



# Emancipating Pragmatism: Emerson, Jazz, and Experimental Writing (Modern & Contemporary Poetics)

*Michael Magee*

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## **Emancipating Pragmatism: Emerson, Jazz, and Experimental Writing (Modern & Contemporary Poetics)** Michael Magee

Emancipating Pragmatism is a radical rereading of Emerson that posits African-American culture, literature, and jazz as the very continuation and embodiment of pragmatic thought and democratic tradition. It traces Emerson's philosophical legacy through the 19th and 20th centuries to discover how Emersonian thought continues to inform issues of race, aesthetics, and poetic discourse. Emerson's pragmatism derives from his abolitionism, Michael Magee argues, and any pragmatic thought that aspires toward democracy cannot ignore and must reckon with its racial roots. Magee looks at the ties between pragmatism and African-American culture as they manifest themselves in key texts and movements, such as William Carlos Williams's poetry; Ralph Ellison's discourse in *Invisible Man* and *Juneteenth* and his essays on jazz; the poetic works of Robert Creeley, Amiri Baraka, and Frank O'Hara; as well as the "new jazz" being forged at clubs like The Five Spot in New York. Ultimately, Magee calls into question traditional maps of pragmatist lineage and ties pragmatism to the avant-garde American tradition.

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