

Maebh Long. 'Aphorisms and Archipelagos: Relationality in Modernist Studies'. *Aphoristic Modernity: 1880 to the Present*. Ed. Kostas Boyiopoulos and Michael Shallcross. 190–205. Leiden: Brill, 2020.

Modernist studies, these days, is on the move. Global, planetary, transnational, postcolonial, and geomodernist rubrics map new routes of aesthetic interconnection and change as the geographical and temporal reaches of modernism are extended. Monographs and collections speak of mobility, dynamism, and hybridity across the local and the global, as texts trace out identities and contexts that are, as Jahan Ramazani puts it, 'discretely located and thoroughly enmeshed, networked, cross-racialized' (16). Eric Hayot and Rebecca Walkowitz, to take one example, write of 'shifting concept[s] of fixity and centrality' (3) in their *New Vocabulary for Global Modernism* (2016), and embrace modernism as a series of changing frames that react to local conditions, international systems, and a plurality of other spatial and temporal scales (8). Their book presents the moving parts of modernism through different lenses, allowing its global reach to present new terms and revitalise old ones, as changing local and international relations present different views.

Faced with such a multiplicity of perspectives, in his *Handbook of Modernism Studies* (2013) Jean-Michel Rabaté (re)turns to Walter Benjamin's and Charles Baudelaire's image of the kaleidoscope to stress the multiple angles and perspectives the new modernist studies try to embrace. Much current work on modernism engages with the richness and complexity that the parallax between different vantage points provides, and strives for a conceptual vocabulary that facilitates engagement with the disjunctions, conjunctions, fluidity, and change that such an extension of scales requires. In response to this endeavour this chapter presents the aphorism as a conceptual unit through which to cognise the kaleidoscopic relationality of a new, decentring and decolonising modernism. The aphorism, in its expansive brevity and its simultaneous isolation and interrelation, is a form that encourages conceptual movement from stable centre/periphery binaries to dynamic polycentrism, and propels thought towards shifting patterns of combined but uneven development, where influence and inspiration is, as Andreas Huyssen puts it, 'reciprocal though asymmetrical' (189).

Thinking aphoristically means that we think in terms of alternate lines of inheritance and appropriation, and move between the small and the large. Aphoristic thought offers a way to engage with patterns that repeat across time and place, and presents a mode through which to more readily conceptualise the logical inconsistencies that arise when similar material conditions or socio-political events result in different outcomes in different locations. Although there is nothing apolitical about the aphorism, this chapter emphasises the importance of the physical and the political within contemporary modernist studies by linking the formal, textual structure of the aphorism to the geographical reach and fluidity of the archipelago, as the latter emphasises the movement between individual islands of thought, as well as the space of relation itself. It brings the aquatic to a modernism too often land-based, and stresses the connections and unpredictable interactions essential to a global modernist approach. To examine the archipelagic aphorism, this chapter turns first to an account of the aphorism, looking specifically at the writings of Friedrich Schlegel, Maurice Blanchot, and Jacques Derrida, and then to writings on archipelagos, before reading current modernist approaches in terms of oceanic fragments.

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The word ‘aphorism’, the *Oxford English Dictionary* tell us, comes from the Greek *apo*, meaning ‘off’, and *horizein*, meaning ‘to set bounds’. From an etymological perspective, the aphorism is that which is bound off, separated and isolated: a short utterance that in its brevity usually presents a single idea, and often so dogmatically as for that single idea to manifest as a single truth. Frequently pithy and direct, the aphorism often appears to command, and performs as an injunction that can stand alone and independent. Friedrich Nietzsche saw aphorisms’ truths as inevitable, perpetual verities, and proclaimed that the ‘aphorism, the apothegm [...] are the forms of eternity, and my ambition is to say in ten sentences what everyone else says in a book – what everyone else *does not* say in a book’ (*Twilight* 115).

The aphorism, in its conciseness, speaks volumes, and is timeless in its ability to appeal to all times. And yet, for dicta to resonate across time and place, they must have the ability to apply to different contexts and different people, which means that their perpetuity is marked not by resolute steadfastness, but by change. The truth of an apothegm, then, is a truth that is flexible, and that by dint of the expansiveness of its terseness can signify differently – think of the pages of contradictory exposition that arise from the simple maxim ‘know

thyself'. As such, the epigrammatic is a boundlessly bounded form, a horizon or limit that is in constant excess of itself. Of course, the most noted writers of aphorisms and fragments were writers of aphorisms in the plural: Nietzsche, Blaise Pascal, Francis Bacon, Friedrich Schlegel, and Ludwig Wittgenstein all wrote series of aphorisms that formed shifting parts of a fluid whole. Thus, not only is the aphorism a form that speaks in excess of itself, its relations to other aphorisms give it even greater multiplicity.

