in the general laws of nature. The "right" way, the moral way, was to keep these various categories distinct and segregated.[6]

Put in slightly different terms, what the Victorians aspired to was a radical standard of innocence. They were engaged in an attempt to wall themselves off as completely as possible from what they regarded as evil and corruption, and to create on their side of the barrier a brave new world suffused, in Matthew Arnold's words, with "harmonious perfection." Nineteenth-century thinkers, writes Donald H. Meyer, "longed for a universe that was not just intelligible, reassuring, and morally challenging, but symphonic as well." To be sure, actual behavior at times seemed to undercut this pursuit of innocence, but the point is that for the Victorian middle class innocence still remained a powerful and almost universal cultural ideal. Even when behavior diverged from it, as doubtless happened quite often, the ideal continued to be venerated. Nor was the Victorian ethos regarded as especially oppressive by the great majority of its nineteenth-century middle-class adherents. Rather, in the context of their experience it was both comforting and distinctly uplifting—a set of values that offered moral certainty, spiritual balm, and the hope that civilization might at last rid itself of the barbaric baggage remaining from humankind's dark, preindustrial past.[7]

Nevertheless, by the end of the century various individuals in Europe and the United States were beginning to chafe under the burden of Victorian repression and to challenge their inherited culture in different ways. A belief developed that modern bourgeois existence had become perilously artificial and "over-civilized," and that the degree of self-control that Victorian morality required of each individual was stultifying the personality. "Many yearned to smash the glass and breathe freely," writes T. J. Jackson Lears, "to experience 'real life' in all its intensity." In most instances, though, these early rebels should be seen as post-Victorians rather than incipient Modernists, for they did not at bottom desire to overthrow nineteenth-century moralism, but rather to temper or amend it in ways that would make it more bearable. Lears skillfully documents the various exotic devices they resorted to in their futile attempts to break with their conventional existence and regain contact with "reality." But, as he also shows, identifying with medieval knights or taking up Oriental religion were no more than safe substitutes for actual liberation and could not resolve the cultural crisis these people were caught up in. The overwhelming majority of post-Victorians were accordingly fated to dwell in a kind of no-man's land. "Wandering between two worlds," Lears reports, these victims of cultural transition typically "remained outsiders in both."[8]

The first true signs of Modernism appeared in Europe during the latter half of the nineteenth century in the form of a succession of small movements, each making its

unique contribution to the new culture that was gradually coming into being. Most conspicuous at the outset were the French Symbolist poets, beginning with Charles Baudelaire in the 1850s, who overturned the traditional mimetic conventions of art by writing as much about what was transpiring within their own minds as about events or objects in the "real" world. "Paint not the thing, but the effect it produces," ran Stephane Mallarmé's dictum. To that end, Symbolist verse employed highly allusive language and imagery that described the subject of the poem only indirectly, but conveyed as fully as possible the poet's emotional response to that subject. The Symbolists were soon joined by the Impressionist painters, who in similar fashion devalued the ostensible subject matter and resolved to capture on canvas their own subjective reactions. Both movements, in other words, moved beyond the stable, rational, and seemingly objective world decreed by nineteenth-century positivism in order to explore the far murkier and less predictable operations of human perception and consciousness. In Symbolism, Impressionism, and other allied movements, then, one sees emerging one of the foremost tendencies of Modernism—the desire to heighten, savor and share all varieties of experience.[9]

At the same time developments taking place in more organized fields of thought were providing a philosophical underpinning for this urge to seek out experience. Writers as diverse as Henri Bergson, Friedrich Nietzsche, and William James agreed in rejecting the prevailing theory that divided the mind into separate compartments or "faculties," and in depicting experience as a continuous flux of sensations and recollections—what James would term "the stream of con-sciousness." That raw sensory flux, they concurred, was as close as human beings could come to knowing reality. Abstract concepts, along with all the other products of rationality that the Victorians had gloried in as the highest achievements of civilization, were seen as inherently faulty and misleading precisely because they represented an attempt to stop the experiential flow and remove knowledge from its proper dynamic context. A perception imprisoned in an abstraction was as lifeless and imperfect a model of reality as a butterfly impaled in a specimen box. As James insisted: "When we conceptualize we cut and fix, and exclude anything but what we have fixed, whereas in the real concrete sensible flux of life experiences compenetrate each other." To be sure, most of these early Modernist thinkers regarded rational concepts, especially the truths of science, as useful fictions that helped to get the world's work done, so long as those concepts were not confused with permanent truths. Yet the main thrust of their writings involved the obligation to loosen formal and rational restraints, expand one's consciousness, open oneself to the world, and perfect one's ability to experience experience—exactly what the Victorians had most feared.[10]

Further momentum for this cultural sea-change came from new findings in the physical sciences. "In the twenty years between 1895 and 1915," notes Alan Bullock, "the whole picture of the physical universe, which had appeared not only the most impressive but also the most secure achievement of scientific thought, was

brought into question." The certainties of Newtonian mechanics, and the Euclidian geometry on which it was based, gave way to a new physics in which everything depended on the relative position and motion of the observer and the object being observed. Non-Euclidian versions of geometry abounded, all equally verifiable, until Henri Poincaré was led to suggest in 1902 that "one geometry cannot be more true than another; it can only be more convenient." Radical theoretical shifts that served to demolish a host of familiar and distinct concepts were taking place at both the cosmic and microscopic levels: space, far from being a void, was now seen as filled by fields of energy, while the atom, far from being solid, was itself made up of tiny particles that orbited each other at a distance. The discovery of radium, demonstrating that seemingly solid matter could turn into energy, was shocking enough, but it was soon followed by Albert Einstein's proof early in the century that space and time could no longer by construed as separate and distinct entities, but must be placed on a continuum. Clearly, the new science had little use for the rigid, dichotomous categories that the Victorians had relied upon to organize their world; it was as enamored of dynamic process and relativism as the new philosophy and art.[11]

