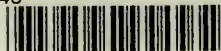


**Backgrounds  
to  
Modern  
Literature**

**John Oliver Perry**



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# Backgrounds to Modern Literature



JOHN OLIVER PERRY

Tufts University



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**For Lucy, absolutely**

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JOHN OLIVER PERRY

*Tufts University*  
*June 24, 1967*



**Backgrounds  
to  
Modern  
Literature**



# INTRODUCTION

## The Uses of Backgrounds to Modern Literature

"Only connect" • E. M. Forster's epigraph to *Howard's End* (1910)

"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" • W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming" (1920)

"O harp and altar, of the fury fused" • Hart Crane, Proem to *The Bridge* (1930)

"All I have is a voice / To undo the folded lie" • W. H. Auden, "September 1, 1939" (1940)

*Backgrounds to Modern Literature* is a selection of recent essays about forces and ideas at work in modern British and American writing. A basic rationale for the collection is that the experience of *modern literature* is something we can look at; that our involvement in it is likely to be of a different sort from our involvement in immediately *contemporary literature*. This statement certainly describes the initial position for most present-day reading of such long-dead moderns as Lawrence, Yeats, and Joyce, besides a number of others who completed their major work almost a generation ago. Most of us nowadays read modern literature as we do the older classics, and it has presentness or relevance for us in much the same way. Indeed, such a way of reading is itself a modern idea, implying that all literature takes on a timeless classic order as we look at it from our own immediate point of view and with our own needs formulate it into a coherent and ongoing tradition. Though the order of a tradition is timeless, the works of literature that make it up are not

wrenched out of the time which they create and inhabit. When we recognize that the red-brick suburban blight in Forster is accompanied by the swish of ladies' long dresses through the hay, past and present are shockingly dissociated, and a humanizing realignment and deepening of feelings result. One might select from modern literature its many existentialist, absurdist, or violently brutal aspects and emphasize these in order to make the experience more surely our own. On the other hand, the great continuing value of literature is that it can throw light on, can help to shape, our ordinary experiences precisely by not being quite those, by its relevant differences from our present life. The paradox about aesthetic distance is that it brings us closer to experiencing the work of art, both immediately for ourselves and directly in its own terms. And it is a paradox that we understand clearly every time we labor creatively and critically to know a novel or a poem.

In an effort, therefore, to stimulate this kind of aesthetic distance, modern literature is here defined chronologically as the particular literary phenomena that occurred between 1900 and about 1940. Each of the four decades can be seen with its own special focus and characteristics, as explained in the essays in Part I. Throughout this collection, most of the essays chosen have been written in the last ten years; they thus provide the best available understanding for us now of what happened in the modern period. The essays in Part II discuss the most important continuing strands of thought and style found in modern literature. However, because of the present-day emphasis on the mythic or pseudoreligious in literature, it did not seem necessary to set aside a special and separate essay for that almost overwhelmingly obvious element in the modern style. Part III, "Views and Theories of the Modernist Movement," presents five different summary ideas about what was modernism. The collection thus is designed to work toward a comprehensive and informal judgment of the period's major literary achievement and distinction.

A prime function of these essays, especially those in Part II, is to clarify concepts and conventions frequently occurring in modern literature. Such important notions as stream of consciousness and psychological time, cubist multiple perspective, surrealist or

expressionist distortion, and the condensation and displacement of dream imagery—each of these modern literary conventions could perhaps be found in some form or other in the work of much earlier artists and thinkers like Augustine, El Greco, or Goethe. But as the terms themselves now indicate, to the twentieth-century mind they are not fundamentally literary ideas or techniques; they are associated with philosophy, psychology, physics, painting—the manifold arts and sciences of the whole modern cultural milieu. Though each writer's use of these conventions must finally be understood in its own precise *literary* terms, still any convention as a whole or its use in particular cases cannot be fully understood in literary terms alone. From the background of associated meanings which it selects and carries with it arises much of its significance and effectiveness.

Furthermore, when we attempt to express and describe our experiences of reading modern literature, we naturally look for generally analogous experiences in the other arts, and we also use clearly limited and well-defined concepts derived from more strictly controlled or scientific ways of knowing and describing other experiences and events. For a properly responsible literary criticism, such analogies from other arts and borrowings from various sciences have to be taken in a flexible, even metaphorical sense, and indeed they never give a sufficient explanation or account of literary effects; still, they are nearly indispensable in providing a starting point for concrete and precise analysis, description, and interpretation. This is not the place to consider the possibilities of a scientific or self-sufficient literary criticism, though that indeed has been one of the major interests of literary men in the twentieth century. But in explaining how a selection of background readings can increase our understanding and appreciation of modern literature, it is necessary to recognize that literary experience is not created simply and entirely out of and for an isolated literary imagination, whatever that might be. More important, analysis of a work of literature in its own terms demands a precise vocabulary of more widely applicable ideas; such a terminology is indeed a prerequisite to placing and knowing for ourselves any particular literary experience. It is to promote both intelligent reading and critical analysis of modern literature that this collection of essays is presented.

The collection is not, however, a source book for modern literature. Those who wish to find the seminal ideas of twentieth-century culture in the diaries, letters, essays, speeches, and other writings of the speculative thinkers, the scientists, and the artists themselves may consult an extensive, nearly 1,000-page-long collection by Professors Ellmann and Feidelson, *The Modern Tradition, Backgrounds of Modern Literature*.<sup>1</sup> In the present book, both "background" and "modern" are defined considerably more narrowly than in *The Modern Tradition*, which presents excerpts from Romantics like Goethe and Coleridge to "postmodern" existentialists and absurdists like Sartre, Camus, and Robbe-Grillet. In searching out the origins and provenance of an ongoing, modern tradition, Ellmann and Feidelson naturally include much continental nineteenth-century symbolist and postmodern existentialist material. The French symbolist roots of twentieth-century art are fully discussed in the present collection, most directly in J. M. Cohen's essay centering on Baudelaire; and the implicit existentialism in the modern is significantly presented in the selection by Miller in Part III. The general aim here, however, is to focus on American and British literature of 1900–1940, and to advance no definite conception of modernism, merely as broad a range of views and issues as is possible in fifteen essays.

In accord with many critics, Graham Hough, in "Imagism and Its Consequences," looks at the earlier twentieth century as fundamentally a time of extreme experimentation. These experiments were necessary and valuable historically for the expansion of consciousness and language prerequisite to literary art; but, Hough feels, they produced few works of lasting literary merit and no usable forms to develop: altogether the modern style has been quite misleading to present-day artists and readers as a model of what literature can and should be. Philip Rahv is also not entirely sanguine about modern literature. The characteristic faults he finds are those of impetuosity, confusion of focus, and naive individualism. Rahv traces these faults not so much to a

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<sup>1</sup>A full bibliographical entry and further suggestions for background reading appear in "A Selected Bibliography," p. 305 below.

supposedly mistaken extension of the symbolist aesthetics into imagism and its consequences, as to older and deeper strains in American history, particularly to a set of cultural ideals culminating in "the cult of experience," a primitive faith that marks the work of even so formally civilized a writer as Henry James.

Though Rahv develops a full case for the modern movement as inherently American, Richard Ellmann's essay introducing this volume sees a very similar "secular cult of life" as characterizing one of the two faces of Edwardian England. Seeing the connection between these two cults suggests two points about this collection. First, along with the writers in Part III, each of the writers in the first two parts also presents or implies his own interpretation of what was central to modernism while discussing either a briefer period or a particular set of ideas and attitudes. Second, one of the more interesting issues in describing modern American and British literature is how and to what extent is it predominantly American or British as well as to what extent thoroughly revolutionary.<sup>2</sup> On this last issue, Ellmann's description agrees with Rahv's earlier view: both see modernism as beginning long before World War I and as looking backward as well as forward, whereas Hough emphasizes the eccentricity and dead-end nature of the modern revolt.

Stephen Spender, though himself an important figure in the fourth modernist decade,<sup>3</sup> writes of the whole period from our own later perspective; it is a nostalgic backward look, though not so personal as his autobiography, nor as political as Julian Symons' reminiscent piece from *The Thirties*. Spender's nostalgia stems from a sense of a promise in the modernist movement throughout the arts, a promise that was not perhaps ever quite realized or realizable: the noble aim of seeing the whole situa-

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. the estimate of a British critic, A. Alvarez, that modernism in Pound and Eliot is a predominantly American search for a distinctive idiom, since we supposedly lack a firm native tradition. But, one might reply, isn't Faulkner modernistic, yet his style draws on traditions of Southern rhetoric; and Frost and Robinson, not idiomatically very modern, also show that a distinctly American use of the common English style could proceed without extreme experimentation.

<sup>3</sup> See "A Modern Chronology" at the end of this book.



tion. This visionary aim is a way to make life whole, and it seems to have been swept aside in the postmodern rush towards what we might call an extremely loose ideal of "polymorphous perversity" in the second half of the twentieth century. This is not to deny that modernism itself is a phenomenon rife with both polymorphism and perversity; both are exactly what Georg Lukacs attacks in the movement as he looks at it from a Marxist critical position.

Lukacs' attack is along a broad front, encompassing "formalism" (the analysis of literature in terms of stylistic effects without seeing their ideological assumptions and implications), "historicism" (the denial of human or social development in significant relations with past and future circumstances), and "alienation." This last key Marxist term is to be connected with "subjectivism"—fruitless concentration on the unlimited abstract possibilities of each isolated individual consciousness. Indeed, language of this sort describes the existential human condition for many twentieth-century writers, and they react to it with grim despair, cool acceptance, or a leap into self-generated myths and apocalyptic visions. It is, Lukacs says, precisely because of the bourgeois emphasis on the individual and his unrealistic "angst-ridden vision of the world" that concrete, contextually actualizable qualities of personality dissolve into a perverse wilderness of mirrors; significant action, protest, and thought is paralyzed by the anti-human arbitrariness of existence seen from only private points of view. A dynamic historical perspective shows individuals their actual representative identity as social types, and such a realistic perspective, Lukacs asserts, can alone give meaning to life and art.

Lukacs' argument that modernism is "the negation of art" involves a multiplicity of intertwined ideas and attitudes that are not broadly familiar to American readers, but especially for that reason they repay the close study they require. Of further interest is the tracing of connections between his antiformalist diatribe against the modern and Hough's explicitly nonsocial critique. Another enlightening comparison is that between Lukacs' views and those of Rahv, who, with a similarly Marxist orientation, also relates modern ways of thinking to the bourgeois spirit of



individualism (and to the peculiar success of the American capitalist order), but who does so only peripherally and without rancor at the end of his analysis; the more crucial criterion for Rahv is the degree and quality of "felt life" in modern literature.

