

SERIA MONOGRAFII NAUKOWYCH UNIwersYTETU ZIELONOGÓRSKIEGO



SCRIPTA HUMANA

VOL. 14

MODERNISM RE-VISITED

Editors

Urszula Gołębiewska and Mirosława Kubasiewicz



Uniwersytet Zielonogórski

SERIA MONOGRAFII NAUKOWYCH
Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego

/

**Scripta
Humana
Vol. 14**

KOLEGIUM REDAKCYJNE

Dorota Kulczycka (redaktor naczelny), Wolfgang Brylla (zastępca redaktora naczelnego), Sławomir Kufel, Małgorzata Łuczky, Marzanna Uździcka, Paweł Zimniak

RADA REDAKCYJNA SERII

Magda Mansour Hasabelnaby (Egipt), Karel Komárek (Czechy), Vyacheslav Nikolaevich Krylov (Rosja), Leszek Libera, Jarosław Ławski, Piotr Michałowski, Małgorzata Mikołajczak, Laura Quercioli Mincer (Włochy), Alexander Wöll (Niemcy)

W serii ukazały się:

- Interpretacje i reinterpretacje*, red. D. Kulczycka, M. Mikołajczak, Zielona Góra 2013 (t. 1)
Historia i historie, red. D. Kulczycka, R. Szyber, Zielona Góra 2014 (t. 2)
Eugeniusz Sue. Życie – twórczość – recepcja, red. D. Kulczycka, A. Narolska, Zielona Góra 2014 (t. 3)
„Obcy świat” w dyskursie europejskim, red. N. Bielniak, D. Kulczycka, Zielona Góra 2015 (t. 4)
Kryminał. Między tradycją a nowatorstwem, red. M. Rusczyńska, D. Kulczycka, W. Brylla, E. Gazdecka, Zielona Góra 2016 (t. 5)
Literatura a film, red. D. Kulczycka, M. Hernik-Młodzianowska, Zielona Góra 2016 (t. 6)
American Literature and Intercultural Discourses, red. naukowa A. Łobodziec i I. Filipczak, Zielona Góra 2016 (t. 7)
Kultura nie tylko literacka. W kręgu myśli Karola Wojtyły – Jana Pawła II, cz. 1, red. E. Bednarczyk-Stefaniak, A. Seul, Zielona Góra 2017 (t. 8)
Kryminał. Okna na świat, red. M. Rusczyńska, D. Kulczycka, W. Brylla, E. Gazdecka, Zielona Góra 2016 (t. 9)
Kultura nie tylko literacka. W kręgu myśli Karola Wojtyły – Jana Pawła II. Część 2, red. D. Kulczycka, A. Seul, Zielona Góra 2018 (t. 10)
Kobiety-pisarki, kobiety-bohaterki, red. N. Bielniak, A. Urban-Podolan, Zielona Góra 2018 (t. 11)
From Essentialism to Choice: American Cultural Identities and Their Literary Representations, red. A. Łobodziec, B.N. Fondo, Zielona Góra 2018 (t. 12)
Ze srebrnego ekranu na papier... Ślady sztuki filmowej w literaturze, red. D. Kulczycka, Zielona Góra 2019 (t. 13)

Zaproszenia do współtworzenia następnych tomów monografii znajdują się na stronie internetowej:
<http://www.ifp.uz.zgora.pl/index.php/badania-naukowe/scripta-humana/108-zaproszenia>

STARANIEM I NAKŁADEM JEDNOSTEK
Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego
Wydziału Humanistycznego
Instytutu Neofilologii

SERIA MONOGRAFII NAUKOWYCH
Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego

/
**Scripta
Humana
Vol. 14**

Zielona Góra 2019

Modernism Re-visited

Edited by
Urszula Gołębiowska
Mirosława Kubasiewicz

THE COUNCIL OF THE PUBLISHING HOUSE

Andrzej Pieczyński (*przewodniczący*), Katarzyna Baldy-Chudzik, Van Cao Long, Rafał Ciesielski,
Eugene Feldshtein, Roman Gielerek, Bohdan Halczak, Małgorzata Konopnicka,
Krzysztof Kula, Ewa Majcherek, Marian Nowak, Janina Stankiewicz, Zdzisław Wołk, Agnieszka Ziółkowska,
Franciszek Runiec (*sekretarz*)