By the early twentieth century the profusion of artistic and intellectual movements was striking, especially in Paris, which was fast becoming the international center of Modernist activity. Most important during the first two decades of the century were Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Imagism, Vorticism, and the Italian variant, Futurism, to be followed after the war by Expressionism (mainly based in the Germanic countries), Dadaism, Surrealism, and Russian Constructivism—and eventually by Existentialism and Structuralism. Modernist masters came to dominate in all the arts, from Picasso, Cézanne, Braque, and Klee in painting, to Joyce, Pound, Eliot, and Malraux in literature, Stravinsky and Webern in music, along with Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright in architecture. Moreover, the new theories and values being fashioned by the intellectual elite were increasingly paralleled by similar developments at the level of popular attitudes and behavior, becoming unmistakable in the rampant consumerism and youth culture of the 1920s. In both cases the motor source was the same: a response to the cultural malaise brought about by late Victorian repression.

What all these various manifestations of Modernism had in common was a passion not only for opening the self to new levels of experience, but also for fusing together disparate elements of that experience into new and original "wholes," to the point where one can speak of an "integrative mode" as the basis of the new culture. Put simply, the quintessential aim of Modernists has been to reconnect all that the Victorian moral dichotomy tore asunder—to integrate once more the human and the animal, the civilized and savage, and to heal the sharp divisions that the nineteenth century had established in areas such as class, race, and gender. Only in this way, they have believed, would it be possible to combat the fundamentally dishonest conception of existence that the Victorians had propagated, free the natural human instincts and emotions that the nineteenth century had bottled up,

and so restore vitality to modern life. In the blunt words of William Carlos Williams: "Man is an animal, and if he forgets that, denies that, he is living a big lie, and soon enough other lies get going." In short, Modernists were intent on nothing less than recovering an entire aspect of being that their predecessors had tried to banish.[12]

Again and again, from art to social policy, Modernists have attempted to bring together that which the previous culture tried to keep separate. Far from being "the mere rehabilitation of the irrational," Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane write, Modernism involves "the interpretation, the reconciliation, the coalescence, the fusion—of reason and unreason, intellect and emotion, subjective and objective." McFarlane in fact identifies three stages in the development of the culture: a first stage of early rebellion (in other words, the bohemian stage that is often mistaken for the culture as a whole) during which "the emphasis is on fragmentation, on the breaking up and the progressive disintegration of those meticulously constructed 'systems' and 'types' and 'absolutes'" that the Victorians had assiduously created; a second stage marked by "a re-structuring of parts, a re-relating of the fragmented concepts"; and a final, mature stage characterized by "a dissolving, a blending, a merging of things previously held to be forever mutually exclusive." Thus, he concludes, "the defining thing in the Modernist mode is not so much that things fall *apart* but that they fall *together*"; the true end result of Modernism "is not disintegration but (as it were) superintegration."[13]

The most graphic manifestation of this integrative mode was certainly Cubism, a movement that deliberately sought to revitalize the experience of perception by challenging artistic conventions that had stood since the Renaissance. Since there was no such thing as fixed reality or truth, Picasso and his colleagues maintained, all objects would have to be seen in shifting relation to each other. The painter's task was thus to break up forms into component parts and have those parts continuously overlap, conveying not so much a sense of fragmentation as of wholeness. Sharp outlines were always to be avoided; rather, colors and textures were to bleed from one object into another, with subdued colors usually employed to enhance the sense of unity. Whenever possible, both the interior and exterior of a form were to be rendered alongside each other; likewise, the background was to have the same value and prominence as the main subject of the painting, and the two were to interpenetrate. Finally, in Cubist collage "found" objects from the "real" world, such as scraps of metal or pieces of newspaper, were to be incorporated into the work to juxtapose the spheres of aesthetic creation and everyday life, emphasizing how the painting was both a collection of pleasing shapes and colors on a flat surface *and* simultaneously a statement about perceived reality. In this manner, as Eugene Lunn tells us, the Cubists mounted their "revolutionary assault on the seeming stability of objects, which are taken apart, brought into collision, and reassembled on the picture surface" into a series of "contingent syntheses by which human activity and perception remake the world."[14]

This ever-present drive for integration explains so much about the history of Modernism. It allows one to make sense, for example, of the predilection of

twentieth-century thinkers and writers for such devices as paradox (which joins
seeming opposites) and ambivalence (the fusing of contradictory emotions, such as
love and hate), and for their tendency to place concepts and empirical observations
along a continuum or spectrum rather than in tightly demarcated categories. It also
helps account for the practice of cinematic montage, with its juxtaposition of events
and experiences; the attempt to break down boundaries between stage and audience
in twentieth-century theater; the resort to multiple overlapping harmonies and
rhythms in contemporary music, especially jazz (which also blends the primitivism
of its African origins with modern sophistication); and the concern for maximizing
the simultaneity of experience in literature—perhaps most fully achieved in Joyce's
*Ulysses*, a novel structured, as Stephen Kern points out, so that "traditional dividers
of sequence and distance collapse into a unified whole which the reader must
envision after several readings." In the realm of social action, it was this stress on
breaking down barriers that created the necessary cultural preconditions for the
twentieth century's concerted campaigns to eliminate a "separate sphere" for
women, and to overthrow that most noxious by-product of Victorian dichotomizing,
racial segregation.[15]