There are, of course, many different ways of reading the aphorism, as hinted at by the multiple different terms for a concise form used in the paragraph above. The kind of reading gestured towards by the opening paragraph of this section owes much to the works of Friedrich Schlegel, Maurice Blanchot, and Jacques Derrida.<sup>1</sup> Although these writers did not use the same name for their short, excessive form – Schlegel and Blanchot spoke of fragments, and Derrida of the aphorism – the structure of openness to which all three writers strove has more similarities than differences. Despite varied approaches and intentions the form they sought was a formless one, 'a form that, being all forms – that is, at the limit, being none at all – does not realise the whole, but signifies it by suspending it, even breaking it' (Blanchot, *Infinite* 353).

The fragment, for Schlegel, was not a part torn from a whole, but a form simultaneously complete and incomplete, as it tersely says everything it needs to say, and yet requires volumes of further thought and work to engage with all its implications. As such, each fragment is radically in excess of itself. The perfect Romantic work, Schlegel wrote, would be 'cultivated when it is everywhere sharply delimited, but within those limits limitless and inexhaustible; when it is completely faithful to itself, entirely homogeneous, and nonetheless exalted above itself' ('Athenäum' no.297).<sup>2</sup> The fragment would be the absolute of German Romantic thought; an act of production – *poiesis* – that was a permanent act of becoming, and which transcended divisions of literature and philosophy. One of Schlegel's most frequently quoted fragments gives a vivid picture of the movement of the short form: 'a fragment, like a miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a hedgehog' ('Athenäum' no.206). Although, as we will see below, frequently this description has been interpreted to signify a commitment to self-referral and closure, Schlegel's fragment has an inward turn that is simultaneously an outward trajectory. The inward movement is infinite and

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<sup>1</sup> I have written elsewhere on the fragment and the aphorism – see Long, 'Absolute Nonabsolute Singularity', *Assembling Flann O'Brien*, and 'Fragmentation'.

<sup>2</sup> When 'no.' appears in a citation, this represents a fragment number rather than a page number.

can never be completed as the fragment's limits are inexhaustible, and as such the fragment's isolation is a permanent expansion.

Despite this, Blanchot understood Schlegel's fragmentary form as 'the closure of a perfect sentence', as it had 'its centre in itself rather than in the field that *other* fragments constitute along with it', thereby 'neglecting the interval' between the fragments, and forgetting that the fragment 'makes possible new relations that except themselves from unity, just as they exceed the whole' (*Infinite* 359). In rejection of this perceived closure, Blanchot presented his fragments as expansive, as having 'no external limit – the outside toward which it falls is not its edge – and at the same time no internal limitation (it is no hedgehog, rolled up and closed on itself)' (*Disaster* 46). The fragmentary is for Blanchot a writing of exposure and incompleteness: 'Fragmentary writing is at risk, it would seem: risk itself. [...] Interrupted, it goes on' (*Writing* 59). Similarly, in 'Istrice 2: Ick bünn all hier', Derrida distanced himself from Schlegel's fragments, as he argued that they pointed to a 'certain cult of the fragment and especially of the fragmentary *work* which always calls for an upping of the ante of authority and monumental totality' (302).<sup>3</sup> Yet, as Derrida also admits in this essay, he had not read Schlegel, and received this sense of the fragment's closure from Lacoue-Labathe and Nancy's *The Literary Absolute*. In order to move away from this perceived closure, and to signify an open, protean potentiality, Derrida turned to the word 'aphorism'.

For Derrida the aphorism is a form that enables movement between radically different positions, and his expositions stress the aphorism's ability to signify in radically different ways. Thus he emphasises both the aphorism's independence *and* its interdependence. The aphorism's self-supporting isolation, he writes, renders it an authoritative form, as it prophesises, speaks the truth, and commands. It 'must never refer to another. It is sufficient unto itself, a world or monad' ('Fifty-Two' no.24). Surrounded by borders and boundaries, it 'separates, it marks dissociation, it terminates, delimits, arrests' ('Aphorism' no.2). And yet, while it is centred only on itself, 'there is always more than one aphorism' ('Fifty-Two' no.45), as the aphorism is always in a series, a closure becoming interruption, omission, openness. We can perhaps get closest to what Derrida has in mind by viewing the aphorism as a full stop within ellipsis: a contradictory form that is both a period, an end, a closure, *and* also a point within a larger, open, series. The order of an aphoristic series is never set, even when aphorisms are placed in a numbered progression, as once read connections and contradictions can be traced between them in any pattern: 'Nothing [...] is absolutely assured, neither the linking nor the order' ('Aphorism' no.9). There is no set, logical progression, just reworkings and rereadings through

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difference and alterity: ‘Aphorism: that which hands over every rendezvous to chance’ (‘Aphorism’ no.11).