The last of the generalizing essays about modernism presents a more positive, existentially oriented evaluation of the literature. J. Hillis Miller makes a case for the poetry of sheer, undifferentiated "reality" as a twentieth-century answer to the problems of solipsism, nihilism, and the death of God that issued from the previous era. Put another way, modernism can be defined as the most recent response to the post-Cartesian sense of an irreconcilable split between mind and body, subject and object, a dichotomy that is not merely epistemological, yet need not be seen as ontologically necessary (though Lukacs says modernists mistakenly see it thus). Romantic and Victorian assertions of faith in the commonness or communicability or at least potentiality of total insight and comprehension could not long prevail without a more broadly viable metaphysic than the nineteenth century could provide. The views that evolve through the modern era are thus varying ways of trying to undercut the metaphysical or ontological question, to go behind it or to avoid it completely, even to go inside it, perhaps, through an analysis of the meaning of the question of meaning.

Miller, however, sees an especially valuable and to him valid strain in modernism which dramatically reverses the terms of the question: all that is subjective is turned inside out and presented as objective, existing in an infinite space where all minds, words, and things are copresent and equally real. Again to suggest a comparison with significant contrastive emphases, we can look at Spender's conception of the modern as an attempt at a vision of the whole situation. That view reflects something of the symbolist faith in a special, nonrational coherence in life or in experience—or at least a coherence of consciousness. Miller, on the other hand, assumes in as nearly Victorian a writer as Conrad, as well as in W. C. Williams, Stevens, and Eliot, the breakdown of this faith—a breakdown clearly connected with the modern phenomena of dissociation of sensibility, dissolution of a reliable

personal and moral guide, and alienation of individuals from an effectively functioning social character. In its place Miller sees artists creating versions of a new kind of belief, often unstructured, tentative, and undirected—a belief in reality here and now. Furthermore, along with Hough but on different grounds, Miller is critical of the blurring together of Romanticism, Symbolism, and the peculiarly modern mode of grasping isolated bits of phenomenological reality, though clearly Miller praises the experiential vitality of this style rather than objecting to its fragmentariness.

In the face of this wide range of articulate opinion, it would seem presumptuous, as well as contradictory to the general purposes of this collection, to take sides. Still, it would be irresponsible to ignore editorial predilections and possible biases. A positive view of modernism as radically existentialist in style and attitude seems to this editor the best basis for a reasonable and comprehensive description of modern literature. Thus the above summary of Miller's essay has been extended to suggest how such a view can connect many qualities of our experience of modern poems and novels, and also to imply how in that view the far-reaching objections of Hough and Lukacs can be taken into account. Surely we do not wish to deny what we have learned and experienced by surviving this far through the twentieth century; a generation of reading and living has revealed what the artists earlier in the century created: forms of thought and modes of feeling that confront the complexity of experience in open, responsive, and ultimately life-enhancing ways. Detailed explanation of how and where this achievement occurred must remain the prerogative of the present-day reader whose own total experience will provide the basis for understanding and judgment.

Part of that experience may include extensive reading in the discursive writing of the whole modern tradition, as in Ellmann and Feidelson's anthology cited above. Carefully used, such wide reading can lend substantial support to the process of distinguishing the intermediate existentialist style between the Symbolist and the postmodern Absurdist, as well as their concurrent variants, the Romantic transcendentalist and the post-Freudian or idealist mythopoeic. But readers of the literature itself will want

to know what is the value of such generalizing, whether there are common or dominant characteristics of any period, and (the basic question) whether it is possible to describe a period style in any useful way. The present anthology takes a fairly direct approach to the enormous problems involved; it is assumed that formulating general concepts is necessary in apprehending, describing, and judging modern literature, and that direct consideration of a variety of prior formulations and analyses can lead to a more flexible, complex, and subtle set of concepts than any other available method. Unless one is as widely read as René Wellek, Leo Spitzer, or Erich Auerbach, basing one's ideas about a period and its writers on a thorough knowledge of all the great monuments and lesser imitations throughout European literature remains a remote scholarly ideal. On the other hand, even if a person knows only a few of the spectacular literary works in the period from 1900 to 1940, he soon becomes aware of many significant and suggestive connections among the marvelously diverse styles and concerns.

Probably one of the most striking characteristics of much modern writing is its use of a multiplicity of techniques and tones within a single poem or novel. The consequent problem for readers is well known: to discover the complex organization of the whole—its logic of images, structure of ideas, archetypal or mythic pattern, organic development, curve or movement of feeling, ironic tensions and unresolved paradoxes, teleology or "principal pleasure," inner symbolic form or gesture, or some other such abstraction pointing to a communicable total conception of the work. So also we see great differences in style within the work of individual authors, and we rightly pursue in Eliot, Yeats, Joyce, Faulkner, or Lawrence a notion of how the parts of his work are connected, taking them as developments, or permutations or related aspects of a central moving mind. One need not, however, posit a *Zeitgeist*, a peculiar mind of the period, in order to look for similar or related operations of thought and feeling and technique. No peculiar set of modern forces is necessarily at work in any individual or collective mind of the artist; rather it is a requirement of our critical intelligence to perceive resemblances as well as differences. With a large enough and flexible

enough set of characteristics with which to define modernism, we can perceive significant selections, variations, and connections of that set in the creative activity of particular authors. To make generalizations is to expand, not constrict, consciousness of variety.

An obvious danger in generalizing about the modern period is that those writers and traits which form a distinctive pattern dominate one's attention. But that hazard is implicit in perceiving all experiences. Still, in searching out the special character of modernism we need not totally ignore the more traditional yet important writers like E. A. Robinson, Robert Frost, John Crowe Ransom in America; Forster, Graves, and Housman in Britain. The challenge they present is in testing what is included, what excluded, in our descriptive definition of the modern mode. Given an accurate sense of what these men achieve, we can note not only how they contribute to our larger sense of the major achievement of the period, but also how their work raises questions about both the nature and the value of the more experimental moderns. We would not be making all we want and can make of our literary experiences if we merely described each of them as totally discrete; even if we identified several major classes of style, we would make further discoveries in connecting them by another set of general ideas.

A kind of atomistic analysis is indeed necessary in order to deal concretely with each part of modern literature, but it is not sufficient to account for the intensity of our interest in any single part. Given this great and widespread interest, we will want both to sharpen and to expand its meaning. We look then for specific points of reference and general definitions, for we need these in order to communicate, and thus to arrive at, a surer knowledge of our personal literary experiences. By relating these experiences both to our established literary knowledge and to our private system or sense of values in all parts of life, we can begin to account for and place the interest that the works of modern literature have for us. The point has already been made that with respect to our critical and personal needs a general vocabulary of ideas is prerequisite to placing and knowing the particular experience of a literary work apprehended in its own specific terms.

That point can now be restated in language with a larger appeal to our humanity: the best reason for attempting to develop a broad and complex notion of what was modernism is that the attempt leads us to make fundamental connections between the different parts of our lives, to seek out continuities between the more and the less recent past, to see ideas and forms in significant relations with each other, and thus to give each of our experiences its peculiar relevance for the whole of us.

Even though in listing the major works of modern literary art one tends to select those which came into prominence in the twenties—R. P. Blackmur's list makes 1921–1925 the *anni mirabiles* of this century's distinctive "expressionist" literature—a definition of modernism in their terms does not necessarily imply a hierarchy or historical flow chart which leads up to and away from those great literary achievements. However, it has not been possible in this limited collection to provide materials that would serve as background for all the different kinds of writers from 1900–1940, and indeed almost inevitably the selection is biased toward explaining and evaluating the successful experimenters, not the writers who were more traditional, therefore more easily understood, but not necessarily less powerful, relevant, and interesting. The essays in Part I, by dealing with each decade separately, make it possible for somewhat different literary values and achievements to be emphasized in the various stages of the developing modernist style. Nevertheless, an early group of Georgian "war poets" (mostly antiwar) now receiving much attention<sup>4</sup>—Owen, Rosenberg, Sassoon, Brooke—is necessarily slighted in deference to the more striking and influential literary experiments in the first part of the decade. Yet those writers, as much perhaps as the dominant figures, acted and saw themselves as innovators, creating their own appropriate style and idiom for a peculiarly new set of conditions and a new consciousness. If we now think all good writers are innovators, that conclusion too is an achievement of the modernist writers and the poetics they developed.

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Bernard Bergonzi, *Heroes' Twilight*; and the later chapters in Robert H. Ross, *The Georgian Revolt: 1910–1922*.



Despite many problems of inclusion and exclusion, it seems clear to most critics that at least the outstanding events of early twentieth-century literary history can now be meaningfully connected. Most standard surveys of the literature trace the early struggles of the major experimenters through to their crowning glories in the difficult, closely packed, fiercely personal poetry and fiction of the 1920's. The assorted disguises of personality and the dodge of traditionalism in these writers no longer mislead us to overemphasize their aesthetic of formal isolation and cool impassivity, for the intense social and moral criticism in the experimental style was broadened and consolidated in the 1930's. Moreover, not only did many of the most important writers die around 1940—Yeats, Joyce, Ford, Fitzgerald, Thomas Wolfe, and Virginia Woolf—but also, perhaps because of political as well as literary developments, most of the remainder became less radically revolutionary as artists and thinkers. The young experimenters of the 1940's operate in a quite different manner and context from the manner of those who developed and established themselves in the preceding four decades; and by the 1950's the leading edge of controversy devolved to the Beat generation while more self-controlled writers retreated to the academies and to a consciously restrained style. This is the standard outline of twentieth-century literary history—useful and true only as far as such a bare sketch can be. This common view has good sense and wide critical experience to commend it; what needs to be done is to refine and test and amend it with concrete applications.

There is a good deal of subtle but general critical talk about alienation as a mark of the modern artist's sensibility;<sup>5</sup> to make the idea concrete and vital, one can try to embed it in objective events. But obviously to give "alienation" a specific meaning involves more than pointing to the large number of literary exiles in the period. Virginia Woolf's puzzling comment that the mind of Europe changed in about 1910 may suggest a more profound and accurate idea about literature than the more common notion

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<sup>5</sup> See the extensive discussion at the Michigan State University Conference of M. L. Rosenthal's "Alienation of Sensibility and 'Modernity'" in *Approaches to the Study of Twentieth Century Literature*, 1963.

that World War I, in killing off the flower of European manhood, effected a radical social change with cataclysmic results for high literary culture. In short, the use of objective events as a test and refinement of vague and general critical language has extremely uncertain value.

