**Nativism**

Nativism in modernist literature asserts the primacy of personal and collective identity mediated through language, culture, geography, religion and race. In the defense of local identity and cultural particularity, nativism stresses the values of the native rooted to a particular place and the distinctive social, cultural and geographical qualities of being native. This essentialist view of identity hence promotes the superiority of any one group, culture and race over other groups, cultures and races. In his book *Our America: Nativism, Modernism and Pluralism* (1995), Walter Benn Michaels argues that modernism and nativism emerged together in American literature in the 1920s through their mutual commitment to resolve the meaning of identity – linguistic, national, cultural and racial (2-3). Thus nativism depends on understanding one’s Americanness as racial difference as evidenced in texts by modernist writers as diverse as Willa Cather, William Faulkner and William Carlos Williams. Paralleling American modernist nativism, a revival of localist discourse also occurred in England in the 1930s. As the British Empire became ‘a shrinking island’, to use Jed Esty’s resonant phrase, England made an anthropological turn, valorizing English place, local culture, rural values and national identity. Corresponding to cultural shifts of the 1930s complementary shifts were evident in modernist aesthetic practices. Even major modernists such as T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster actively participated in this turn toward English national culture, which became ‘the basis for both social and aesthetic renewal’ (Esty 3).

*Arun Kumar Pokhrel, University of Florida*

**References and further reading**

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