Underlying all these efforts at integration has been the Modernist reconstruction
of human nature. If the Victorians sought to place a firm barrier between the
"higher" mental functions, such as rational thought and spirituality, and those
"lower" instincts and passions that Freud would in time ascribe to the "id,"
Modernists strove to unite these two levels of the psyche. Thus where the Victorians
held "sincerity" to be their most prized character trait, with its injunction that a
person's conscious self remain honest and consistent, Modernists have demanded
nothing less than "authenticity," which requires a blending of the conscious and
unconscious strata of the mind so that the self presented to the world is the "true"
self in every respect. This, as Trilling observes, represents a far "more strenuous"
standard than did the code of sincerity, and necessitates precisely the sort of intense
self-knowledge that the Victorians sought to avoid. Hence the resort to stream-of-
consciousness technique in Modernist novels in order to capture what D. H.
Lawrence called the "real, vital, potential self" as opposed to "the old stable ego" of
nineteenth-century character.[16]

Yet it is just at this point that a massive paradox arises within the culture, for with
the universe characterized by incessant flux, and human beings unable to know its
workings with anything approaching certainty, the goal of perfect integration must
always remain unattainable, at least within the natural world. Thus, although the
Modernist seeks integration and authenticity, he or she must also be aware that they
will never fully arrive. Nor would complete integration really be desirable, for that
would mean stasis. The coalescing of the varied fragments of our contemporary
existence can never be consummated, but must constantly be sought. The sole
exceptions to this rule are found in self-contained intellectual systems such as
mathematics, language or logic, as the logical positivists affirmed, or in imaginary
settings conjured up for the purposes of art (though Modernist practice typically

demands that artifice of this sort be clearly identified as such). Otherwise, all that pertains to nature and life must be construed dynamically, as continuous process; the only lasting closure, in Modernist terms, comes with death.

Here lies the reason why personal identity has often become problematic and tension-ridden for those living in the twentieth century. The Victorian expectation that a person be consistent and sincere rested on the assumption that character was defined largely by social role, which in turn was normally fixed by heredity, upbringing, and vocation. Accordingly, once an individual matured, any shift in his or her character was viewed with suspicion. By contrast, the Modernists, as Ronald Bush puts it, view human nature "in a state of continuous becoming." Neither the self, nor any work of art designed to portray the self, Bush explains, can achieve "completeness or closure"; such closure would automatically violate the criterion of authenticity. As a result, one must constantly create and re-create an identity based upon one's ongoing experience in the world. Difficult though this effort may be at times, nothing less will meet the Modernist standard.[17]

Finally, this paradoxical quest for and avoidance of integration accounts for the special role of the arts within Modernist culture. Precisely because they represent a realm where that quest can be pursued with relative safety through surrogate experience, the arts have become a medium for radical experimentation in new ways of amplifying perception, organizing the psyche, and extending culture. As Susan Sontag points out, art in this century "has come to be invested with an unprecedented stature" because of its mission of "making forays into and taking up positions on the frontiers of consciousness (often very dangerous to the artist as a person) and reporting back what's there." Art is aided in this task by its ready access to the devices of symbolism, metaphor, and myth, all of which, in Jerome Bruner's words, serve to connect "things that were previously separate in experience" and that cannot be joined through logic. Art in this way "bridges rationality and impulse" by fusing together metaphorically the objective and subjective, the empirical and the introspective—breaking apart conventional beliefs and rejoining the resulting fragments in a manner that creates relationships and meanings not suspected before. In short, where the Victorians saw art as didactic in purpose—as a vehicle for communicating and illustrating preordained moral truths—to Modernists it has become the principal means of creating whatever provisional order human beings can attain.[18]

Thus the Modernist world-view has taken shape. It begins with the premise of an unpredictable universe where nothing is ever stable, and where accordingly human beings must be satisfied with knowledge that is partial and transient at best. Nor is it possible in this situation to devise a fixed and absolute system of morality; moral values must remain in flux, adapting continuously to changing historical circumstances. To create those values and garner whatever knowledge is available, individuals must repeatedly subject themselves—both directly, and vicariously through art—to the trials of experience. Above all they must not attempt to shield themselves behind illusions or gentility, as so many did during the nineteenth

century. To be sure, with passing time the Modernist world-view has, especially at the hands of the mass media, undergone the same tendencies toward corruption and routinization that have beset other major historical cultures. But in its ideal form at least, Modernism—in stark contrast to Victorianism—eschews innocence and demands instead to know "reality" in all its depth and complexity, no matter how incomplete and paradoxical that knowledge might be, and no matter how painful. It offers a demanding, and at times even heroic, vision of life that most of its adherents may in fact have fallen short of, but which they have used to guide themselves by nonetheless.

* * *

Although it has become common practice to identify the New York Armory Show of 1913, with its exhibition of Cubist and Postimpressionist painting, as the first shot fired in the battle to establish Modernism on this side of the Atlantic, significant skirmishes had in fact been underway for several decades. By the time the show opened, Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound, the two principal intermediaries between the United States and European Modernism, were already firmly entrenched at their posts overseas, Greenwich Village was filling up with cultural and artistic rebels, and proponents of the major intellectual breakthroughs in fields such as physics, biology, philosophy, psychology, and the social sciences had long since established beachheads at American universities. Both the Armory Show and the opening of Alfred Stieglitz's famous gallery were important vehicles for communication with headquarters overseas, but in America the war had long since been started, and by the period just before the First World War its effects could be seen everywhere, from muckraking journalism to the irreverent history of Charles A. Beard to the calls for personal and political liberation in *The Masses*. There were of course some differences from Europe—in John Higham's neat formulation, "Americans rebelled by extending the breadth of experience, Europeans by plumbing its depths"—but the essential values and dynamics of the culture were the same. "What was happening," Richard Hofstadter sums up, " . . . was that a modern critical intelligentsia was emerging in the United States. Modernism, in thought as in art, was dawning upon the American mind."[19]

Surely the two key figures in the process of importing the new culture to this country and giving it American roots were William James and John Dewey. James, as conversant with the latest European thought as any American of his day, was won over early in his career to the Darwinian premise that human beings existed on a continuum with other animals, and that the human brain was no more or less than a biological organ designed to select from the environment those perceptions useful for survival. For James that meant that the Victorian practice of radically separating the "higher" rational faculties from the "lower" instinctual ones made no sense. Rather, the mind must be conceived of as functionally integrated: "Pretend what we may, the whole man within us is at work when we form our philosophical opinions. Intellect, will, taste, and passion co-operate just as they do in practical affairs. . . ."