Admittedly, the experience of the First World War and its successor had considerable impact on the literature as on the life of modern times. Peter Laslett points out, however, that for England, in the period from 1901 to 1940, most social changes were slow, fairly even, and moderate; the period was neither one of greatly increasing industrialization and urbanization—already in 1901 the standard figure was reached: only one fifth of the population was agricultural<sup>6</sup>—nor a period of rapid bourgeoisification of the working class. Indeed, over one quarter of the population (about 40 per cent of all children) were living in profound poverty in 1901, mostly because of wages insufficient to provide the necessities of life; and although the reform legislation from this time forward reduced the nature and the causes of poverty (in 1936 the prime cause was unemployment; in 1951, old age), the proportion of poor families diminished only slightly. It was not until 1940 to 1947 that any great change in the shape of English society took place: "From being a pyramid, lofty and slender, society began to look something more like a pear, a pear tending to become an apple."<sup>7</sup> Rather than declining, the solid middle class had been slowly expanding: in Edwardian times there was about one truly genteel person to seventeen others (including many pretenders to the higher status); in 1951 the middle class accounted for perhaps 30 per cent of the electorate. And by that recent time the electorate was the general population and included women, whose emancipation from servanthood (in 1900 the largest occupation for both sexes) or from a life spent in childbearing is, Laslett notes, the most emphatic social change in the period.

Facts such as these give an interesting perspective to our read-

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<sup>6</sup> In the United States in 1900, 40 per cent of the population lived in towns over 2,500; the number was only around 50 per cent in 1940.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Laslett, "Social Change in England, 1901-1951," p. 53.

ing, for usually they are not overtly recognized in the literature. By and large, lacking a dramatic social revolution, Anglo-American literary culture seems to reflect the fairly narrow concerns of a very small middle-and-upper class as well as long-established myths about its relative size and social importance. How are such statistics and suppositions to be analyzed by the student of literature? Because Arnold Bennett and Virginia Woolf both had exaggerated ideas about the middle class, are their novels less perceptive, less useful to us? Are they to be evaluated and understood as if they were relatively similar writers for this reason? Clearly social and economic history cannot be the center of our study; but there are a good many philosophical and cultural strands running through the intellectual life of the twentieth century which, because of their more immediate relevance to the reading of modern literature, one is disposed to identify, connect, and understand more clearly. To attempt fully understanding even these, however, would result in a life-long study; modern political ideologies, especially, are extremely difficult to chart, so much so that the only direct references to them here are in Julian Symons' essay in Part I, and in a brief attack on the Nazi sympathies of certain existential philosophers in Georg Lukacs' essay.

The selections in Part II were chosen, therefore, because the ideas they discuss—those of Baudelaire, Bergson, Freud, and Moore, to mention some names—are immediately useful in describing modern literature, and because they suggest important implications and analogies for similar ideas at work in the poems, novels, and plays themselves. Most of these selections also provide useful ways of conceiving, understanding, and apprehending many formal qualities in the literature—Wylie Sypher's long essay connecting camera, painting, literature, science, and general philosophy being the most outstanding example of this kind of suggestiveness by analogy. Here, too, it should be apparent that Sypher's emphasis on the Cubist perspective presents as comprehensive and useful a notion of what modernism was as any in the summarizing essays of Part III. In this part also it will be possible to connect disparate ideas—Sypher's ideas of Cubism, for example, with both the stream-of-consciousness and Bergsonian no-



tions of time, and these with the symbolist techniques analyzed by Cohen, with the related thrust of Freudian thinking about imagery, and even with the cooler analytical philosophy of Moore and the formal yet intuitional aesthetics of the Bloomsbury group. And we can again try to see how far each of these ideas contributes to the specific qualities and attitudes in our complex and continually expanding general notions of modernism.

The ultimate justification of all these selections rests finally on what they can do to make our experience of modern literature less diffuse, obscure, and vague. Some support for that basic goal will come from critically examining and comparing the materials here assembled; but the goal will be achieved only by continually referring these conceptions to direct experiences of poems, novels, plays, and stories. If the reader is sufficiently interested in modern literature and has not read this far merely to search out some simple and easily repeated truths about it, then he can be confident that his study of the succeeding pages will give these experiences the focal points of reference he wants for making the literature more truly and surely his own. He will know that the study of literature gives questions a vital form, substance, and value; that it does not provide answers.



I

**Literary Movements and Forces  
in the Four Decades:  
Some Cults, -isms, Feelings, and Facts**



RICHARD ELLMANN  
**Two Faces of Edward**

ROBERT H. ROSS  
**Sound and Fury**

FREDERICK J. HOFFMAN  
**The Temper of the Twenties**

JULIAN SYMONS  
**Heresy, Guilt, Munich**



# Two Faces of Edward

Polite Religious Rebellion  
and the Secular Cult of Life

RICHARD ELLMANN

Victoria stayed too long, Edward arrived too late. By the time the superannuated Prince of Wales became king, it was evident that a change would take place in literature; it took place, but Edward has somehow never received credit for it, and the phrase Edwardian literature is not often heard. We have to fall back on it, though, because there is no neat phrase in English, like "the nineties," to describe the first ten years of a century. The word Edwardian has taken its connotations from social rather than literary history. Just what it means is not certain, beyond the high collars and tight trousers which flouted Victorian dowdiness then, and which now have become the pedantic signs of juvenile delinquency. Perhaps "pre-war courtliness" is the closest we can come to the meaning of Edwardian outside literature, sedate Victorianism in better dress. The meaning was present enough to Virginia Woolf for her to declare that "on or about December 1910," that is, in the year of Edward's death, "human character changed."<sup>1</sup> Edward "the Peacemaker" had to die before the world could become modern, and she pushed the dead Edwardians aside to make room for the lively Georgians. The distinction was more relevant, however, for describing Virginia Woolf's own accession to purposiveness than George's accession to rule.

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (London, The Hogarth Essays, 1924), p. 4.

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From Richard Ellmann, ed., *Edwardians and Late Victorians* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

While the late Victorians seem to have relished the idea that they were the last, the Edwardians at once declined to consider themselves as stragglers, ghostly remains of those Englishmen who had stretched the empire so far. The Edwardians had, in fact, a good deal of contempt for the previous reign, and an odd admiration for their own doughtiness. In the midst of the general melancholy over Victoria's death, her son said sturdily, "The King lives."<sup>2</sup> To Virginia Woolf the hated Edwardian writers were Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells, yet even these writers labored under the apprehension or misapprehension that they were trying something new. Lascelles Abercrombie, in one of the few essays on Edwardian literature, finds the period to be only the decorous extension of tradition, and in his essay is detectable that faintly patronizing note which occurs also in biographies of Edward that prove the king was a worthy man.<sup>3</sup> So for Abercrombie the writers of this time were engagingly discreet; they drew in literature, as Edward in life, upon an ample wardrobe, and perhaps dared to go so far as to leave unbuttoned the lowest button on their literary waistcoats.

That the Edwardians have been discounted is understandable, I think, because of the prevalence of a sociological assumption. If the birth of modern literature is dated back to the century's first decade, what happens to our conviction that it was the Great War which turned the tables? At any cost we have to confine the beginning of the century to the infancy or adolescence of modern writers, so that only when the guns boomed did they become old enough to discern the nature of the world. The admonitory fact, however, is that most of the writers whom we are accustomed to call modern were already in their twenties or older when King Edward died. In 1910 Eliot was twenty-two, Lawrence and Pound were twenty-five, Joyce and Virginia Woolf were twenty-eight, Forster was thirty-one, Ford Madox Ford thirty-seven, Conrad fifty-three, Shaw fifty-four, Henry James sixty-seven. Bennett,

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<sup>2</sup> Esmé Wingfield-Stratford, *The Victorian Aftermath* (New York, 1934), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Lascelles Abercrombie, "Literature," in *Edwardian England*, ed. by F. J. C. Hearnshaw (London, 1933), pp. 185-203.

Galsworthy, and Wells were in their forties. To dismiss most of the writers I have named as either too young or too old to be Edwardians, as if only men of middle age counted in literary fashion, is one of those historical simplicities like denying that the twenties were the twenties because so many people didn't know the twenties were going on. Neither age nor self-consciousness determines the private character of a period; if anything does, it is the existence of a community between young and old experimental writers. Such a community existed in the Edwardian period. It was a community which extended not only across the Irish Sea but, spottily at least, across the Channel and the Atlantic; so, if I extend Edward's dominions occasionally to countries he did not rule, it is only to recover the imperial word Edwardian from an enforced limitation.

If a moment must be found for human character to have changed, I should suggest that 1900 is both more convenient and more accurate than Virginia Woolf's 1910. In 1900, Yeats said with good-humored exaggeration, "everybody got down off his stilts; henceforth nobody drank absinthe with his black coffee; nobody went mad; nobody committed suicide; nobody joined the Catholic Church; or if they did I have forgotten."<sup>4</sup> That there was pressure upon them to change was something that the writers of this time were distinctly aware of; it is not only Yeats, whose attitudes, as Mr. Whitaker has shown, take a new turn; it is also lesser writers. Even John Masefield was once asked how it had happened that his poetry had moved from the nostalgic rhythms of his early work to the more athletic ones of "The Everlasting Mercy," and he replied simply, "Everybody changed his style then." The Edwardians came like Dryden after Sir Thomas Browne, anxious to develop a more wiry speech. Their sentences grew more vigorous and concentrated. I will not claim for the Edwardians' work total novelty—that can never be found in any period, and many of their most individual traits had origin in the nineties or earlier. But in all that they do they are freshly self-conscious. What can be claimed is that there was a gathering

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<sup>4</sup> W. B. Yeats, Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (Oxford, 1936), p. xi.

of different talents towards common devices, themes, and attitudes, and King Edward at least did nothing to impede it.

What strikes us at once about Edwardian literature is that it is thoroughly secular, yet so earnest that secularism does not describe it. It is generally assumed that in this period religion was something to ignore and not to practice. Edwardian writers were not in fact religious, but they were not ostentatiously irreligious. In the Victorian period people had fumed and left the churches; in the Edwardian period, becalmed, they published memoirs or novels describing how strongly they had *once* felt about the subject. This is the point of Gosse's *Father and Son* (1907) as well as of Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* (written earlier, but published in 1903). It was also part of the subject of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, much of it written in 1907-8, as it is of Yeats's first autobiographical book, *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*, written just before the war. In all these books the intensity of rebellion is past, an incident of an unhappy childhood (and the vogue of having had an unhappy childhood may well have begun with the Edwardians) succeeded by confident maturity.

Because they outlived their passionate revolt, writers as different as Yeats and Joyce are sometimes suspected nowadays of having been reverted Christians or at least demi-Christians. Certainly they no longer make a fuss about being infidels. And they are suspected of belief for another reason, too. Almost to a man, Edwardian writers rejected Christianity, and having done so, they felt free to *use* it, for while they did not need religion they did need religious metaphors. It is no accident that the Catholic modernists, with their emphasis upon the metaphorical rather than the literal truth of Catholic doctrines, became powerful enough in the first years of the century to be worth excommunicating in 1907. There were other signs of a changed attitude toward religion: the comparative mythologists tolerantly accepted Easter as one of many spring vegetation rites; William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, published in 1902, made all varieties equally valid.

In creative writers, this new temper appears not in discussion of religion, which does not interest them, but in vocabulary.