Aphorisms thus exist absolutely by themselves, and absolutely in a fluid relation. The space between them provides the flexibility to read them in any order, but also means that they are so isolated that arguments about contradiction or repetition are difficult to sustain. An aphoristic sequence does not follow a logical pattern, nor form a single argument, and thereby does not have to conform to expectations regarding focus, flow, coherency, inconsistency or recurrence. This is because, for Derrida, the serial (il)logic of the form means that each ‘aphorism in the series can come before or after the other, before *and* after the other – and in the other series’ (‘Aphorism’ no.9). Each aphorism is centre of one series and beginning or middle or contradiction of (another) series, and so, within this shifting scene, each aphorism is potentially before and after every other aphorism. As such aphorisms are of an impossible synchronisation, and partake of what Derrida calls an ‘exemplary anachrony, the essential impossibility of any absolute synchronisation’ (‘Aphorism’ no.11), which means that the time of each aphorism is fully separate and removed from every other. And yet, the aphorism could not exist ‘without the promise of a now in common’ (‘Aphorism’ no.13); a temporality in which and from which comparisons and conjunctions can be made.

Each aphorism, Derrida writes, is a counterpoint to each other aphorism, and this puts them into a syncopated rhythm: in syncopation a normally unaccented note is stressed, a usually unstressed beat is foregrounded, and the regular flow of the tempo is interrupted. Thus aphorisms interrupt ‘normal’ rhythm, producing an off-beat, irregular time, which Derrida refers to as a time out of joint. Interestingly, the term ‘syncopation’ is also used in linguistics to denote the loss of unstressed sounds within a word; for example, when ‘over’ is changed to ‘o’er’. Hence while syncopation interrupts it also conjoins, bringing together over an elided space. Of course, this coming together is never a movement of strength: the aphorism is a form always exposed and open to chance, embodying a fragile singularity that Derrida would elsewhere give, with echoes of Schlegel that he firmly denied, the form of the hedgehog (‘Che cos’è’ 221–40). A writing that exposes itself in its attempt at defence.

From Schlegel, Blanchot, and Derrida we arrive at a picture of aphoristic form that is one of fluid movement between frames of references. For Derrida this fluidity leads him to refer to his ‘Fifty-two Aphorisms for a Foreword’ as an ‘archipelago of aphorisms’ (‘Fifty-two’ no.7). The term ‘archipelago’ originally referred to the Aegean Sea, but the *Oxford English Dictionary* now defines it as ‘[a]ny sea, or sheet of water, in which there are numerous islands’. This definition, most importantly, prioritises the aquatic – an archipelago does not

refer primarily to the islands themselves, but to the sea that contains them. It thereby emphasises the fluid space of connection between the islands, a space in which water and land relate. Aphorisms resemble small islands in a shifting, archipelagic sea of relationality; independent and isolated, they are nonetheless part of a networked whole whose patterns of connection and interaction are never fixed.

To think aphoristically, we need to think in terms of a floating geography, and ensure that our vision is constantly shifting scale: engaging with each island aphorism separately and independently, while also engaging regionally and collectively, knowing that the pattern being drawn will constantly shift. To think in these terms is to connect unexpectedly, across ontological and epistemological differences. To think in terms of aphoristic archipelagos is to avoid thinking in static hierarchies, but to be aware that the relation between parts is dynamic – that power relations exist, that certain trends or forces dominate, but that these power structures do not operate in the same direction or manner in every instance. Lines of influence are drawn, but these are not inevitably linear. And so, from the gardens of Schlegel's and Derrida's hedgehog aphorisms, we move to the geopolitical waters of modern archipelagic aphorisms.