Once the mind, guided by its passions, had chosen which perceptions to bring to consciousness, it might proceed to formulate abstract concepts based on them, but in doing so, James insisted, it necessarily introduced further distortions. The initial raw sensory experience, he believed, was the closest we could come to knowing reality; each application of the intellect, however valuable it might be for practical purposes, took us further from the "truth."[20]

For this reason, James concluded, human beings were doomed forever to epistemological uncertainty. To the great majority of his contemporaries this was a horrible revelation, but to James it was infinitely exciting, precisely because it banished the closed, deterministic universe of nineteenth-century positivism in favor of an "open" universe governed by change and chance where the process of discovery would be continuous. Embracing pluralism as a positive good, and grounding his own system of thought on the experiential basis of "radical empiricism," James became the first important American Modernist intellectual.[21]

Dewey, although heavily influenced by James, was a more systematic thinker inclined to give greater recognition to the virtues of rationality and science. More explicitly, the central purpose of all of Dewey's thought was eradicating the dichotomy between intellect and experience, thought and action, that he and James had inherited. Sensory perceptions, he contended, must be filtered through intelligence to become meaningful, while at the same time scientific theorizing must always be controlled by testing in the real world. One might even say that Dewey, in keeping with the "integrative mode" of Modernist culture, devoted his career to combating dualisms of all kinds—including those dividing mind from body, science from art, the city from the countryside, and the elite from the common people—all the while, of course, resisting final closure. Everywhere one looks in his writings one finds this sensibility at work, as in his discussion of how the basic task of both art and science is to blend elements of perception into integrated "relationships" in such a way that the process can "recur" indefinitely:

> A well-conducted scientific inquiry discovers as it tests, and proves as it explores; it does so in virtue of a method which combines both functions. And conversation, drama, [the] novel, and architectural construction, if there is an ordered experience, reach a stage that at once records and sums up the value of what precedes, and evokes and prophesies what is to come. Every closure is an awakening, and every awakening settles something.

One can likewise see the Modernist ethos at work in Dewey's plan for "progressive education," with its effort to connect the classroom with "real life" experience, its pluralistic stress on breaking down social barriers by encouraging interaction among students from diverse class and ethnic backgrounds, and its imperative that teachers not deliver fixed truths, but rather impress upon children at the earliest age the tentative, pragmatic character of knowledge.[22]

Indeed, one might rightfully speak of two predominant "streams" of American Modernist culture, proceeding respectively from James and Dewey. The Jamesian stream centers its interest on the individual consciousness, celebrates spontaneity,

authenticity, and the probing of new realms of personal experience, and flows
mainly through the arts and humanities. The Deweyan stream, by contrast, tends to
focus on society as a whole, emphasizes the elimination of social barriers
(geographic, economic, ethnic, racial, and gender), and tries to weld together reason
and emotion in the service of programmatic social aims. With each passing decade
of the twentieth century these two streams have increasingly diverged, ultimately
creating an important internal tension within American Modernism, but that fact
should not be allowed to obscure their many close resemblances, particularly at the
beginning. James, after all, considered himself a professional scientist, while
Dewey's educational program was always centered on the individual and designed
to tap the child's natural spontaneity. Both strains, moreover, have reflected the
frequent preoccupation of American Modernists with pragmatic empiricism and
democratic pluralism, as opposed to the tendency of Modernists in war-ravaged
Europe to focus on apocalyptic experience and a concomitant cult of the irrational.

By the latter part of the Progressive Era, as Henry May has shown, the cultural
revolution that James and Dewey had helped to initiate in America was spreading
everywhere. Muckraking journalists were setting aside Victorian codes of gentility
and exposing corruption at the highest levels of American life, naming specific
names when necessary. Scholars like Charles Beard and Thorstein Veblen were
taking a new critical look at their society and its history, determined to shed their
nineteenth-century innocence and ferret out "reality" no matter how sordid it might
be. Social workers like Jane Addams were praising the earthy vitality of immigrant
cultures and insisting that such Old World heritages be blended with rather than
overwhelmed by the dominant national culture. In New York, the Young
Intellectuals, including Max Eastman, John Reed, Floyd Dell, Margaret Sanger,
Eugene O'Neill, Randolph Bourne and Walter Lippmann, were meeting at Mabel
Dodge Luhan's salon, discussing the latest European Modernist authors and calling
noisily for sexual, artistic, and political liberation in their own country. At the same
time Frank Lloyd Wright was busy reshaping American architecture along
Modernist lines, stripping away "false" ornamentation and facades, employing
"authentic" materials such as untreated wood, glass, and stone, and using an
abundance of windows and doors to erase the demarcation between interior and
exterior. "Wright's first objective," one historian notes, "was to reduce the number
of ... separate parts and make a unified space so that light, air, and vistas permeated
the whole." His designs, though attenuated in quality as they were popularized,
supplied the basic patterns for the mass suburban housing boom following World
War II, ensuring that a majority of middle-class Americans in the second half of the
century would live in Modernist-styled homes.[23]

