

The Modernist Nation: Generation, Renaissance, and Twentieth-Century American Literature

Michael Soto

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The Modernist Nation examines why America's modern literary movements have come to be characterized as "generations" and "renaissances," such as the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation or the Harlem, Southern, and San Francisco Renaissances. The metaphor of rebirth, Michael Soto argues, offered and continues to offer American writers a kind of shorthand for imagining American cultural history, especially as a departure from Old World (English) trappings.

Soto highlights the interracial dynamics of American literary movements, touching on authors as varied as James Weldon Johnson, Malcolm Cowley, W. E. B. DuBois, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, Zora Neale Hurston, and Jack Kerouac. After assessing the origins of the Lost Generation and the Harlem Renaissance, Soto traces the rise of the "bohemian artist" narrative, and demonstrates how a polyethnic cast of writers and critics constructed American literary production in terms of symbolic rebirth.



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