Religious terms are suddenly in vogue among unbelievers. Yeats calls up God to be a symbol of the most complete thought. Joyce allows the infidel Stephen to cry out "Heavenly God!" when, seeing a girl wading, he experiences "an outburst of *profane* joy."<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere, as in *Ulysses*, he asks what difference it makes whether God's name be Christus or Bloom, and Jesus is allowed into *Finnegans Wake* as one of Finnegan's many avatars. Ezra Pound, newly arrived in London in 1908, immediately writes a canzone to celebrate "The Yearly Slain," a pagan god, and then a ballad to celebrate the "Goodly Fere," who turns out to be Christ made into a Scottish chap. All deaths of all gods roused Pound to the same fervor. There was no need to attack with Swinburne the "pale Galilean," or to say with Nietzsche that "God is dead"; as a metaphor God was not dead but distinctly alive, so much so that a character in Granville Barker's play *Waste* (1906-7) asks sardonically, "What is the prose for God?"<sup>6</sup> T. S. Eliot, if for a moment he may be regarded as an Edwardian rather than as a Rooseveltian, used John the Baptist and Lazarus in "Prufrock" (written in 1910), as if they were characters like Hamlet, and even in his later life, after becoming consciously, even self-consciously Christian, he used the words "God" and "Christ" with the greatest circumspection, while unbelievers used the words much more casually, their individual talents more at ease in his tradition than he himself. D. H. Lawrence, the same age as Pound, writes his "Hymn to Priapus" in 1912, yet remains attracted by images of Christ and is willing enough, in spite of his preference for older and darker gods, to revise Christianity and use its metaphors. In *The Rainbow* (begun the same year), Tom Brangwen and his wife, when their physical relationship improves, experience what Lawrence variously calls "baptism to another life," "transfiguration," and "glorification."<sup>7</sup> In later life Lawrence would give Christ a new resurrection so he could learn to behave like the god Pan, and in poems such as "Last Words to

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<sup>5</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, in *The Portable James Joyce*, ed. by Harry Levin (New York, 1949), p. 432.

<sup>6</sup> H. Granville-Barker, *Three Plays* (New York, 1909), p. 271.

<sup>7</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow* (New York, Modern Library), p. 87.

Miriam" the cross becomes emblematic of the failure to cohabit properly, an interpretation which I should like to think of as Edwardian or at least post-Edwardian. Even H. G. Wells played for a time with the notion of a "finite God," "the king of man's adventures in space and time," though in the end he granted, too unimaginatively, that he had been guilty of "terminological disingenuousness."<sup>8</sup>

To accept Christianity as one of a group of what Gottfried Benn calls "regional moods," or to rewrite it for a new, pagan purpose, seemed to the Edwardians equally cogent directions. For the first time writers can take for granted that a large part of their audience will be irreligious, and paradoxically this fact gives them confidence to use religious imagery. They neither wish to shock nor fear to shock. There is precision, not impiety, in Joyce's use of religious words for secular processes. About 1900, when he was eighteen, he began to describe his prose sketches not as poems in prose, the fashionable term, but as "epiphanies," showings-forth of essences comparable to the showing-forth of Christ. *Dubliners* he first conceived of in 1904 as a series of ten *epicleseis*, that is, invocations to the Holy Spirit to transmute bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, a sacramental way of saying that he wished to fix in their eternal significance the commonplace incidents he found about him. To moments of fullness he applied the term "eucharistic." When Stephen Dedalus leaves the Catholic priesthood behind him, it is to become "a priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everlasting life."<sup>9</sup> One did not have to be a defected Irish Catholic to use terms this way. Granville Barker's hero in *Waste* wants to buy the Christian tradition and transmute it.<sup>10</sup> Proust, searching for an adjective to express his sense of basic experiences, calls them "celestial."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography* (New York, 1934), pp. 573-78.

<sup>9</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, in *The Portable James Joyce*, p. 488.

<sup>10</sup> Granville-Barker, *Three Plays*, p. 252.

<sup>11</sup> Marcel Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé*, p. 16 (Volume VII in *Oeuvres Complètes*; Paris, 1932); cf. *Remembrance of Things Past* (New York, Modern Library Giant), II, 996.

Yeats, a defected Protestant, wrote in 1903, as Mr. Whitaker reminds us, that his early work was directed toward the transfiguration on the mountain, and his new work toward incarnation. The artist, he held, must make a Sacred Book, which would not be Christian or anti-Christian, but would revive old pieties and rituals in the universal colors of art instead of in the hue of a single creed.

The reestablishment of Christianity, this time as outer panoply for an inner creed, was not limited to a few writers. In the Edwardian novels of Henry James the words he is fondest of are "save" and "sacrifice," and these are secular equivalents for religious concepts to which in their own terms he is indifferent. In the novels of E. M. Forster, mostly written before Edward died, there is exhibited this same propensity. Forster usually reserves his religious imagery for the end of his novels. In the last pages of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, his first novel (1905), Forster writes of Philip, "Quietly, without hysterical prayers or banging of drums, he underwent conversion. He was saved."<sup>12</sup> *The Longest Journey* (1907) concludes with Stephen Wanham undergoing "salvation."<sup>13</sup> In *A Room with a View* (1908), there is a "Sacred Lake," immersion in which, we are told, is "a call to the blood and to the relaxed will, a passing benediction whose influence did not pass, a holiness, a spell, a momentary chalice for youth."<sup>14</sup> At the end the heroine derives from Mr. Emerson, who has "the face of a saint who understood," "a sense of deities reconciled, a feeling that, in gaining the man she loved, she would gain something for the whole world."<sup>15</sup>

Even allowing that writers always incline to inflated language for their perorations, Forster obviously intends his words momentarily, almost portentously. He is not for Christ or Pan, but with profoundly Edwardian zeal, for the deities reconciled. Some of the same images appear with much the same meaning in his contemporaries. A character in Granville Barker calls for "A

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<sup>12</sup> E. M. Forster, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (New York, 1950), p. 267.

<sup>13</sup> Forster, *The Longest Journey* (Norfolk, Conn., n.d.), p. 327.

<sup>14</sup> Forster, *A Room with a View* (Norfolk, Conn., n.d.), p. 204.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 310.

secular Church."<sup>16</sup> Shaw's *Major Barbara* (1905) makes similar use of the theme of salvation with its earnest fun about the Salvation Army. Let us be saved, Shaw says, but with less Christian noise and more Roman efficiency. Forster's "chalice" is like the chalice in Joyce's *Araby* (written in 1905), which is a symbol of the boy's love for his sweetheart. The "Sacred Lake" with its subverting of Christian implication is like *The Lake* in George Moore's novel (1905), in which the priest-hero immerses himself in the lake not in order to become Christian, but to become pagan. Forster's deflection of familiar Christian phrasing in having his heroine feel that, in gaining the man she loves she gains something for the whole world, is cognate with Joyce's heroine in "The Dead" (written in 1907), who says of her pagan lover, "I think he died for me,"<sup>17</sup> a statement which helps to justify the ending of that story in a mood of secular sacrifice for which the imagery of barren thorns and spears is Christian yet paganized. I do not think it would be useful to discriminate closely the slightly varying attitudes towards Christianity in these examples: the mood is the same, a secular one.

Yet to express secularism in such images is to give it a special inflection. The Edwardians were looking for ways to express their conviction that we can be religious about life itself, and they naturally adopted metaphors offered by the religion they knew best. The capitalized word for the Edwardians is not God but life: "What I'm really trying to render is nothing more nor less than Life," says George Ponderevo, when Wells is forty-three;<sup>18</sup> "Live," says Strether to Little Bilham, when Henry James is sixty;<sup>19</sup> "O life," cries Stephen Dedalus to no one in particular when Joyce is about thirty-four;<sup>20</sup> "I am going to begin a book about Life," announces D. H. Lawrence, when he is thirty.<sup>21</sup> It

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<sup>16</sup> Granville-Barker, *Three Plays*, p. 250.

<sup>17</sup> Joyce, "The Dead," in *The Portable James Joyce*, p. 238.

<sup>18</sup> H. G. Wells, *Tono-Bungay* (London, Penguin Books, 1946), p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (New York, Harper, 1948), p. 150.

<sup>20</sup> Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist*, p. 525.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted by Harry T. Moore in *The Intelligent Heart* (New York, 1954), p. 191.

does not much matter whether life is exciting or dull, though Conrad is a little exceptional in choosing extraordinary incidents. Arnold Bennett is more usual in his assurance that two old women are worth writing *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908) about. The Edwardians vied with each other in finding more and more commonplace life to write about, and in giving the impression of writing about it in more and more common speech. In Ireland there is the most distinct return to simple men for revelation, in the peasant drama, in Lady Gregory's collection of folklore, in Moore's and Joyce's short stories; but there is a good deal of it in England too, in Arthur Morrison for example. It is connected with an increasing physicality in writers like Lawrence and Joyce, as if they must discuss the forbidden as well as the allowed commonplace. In Lawrence and in Yeats there is the exaltation of spontaneous ignorance, the gamekeeper in the one and the fisherman in the other held up as models to those who suppose that wisdom is something that comes with higher education. In 1911 Ford Madox Ford calls upon poets to write about ash-buckets at dawn rather than about the song of birds or moonlight.<sup>22</sup> While Henry James could not bring himself to joy in ash-buckets, he too believed that by uninhibited scrutiny the artist might attract life's secrets.

The Edwardian writer granted that the world was secular, but saw no reason to add that it was irrational or meaningless. A kind of inner belief pervades their writings, that the transcendent is immanent in the earthy, that to go down far enough is to go up. They felt free to introduce startling coincidences quite flagrantly, as in *A Room with a View* and *The Ambassadors*, to hint that life is much more than it appears to be, although none of them would have offered that admission openly. While Biblical miracles aroused their incredulity, they were singularly credulous of miracles of their own. As Conrad said in *The Shadow-Line*, "The world of the living contains enough marvels and mysteries as it is; marvels and mysteries acting upon our emotions and intelligence in ways so inexplicable that it would almost justify the

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<sup>22</sup> Ford Madox Ford, *Collected Poems* (London, 1914), p. 17.



conception of life as an enchanted state."<sup>23</sup> The central miracle for the Edwardians is the sudden alteration of the self; around it much of their literature pivots. In 1907 Yeats began work on *The Player Queen*, a dramatic statement of his conviction that, if we pretend hard enough to be someone else, we can become that other self or mask. That was the year, too, when Joyce planned out the miraculous birth of his hero's mature soul as the conclusion of *A Portrait of the Artist*, and when John Synge, in *The Playboy of the Western World*, represented dramatically the battle for selfhood. At the end of Synge's play, Christy Mahon is the true playboy he has up to now only pretended to be, and his swagger is replaced by inner confidence. In *The Voyage Inheritance* (1905) Granville Barker brings Edward Voysey to sudden maturity when, like the hero of that neo-Edwardian novel *By Love Possessed*, he discovers the world is contaminated and that he may nonetheless act in it. Lawrence's heroes must always shed old skins for new ones. In Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900), the struggle for selfhood is the hero's quest, a quest achieved only with his death. In Henry James's *The Ambassadors* (1903), the miracles among which Strether moves at first are phantasmagoric, but there is no phantasmagory about the miracle which finally occurs, the release of Strether from ignorance to total understanding. Though the dove dies in another of James's novels of this time (1902), her wings mysteriously extend beyond death into the minds of the living, to alter their conduct miraculously. *The golden bowl* (1904) is cracked and finally broken, but by miracle is re-created in the mind.