My interest in thinking in terms of aphoristic archipelagos stems from island thinking in three different waters – the warm waves of the Pacific, the cold spray of the Atlantic, and the waters in which the Atlantic ocean and the Caribbean sea meet. Turning first to the Pacific, an area still under-represented in modernist studies, in 1993 Epeli Hau'ofa, a Tongan academic who was based in Fiji, made an intervention into representations of the island nations of the Pacific Ocean that would be vastly influential in Pacific studies.<sup>4</sup> Commenting on the belittling representation of the countries of Oceania on the world stage, he argued that for too long island nations had been treated as 'much too small, too poorly endowed with resources, and too isolated from the centres of economic growth' (29). For Hau'ofa this was an 'economistic and geographic deterministic view of a very narrow kind, that overlooks culture and history, and the contemporary process of what may be called "world enlargement" carried out by tens of thousands of ordinary Pacific islanders [moving] right across the ocean from east to west and north to south' (30).

Instead of understanding the Pacific from a Western, land-based perspective as comprising small islands in a far sea, Hau'ofa argued that a more accurate outlook, and one that takes into consideration the worldview, culture,

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<sup>4</sup> A conference held at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji in 2016, organised by Matthew Hayward, Maebh Long, and Sudesh Mishra, focused on Oceanic Modernism, and has publications forthcoming.



achievements, and legends of Oceania, is to view the region as a 'sea of islands' (31), in which place and identity do not end at islands' coastlines, but extend far out across the water. Hence Hau'ofa called for the region to be referred to as Oceania, rather than the Pacific Islands, as the latter is too focused on small landmasses, while 'Oceania' incorporates the aquatic and emphasises relationality, movement, and expansiveness. A sea of islands, in which land, water, and different cultures all relate, is an archipelagic relation, a series of aphorisms in which different elements, different peoples, different socio-political experiences connect and separate.

This is further emphasised by Vicente M. Diaz's work on moving islands, a phrase taken from traditional Carolinian navigators in which the canoe is represented as stationary and the islands as mobile. This is not, he argues, merely perspective, as the islands do move, 'tectonically and culturally' (26): they contract and expand as islanders, animals, and birds migrate, and as climate change pushes them under water. Not only do islands move, they interrelate, and Diaz replies directly to Donne when he writes that 'no island is an island' (28) but instead a roaming, fluid part of an interconnected archipelago. To think in Hau'ofa's and Diaz's terms is to think aphoristically, to think not statically, in large, broad strokes, but in oceanic flux.

On the other side of the world, archipelagic thinking has been useful to work on Irish and British literature and history; in John Kerrigan's *Archipelagic English: Literature, History and Politics 1603–1707*, and John Brannigan's *Archipelagic Modernism: Literature in the British and Irish Isles, 1890–1970*. Kerrigan's text, which looks to the seventeenth century and its effects on modernity, works to 'strip away modern Anglocentric and Victorian imperial paradigms to recover the long, braided histories played out across the British-Irish archipelago' (2). Kerrigan notes that the drive to map out the violence and oppression associated with the British Empire introduces to certain postcolonial approaches a blanket systematicity, one which frequently fails to engage with the complexity of interrelations between Ireland and Britain.

As important as tracing large power-structures is, this approach has tended towards the homogenising. Instead, Kerrigan turns to the dynamics of the archipelagic to study multiple frames, across and within borders. Kerrigan sees this process as devolutionary, as it moves power structures away from a monolithic centre to small circles of interests that connect and disaggregate in multiple ways. With an archipelagic framework, 'one discovers [...] that Englishness was a contested resource [...] and that "England" was a shifting entity, open to reconceptualization, defined against and meshed with its neighbours' (12). His framework is not simply a fragmenting of power, but one that traces the ways in which single texts or events look beyond themselves to larger groups, different times and altered situations: he reads *Macbeth* as moving beyond the horizon

of Jacobean geopolitics to anticipate later British-Irish struggles. Archipelagic thinking, for him, like the aphoristic, involves depth in all directions.

Brannigan's monograph works to similar, if more overtly modernist aims. Embracing a broad understanding of the reach of modernism, he reads modernist texts from an ecocritical and devolutionary perspective, aphoristically arguing that '[t]here is no unity and the archipelago is not self-contained: each part [...] connects to other peoples, seas, and lands. This is the local truth which much of the literature described in this book witnesses, articulates, and celebrates' (254). In 'seeking out the cultures of borders, peripheries, and the hidden spaces of the archipelago', he urges us to see and read differently, so that 'we might learn to re-imagine and re-inhabit the places we happen to live in' (252). Calling to Joyce's myriadislanded world, Brannigan presents the global aphoristically: 'differential, variegated, contested, and interdependent' (93). The book itself supports this approach, as the essays both work independently and in concert, and move between scales and frames of engagement.