UNIwersytet
Zielonogórski

REVIEWER

Dirk Vanderbeke
University of Jena

PROOFREADING

Una MacLean-Hañkowiak

LAYOUT

Anna Strzyżewska

DTP

Arkadiusz Sroka

COVER DESIGN

Grzegorz Kalisiak
Agnieszka Gruszka

© Copyright by Uniwersytet Zielonogórski
Zielona Góra 2019

ISBN 978-83-7842-386-7
ISSN 2657-5906

OFICyna WYDAWNICZA UNIwersytetu ZIElONOGÓRSKIEGO
65-246 Zielona Góra, ul. Podgórna 50, tel./faks (68) 328 78 64
www.ow.uz.zgora.pl, e-mail: sekretariat@ow.uz.zgora.pl

CONTENTS

Introduction	7
PART ONE: NEW READINGS	
Jacek Gutorow	
A Sense of Ending. Henry James and Adorno's <i>Spätstil</i>	15
Richard Cappuccio	
"I try to pray and I think of something clever": Katherine Mansfield and Modernist Prayer	29
Cristina Dodson-Castillón	
The Feminine Condition: Women and Madness in Katherine Mansfield's "Prelude"	45
Anna Kwiatkowska	
Modern Mansfield and Old Masters. Hypotyposis in Selected Short Stories by Katherine Mansfield	59
Ann Herndon Marshall	
Vita's Modernism: The Green Sackville-West	75
Rowland Cotterill	
Charles Williams as a Shakespearean Critic in the Age of Modernism	91
PART TWO: MODERNISM TODAY	
Marek Pawlicki	
"At the Brink of a Vision": Epiphany in the Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield and Nadine Gordimer	109
Olga Glebova	
Modernist Aesthetics and Existentialist Thought in J.M. Coetzee's <i>The Childhood of Jesus</i>	123
Barbara Poważa-Kurko	
The Theme of Paralysis in <i>Dubliners 100</i>	137
Urszula Gołębiowska, Mirosława Kubasiewicz	
Memory, Myth, and Modernism in Kazuo Ishiguro's <i>The Buried Giant</i>	153
Notes on Contributors	167
Index	171

INTRODUCTION

The title of this volume, *Modernism Re-visited*, suggests yet another re-engagement with early twentieth-century literature in search of new insights and interpretations. However, the act of revisiting also creates an occasion to reconsider those concerns and values of the movement which could inform reflection on our own moment and its literature. In fact, the current revival of interest in modernism demonstrates its continuity and relevance for our times against the dismissal of the period in the latter half of the twentieth century. Attacked by both the realists of the 1950s and 1960s and later by postmodernists for being elitist, formalist, hostile to popular culture and conservative, modernism has emerged in the last two decades as not, in its entirety, indifferent to pressing social, political, and ethical problems. Certainly, not all modernists shared progressive political views and commitments, the attitudes of some are in fact considered downright reactionary (for instance, those of T.S. Eliot or Ezra Pound).¹ Still, even when it was acknowledged that modernism did oppose the current reality, “pitting its innovative art against a reified bourgeois life-world,” the fact that those oppositional or critical ambitions were not fully realized has been held against the movement and seen as confirming its irrelevance.²

Among other factors, it is this transformative aspiration that informs modernism’s lasting impact: J.-F. Lyotard suggests that what is present in modernism, but disappears in postmodernism, is “the close bond’ between aesthetic endeavors and ‘an idea of the progressive realization of social and individual emancipation encompassing all humanity.’”³ For Fredric Jameson, the essential difference between the two eras is that modernism “still retains a sense of something outside capitalism” – the belief in the power of culture to transform nature, which becomes lost during the postmodern period.⁴ The resurgent appeal of modernism in today’s globalized, capitalist reality suggests that this utopian, idealist, emancipatory aspiration (and potential) of art resonates with contemporary artists’ desire to perform vital functions while resisting

1 Andrzej Gašiorek, *A History of Modernist Literature* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 560.

2 *Ibidem*, 555. Gašiorek observes that modernists aimed at preserving “the independent power of creative intelligence” capable of fostering an individual rather than a total social transformation, about which they were skeptical (560).