Miracles of this sort occur in surprising places, even in H. G. Wells. In *Kipps* the hero is transformed from a small person named Kipps into a bloated person named Cuyps and finally into a considerable person named Kipps. He is himself at last. Less obviously, such a change takes place in George Ponderevo in *Tono-Bungay*. It is part of Wells's favorite myth of human achievement, and trying to express that George Ponderevo says, "How can I express the values of a thing at once so essential and

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<sup>23</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Conrad's Prefaces*, ed. by Edward Garnett (London, 1937), p. 173.

so immaterial?"<sup>24</sup> To do so he falls back upon the words "Science" or "Truth," words as reverberant for Wells as "chalice" for Forster or "eucharist" for Joyce. Selfhood—the crown of life, attained by a mysterious grace—forced the Edwardians into their grandest metaphors. It will not seem strange that Bernard Shaw's mind hovers continually about it, as in *Man and Superman* (1901–3) and *Pygmalion* (1912), where miracles as striking and as secular as those in Synge, Joyce, or Yeats, take place. Perhaps we could distinguish two kinds of such miracles: the kind of Shaw and Wells, in which a victory in the spirit is accompanied usually by some material victory, and the kind of James, Lawrence, Conrad, Yeats, and Joyce, in which a victory in the spirit is usually accompanied by some material defeat. Shaw complained vigorously to Henry James that James's kind of miracle was not "scientific."<sup>25</sup>

If the secular miracle is usually the climax of Edwardian writings, there is also a thematic center, usually some single unifying event or object, some external symbol which the Edwardians bear down upon very hard until, to use Conrad's unprepossessing phrase, they "squeeze the guts out of it."<sup>26</sup> So Forster's *A Room with a View* is organized around the title; Lucy Honeychurch, viewless at first, must learn to see; Forster plays upon the word "view" at strategic points in the novel, and at the end Lucy attains sight. In Conrad's *Nostromo* (1904) the central motif is silver, established, by Conrad's custom, in the first chapter: silver civilizes and silver obsesses, a two-edged sword, and the different attitudes that silver inspires control the action of the book. The meaning of the hero's name, Nostromo, becomes as ambiguous as silver; a lifetime of virtue is balanced against an ineradicable moral fault, and Nostromo dies an example of Conrad's fallen man, partially at least saved by misery and death. In *The Man of Property* (1906), John Galsworthy, somewhat under Conrad's influence, developed the very name of Forsyte into a symbol, and

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<sup>24</sup> Wells, *Tono-Bungay*, p. 377.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from G. Bernard Shaw to James, Jan. 17, 1909 in Henry James, *The Complete Plays*, ed. by Leon Edel (New York, 1949), p. 643.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted by Ford Madox Ford in *The English Novel* (Philadelphia, 1929), p. 147.



as if fearful we might miss it, he keeps reminding us that the Forsytes were not only a family but a class, a state of mind, a social disease. The use of a symbolic nucleus in these books seems to justify itself by its public quality, a whole society being measured in terms of it. In *The Golden Bowl*, one of those demonstrations of method which Forster found too extreme, Henry James not only invokes the bowl itself several times in the novel, but keeps invoking its atmosphere by repeating the words "gold" and "golden." Verbal iteration is a means by which Edwardian novelists make up for the obliquity of their method, the complexity of their theme, and give away some of their hand. So Conrad in *Lord Jim* speaks of his hero's clothing, on the first page, as "immaculate," and at the last he is "a white speck," all the incongruities of the book pointed up by the overemphasis on stainlessness. Joyce plays on a group of words in *A Portrait*, "apologise," "admit," "fall," "fly," and the like, expanding their meaning gradually through the book. The pressure of this Edwardian conception of novel-writing is felt even in the work of Lawrence. In his first book, written in 1910, Lawrence is still rather primitive in his use of key words. He changed his title from *Nethermere* to *The White Peacock*, and then laboriously emphasized his heroine's whiteness and introduced discussion of the pride of peacocks. By the time he started *The Rainbow* two years later, he had developed this technique so far as to use the words "light" and "dark," and the image of the rainbow itself, obsessively, and he does not relax this method in *Women in Love* or his later books. He even does what most Edwardians do not do, writes his essay "The Crown" to explain what light, dark, and rainbow signify.

A good example, too, is Joyce's transformation of *Stephen Hero* (1904-5) into *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (chiefly 1907-8). Between writing the two books he read a good deal of Henry James, George Moore, and others, and quite possibly caught up Edwardian habits from them. *Stephen Hero* was to a large extent a Victorian novel, with an interest in incident for its own sake; so Joyce was particularly pleased when he composed the scene in which Stephen asks Emma Clery to spend the night with him. But two or three years later he expunged that scene: it

had become irrelevant to his central image. For by then he had decided to make *A Portrait* an account of the gestation of a soul, and in this metaphor of the soul's growth as like an embryo's he found his principle of order and exclusion. It gave him an opportunity to be passionately meticulous. In the new version the book begins with Stephen's father and, just before the ending, it depicts the hero's severance from his mother. From the start the soul is surrounded by liquids, urine, slime, seawater, amniotic tides, "drops of water" (as Joyce says at the end of the first chapter) "falling softly in the brimming bowl." The atmosphere of biological struggle is necessarily dark and melancholy until the light of life is glimpsed. In the first chapter the fetal soul is for a few pages only slightly individualized, the organism responds only to the most primitive sensory impressions, then the heart forms and musters its affections, the being struggles towards some unspecified, uncomprehended culmination, it is flooded in ways it cannot understand or control, it gropes wordlessly toward sexual differentiation. In the third chapter shame floods Stephen's whole body as conscience develops; the lower bestial nature is put by. Then, at the end of the penultimate chapter, the soul discovers the goal towards which it has been mysteriously proceeding—the goal of life. It must swim no more but emerge into air, the new metaphor being flight. The last chapter shows the soul, already fully developed, fattening itself for its journey until at last it is ready to leave. In the final pages of the book, Stephen's diary, the style shifts with savage abruptness to signalize birth. The soul is ready now, it throws off its sense of imprisonment, its melancholy, its no longer tolerable conditions of lower existence, to be born.

By making his book the matrix for the ontogeny of the soul, Joyce achieved a unity as perfect as any of the Edwardians could achieve, and justified literally his description of the artist as like a mother brooding over her creation until it assumes independent life. The aspiration towards unity in the novel seems related to the search for unity elsewhere, in psychology for example, where the major effort is to bring the day-world and the night-world together. Edwardian writers who commented on history demonstrated the same desire to see human life in a synthesis. In

1900 Joyce announced in his paper on "Drama and Life" that "human society is the embodiment of changeless laws,"<sup>27</sup> laws which he would picture in operation in *Finnegans Wake*. H. G. Wells insisted later that "History is one,"<sup>28</sup> and proceeded to outline it. Yeats said, "All forms are one form," and made clear in *A Vision* that the same cyclical laws bind the lifetime of a person, a civilization, or an idea; and this perception of unity enabled him, he said, to hold "in a single thought reality and justice."<sup>29</sup>

When they came to state their aesthetic theories, the Edwardians bore down hard on the importance of unity. To choose one among a multitude of their sources, they were to some extent making English the tradition of the *symbolistes* of whom Arthur Symons had written in 1899. Aggressively and ostentatiously, the Edwardians point to their works as microcosms characterized by the intense apprehension of the organic unity of all things. They felt justified in subordinating all other elements to this node of unity. Events of the plot can be so subordinated, for example, since, as Virginia Woolf declares, life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged but a "luminous halo."<sup>30</sup> Short stories and novels begin to present atmospheres rather than narratives; and even when events are exciting in themselves, as in Conrad and often in James, the artist's chief labor goes to establish their meaning in a painstaking way, and he will often set the most dramatic events offstage or, rather than present them directly, allow someone to recollect them. Time can be twisted or turned, for unity has little to do with chronology. What subject matter is used becomes of less importance because any part of life, if fully apprehended, may serve. As Ford Madox Ford says in describing the novel of this period, "Your 'subject' might be no more than a child catching frogs in a swamp or the emotions of a nervous

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<sup>27</sup> *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, ed. by Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann (New York, 1959), p. 40.

<sup>28</sup> Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography*, p. 619.

<sup>29</sup> Yeats, *A Vision* (New York, 1938), p. 25.

<sup>30</sup> Woolf, "Modern Fiction," in *The Common Reader* (London, 1925), p. 189.

woman in a thunderstorm, but all the history of the world has gone to putting child or woman where they are. . . ."<sup>31</sup> Since characters are also subsidiary to the sought-after unity, there is a tendency to control them tightly. Few Edwardian characters can escape from their books. Galsworthy's plays are called *Strife* (1909) or *Justice* (1910), as if to establish the preeminence of theme over character. The heroic hero is particularly suspect. He is undermined not only by Lytton Strachey in *Eminent Victorians* (1912), but by Joyce, who calls his first novel *Stephen Hero* as if to guard by irony against Stephen's being really heroic; Granville Barker, as Mr. Weales has shown, writes plays in which the heroes do not deserve the name. The Edwardian male, as he appears in the books of this time, is often passive and put upon, like Maugham's Philip in *Of Human Bondage* (published in 1915 but drafted much earlier) or James's Strether, not only because this is the period of the feminist movement, but because it is the period of the hero's subordination. Concurrently, there is a loss of interest in what the hero does for a living—the emphasis comes so strongly upon their relatively disinterested mental activity that the occupations of Strether, Birkin, or Bloom become shadowy and almost nominal.

The amount of unity which the Edwardians instilled in their work is one of their extraordinary accomplishments. As Edith Wharton aggressively and seriously declared in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1914, "the conclusion of [a] tale should be contained in germ in its first page."<sup>32</sup> Conrad said in his preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* that a work of art "should carry its justification in every line."<sup>33</sup> There were occasional signs of revolt against this zealous "desire and pursuit of the whole."<sup>34</sup> So Wells found Henry James's insistence upon what he aptly called "continuous relevance" to be objectionable.<sup>35</sup> "The thing his

<sup>31</sup> Ford, *The English Novel*, p. 147.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted by Walter B. Rideout in "Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*," in *Twelve Original Essays on Great American Novels*, ed. by Charles Shapiro (Detroit, 1958), p. 151.