Of course, in thinking archipelagically and aphoristically we have to turn to the Caribbean, and to the work of Edouard Glissant, for whom 'creolisation' named a similar poetics of relation. For him, creolisation is the 'meeting, interference, shock, harmonies, and disharmonies between the cultures of the world, in the realised totality of the earth world' (290). Creolization is swift interaction, self-reflexivity, shifts in value systems, and unpredictability: these elements, he writes, 'take shape and develop better in archipelagos than on continents' (290). For Glissant, creolisation is linked to Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, in which, like aphorisms, there is no stable beginning or end, but a multiplicity of points that can connect to any other point. From these three different archipelagos we see similar focuses on aphoristic thought, that is, a structure that assists shifts between different frames, and that recognises in different places, different times, and different contexts varying sources of power without calcifying them into a single monolithic structure. In the case of aphorisms and archipelagos, fluidity is the order of the day: local contexts both stand absolutely alone and are absolutely part of a wider, shifting system.

In their *Geographies of Modernism* (2005), Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker ask, '[w]hat would a "geography of modernism" look like?' (1). In answer, we might say that the geography of global modernism and the new modernist studies is the geopolitics of the archipelago, a geography of island aphorisms: a sea of texts, writers, contexts, and theories that are isolated and in continuous relation, and whose fluid reconfigurations require a complex structure. It is with this refiguring of power and identity in mind that an archipelago of aphorisms might serve to move thinking in modernism away from cognitive mappings that are continental, and imperial, in scope and approach.



In bringing together the concept of the aphorism and the archipelagic we bring together the island and the sea, the paragraph and the page. Thus the insularity that might be associated with the aphorism is widened by the scope of the archipelago. The sea/page allows for movement, connections, and separations between the aphorisms to be emphasised, as the spaces provided between the aphorisms can be filled with conjunctions of any kind: and, but, if, because, yet, neither. But this paratactic space should not be understood to downplay power structures. A sea of islands does not imply that each island is the same size. Within a series of aphorisms not all are the same length, nor do all have the same import. Aphoristic and archipelagic thought allows for shifting scale and relations – it allows the dominance of one island to be recognised, and its power traced to certain historical, geopolitical contexts, but its fluidity prevents that power structure from appearing inevitable and perpetual. Aphorisms and archipelagos insist on multiple perspectives.

Through aphoristic, archipelagic thought we can work towards methods of reading and engagement that do not oppose the theoretical and the archival, the materialist and the historical, the national and the transnational, without the permeability of these disciplinary divisions treating sources and forms of investigation as a homogenous mass from which to appropriate at will. To think aphoristically is to recognise the independence of contexts and forms, as well as their interconnectivity. In bringing together the archipelagic and the aphoristic we have the conjunction of the formal and the geographical, the textual and the geopolitical, the aesthetic and the material.

Thus within Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) we can recognise the colonial power of England in Anna Morgan's life – over the Caribbean and over Anna as a colonial subject. We also recognise the power of the Caribbean over Anna, a power that the cold, grey streets of British towns can do nothing to dominate. We can engage with Anna's position of colonial privilege within the Caribbean, and also see her emotional vulnerability as an outsider there. We can see Anna as a consumerist subject with purchasing power in the shops of London, while also knowing her to be an object of merchandise bought and discarded by various English men. We recognise the text as an English text, and a Caribbean text, a modernist text, a postcolonial text, and a text of a postcolonial modernism. An engagement with Anna's creole identity and her complex position within various dynamics of power are facilitated by an archipelagic, aphoristic reading.

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When we trace the shifts in approaches to modernist studies over the last twenty years, we see that much of the movement has been towards a new cognitive

mapping of relations and hierarchies within the discipline, a movement that sketches out the interplay of island aphorisms. Emphasis is repeatedly laid on relations and combinations that move away from broad strokes, and instead engage with ideas of aphoristic, interlocking modernities and modernisms. In *Alternative Modernities* (1999) Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar called for new conceptualisations of modernity within the discipline that would arise from alternative representations of the modern. For Gaonkar, no modernity, anywhere in the world, could completely unshackle itself from Western discourse, so fully had the global north seized control of the history of modernity. But, he argued, new perspectives could introduce cracks into the dominant narrative. These new readings would trace a pattern of similarities and differences:

