



## **Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism (Modernist Latitudes)**

*By Jessica Berman*

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Modernism has long been characterized as more concerned with aesthetics than politics, but Jessica Berman argues that modernist narrative bridges the gap between ethics and politics, connecting ethical attitudes and responsibilities—ideas about what we ought to be and do—to active creation of political relationships and the way we imagine justice. She challenges the divisions usually drawn between "modernist" and "committed" writing, arguing that a continuum of political engagement undergirds modernisms worldwide and that it is strengthened rather than hindered by formal experimentation.

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- Sales Rank: #2197957 in eBooks
- Published on: 2012-01-17
- Released on: 2012-01-17
- Format: Kindle eBook



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## Editorial Review

### Review

Vigorously expanding the scope of modernist and postcolonial fiction studies, *Modernist Commitments* ranges boldly from early-twentieth-century India to Civil War Spain and Depression-era U.S. corn lands, encompassing not only writers such as Woolf, Rhys, Joyce, and Anand but also little-known authors of domestic, postcolonial, wartime, and working-class narratives. In her multifaceted, engaging, and richly researched book, Berman spans the archival and the philosophical, advances the transnationalization of modernist studies, and powerfully reveals the ethical and political urgencies embedded in modernist narrative technique.

(Jahan Ramazani, author of *A Transnational Poetics*)

*Modernist Commitments* is a rigorously philosophical and comparative contribution to transnational modernist studies. It juxtaposes locations of modernity seldom conjoined?e.g., colonial India, Civil War Spain, and the rural United States, along with London and Dublin?and is particularly valuable for its exploration of narrative as a form of political intervention into the public spheres of war and colonialism and the private intimacies of the domestic. A must-read for the new modernist studies.

(Susan Stanford Friedman, University of Wisconsin–Madison)

*Modernist Commitments* is the book to read if you want to know what transnational criticism in twentieth-century literature can achieve once we stop theorizing the global and start investigating the living archive of intercultural literary history. Berman boldly redefines the question of global modernism by zeroing in on the shared ethical dimensions of disparate modernisms. A superb, sure-footed guide to the complex relation between narrative ethics and literary politics. Berman utterly and finally debunks the myths of modernist disengagement and aesthetic individualism.

(Jed Esty, author of *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development*)

Well researched and clearly written.... A noteworthy contribution to its field.

(*Choice*)

Readers will emerge from these ambitious encounters with a profound appreciation for Berman's patient erudition, fluid critical voice, and beautifully structured analyses.

(Jeanette McVicker *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*)

An important contribution that graciously integrates politics and ethics into a comparative study of transnational modernism while providing new directions for future work in postcolonial and global studies.

(Juan Meneses *Modern Fiction Studies*)

Remarkable

(Hugues Azerad *Modern Language Review*)

Review

This is a state-of-the-art book, both in its aims and execution. Scholars of modernism will understand it as anticipating and guiding the field's changing shape, and literary scholars in general will turn to this volume to explain how the 'new modernism' is altering our sense of twentieth-century fiction and literary history as a whole.

(John Marx, University of California, Davis)

About the Author

Jessica Berman is associate professor and chair of English at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). She is the author of *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community* and the coeditor, with Jane Goldman, of *Virginia Woolf Out of Bounds*. She is also the co-editor, with Paul Saint-Amour, of the series *Modernist Latitudes*.

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