



## Nationalism and the modern american canon

Mark Morrisson

English

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### Abstract

London was a Mecca for modernist writers and visual artists, with its Bloomsbury experiments in aesthetics and lifestyles, its avant-garde exhibitions and arts workshops, its audacious poetry readings, and its fiercely independent small presses and little magazines. But as Hugh Kenner has noted, none of the “masterpieces” of modernist literature (*Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, or the first third of Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, for instance) were written by English writers. Moreover, the English language and English literature itself had become decentered: Kenner went on to argue that “by midcentury... English was the language not only of the Three Provinces but also of several masterpieces best located in a supranational movement called International Modernism.” The literature that he espoused - primarily the work of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, James Joyce, William Carlos Williams, William Butler Yeats, Marianne Moore, and Samuel Beckett - all, in Kenner's view, belonged to this “supranational movement.” Indeed, modernism has often been conceptualized as a stridently international phenomenon across art and literature. But if we accept such a vision of modernism as international, what could the phrase “American modernism” possibly mean? Does it refer to a specific subset of international modernism (that is, work produced by American modernists), or to a different kind of writing altogether? In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many American writers (modernist or not) were grappling with the “American-ness” of their own writing, seeking to understand what could define their literature as a national literature and not simply as a provincial footnote to English literature. American literary nationalism proved a powerful cultural force even as modernists began to engage with international avant-gardism. The national (or international) identity of modernism was by no means as lucid then as later scholarly assessments, including Kenner's, might suggest.

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 Ezra Pound  
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 Nationalism  
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Indeed much research on American nationalism has been concerned with the way in which the national idea gained prominence among the population of the colonies and the early Republic and how its meaning has subsequently evolved over the course of American history. Psychological Definitions. A second conception of nationalism emphasizes the relationship between the individual and a generalized image of the nation. The way Native American literature continues to thrive and the direction it takes is predetermined to a great extent by oral tradition, which at the same time

constitutes a rather big part of indigenous literatures' character and identity. The history of Euro-American/Indian relationships has also been of tremendous influence on the course of Native American literature and shaped to a certain extent its goals as well, i.e. the establishment of Native American literary canon and criticism, Native American national literature, and fight for intellectual sovereignty. This work will discuss the way As nationalism evolved in the nineteenth century, it assumed the ugly forms of imperialism, racism, and totalitarianism; it helped to stimulate world wars in the twentieth century. It is these pejorative qualities that have led some American critics of nationalism to separate the American experience from the nationalism of Europe. Paul Nagel, an intellectual historian at the University of Missouri, refused even to use the term in dealing with American nationality. For him, "'Nationalism' regularly has implied a doctrine or a specific form of consciousness conveying superiority o Nationalism is the cultural framework of modernity. Modern consciousness is national consciousness. This means that we see reality through the lens of nationalism, or that reality is constructed by nationalism. The emergence of this new national image of reality—national consciousness or nationalism—in sixteenth-century England inaugurated the age of continuous social change oriented toward the realization of the principles of popular sovereignty, fundamental equality of national membership, and inclusive identity implicit in nationalism. These principles are best known to us under the name given to them by the French Revolution of 1789, which signaled the arrival of nationalism in France: liberty, equality, fraternity.