Yet perhaps the most influential stirrings of the new culture in America could be
found in the work of the anthropologist Franz Boas and the extraordinary group of
disciples he trained at Columbia University. In *The Mind of Primitive Man*,
published in 1911, Boas took direct aim at the bedrock Victorian dichotomy
between civilization and savagery, contending that so-called savage peoples were
fully capable of logic, abstraction, aesthetic discrimination, and the inhibition of

biological impulses, while Europeans practiced any number of customs, taboos, and rituals that could only be construed as irrational. For Boas such attributes as "human" or "animalistic" were all a matter of cultural perspective, and there was no scientific reason for granting the European perspective superiority over another—the only permissible criterion for normative judgment was the Darwinian one of how successfully a culture allowed a particular society to adapt to its environment. These insights, spreading first within the ranks of social scientists and then through the general population, would in time transform American attitudes concerning race by undermining the reigning stereotype of black people, whom the old moral dichotomy had consigned to "savagery." Indeed, by knocking away the cultural and scientific props of racism and replacing them with a new cultural modality that favored pluralistic integration, this attitudinal change in turn provided the essential foundation upon which the various movements to secure black rights were able to build. As Marshall Hyatt concludes, "Boas's critical contribution . . . lay in providing a new way of thinking, without which America could not have traveled the long road from *Plessy v. Ferguson* to *Brown v. Board of Education.*"[24]

Finally, one should take note of how the Modernist sensibility invaded popular culture during the Progressive Era. That process is clearly visible in Lewis Erenberg's study of New York City nightlife, which charts the way members of the more prosperous classes overcame post-Victorian malaise by gradually throwing aside the restraints of gentility and seeking out more sensuous forms of entertainment. In the nineteenth century, he observes, each "sex, class, and race . . . was expected to occupy its exclusive sphere. Public life was increasingly divided, and the private realm of the home diverged from the values of public life." But the cabaret, the focal institution of the new nightlife, was notable precisely because it "relaxed boundaries between the sexes, between audiences and performers, between ethnic groups and Protestants, between black culture and whites." For example, traditional "barriers between the entertainer and his audience" fell with the elimination of the raised stage, curtain, and footlights; performers even went out into the audience during their acts. Moreover, the majority of the leading entertainers and songwriters came from immigrant backgrounds that fell outside the orbit of Victorian respectability and hence were valued in large measure for their ability to put well-to-do patrons in touch with the vitality and experiences of lower-class life—an attribute that became even more prized during the 1920s when cabaret-goers went "slumming" in Harlem in search of black performers thought to be especially "natural, uncivilized, [and] uninhibited." To be sure, patrons demanded an atmosphere of sumptuous elegance to provide a sense of order and guarantee that they would not be declassed themselves. But the basic thrust of this newly created and rapidly expanding popular culture remained the effort to erase the Victorian dividing line between human and animal and thus "to liberate some of the repressed wilder elements, the more natural elements, that had been contained by gentility."[25]

The most unmistakable evidence of this transformation in public sensibility was

surely the dancing craze that swept the nation between 1912 and 1916, foreshadowing the youth rebellion of the 1920s. Victorian-era dances such as the waltz, Erenberg observes, had emphasized "control, regularity and patterned movement," along with "a look but do not touch approach to one's partner." The scores of dances introduced after 1912, most of which had originated in black culture, featured "heightened bodily expression" and far more "intimacy" between partners. The very names of the dances—bunny hug, monkey glide, grizzly bear, and lame duck—suggested a delectable surrender to animality and "rebellion against the older sexual mores." Most notorious was the shimmy, "a black torso-shaking dance" that became the rage just after the war. It was accompanied by a new form of music called jazz, also of black origins, which featured still wilder rhythms, frequent improvisation, and recurrent attempts by early bands to make their instruments "duplicate animal sounds." Moral reformers, ministers, and members of the older generation were predictably aghast at this outbreak of impulse. "Jazz and modern dancing" in their eyes, writes Paula Fass, seemed to herald "the collapse of civilized life." It is clear in retrospect that, viewed from a Victorian perspective, such forebodings were not without justification, for the behavior of middle-class youth during the 1920s demonstrated just how widely Modernist values had spread within the nation and how quickly they were approaching dominance.[26]

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

To trace the course of Modernist culture in America in full detail would require far more space than is available here. Such a narrative would necessarily include 1920s novelists like Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Dos Passos, and Faulkner, who chronicled the disintegration of modern society and culture, but whose primary concern, Bradbury rightly observes, was somehow "to make the world re-cohere." It would also encompass the documentary-style writers of the 1930s who sought to immerse themselves in the consciousness of socially marginal groups like southern sharecroppers—most notably James Agee and Walker Evans, in their *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, with its impassioned effort to pare away the separation between the authors' consciousness and that of their impoverished, illiterate subjects (along with Agee's pained realization of the impossibility of breaking down those barriers). Other illustrations of the mature American Modernist sensibility would run the gamut of cultural and intellectual activity from the interwar period onward, including the "humanist existentialism" of postwar literature, the neo-orthodox theology of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, the pluralism of social science-oriented writers such as Richard Hofstadter and Daniel Bell, the pragmatic social reform initiatives of the New Deal and Great Society, the "International Style" in urban architecture, and the rise of modern advertising, where, as Bruce Robbins puts it, the "techniques of the modernist classics have been incorporated into modernist commercials." Finally, a complete account of the new culture's fortunes in America could not leave out the various countervailing movements that arose to

challenge Modernist values, either seeking, like the Fundamentalists, Ku Klux Klan and "New Right," to restore nineteenth-century certainties, or to proffer some new form of absolutism in the manner of scientism, orthodox Marxism and the behaviorism of B. F. Skinner, or to provide refuge from the tensions accompanying Modernism through an emphasis on bureaucratic process, as have some varieties of corporate culture.[27]