<sup>33</sup> *Conrad's Prefaces*, p. 49.

<sup>34</sup> The title of Frederick Baron Corvo's novel, written in 1909.

<sup>35</sup> Wells, *Boon* (New York, 1915), p. 106.

novel is about is always there," he said disapprovingly,<sup>36</sup> probably remembering how Joseph Conrad had irritatingly asked several times what Wells's own novels were really *about*.<sup>37</sup> Wells thought himself later to be in favor of irrelevance, but as Gordon Ray points out, he himself said that "almost every sentence should have its share in the entire design," and his best books are not thoughtlessly constructed; they are unified, as I have suggested, by the myth of selfhood.

The Edwardian aesthetic is fairly closely related to the imagist movement, or part of it. T. E. Hulme had interested Pound and others in his theory of intensive manifolds, that is, of wholes with absolutely interpenetrating parts instead of aggregates of separate elements. Hulme instructed them to place themselves "inside the object instead of surveying it from the outside."<sup>38</sup> This position was that which Yeats also insisted upon when he said that the center of the poem was not an impersonal essence of beauty, but an actual man thinking and feeling. He threw himself into the drama because he saw in it a rejection of externality, even of scenery, and an invitation to the writer to relinquish his self. Henry James was also convinced that the "mere muffled majesty of irresponsible 'authorship'"<sup>39</sup> must be eliminated, and entered the consciousness of his most sensitive characters so thoroughly as to make possible disputes over where *he* stood.

What is confusing about the first imagist manifestoes is that this theory has got mixed up with another, a notion of objectivity and impersonality which, though it receives passing applause from Stephen in *A Portrait*, is not Joycean or Edwardian. Most Edwardian writing is *not* aloof, and the poems Pound praised for their imagist qualities were poems like Yeats's "The Magi," or Joyce's "I hear an army," in which the writer is not at all removed from his image. Pound found a more congenial version of the Edwardian aesthetic in the vorticist movement, for that

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>37</sup> Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography*, pp. 527-28.

<sup>38</sup> T. E. Hulme, *Speculations*, ed. by Herbert Read (London, 1949), pp. 180-81, 213.

<sup>39</sup> Henry James, "Preface to 'The Golden Bowl,'" in *The Art of the Novel*, ed. by R. P. Blackmur (New York, 1950), p. 328.



was manifestly based upon the absorption of the artist into his work, rather than his detachment from it. The word "vortex" was something of an embarrassment. Pound said, with an obvious allusion to its female symbolism, "In decency one can only call it a vortex."<sup>40</sup> But it had the advantage of implying the death of the poet in his poem: the ultimate arrogance of the artist is to disappear. This was the point of view of James and of Yeats as well as of Joyce; Edwardian writers were not much concerned with the artist as were writers of the nineties; they were concerned only with the art. They began to put away their flowing ties. Yeats could never understand the reluctance of some writers to let him improve their poems for them, since to him the work was all. The Edwardian writer is an artist not because he proclaims he is, as Wilde did, but because his works proclaim it. There is much less time for affectation and eccentricity, the point being to get on with the job. As Conrad said in his preface to *The Secret Agent*, "In the matter of all my books I have always attended to my business. I have attended to it with complete self-surrender."<sup>41</sup>

Having yielded up his own identity to write his work, the Edwardian wished the reader to make comparable sacrifices. The *hypocrite lecteur* whom Baudelaire had arraigned was the reader who thought he might observe without joining in the work of art. This was to pass through the house like an irresponsible tenant, and the Edwardian novelist was too good a landlord for that. The reader must become responsible, must pay his rent. The sense of the importance of what their books were doing, the sense that only art, working through religious metaphor, can give life value, made the writers free to ask a great deal of their readers, and the literature of the time moved towards greater difficulty, the revival of Donne in 1912 being one of its manifestations, or towards greater importunacy, as in Lawrence. As Henry James remarked to a writer who complained that a meeting of authors was dull, "Hewlett, we are not here to enjoy ourselves."

It may seem that, though I have offered to exhibit two faces of

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<sup>40</sup> Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska* (London, 1916), p. 106.

<sup>41</sup> *Conrad's Prefaces*, p. 110.

Edward, I have in fact shown only one, and that one staring urgently toward the atomic age. Yet modern as Edwardian literature was, it was not fully modern. There was a difference in mood, which Yeats hinted at when he said that after 1900 nobody did any of the violent things they had done in the nineties. Can we not detect in this period, so distinguished in many ways, its writers so strict with themselves and with us, a sensible loss of vigor and heat? The Edwardians managed to retain much of the stability of the Victorians, but they did so only by becoming artful where their predecessors had seemed artless. The easy skill of Victorian narrative disappears, and while the Edwardians have good reasons for trying for more awesome effects, their work does not escape the charge of being self-conscious, almost *voulu*. It is the age of prefaces and of revisions. Their secular miracles, which they arranged so graciously, seem too easy now, and the modern equivalents of them, in Malamud's *The Assistant* or Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* for example, are deliberately wrought with far greater restraint. Writers of social protest like Galsworthy seem, as Esmé Wingfield-Stratford points out, resigned to their own helplessness.<sup>42</sup> H. G. Wells, though so energetic, seems when he is not at his best too devout toward science, toward popular mechanics, and the later history of his writing of novels, which Gordon Ray has described, makes us wonder if even earlier he was quite so energetic as he appeared. Bennett presents his slices of life with the assurance of a good chef that life is appetizing, yet he has mastered his ingredients without much flair. *A Portrait of the Artist* is a work of genius, but wanting in gusto; and even Yeats is for much of this time more eloquent than implicated, not so much passionate as in favor of passion. Conrad achieves his effects, yet so laboriously, and with awkward narrators like Marlow who, in spite of his laudable artistic purposes, is a bit of a stick. The repetition of words and images, while helpful to the creation of unity, gives an air of pedantry to this aspiring period; the bird flies, but with leaden wings. I should like to find in George Gissing's book, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903), a reflection of this diminution of vitality in a period that

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<sup>42</sup> *The Victorian Aftermath*, p. 173.



prided itself on its life. Gissing lived turbulently enough, but in this autobiographical fiction he is at pains to seem full of calm; a writer today might live calmly, but would want his books to be distraught.

The war, for I will not deny that it took place, made everything harder. The Edwardian confidence in artistic sensibility was broken down; the possibility of nothingness seems to replace the conviction of somethingness. Those Edwardian writers who lived through the war found stability less easy to come by. Before the war Yeats could write "The Magi," with its longing for violence; after the war he wrote "The Second Coming," in which violence inspires horror. Forster, who had accomplished his secular miracles rather handily in his early books, as by the trick of sending his thinner-blooded characters to lush Italy, descends lower to *A Passage to India*, where there is more brutality, and where the realizations to which he brings his personages are less ample, less reassuring. Pound, content with his troubadours before the war, turns upon himself in *Mauberry* with a strange blend of self-destruction and self-justification. Eliot, after politely mocking Edwardian politeness in "Prufrock," becomes impolite in *The Waste Land*. Lawrence becomes strident, frantic, exhortatory, almost suffocating his own mind. Virginia Woolf, unable to find herself before the war, discovers at last a tense point around which to organize her books, and this is not so much unity as the threat of the breakdown of unity. Joyce, content to stay in the conscious mind in his earlier work, descends to a fiercer underworld in the *Circe* episode of *Ulysses*, where Edward VII appears, appropriately now turned to a nightmare figure babbling hysterically of "Peace, perfect peace."<sup>43</sup> The miracle of birth was accomplished in *A Portrait of the Artist* without much resistance, but the comparable miracle in *Ulysses*, Bloom's rescue of Stephen in a world where gratuitous kindness seems out of context, is described by Joyce with great circumspection, as if humanistic miracles now embarrassed him. The religion of life keeps most of its Edwardian adherents, but it has begun to stir up its own atheists and agnostics.

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<sup>43</sup> Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York, Modern Library Giant, 1934), p. 575.

# Sound and Fury

Realism, Futurism, Vorticism, Imagism  
Early in the Second Decade

ROBERT H. ROSS

. . . . Masfield was neither the first nor the only practitioner of realistic verse in modern times. By 1911 both Alfred Noyes and Henry Newbolt had had their fling at the kind of verse Masfield was attempting; and of course he had been long anticipated by Kipling. Compared to Kipling's realistic verse, indeed, Masfield's seems too obviously sprung from the forcing house, too self-conscious, too clearly contrived. "When Mr. Kipling repeats a soldier's oath, he seems to do so with a chuckle of appreciation. When Mr. Masfield puts down . . . oaths . . . he does so rather as a melancholy duty. He swears, not like a trooper, but like a virtuous man. He does not, as so many realists do, love the innumerable coarsenesses of life which he chronicles; that is what makes his oaths often seem as innocent as the conversation of elderly sinners echoed on the lips of children."

Why, then, the almost instant and widespread popularity of *The Everlasting Mercy*? Perhaps the reasons alleged by Harold Monro are as sound as any. For the first time in many years, in Masfield the general reader found verse which he could "appreciate without straining his intelligence." Moreover, to the public delight Masfield stretched traditional poetic forms to the breaking point. No more exquisitely jeweled lyrics, no more

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*From Robert H. Ross, The Georgian Revolt, Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal, 1910-1922 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965). Footnotes have been omitted.*

triolets or double ballades on the nothingness of things; rather, the "rapid, free doggerel," the "bold colloquialism," and the "narrative interest" of *The Everlasting Mercy*. Perhaps an even more compelling reason for the poem's startling success lay in its timing. It was published at precisely the right moment to act as a catalyst for some of the new forces of discontent stirring beneath the surface of British poetry in late 1911. Finally, like the naturalistic novel and the realistic drama, *The Everlasting Mercy* suited its age. In the liberal though not radical social ethos with which the poem was infused, in its racy, colloquial diction, in its rigorous avoidance of traditionally "poetic" subject matter, the English reading public saw tangible evidence that poetry had finally caught up, so to speak, with the contemporary novel and the stage.

For whatever reasons, publication of *The Everlasting Mercy* may be said to mark the beginning of the prewar poetic renaissance, for, as Edmund Blunden observed, Masfield's poem "energized poetry and the reading of it, no matter what extremes of feeling it then aroused or now fails to arouse." Masfield followed up the success of *The Everlasting Mercy* with other narrative poems of the same order, *The Widow in the Bye Street* (1912), *The Story of a Roundhouse* (1912), and *Dauber* (1913). And in 1915, when Edward Marsh staked the considerable critical reputation of *Georgian Poetry* on two long works in the realistic tradition—Abercrombie's "End of the World" and Bottomley's "King Lear's Wife"—he made amply evident what was in fact true: the kind of realism first popularized by Masfield was one of the major facets of the prewar revolt against the dead hand of poetic tradition.