This double relationship between convergence and divergence, with their counterintuitive dialectic between similarity and difference, makes the site of alternative modernities also the site of double negotiations – between societal modernization and cultural modernity, and between hidden capacities for the production of similarity and difference. Thus, alternative modernities produce combinations and recombinations that are endlessly surprising. (23)

In Gaonkar's essay we are presented with a formulation of global modernity as fundamentally fragmentary and aphoristic; a shifting pattern of relations that neither suppress power structures nor comprehend them as inevitable and unchanging. This understanding was pivotal to Arjun Appadurai's formulations in *Modernity at Large* (1996), a title that has by now become a phrase in its own right. For Appadurai, modernity 'has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models' (32). Instead of the old binary relation he offers a framework through which global cultural flows could be examined, stressing that his aphoristic model of ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, finanscapas, and ideoscapas does not present 'objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision', but are instead 'deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors. [...] [T]hese landscapes are eventually navigated by agents who both experience and constitute larger formations' (33).

Aphorisms, as Derrida reminds us, are fundamentally asynchronous. They are of their own time, running according to their own schedules. To compare the 1925 of Cork and Suva and Chicago is to compare radically different things, as these different places are not in time with each other. And yet, the act of reading always brings things together, and aphorisms, like cities, are also bound by a global time embedded into newspapers and sounding out over the radio.

When we think in terms of connections between island aphorisms, between Cork and Suva and Chicago, we need to think in terms of synchronicity and asynchronicity. This call for complexity is not a call for a sea of relativism, but an awareness of the need to think in contrasting ways simultaneously. Homi Bhabha's postcolonial intervention into modernity drew strong attention to the 'ambivalent temporality of modernity' (239). He called, as many such as Walter D. Mignolo have done since, for a recognition of the complicity of modernity with the colonial project, a recognition that should 'introduce another locus of inscription and intervention, another hybrid, "inappropriate" enunciative site' (241) into modernity.

As modernity manifests in different ways in different locations, modernity contains many times within itself. Certain formulations of modernity place racism outside of modernity, and understand it as anachronistic, a regressive part of the past that has mistakenly found its way into modernity: 'unresolved, transitional moments [of racial conflict] within the disjunctive present of modernity [...] are then projected into a time of historical retroversion or an inassimilable place outside history' (Bhabha 250). But modernity, Bhabha argues, must confront the different temporalities within itself, and not present a false, synchronous, empty time that erases its relation with slavery, colonialism, or inequalities. Postcolonial readings of modernity 'do not merely tell the modern history of "unequal development" or evoke memories of underdevelopment', but 'provide modernity with a modular moment of *enunciation*: the locus and locution of cultures caught in the transitional and disjunctive temporalities of modernity' (251) that shift dominant narratives to those of hybridity, liminality, and fluidity. This form of thinking undoes 'that compliant past tethered to the myth of progress, ordered in the binarisms of its cultural logic: past/present, inside/outside' (253) and sees modernity and modernism aphoristically, as full of nonsynchronous temporalities.

Moving from time to place, Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel proposed the concept of 'geomodernisms' as a way to 'emplace modernism' and to think 'in terms of interconnected modernisms' (3). They point to an 'aesthetic self-awareness [that] expresses a *geocultural* consciousness – a sense of speaking from outside or inside or both at once, of orienting toward and away from the metropole, of existing somewhere between belonging and dispersion' (4). This complex movement that dances between 'either/or' and 'both/and' is an aphoristic form, a modernist geography of aphoristic islands. Susan Stanford Friedman's planetary formulation of modernism and modernity depends on a similar logic, one that is equally aphoristic and archipelagic. Working to destabilise the conventional history and geography of modernism by calling for plural, recurring, global, relational, contradictory, and rupturing thought on a

planetary scale, Friedman calls for epistemologies that invoke ‘a polylogue of languages, cultures, viewpoints, standpoints’ and that can encompass ‘contradictions, tensions, oppositions, asymmetries’ (79). On Friedman’s formulation, the periodization of modernity and of modernism are split open, as she sees modernity broadly, as ‘a powerful vortex of geohistorical conditions that coalesce to produce sharp ruptures from the past that range widely across various sectors of a given society and open up new futures’ (154).