It would appear that the culminating moment for American Modernism—and perhaps also the beginning of its end—came in the 1960s. The celebration of the animal component of human nature, the quest for spontaneity and authenticity, the desire to raze all dualisms and distinctions, the breaking down of social and cultural barriers, the quest for "wholeness," and the effort to expand consciousness and discover new modes of experience—all were given heightened realization. A new generation of rebels, ironically spoken of as a "counterculture" when they were in fact riding the crest of a cultural tidal wave, carried the Modernist embrace of natural instinct and primitivism to its seemingly inevitable conclusion by letting hair grow wild, experimenting with mind-altering drugs, overthrowing the last vestiges of conventional sexual mores, and creating in acid rock a music of pounding sensuality. The same forces could be found at work among the intellectual elite, where writers like Susan Sontag condemned a supposed "hypertrophy of the intellect at the expense of energy and sensual capability" in contemporary life and demanded that critics forego all attempts at describing or interpreting art. Contending that "our world" is "impoverished enough," she insisted that we abandon "all duplicates of it, until we again experience more immediately what we have." Numerous performing groups took this philosophy to heart, endeavoring to achieve authenticity by bridging life and art—most notably the Living Theater, whose *Paradise Now* invited members of the audience to disrobe on stage and join the troup in sexual high jinks. Viewed in retrospect, what seems most striking about such excesses is the way matters once vested with deep emotion and commitment by those engaged in the initial battle against Victorianism were now often reduced to a pointless game. One senses that the pendulum was again starting to swing, that Modernism, much like late Victorian culture in the 1890s, was at last becoming overripe and starting to caricature itself. If so, then the 1960s, instead of marking the dawn of an Aquarian age, might be more accurately viewed as the death-rattle of a fast aging culture.[28]

Since that decade, and partly in reaction to it, there has been increasing discussion of the possible arrival of "postmodernism." As one might expect, those attempting to describe this new sensibility have often disagreed with each other, but they do seem to concur that its presence first became unmistakable during the 1960s. It has manifested itself, according to most accounts, in the form of Pop and minimalist art, in an architecture that intentionally draws on cliches from popular culture ("learning from Las Vegas," as Robert Venturi puts it), and in the literary productions of Tom Wolfe, Donald Barthelme, and Joseph Heller, among others. What these various tendencies appear to have in common is what Richard Wolin

calls "the valorization of mass culture" by the intellectual elite, "a pseudo-populist ethos which suggests that the gap between (high) art and life has been definitely bridged." To put this in slightly different terms, one might say that the democratic urge within Modernism to break down all division between the elite and the popular has at last overcome the long-standing practice of Modernist thinkers to dismiss mass culture on the grounds of inauthenticity. The result, Wolin argues, is a sensibility that is impatient with "complexity" and "wants instead works of literature . . . as absolute as the sun, as unarguable as orgasm, as delicious as a lollipop."[29]

Fredric Jameson likewise speaks of an "aesthetic populism" as the essence of postmodernism, and complains of a new superficiality, a "waning of content," in which "depth is replaced by surface, or multiple surfaces." "The postmoderns," he claims, "have in fact been fascinated precisely by this whole 'degraded' landscape of schlock and kitsch, of TV series and Readers' Digest culture, of advertising and motels . . . materials they no longer simply 'quote,' as a Joyce or Mahler might have done, but incorporate into their very substance." As he sees it, this new "cultural dominant" has resolved the Modernist crisis of personal identity by the simple expedient of eliminating the self as a subject of art or intellectual speculation. With no ego, there is conveniently no emotion, no troublesome conflict—just problems of "style," to the point where art becomes little more than a matter of "codes" and "pastiche," a "virtual grab-bag" of "random raw materials and impulses" reflecting the peculiar commodity fetishism of "late capitalism." What post-modernism seems to lack, in short, is the creative tension—the refusal to achieve closure—that had characterized Modernist art and thought at their best and provided their special resonance.[30]

If Jameson and Wolin are correct in their descriptions of postmodernism, what its advent may signal is a growing inability to tolerate the formidable demands made by Modernist culture, especially its abiding lack of resolution and certainty—just as post-Victorianism in the 1890s represented an effort to escape nineteenth-century moral constraints. Where Americans once sought an antidote to excessive repression, they may now be searching out a remedy for excessive liberation. The real underlying force beneath our present cultural activity may thus be the desire to find a stable point of reference, some firm rock upon which to rest our perceptions and values—though preferably without giving up the lessons about the relative nature of truth that Modernism itself provided. Thus we even find Jameson himself at the end of his critique calling almost plaintively for a new kind of cultural sextant and compass to fashion what he calls an "aesthetic of *cognitive mapping*."[31]

Some, including Jameson, seem to believe that the surest path to such regenerative intellectual cartography can be found in French poststructuralist theory, including the work of Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, and Althusser. One suspects, however, that, useful as some of its specific insights and techniques may be, poststructuralism in the long run will be viewed more as part of the

postmodernist malady than as a cure. The prime characteristic of its grand systems, as Frederick Crews recently pointed out, has been "a growing apriorism—a willingness to settle issues by theoretical decree, without even a pretense of evidential appeal." In eschewing empiricism this way, he continues, the post-structuralists and their disciples have been proceeding from "an unarticulated feeling that one at least deserves the haven of an all-explanatory theory, a way of making the crazy world cohere." But in the midst of the cultural dilemma posed by late Modernism it does not seem likely that the world will agree to cohere that easily; the expedient of intellectual game-playing, for all its temptations, will not solve the problem.[32]

Moreover, it seems clear that the postmodernist initiative to date has taken place within an essentially Modernist framework. The democratic urge to close the gap between the intellectuals and the "people," the stipulation (in Pop art and architecture, for example) that all artifacts be clearly identified as artificial and inauthentic while at the same time being seen paradoxically as authentic artifacts, the poststructuralist resort to semiotic analysis—these and other postmodernist traits surely represent extrapolations from the basic Modernist ethos. "Post-modernist anti-art was inherent in the logic of the modernist aesthetic," Gerald Graff observes astutely in support of his contention that a major cultural "breakthrough" has yet to occur in our time. Robert Martin Adams similarly finds that "where modernism has simply pushed ahead, it has exaggerated tendencies which were in it from the very beginning, by making symptomatic jokes out of them." In short, as was the case earlier with post-Victorianism, it would appear that those attempting to free themselves from inherited beliefs and values have thus far been unable to do so. Long-standing internal contradictions have surfaced, the old culture is wobbling, but its successor is still not here.[33]

Where then are we headed? If there is a lesson to be gleaned from the study of history, it is the necessity of expecting the unexpected. Few people at the turn of the twentieth century were able to discern the shape of the cultural era they were entering, and those few saw that shape only in its vaguest outline. There is no reason to think that prognostication will fare better this time. In the meanwhile, now that we are gaining a modicum of critical distance from it, perhaps the wisest course of action would be to occupy ourselves with improving our understanding of Modernism, as well as the more general process of cultural change in America, in order to gain as much perspective as possible on our recent historical experience. That seems the best answer available, though doubtless some will object that, with its relativism and contingency, it is indelibly a Modernist one.

