

*Reconnecting Aestheticism and Modernism: Continuities, Revisions, Speculations* edited by Bénédicte Coste, Catherine Delyfer, and Christine Reynier. London: Routledge, 2017. vi, 210 pp. ISBN 978-1-138-64077-1. £115.00; \$140.00.

When the artistic and intellectual importance of the fin de siècle (here 1880-1914) began to be reassessed in the late 1950s and early 1960s, critics such as Frank Kermode, Ian Fletcher, and Helmut Gerber puzzled over whether the 1890s represented, in the latter's words, "beginning, end, or transition." That question has been posed many times since, the answer to it depending largely upon period affiliations. Those working in late-Victorian studies have been, in general, willing to look forward and see where the experiments of their era would in due course lead, but until quite recently many Modernist scholars, like Modernists themselves, have preferred to subscribe to Linda Dowling's resonant notion of the "parthenogenesis of the avant garde," and have disavowed their aesthetic forebears as so many embarrassing elderly relatives.

Coste, Delyfer, and Reynier's book is the most recent to explore the shift from "modern" to "modernist," though it assuredly will not be the last. Edited collections are often contradictory affairs, but this is why they can be helpful contributions to scholarly debate, offering a plethora of opinions and voices rather than being chained to the anchor of consistency as a monograph might be. Here we have a generally productive discussion between scholars of late-Victorian and Modernist writing which traces the evolution of a Modernist aesthetic without being crudely teleological. Modernism was not an inevitable consequence of earlier experiments, and neither was it a single monolithic whole, any more than were the earlier movements its propagandists caricatured. In examining writers from both ends of the fin de siècle and extending coverage to Dorothy Richardson, Ford Madox Ford, and Evelyn Waugh, the book manages to be at once wide-ranging and, in some essays at least, tightly focused. Over the course of fourteen essays arranged in three broad sections – "Connecting Aestheticism and Modernism," "Revising Assumptions about Aestheticism and Modernism," and "Speculative Orientations in Aestheticism and Modernism" – the editors argue for "a new mapping of literary history" and seek to pose "new questions for future research." These are laudable aims, and the book makes some steps towards accomplishing them.

Inevitably, as a collection of essays which began life as papers at a workshop funded by the European Science Foundation, there is a sense of the book as beads rather than necklace. How useful the individual reader will find it depends upon her preoccupations. There is very little on Yeats (surely a key figure in the Victorian/Modern debate) and only slightly more on Eliot. Instead, the editors give a sense of how the Modernist canon is evolving and