Once modernity is seen on such broad terms, modernism is similarly opened up:

Multiple and recurrent modernities produce their own particular multiple and recurrent modernisms. Across the globe and through time, these modernisms are not only distinctive but also linked to other modernisms in vast relational networks. They constitute a multimodal world system of expressive/symbolic culture, one not set apart from but rather embedded within the other dimensions of the modernities of which they are a part. [...] This] planetary framework [...] brings into heightened visibility such mobile, interlocking, yet distinctive modernisms. (215–16)

Friedman’s book is a networked text, an archipelago of ideas that circulate, performing a call for new paths and connections within modernist studies. Presenting maps of trade routes, tables of terms, aphoristic sections, fragmentary phrases, and collages, it plays repeatedly on concepts of rupture, fluidity, conjuncture, and vortex. The dynamism and movement that Friedman is mapping out is already aphoristic, but it might be further propelled by a thought process that cognises in terms of aphoristic archipelagos, that performs fluidity, and encapsulates both gentle interaction and the crashing waves of change. Modernity has long been characterised by the idea that ‘all that is solid melts into air’, but perhaps the structure of thought that is needed is not of the breeze but of the wave, and the fluid movement of aphorisms.

As Mao and Walkowitz noted in 2008, the ‘transnational turn’ in modernist studies has been pivotal in broadening the focus of critical engagement with modernism and modernity (737–48). While modernism had already broadened beyond the old, narrow focus of the ‘men of 1914’, the new mode of modernist studies expanded further, and on a number of fronts: temporally, to include work outside the 1890–1940 period; spatially, to move far beyond the old London-Paris-New York axis; and as Mao and Walkowitz put it, vertically, to transcend divisions between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ aesthetics. A large component of this expansion has been linked to transnational frameworks that are

predicated on movement, not simply across international borders, but across cultural, economic, political, and aesthetic spheres.

As Jahan Ramazani describes it, the transnational project is a mapping of ‘affiliations and identities that are overlapping and conflicted, multiple and fluid’ (28). In outlining connections between Yeats and Mina Loy, or D.H. Lawrence and Langston Hughes; in engaging with the polylingualism of Gertrude Stein; in exploring Marilyn Chin’s use of Black Arts feminism to engage with Asian-American alienation; in looking at ‘these and many other instances of dislocation and hybridization, of creolized genres and idioms, of shared intercultural precursors and forms, of postnational skepticisms and sedimented geographies’, Ramazani shows ‘the holes in nationalist disciplinary partitions’ (34), and strongly advocates the need for a broader form of engagement.

Although the term that Ramazani uses is one predicated on the transcending of the nation state – the transnational – the structure of his engagement, and the range he affords to this term, is archipelagic and aphoristic. The convergences and divergences across times and cultures that he maps out are the interplay of aphorisms, the hybridised identities that he engages with those of an archipelagic creolisation, and the call to destabilise notions of pre- and post- is the nonsynchronous temporality of the aphoristic. As we see in Gaonkar, Appadurai, Bhabha, Friedman, Doyle, and Winkiel, the call is not simply to broaden, but to enable thought across radically different frames such that from the map of modernity comparisons of different island aphorisms – be they individual, school, style, period, country – can be made in ways that converge and diverge, merge and retreat.

Jessica Berman’s recent reading of Woolf’s *Orlando* (1928) extends the concept of the transnational to the gendered body, proposing that a transnational or transgendered approach to texts would understand the prefix ‘trans’ to mean ‘not just “across, through, over ... or on the other side of” but also “beyond, surpassing, transcending”’, such that the text, and a trans reading of the text, presents a disruptive ‘challenge to the normative dimension of the original entity or space, a crossing over that looks back critically from its space beyond’ (220–1). For Berman, trans texts and trans reading practices challenge the primacy of the nation-state and the statically gendered body. To read thus is to ‘struggle with the ongoing problematics of nation, empire, and globe, while opening up a space of resistance to their hegemony’ (220). In aphoristic fashion, a trans reading practice looks beyond entrenched borders to open up a fluidity of relations that does not ignore discrete, enclosed identities, but problematizes them.