*NOTES*

[1]Virginia Woolf, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (London, 1924), 4; Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, "The Name and Nature of Modernism," in Bradbury and McFarlane, eds., *Modernism, 1890-1930* (New York, 1976), 20, 28, 34-35; Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and*

*Victims in Modernist Culture* (New York, 1978), 21-22; Bruce Robbins, "Modernism in History, Modernism in Power," in Robert Kiely, ed., *Modernism Reconsidered* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 231-32, 234-39; Daniel Joseph Singal, *The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919-1945* (Chapel Hill, 1982), 3-4.

[2]On modernization theory, see especially Cyril E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History* (New York, 1966), 7, 9-26, 46-49; and Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), 15-25; for its applicability within the context of American history, see Richard D. Brown, *Modernization: The Transformation of American Life, 1600-1865* (New York, 1976), especially 3-22. The dialectical linkage between Modernism and modernization is explored in Peter Berger et al., *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York, 1973), though the authors use the term "demodernizing consciousness" in place of "Modernism." See also Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukacs, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno* (Berkeley, 1982), 40-42. For one among many examples of works that badly confuse Modernism and modernization, see Richard Wolin, "Modernism vs. Postmodernism," *Telos* 62 (Winter 1984-85): 9-11.

[3]Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans*, 22-26; Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning* (New York, 1968), xiii, 3, 30; Irving Howe, *The Decline of the New* (New York, 1968), 3-5, 9-10, 21-25; Mark Krupnick, *Lionel Trilling and the Fate of Cultural Criticism* (Evanston, 1986), 135-36, 143-45; Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York, 1976), 46-48.

[4]Daniel Walker Howe, "American Victorianism as a Culture," *American Quarterly* 27 (December 1975): 508, 511-14, 521.

[5]Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven, 1957), 14, 144-45, 420; John S. Haller and Robin M. Haller, *The Physician and Sexuality in Victorian America* (New York, 1977), 126-28, 109; Nancy F. Cott, "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850," in Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, eds., *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women* (New York, 1979), 166-68.

[6]Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, 162, 171, 144-45; Masao Miyoshi, *The Divided Self: A Perspective on the Literature of the Victorians* (New York, 1969), xv; Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New York, 1982), xiv.

[7]Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, 266, 297-300, 356; Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge, Eng., 1971), 11; Donald H. Meyer, "American Intellectuals and the Crisis of Faith," *American Quarterly* 27 (December 1975): 601; W. L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise: A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation* (New York, 1964), 41, 106.

[8]T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York, 1981), 5-6, 13, 37, 48, 53, 57, 105-06, 166, 174; John Higham, "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890's," in Higham, *Writing American History: Essays on Modern Scholarship* (Bloomington, Ind.: 1970), 78-79, 99.

[9]Bradbury and McFarlane, "Name and Nature of Modernism," 31; Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism*, 42-43, 45; Stephane Mallarmé, quoted in Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 172; Clive Scott, "Symbolism, Decadence and Impressionism" in Bradbury and McFarlane, *Modernism*, 219; Gay, *Freud, Jews, and Other Germans*, 275. For a detailed account of the transition to Modernism in an American setting, see Singal, *The War Within*.

[10]Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, 204; James, quoted in ibid., 204; Sanford Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot, and Early Twentieth Century Thought* (Princeton, 1985), 5-6, 12, 17-19.

[11]Alan Bullock, "The Double Image," in Bradbury and McFarlane, *Modernism*, 66-67; Robert W. Wald, *Space, Time, and Gravity: The Theory of the Big Bang and Black Holes* (Chicago, 1977), 10-11; Schwartz, *Matrix of Modernism*, 15-17; Henri Poincaré, quoted in ibid., 16; Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, 18-19, 132-36, 183-85, 153, 206; Albert Einstein, *Relativity: The Special and General Theory* (New York, 1961), 56-57, 94-96, 141-44; George Gamow, "The Declassification of Physics," in John Weiss, ed., *The Origins of Modern Consciousness* (Detroit, 1965), 167, 176-77, 188.

[12]Singal, *The War Within*, 7-8; Peter Faulkner, *Modernism* (London, 1977), 19; Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York, 1968), 185; William Carlos Williams, quoted in Robert Coles, "Instances of Modernist Anti-Intellectualism," in Kiely, *Modernism Reconsidered*, 217.

[13]Bradbury and McFarlane, "Name and Nature of Modernism," 46, 48-49; James McFarlane, "The Mind of Modernism," in Bradbury and McFarlane, *Modernism*, 80-81, 83-84, 92.

[14]Panthea Reid Broughton, "The Cubist Novel: Toward Defining a Genre," in Ann J. Abadie and Doreen Fowler, eds., *A Cosmos of My Own: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1980* (Jackson, Miss., 1981), 48-52; Eric Cahm, "Revolt, Conservatism and Reaction in Paris, 1905-25," in Bradbury and McFarlane, *Modernism*, 169; Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, 143-45, 195, 7, 161-62; Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism*, 48-51.

[15]McFarlane, "Mind of Modernism," 84-85; Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, 219-20, 199-201, 75-79; Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism*, 35.