3 Ryan Trimm, “Contemporary Fiction and Modernism,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*. <http://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-186?rsk=1&oi=1&result=1>.

4 *Ibidem*, 8.

the pressures of the market. Borrowing Marjorie Perloff's words, it can be said that modernism "remains, at the beginning of our own century, incomplete and *open* to the future: *modernism*, it is now widely understood, is not yet finished, its momentum having been deferred by two world wars and the Cold War so that many of its principles are only now being brought to fruition."⁵

Recent developments in the field of modernist studies provide a timely context for a re-visiting and re-interpretation of the literature of the period. New methodologies and approaches (transnational, gender, race, environmental and other theories and methodologies) have allowed critics to reframe their perspectives on this cultural and literary period and phenomenon, which has led to a questioning of the conventional "mythology" of high modernism. While the essential features of this mythologized, traditionally conceived, modernism still resonate today, the dominant tropes of elitism and autonomy of modernist art, its detachment from social and historical realities, are being reconsidered in current research. Recent studies foreground previously unrecognized aspects and motifs, allowing us to revisit works which have been perceived in a limited manner and made to fit predetermined critical agendas. Apart from offering fresh perspectives on the canonical literature of the period, current revisions are also conducive to re-interpreting and re-assessing works which temporally belong to the period but, as they fail to conform to narrow conceptions of modernism, have been relegated to the periphery or excluded from the canon. At the same time, the very temporal and spatial coordinates of modernism are being reconstituted, extending the field of study temporally, beyond the boundaries of traditional periodizations of the movement, and spatially, beyond the American and European metropolitan centers.⁶ These extensions have had the effect of broadening the scope of studies and incorporating works produced before and after the core period of 1890 to 1945 and on the peripheries of the early twentieth-century culture.

Alongside the re-interpretations of the literature of the (expanded) period, the other impulse of the new studies of modernism is the examination of contemporary literary production which exhibits the continuity of modernist concerns and artistic techniques. The aptly titled 2016 volume *The Contemporaneity of Modernism* traces the re-emergence in contemporary literature and culture of key preoccupations of modernism such as the critical function of art and its autonomy from the domination of the market as well as the current renewal of interest in the issues of time and temporality.⁷

5 Marjorie Perloff, "Epilogue: Modernism Now," in *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*, ed. David Bradshaw and Kevin J.H. Dettmar (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 571.

6 Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies," *PMLA* 123.3 (2008): 737-748, 738.

7 Michael D'Arcy and Mathias Nilges, "Introduction," *The Contemporaneity of Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 1.

Contemporary novelists such as J.M. Coetzee, Kazuo Ishiguro, Colm Tóibín, and Zadie Smith acknowledge their fascination and affinities with modernism, apparent in their interest in modernist writers as well as in their explorations of characters' interiority and the themes of alienation and search for meaning in today's globalized world. Likewise, the continuity of modernist aesthetics in the post-war literature and its contemporary afterlives signal the persistence of the movement. Although the contemporary redeployments of modernist techniques have been frequently considered the result of merely drawing on an inherited formal tradition, the editors of *The Contemporaneity of Modernism*, Michael D'Arcy and Mathias Nilges, adopt a different approach. Against the widespread tendency of the new modernist studies towards downplaying the aesthetic aspects of modernism and focusing on its critical engagement in socio-political or ethical issues⁸ (and their contemporary relevance), they suggest regarding the return to the modernist aesthetics as not a sign of a purely formalist preoccupation. D'Arcy and Nilges draw on the views of Theodor Adorno, Fredric Jameson, Jacques Rancière, and T.J. Clark, for whom the modernist concept of aesthetic autonomy does not necessarily imply a separation from the social world, "the claim to aesthetic autonomy and reflection on aesthetic medium" being not opposed to the socio-historical context, but "dialectically involved in it."⁹ For one, aesthetic experiments, by creating uniqueness and difficulty, enact resistance to the expectations of easily consumable artistic "goods" for the contemporary cultural mass market.