### Futurism

The most spectacular Continental revolutionary movement to strike England with something like a major impact at the beginning of the second decade was Futurism. Originally a revolt confined almost entirely to pictorial art, Futurism began around

1908 when a small band of Milanese painters—Marinetti, Buzzi, Palazzeschi—with that splendid Latin penchant for artistic coteries, creeds, and fiery pronunciamentos, declared themselves henceforward free from the chains of artistic Academism. The movement quickly caught on in both Italy and France, and its implications for poetry were soon recognized by some of its founders, principally Marinetti. On February 20, 1909, Marinetti published the first Futurist “Manifesto” in *Le Figaro*, a document which launched Futurism not only as an artistic but also as a poetic movement. It was followed by a spate of manifestoes during 1909 and 1910, most of them addressed to the artist—though one was addressed to musicians and another was concerned with motion pictures—and in 1910 the tenets of the movement were summed up by Marinetti’s *Le Futurism*. In 1912 Italian Futurist verse was collected in an anthology which, according to Harold Monro, had sold thirty-five thousand copies by late 1913.

There could scarcely be a more cogent example than Futurism of the desire for the violent, the self-assertive, and the primitive, which was beginning to engulf Continental art and from art to spill over into poetry. “We will sing the love of danger, and the habit of energy and fearlessness,” wrote Marinetti in the manifesto of 1909.

The foundations of our poetry shall be courage,  
audacity, and revolt.

We announce that the splendour of earth has  
become enriched by a new beauty, the beauty of  
Speed. . . .

All beauty is based on strife. There can be no  
masterpiece otherwise than aggressive in character.  
Poetry must be a violent assault against unknown  
forces to overwhelm them into obedience to man.

We will sing the great multitudes furious with  
work, pleasure, or revolt; the many-coloured and  
polyphonic assaults of revolution in modern capitals; . . .  
stations, those ravenous swallows of fire-breathing  
serpents; factories, hung by their cords of smoke to  
the clouds.

Futurism lauded war, it praised violence for its own sake; taking a page from Henley's book, it idealized the machine, especially the automobile; it stood for speed, love of danger, noise, and the unrestrained ego.

If there was any organized rationale at all in Futurism, it argued fundamentally from the premise that twentieth-century sensibility had been completely changed by scientific discovery and its stepchild, invention. In his "New Futurist Manifesto" of May 11, 1913, Marinetti claimed that modern communication and machinery had brought about a change in man's psyche which, were he courageous or wise enough to admit it, must also cause a complete and violent change in his art. Explaining what he meant by "The Futurist Consciousness," Marinetti claimed that twentieth-century life had effected at least fifteen specific results, chief among them: acceleration of living, speed; horror of the old, the familiar, the known; abhorrence of the quiet life, love of action and danger; destruction of "the feeling of *the beyond*"; "multiplication and inexhaustibility of human desires and ambitions"; equality of the sexes; "depreciation of love (sentimentalism and luxury) produced by greater erotic facility and liberty of women"; a new sense of fusion of men and machines; "nausea of the curved line . . . love of the straight line and of the terminal."

Upon such a tenuous foundation Marinetti erected the framework of the Futurist poetic. Twentieth-century poetry, he claimed, if it would accurately reflect the realities of twentieth-century life, must embody several Futurist precepts:

WORDS AT LIBERTY. Lyricism has nothing whatever to do with syntax; it is simply "the exceptional faculty of intoxicating and being intoxicated with life." The poet must communicate by using "essential" words only, "and these absolutely *at liberty*."

WIRELESS IMAGINATION. By which Marinetti meant "entire freedom of images and analogies expressed by disjointed words and without the connecting wires of syntax. . . . Poetry must be an uninterrupted sequence of new images."

SEMAPHORIC ADJECTIVATION. Qualifying adjectives must be cut



to the bone in Futurist verse. They should be considered only as "semaphores" serving "to regulate the speed and pace of the race of analogies."

VERB IN THE INFINITIVE. Finite verb forms must be avoided at all costs because they tend to make units of meaning (i.e., sentences). The infinitive form is far preferable, indeed indispensable, because it negates "in itself the existence of a sentence, and prevents the style from stopping or sitting down at a determined spot."

ONOMATOPOEIA AND MATHEMATICAL SIGNS. Modern verse must have "a most rapid, brutal, and immediate lyricism . . . a telegraphic lyricism." To this end it must have the courage to introduce "onomatopoeic chords, in order to render all the sounds and even the most cacophonous noises of modern life." And it must make copious use of mathematical and musical symbols "to regulate the speed of the style."

TYPOGRAPHICAL REVOLUTION. The typographical harmony of the normal printed page of verse must be rigorously eschewed. Typography must rather show "the flux and reflux, the jerks and the bursts of style" represented on the page. Therefore the Futurist poet may "if necessary" make use of three or four colors of ink and twenty kinds of type on a single page.

FREE AND EXPRESSIVE ORTHOGRAPHY. Words must continually be made and unmade *ad libitum*; they must be formed, reformed, and deformed in the process of every poem. No syntax is allowable by any stretch of permissiveness. We must have "words at liberty."

Perhaps the most charitable course at this late date is thus to allow the futurist poetic to speak for itself. Though it undeniably opened the door to all sorts of further experiments with verse forms, few English poets appear to have taken it very seriously as a guide for writing verse, if for no other reason than the English poet's fundamental distrust of Latin extremism. "If Futurism had triumphed here," Frank Swinnerton declared, "it would have done so because the nation had lost its head." Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that even the most ardent poetic revolution-

ary in London in 1913 could have considered a poem like Marinetti's "Bataille" as much more than mildly amusing.

*BATAILLE / POIDS + ODEUR*

Midi  $\frac{3}{4}$  flûtes glappissement  
 embrasement toumtoumb alarme Gargaresch  
 craquement crépitation marche Cliquetis  
 sacs fusils sabots clous canons crinières  
 roues caissons juifs beignets pains-a-huile  
 cantilènes échoppes bouffées chatoisement  
 chassie puanteur cannelle  
 fadeurs flux reflux poivre rixe vermine  
 tourbillon orangers-en-fleur filigrane  
 misère dés échecs cartes jasmin + muscade  
 + rose arabesque mosaïque charogne  
 hérissement + savates mitrailleuses =  
 galets + ressac + grenouilles Cliquetis  
 sacs fusil canons ferraille atmosphère =  
 plombs + lave + 300 puanteurs + 50 parfums  
 pavé matelas détritit crottin charognes  
 flic-flac entassement chameaux bourricots  
 tohubohu cloaque.

The major impact of Futurism upon London came not from the Futurist poetic but in the person of its incredible founder and publicist Filippo Marinetti. Marinetti lectured frequently in London from 1912 through 1914. A man of considerable wealth, he was "a flamboyant person," as Douglas Goldring recalled, "adorned with diamond rings, gold chains, and hundreds of flashing white teeth." His public performances were perhaps more spectacular than edifying: during one recitation in 1914 he was accompanied by the intermittent booming of a large drum off-stage, and he sometimes exemplified Futurist tenets by imitating the sound of machine guns from the platform. But he spoke everywhere and to all kinds of artists and poets, at the Lyceum Club and in Bechstein Hall, to T. E. Hulme's Poets' Club, in the Dore Galleries, and in the meeting room of Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop. Not everyone was impressed. Richard Aldington recorded in December, 1913: "M. Marinetti has been reading



his new poems to London. London is vaguely alarmed and wondering whether it ought to laugh or not." Perhaps Edward Marsh had attended the same reading as Aldington; at any rate he wrote a lively account of one to Rupert Brooke, absent in the South Seas, on December 14, 1913.

Did anyone give you an account of Marinetti's visit? I only attended one of his manifestations—a lecture at the Poetry Bookshop, in a kind of loft which looked as if it was meant to keep apples in, and one ought to get into it by a ladder through a trap-door. It was illuminated by a single night-light, which I thought at first must be a Futurist tenet; but it turned out to be only a fatuity of Monro's. Marinetti began his lecture by asking how he could possibly talk in a penumbra about Futurism, the chief characteristic of which was Light, Light, Light? He did very well all the same. He is beyond doubt an extraordinary man, full of force and fire, with a surprising gift of turgid lucidity, a full and roaring and foaming flood of indubitable half-truths.

He gave us two of the 'poems' on the Bulgarian War. The appeal to the sensations was great—to the emotions, nothing. As a piece of art, I thought it was about on the level of a very good farmyard-imitation—a supreme music-hall turn. I could not feel that it detracted in any respect from the position of *Paradise Lost* or the *Grecian Urn*. He has a marvelous sensorium, and a marvelous gift for transmitting its reports—but what he writes is not literature, only an aide-mémoire for a mimic.

Wyndham Lewis expressed his antagonism more actively. To one of Marinetti's lectures at the Dore Galleries in 1914 "Lewis took 'a determined band of miscellaneous anti-Futurists,' including Gaudier-Brzeska, Edward Wadsworth, and T. E. Hulme (all big men). They heckled Marinetti. Gaudier 'put down a tremendous barrage in French,' while the rest 'maintained a confused uproar'."

But Marinetti was quite capable of giving as good as he got. In May, 1914, Harold Monro remarked in a letter to Marsh: "We had tremendous fun with Marinetti the other evening. He came around [to the Poetry Bookshop] and declaimed to Yeats and made the room shake." This was not the first time Yeats had been required to endure Marinetti's declamations. Sturge Moore, Pound, and Aldington had taken Marinetti to Yeats' flat in the

Woburn Buildings upon an earlier occasion. As Aldington recalled the episode, Yeats read some of his poems and then politely asked Marinetti to reciprocate. "Whereupon Marinetti sprang up and in a stentorian Milanese voice began bawling:

'Automobile,  
Ivre d'espace,  
Qui piétine d'angoisse,' *etc.*,

until Yeats had to ask him to stop because neighbours were knocking in protest on the floor, ceiling, and party walls."

Though Futurism did much to enliven the English literary and artistic scene in 1912 and 1913, by 1914 it was being replaced by other, more up-to-the-minute "-isms." Among other reasons for the decline is the fact that the very word was being diluted by too loose and too frequent use. By 1914 "Futurist" had come to be applied in art circles not so much to Marinetti and his followers as indiscriminately to anyone trying to rebel against merely representational art. Moreover, by 1914 there were many artists—especially those in rival coteries like the Vorticists—who claimed that in the rush to modernity Futurism had long since been passed by; it was itself (to use their own phrase) "passéiste." Wyndham Lewis could write patronizingly in 1914 that Futurism, as bodied forth in a current exhibition of Futurist art, was only "Impressionism up-to-date," with an admixture of "Automobilism" and Nietzsche. It was "romantic," the most damning of all epithets: "a picturesque, superficial, and romantic rebellion of young Milanese painters against the Academism which surrounded them. . . . The Automobilist pictures were too 'picturesque,' melodramatic and spectacular," Lewis continued, "besides being undigested and naturalistic to a fault. . . . Romance about science is a thing we have all been used to for many years, and we resent its being used as a sauce for a dish claiming to belong strictly to emancipated Futures."

