



# **Mosaic Modernism: Anarchism, Pragmatism, Culture (New Studies in American Intellectual and Cultural History)**

*Professor David Kadlec*

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In *Mosaic Modernism* David Kadlec examines the anarchist and pragmatist origins of modernism as a literary/cultural phenomenon. Treating a wide range of historical sources and materials, many of them previously unpublished, Kadlec argues that the formal experiments of leading modernists were spurred by German, French, and British anarchists. He thus offers a dramatically new account of modernism's political genesis and the mosaic, improvisational tendencies of modern literature.

Anarchist polemics against "beginnings, origins, and principles" shaped the avant-garde writings of Ezra Pound and James Joyce. And anarchism influenced American philosophy as well. The pragmatist William James was among those who adapted anarchist premises to lingering exceptionalist visions of American experience and identity. Through the writings of later American philosophers and social theorists--Horace Kallen, John Dewey, and Alain Locke--and through the inventive poems of William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore, modernism's resistance to deterministic "first principles" came to assume a new shape on American soil.

The antifoundationalist impulse that lay beneath modernism's formal innovations, Kadlec argues, eventually spawned its own foundation in the notion of culture as an indeterminate and contingent measure of American identity. The orthodoxy of this new cultural measure received challenge in the later modernist innovations of the African American folklorist and novelist Zora Neale Hurston. In restoring the centrality of anarchism and pragmatism to a range of modern writers and movements, *Mosaic Modernism* provides a welcome historical perspective on contemporary conceptions of identity politics.

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