New readings of both the established modernist writers and those who are frequently omitted from accounts and anthologies of modernism comprise the first section of this volume – the essays in this part are devoted to explorations of the works of Katherine Mansfield, Charles Williams, Henry James, and Vita Sackville-West. Jacek Gutorow looks at Henry James's late writings through the lens of Theodor W. Adorno's conception of *Spätstil* (late style), identified by the philosopher in Beethoven's last disharmonious, unsettling compositions. Likewise, James's late idiom, most visible in his works composed after 1900, is marked by a tendency towards complication. An accumulation of epithets, a complex sentence structure with multiple parallel clauses,

⁸ The element of opposition and subversion in modernist literature is particularly emphasized in new modernist studies. By contrast, Charles Altieri argues that for modernist writers "subversion and critique were very rarely ends in themselves but functioned as [...] the ground for positive visions" (765). Altieri's rejection of the "idealization of subversion" which he identifies in the current discourse on modernism seems to offer a particularly refreshing perspective on modernist and contemporary production. Modernist works are committed not just to criticism but to defining a positive impact of literature – how it might "get individuals to change aspects of their ways of paying attention and orienting their affective lives, in the hope that rebuilding individuals' senses of the good is required to produce durable social change." Rather than being purely negative – oppositional and critical – art may, in a subtle way, promote positive goals such as individual emancipation (765, 767).

⁹ *Ibidem*, 5.

frequent hesitations and parenthetical restatements result in an increased ambiguity of the writer's late prose. Gutorow argues that this elaborate late style, far from being a mere rhetorical or linguistic phenomenon, manifests the writer's growing sense of his work's "existential insufficiency and irrelevance, [...] of the inadequacy of the medium and [...] of art as necessarily anti-mimetic and anti-realistic." In an essay on another canonical author, Katherine Mansfield, Richard Cappuccio examines the role of prayer in her stories "Prelude," "At the Bay," "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," "Taking the Veil," as well as in some of her unpublished sketches, relating Mansfield's use of prayer as both a subject and form in her stories, journals, and poetry to T.S. Eliot's treatment of prayer in his work. Mansfield's story "Prelude" returns in the essay by Cristina Dodson-Castillón, who examines the theme of madness in the story from the perspective of feminist literary criticism, which views some forms of mental illness in female characters as a consequence of oppression experienced in patriarchal society. Additionally, Dodson-Castillón indicates the modernist aspect of madness as a symbol of rebellion. Anna Kwiatkowska explores the presence of *hypotyposis* in Katherine Mansfield's stories, interpreting compositions of flowers, fruit, musical instruments, and kitchen utensils described in narratives as reminiscent of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century still lifes by Jean Chardin, Johannes Vermeer or Francisco Zurbaran. The article establishes analogies between Old Masters' compositions (with the focus on still life, *vanitas* and genre painting) and Mansfield's narrative structures.

Unlike Katherine Mansfield, who has enjoyed the status of a legitimate modernist for some time now, Vita Sackville-West has been frequently omitted from the canon. Ann Marshall reclaims the writer and famous gardener as a modernist. Until recently written off as a marginal writer, Sackville-West emerges in Marshall's essay as a "green modernist," whose unsentimental garden writing "anticipates today's environmentalists." In her prose she not only challenges pastoral ideals but also questions Victorian perceptions of the harmonious relationship women were expected to have with the natural world. Marshall's reading of Vita's garden writing and of her novel *All Passion Spent*, reveals a writer responding to the challenges of her natural environment, a conscious modernist and a feminist author. In the only essay in this volume devoted to modernist criticism, Rowland Cotterill reconsiders Charles Williams's critical writings as a contribution to the modernist discussion of Shakespeare's work. Cotterill demonstrates that Williams's arguments, though largely omitted from accounts of English inter-war critical work which constituted the "modernist Shakespeare," resonate with both the Empsonian conception of 'ambiguity' and the modernist emphasis on poetic coherence.

