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Louise Williams explores the nature of historical memory in the work of five major Modernists: Yeats, Pound, Hulme, Ford and Lawrence. These Modernists, Williams argues, started their careers with historical assumptions derived from the nineteenth century. But their views on the universal structure of history, on the abandonment of progress and the adoption of a cyclical sense of the past, were the result of important conflicts and changes within the Modernist period. Williams focuses on the period immediately before World War I, and shows in detail how Modernism developed and why it is considered a unique intellectual movement. She also revisits the theory that the Edwardian age was a difficult period of transition to the modern world. Finally, she illuminates the contribution of non-Western culture to the literature and thought of the period. This wide-ranging and inter-disciplinary study is essential reading for literary and cultural historians of the modernist period.

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