[16]Singal, *The War Within*, 7-8; Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 6, 11, 143-47; Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans*, 72; Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven, 1982), xvi-xvii, 51-54; D. H. Lawrence, quoted in Ronald Bush, "Modern/Postmodern: Eliot, Perse, Mallarme, and the Future of the Barbarians," in Kiely, *Modernism Reconsidered*, 197.

[17]Jerome H. Buckley, "Towards Early-Modern Autobiography: The Role of Oscar Wilde, George Moore, Edmund Gosse, and Henry Adams," in Kiely, *Modernism Reconsidered*, 1-3; Bush, "Modern/Postmodern," 214, 196-201; McFarlane, "Mind of Modernism," 81; Singal, *The War Within*, 370; Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, 11; Erik H. Erikson, "The Problem of Ego Identity," in Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York, 1959), 118.

[18]Bradbury and McFarlane, "Name and Nature of Modernism," 50; McFarlane, "Mind of Modernism," 82-89; Susan Sontag, "The Pornographic Imagination," in *The Susan Sontag Reader* (New York, 1982), 212; Jerome S. Bruner, *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 62-63. McFarlane, in his otherwise excellent essay, makes the error of describing the "logic" of the dream as the guiding sensibility of Modernism. He notes, for example, how "a great many of the artists and writers of the first two decades of the twentieth century" found in the dream a "paradigm of the whole *Weltbild* in which reality and unreality, logic and fantasy, the banal and the sublime form an indissoluble and inexplicable unity." But surely this is an early and more extreme version of Modernism, and not necessarily a characteristic of the more mature culture. The latter involved not simply an attempt to assimilate the fiery processes of the unconscious, but also an effort to integrate them with those of rational thought. That is why metaphor provides a more accurate representation of the "logic" of Modernism than does dreamwork. See McFarlane, "Mind of Modernism," 86.

[19]Higham, "Reorientation of American Culture," 101; Hofstadter, *Progressive Historians*, 184-85.

[20]William James, "The Sentiment of Rationality," in James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays* (New York, 1956), 92, 65-70; Elizabeth Flower and Murray G. Murphey, *A History of Philosophy in America*, 2 vols. (New York, 1977), 2: 643-44, 649-50, 669.

[21]William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (New York, 1909), 318-19; Flowers and Murphey, *History of Philosophy*, 2: 683.

[22]John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (1934; New York, 1958), 169; idem, *The School and Society* (1900; Chicago, 1943), 11-14, 26-27. Dewey, with his Modernist animus against dichotomies of any sort, could even wax eloquent about integrating the various levels of education: "We want to bring all things educational together; to break down the barriers that divide the education of the little child from the instruction of the maturing youth; to identify the lower and the higher education, so that it shall be demonstrated to the eye that there is no lower and higher, but simply education." Ibid., 92.

[23]Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time* (New York, 1959), 220, 280-84; Hofstadter, *Progressive Historians*, 184; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York, 1963), 251, 121; Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, 186-87, 179; Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Natural House* (New York, 1954), 14-20, 38-40, 51-54, 62-65. The best treatment of the Greenwich Village movement is Leslie Fishbein, *Rebels in Bohemia: The Radicals of The Masses, 1911-1917* (Chapel Hill, 1982).

[24]Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1911; New York, 1965), 17, 29, 160-61, 154, 201, 205-10; Lewis Perry, *Intellectual Life in America: A History* (New York, 1984), 320-23; George W. Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York, 1968), 217-22, 226, 190-91; Marshall Hyatt, "Franz Boas and the Struggle for Black Equality: The Dynamics of Ethnicity," *Perspectives in American History* 2 (1985): 295, 269.

[25]Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (Westport, Conn., 1981), 5, 23, xii-xiv, 113, 125-26, 131, 187, 195, 255-56, 240-41, 154.

[26]Ibid., 148, 150-51, 153-54, 249-51; Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's* (New York, 1977), 301-03, 22.

[27]Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern American Novel* (New York, 1983), 61-62; James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941; New York, 1966), esp. 121, 129, 376-77; William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York, 1973), 302, 305-07, 310-11; Daniel Joseph Singal, "Beyond Consensus: Richard Hofstadter and American Historiography," *American Historical Review* 89 (October 1984): 978, 996; Howard Brick, *Daniel Bell and the Decline of Intellectual Radicalism: Social Theory and Political Reconciliation in the 1940s* (Madison, 1986), 20-21, 38-39, 165, 191-92, 208; Robbins, "Modernism in History," 234-35.

[28]William L. O'Neill, *Coming Apart: An Informal History of America in the 1960s* (New York, 1971), 200-02, 204-08; Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," in *Sontag Reader*, 98-99, 104.

[29]Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (July-August 1984), 53-54; Wolin, "Modernism vs. Postmodernism," 18-20, 25, 26; Gerald Graff, "The Myth of the Postmodernist Breakthrough," *Triquarterly* 26 (Winter 1973): 392; Bradbury, *Modern American Novel*, 160-64; Robert Venturi et al., *Learning From Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), 6-9 and passim; Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, eds., *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture* (Athens, Ga., 1986). For an early view of literary postmodernism that now seems somewhat dated, see Ihab Hassan, "POSTmodernISM," *New Literary History* 3 (Autumn 1971): 5-30.

[30]Jameson, "Postmodernism," 54-55, 59-62, 65, 72-73, 75.

[31]Ibid., 87, 89-90.

[32]Ibid., 71-72, 91-92; Frederick Crews, "In the Big House of Theory," *New York Review of Books*, 33 (May 29, 1986), 37, 39-42. On this debate, see also Jean Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Masumi (Minneapolis, 1984).

[33]Graff, "Myth of the Postmodernist Breakthrough," 387; Robert Martin Adams, "What Was Modernism?" *Hudson Review* 31 (Spring 1978): 29-30.