The essays in the second section of the volume trace the presence of modernist inspirations, both formal and thematic, in recent fiction. The deployment of modernist modes and techniques – non-linearity, interiority, chronological play – has

been labelled, by David James and Urmila Seshagiri, “metamodernism,” a movement regarding “modernism as an era, an aesthetic, and an archive.”¹⁰ Contemporary fictions, however, do not only re-appropriate modernist techniques but also address modernism’s “sociopolitical, historical, and philosophical contexts.”¹¹ The lasting influence of the modernist aesthetic on more contemporary writers can be seen in Marek Pawlicki’s essay, which juxtaposes Nadine Gordimer’s short story “A Company of Laughing Faces” with Katherine Mansfield’s “The Garden Party.” Pawlicki underlines “thematic and structural similarities” between both stories, paying special attention to their use of epiphany – an inconclusive spiritual experience, which Dominic Head calls “equivocal epiphany” as opposed to a complete illumination. Rather than with modernist techniques, Olga Glebova’s essay is concerned with philosophical contexts of modernism in J.M. Coetzee’s novel *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013). Glebova proposes to read the novel as an “existential fable enacting the fundamental sense of disorientation and bewilderment” reminiscent of Lukács’s conception of “transcendental homelessness.” Coetzee’s displaced characters in settings resembling Kafkaesque and Beckettian locations indicate a continuation of modernist impulses to draw on existentialist thought in an attempt to grasp the human condition in specific historical circumstances. Barbara Poważa-Kurko’s essay analyses the topos of paralysis in *Dubliners 100* (2014), a collection of ‘cover versions’ of James Joyce’s stories. Written by different authors to commemorate the centenary of the publication of Joyce’s *Dubliners*, the contemporary versions share with one another and with their prototypes the theme of paralysis experienced in the contemporary world in the form of personal rigidity, Internet addiction, and isolation. Finally, in our essay we demonstrate that the treatment of memory, history, and myth in Kazuo Ishiguro’s most recent novel, *The Buried Giant* (2015), shows affinities with modernism. Modernist conceptualizations of memory – Maurice Halbwachs’s ideas on collective memory, Sigmund Freud’s theories concerning individual memory, and Marcel Proust’s notion of involuntary memory – are reflected in Ishiguro’s novel. Likewise, in its vision of a cyclical character of human history, the novel embraces a mythical perspective on time, rather than the spatialized, scientific time of historiography, which constitutes yet another link with modernism.

Works Cited

- D’Arcy, Michael and Mathias Nilges. “Introduction.” *The Contemporaneity of Modernism*. New York: Routledge, 2016. 1-14.
- Gąsiorek, Andrzej. *A History of Modernist Literature*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

¹⁰ David James and Urmila Seshagiri, “Metamodernism: Narratives of Continuity and Revolution,” *PMLA* 129.1 (2014), 88-89.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, 93.

- James, David and Urmila Seshagiri. "Metamodernism: Narratives of Continuity and Revolution." *PMLA* 129.1 (2014). 87-100.
- Mao, Douglas and Rebecca Walkowitz. "The New Modernist Studies." *PMLA* 123.3 (2008): 737-748.
- Perloff, Marjorie. "Epilogue: Modernism Now." *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*. Edited by David Bradshaw and Kevin J.H. Dettmar. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. 571-78.
- Trimm, Ryan. "Contemporary Fiction and Modernism." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*. <http://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-186?rskey=L1AOim&result=1>.