To observe that the disruptive movement that Ramazani and Berman present is structurally aphoristic is not to deprioritise or obscure deliberately



political and ontological forms – the transnational offers an important disruption to the primacy of the nation state, and the transgendered a vital recognition of identity beyond rigid, hierarchical binaries. It is to remark on an archipelago of work that recognises the lure of the isolated, be it the island, the nation state, the distinct gender identity, the discrete individual, and works to move beyond it without eradicating it. Aphoristic thought always requires a certain step beyond, to the archipelagic, the regional, to the non-binary, to the community, to intersectionality, and in its plurality, in its shifting series of aphorisms, creates fluid networks of identities. Aphoristic thought is both/ and; it neither dissolves nor enshrines difference but rather demands a complex negotiation with differences that alter as contexts change. The plurality of aphorisms prevent thought from being saturated by binary logic – not only is there always a second step, but also a third and a fourth. In linking the aphoristic to the archipelagic we retain the importance sense of the geopolitical, and of identity formation – we retain the idea of disrupting disciplinary boundaries predicated on the borders of nation-states, without wholly abandoning an appreciation of their value. In thinking in island terms, we can see independence and interdependence, we visualise land and water relation, we map out contingency and chance, as well as intention and plans.

In aphoristic, archipelagic thought the emphasis is on complexity, and an ability to negotiate, as Kerrigan puts it, ‘an untidy patchwork of local, overlapping allegiances’ (30). Aphoristic thought moves through difficult waters, and does not divide in order to simplify. For some, this has led to a scene that seems clouded and obscure, with disciplinary borders that no longer demarcate firm limits of academic engagement. Paul Jay, writing in *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* (2010), notes that:

One charge that is often made against the changes ushered in by the transnational turn in literary studies is that it has led to a debilitating fragmentation. Principles of coherence that have guided the field for decades have given way to a focus on pluralities, differences, hybrid identities, and complicated transnational geographies that are seemingly incoherent and unmanageable. (4)

The fear is of unmanageable complexity, but frequently it is the response – a turn to oversimplification – this is managed by a form of reductive fragmentation. As Zygmunt Bauman argues, too often a structure of fragmentation within modernity has been deployed not in order to embrace intricacy, but to divide the world into seemingly simple, accessible sections: ‘Fragmentation is the prime source of [modernity’s] strength. The world that falls apart into a

plethora of problems is a manageable world' (12). Aphoristic thought should not create a configuration whose clean, crisp lines obscure the plurality of Kerrigan's untidy patchwork; its fragmentation is not tidy partition. It is an intersectional weaving of structures and connections, an aphoristic reading that abandons models prioritising false simplicity and deceptive ease. And as Jay insists, 'literary studies as a field has always *thrived* on fragmentation and challenges to coherence' (4).

The aphoristic is not an orderly segmentation or taxonomy, but a recognition of complexity and a rejection of overly policed boundaries. To read modernism in such terms is to comprehend it as what Wai Chee Dimock calls 'weak theory'. Modernism, archipelagic and aphoristic, is weak as it is a

nonsovereign field, with site-specific input generating a variable morphology, a variable ordering principle, so that what appears primary in one locale can indeed lapse into secondariness in another. There are many host environments here, differently assembled, differently oriented, with different directional vectors at play. (Dimock 738)

Recognising the aphoristic in modernism embraces the looseness of its borders and the fluidity of its range. It emphasises the importance of weak connections: Paul K. Saint-Amour reads the 'Tangled Web of Modernists' – already an exemplary aphoristic model – in Bonnie Kime Scott's *The Gender of Modernism* (1990) as mapping weak connections between modernists who never met, noting how the exploration of loose social ties facilitates 'more ferment and recombination' (451). Permitting ourselves the liberty to analyse weak ties, and to do in a weak, non-sovereign field, enables new comparisons, new patterns, deeper understanding, and more connections between our travelling island aphorisms.

To emphasise this structural aspect of the approach within modernist studies is not to move away from the political, but to allow the archipelagic structure that aphorisms form to move us away from the continental focus that so often dominates in modernism, and offer a different voice, from a different place, allowing us to see the state of the field differently. Thinking in terms of archipelagic aphorisms is to think of the crowd, but a crowd comprising individuals in relation to each other, fragments of a large, shifting totality, through which the reader, the *flâneur*, sails, deciphering and acting as the crowd's consciousness, weaving different orders and patterns.

And so, in engaging with aphoristic archipelagos, we think both of modernism in the plural, as differentiated aesthetic expressions of different modernities,

*and* as Jameson suggests, in the singular, as bound by the overriding presence of a single structure, namely capitalism. We recognise local temporalities and global temporalities, shifting lines of influence and inheritance, and map fluid, changing relations. Not only do we engage with the trends of modernist studies today, but we can move towards a model that reads the modernism of Ireland, and the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands, as well as America, the United Kingdom, France, and China, differently. Aphoristic island thought is not restricted to small landmasses. We thus have modernity and modernism at large, but also, simultaneously, modernity and modernism in miniature.

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