In its more specifically poetic phase, too, not a few critics were quick to point out that Futurism was not so new as it pretended to be. Henley had anticipated by some years the Futurist effusions on the automobile and on the beauty of speed, and Kipling had long since remarked upon the romance of the modern ma-

chine. Even so sympathetic a critic as Harold Monro felt impelled to point out to the Futurists that the poetry which they believed so new was "no more than frenzied Whitmanism, adulterated by an excessive if diverting, admixture of meridional eloquence." Wyndham Lewis observed that in their praise of the machine the Futurists had also been anticipated by H. G. Wells. And J. C. Squire pointed out that Futurist poetry bore traces of Impressionism, the very movement which the Futurists professed so cordially to detest. "To me, at least," wrote Squire, "the Futurist verse of Signor Marinetti reads like slightly more disjected Whitman or Henley with a flavouring of French impressionism."

But the rock on which Futurism finally foundered was the war. With its single-minded emphasis on energy as a goal of art, its love of the brutal, its open desire for and praise of war, Futurism could not weather the universal revulsion at the very real world of trench warfare in the mud of Flanders. "What Futurist, either in the trenches or at home, honestly desires war to continue?" asked John Cournos, art critic of the *Egoist*, in January, 1917. "What Vorticist? They advocated violence, but violence has now become too common; devastation and anarchy sweep Europe." And so the Russian Futurist Mayakovsky could claim with justification in early 1917: "Futurism has died as a particular group, but it has poured itself out in everyone in a flood. Today all are Futurists."

### Vorticism

An even more pyrotechnic phase of the prewar revolt in the plastic and pictorial arts which had implications for poetry was Vorticism. In a sense both an outgrowth from and a rebellion against Futurism, Vorticism was not a Continental import, but a home-grown revolution. It was launched as a formal "movement" by the second of Marinetti's lectures at the Dore Galleries on May 5, 1914, the one to which went "a small band of miscellaneous anti-Futurists"—Hulme, Wadsworth, Gaudier-Brzeska—led by Wyndham Lewis to heckle Marinetti. Their success

against so formidable an opponent apparently led the small band to consider formalizing their views, and so with the addition of several others to the group—among them Ezra Pound (who invented the word “Vorticism”) and Richard Aldington—Vorticism began its brief but lively career.

Little more than a month later, in June, 1914, Vorticism became vocal with the publication of that most amazing of all prewar little magazines, *Blast*, which ran for only two numbers, the second and final one appearing in July, 1915. Edited by Wyndham Lewis and published by John Lane at the Bodley Head, *Blast* was obviously out to shock both in content and format. The first number had a puce-colored paper cover, the word “BLAST” being written in huge block capitals diagonally across it. Inside appeared the inevitable manifesto printed in inch-high capitals, poems by Pound, Vorticist drawings, “Vortices and Notes” by Lewis, stories by Rebecca West and Ford Madox Hueffer, and short pieces entitled “Vortex” by Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska. Harrying the Philistines was certainly no new aim in British letters from the mid-nineteenth century on, but *Blast* did the job extraordinarily well.

Among other distinctions which fell to the journal, it was in *Blast* that Eliot’s four “Preludes” and the “Rhapsody of a Windy Night” first saw print; and Pound’s small *tour de force* “Ancient Music” first appeared there. Pound no doubt took some pride in the fact that three lines of one of his more scurrilous short poems in the first number had to be inked out by a censor. And in the second number appeared a small poem of Pound’s which must surely be the only published satiric poem about Rupert Brooke. Both in truculence and in volume, however, the second number showed a considerable falling off from the first. Though its literary quality was higher, it took a doomed, if forthright, stand toward its task during wartime: “This puce-coloured cockleshell,” Lewis wrote, “will . . . try to brave the waves of blood, for the serious mission it has on the other side of the World-War.” And though Lewis confidently looked forward to two more issues in 1915, even going so far as to list the contents of the next projected number, *Blast*, like most of the little magazines which

so enlivened prewar literary London, became a casualty of the war.

As one traces its tenets through the pages of *Blast*, Vorticism appears to have had several strings to its bow. In a bristling statement of aims at the beginning of the first number, Lewis set forth the major principles upon which the journal would stand and upon which subsequent articles and contributors only rang the changes. "Long live the great art vortex sprung up in the centre of this town!", he began.

We stand for the Reality of the Present—not for the sentimental Future or the sacripant Past.

We want to leave Nature and Men alone.

We do not want to make people wear Futurist patches, or fuss men to take to pink and sky-blue trousers.

We are not their wives or tailors. . . .

We believe in no perfectibility except our own. . . .

We do not want to change the appearance of the world, because we are not Naturalists, Impressionists or Futurists (the latest form of Impressionism), and do not depend on the appearance of the world for our art.

WE ONLY WANT THE WORLD TO LIVE, and to feel its crude energy flowing through us. . . .

We want to make in England not a popular art, not a revival of lost folk art, or a romantic fostering of such unactual conditions, but to make individuals wherever found.

We will convert the King if possible.

A VORTICIST KING! WHY NOT?

DO YOU THINK LLOYD GEORGE HAS THE VORTEX IN HIM?

MAY WE HOPE FOR ART FROM LADY MOND? . . .

AUTOMOBILISM (Marinettiism) bores us. We don't want to go about making a hullobulloo about motor cars, anymore than about knives and forks, elephants or gas-pipes.

Elephants are VERY BIG. Motor cars go quickly.

Wilde gushed twenty years ago about the beauty of machinery. Gissing, in his romantic delight with modern lodging houses was futurist in this sense.

The futurist is a sensational and sentimental mixture of the aesthete of 1890 and the realist of 1870. . . .



We want those simple and great people found everywhere.  
 Blast presents an art of Individuals.

Vorticism was an artistic coterie to end artistic coteries. It set itself against any other school except Vorticism; it was equally disgusted by realism and aestheticism. Explicit in Lewis's manifesto was also Vorticism's intense hostility toward Futurism. Though its credo shared several fundamental points with that of the Futurists, Vorticism took a violent and forthright antipathy toward its predecessor. Futurism had become a dead issue in England by 1914, Lewis claimed, because it was too "romantic" and "sentimental"—sentimental about the future, to be sure, but no less sentimental than such outdated artistic movements as Impressionism, which Futurism claimed to supplant. Vorticism set its face as resolutely against Impressionism as against Futurism. It had nothing but scorn for the "lean belated Impressionists at present attempting to eke out a little life in these islands. . . . Our vortex is fed up with your dispersals, reasonable chicken-men," wrote Lewis.

Behind the antipathy toward both Futurism and Impressionism, however, one detects a deeper hatred. Almost all the denunciations and manifestoes in *Blast* were directed toward what it was pleased to call "sentimentalism," be it sentimentalism about the past or the future.

Our Vortex is not afraid of the Past: it has forgotten its existence.

Our Vortex regards the Future as as sentimental as the Past.

The Future is distant, like the Past, and therefore sentimental. . . .

Everything absent, remote, requiring projection in the veiled weakness of the mind is sentimental.

In its emphasis on the anti-sentimental, the hard and dry, Vorticism attempted to do in art much the same thing that Imagism was contemporaneously attempting to do for poetry. Indeed, "according to Pound," wrote John Gould Fletcher, the Vorticist principles "were only an extension of the old principle of Imag-

ism, developed to embrace all the arts. The basis for poetry . . . was not an abstract idea, but a concrete image; this emerged from a radiant node, a cluster of energy from which and into which and through which ideas and associations were constantly moving; therefore it could only be called a VORTEX."

Finally, Vorticism was aggressively, self-consciously English. Unlike Futurism, an import from alien, Latin shores, Vorticism took pains to distinguish itself as a native movement. It was thoroughly bored, Lewis declared, with "that feeble Europeanism, abasement of the miserable 'intellectual' before anything coming from Paris, cosmopolitan sentimentality, which prevails in so many quarters." After all, because England "practically invented this civilization that Signor Marinetti has come to preach to us about," Lewis protested, there should be nothing particularly intoxicating about modern machines to an Englishman.

The modern world is due almost entirely to Anglo-Saxon genius,—its appearance and its spirit. . . .

In dress, manners, mechanical inventions, LIFE, that is, ENGLAND, has influenced Europe in the same way that France has in Art.

But busy with this LIFE-EFFORT, she has been the last to become conscious of the Art that is an organism of this new Order and Will of Man. . . .

Once this consciousness towards the new possibilities of expression in present life has come, however, it will be more the legitimate property of Englishmen than of any other people in Europe.

It should also, as it is by origin theirs, inspire them more forcibly and directly.

They are the inventors of this bareness and hardness, and should be the greatest enemies of Romance.

One runs a risk, perhaps, in taking *Blast* too seriously, with its long lists in three-quarter-inch capitals of random persons, events, and institutions to be "blasted" or "blessed." Under the heading "Blast" (and one must recall the ubiquitous English use of the word as epithet) occur such items as English weather, "Humor (English variety)," all things Victorian, the Bishop of London (and "all his posterity"), Galsworthy, Dean Inge, Croce,



Bergson, "Beecham (Pills, Opera, Thomas)," A. C. Benson, the British Academy, William Archer, and the "Clan Meynell." Under the heading "Bless" one finds "cold, magnanimous, delicate, gauche, fanciful, stupid Englishmen," the Hairdresser, English humor (Swift and Shakespeare), French "vitality, skepticism, pornography and females," the Pope, "Barker (John and Granville)," the Salvation Army, Charlotte Corday, Castor Oil, James Joyce, Lloyd George, Chaliapin, and the Commercial Process Company. One cannot take too seriously either some of Pound's poetic sorties in *Blast*, full of the new insolence, attacking all manner of persons and institutions which he saw as restricting the freedom of the artist. He hit out at the conservative reviewers:

Let us deride the smugness of 'The Times':

GUFFAW!

So much the gagged reviewers,  
It will pay them when the worms are wriggling  
in their vitals;

These were they who objected to newness,  
HERE are their TOMB-STONES.

They supported the gag and the ring:  
A little BLACK BOX contains them.

So shall you be also,  
You slut-bellied obstructionist,  
You sworn foe to free speech and good letters,  
You fungus, you continuous gangrene.

And he lashed his literary contemporaries in general:

You say that I take a good deal upon myself;  
That I strut in the robes of assumption.  
In a few years no one will remember the 'buffo,'  
No one will remember the trivial parts of me,  
The comic detail will not be present.  
As for you, you will lie in the earth,  
And it is doubtful if even your manure will  
be rich enough  
To keep grass  
Over your grave.

The close relationship of Vorticism to Imagism is apparent in some of Pound's contributions to *Blast*. Several of his semi-Imagist efforts were printed in the first number:

*L'ART*

Green arsenic smeared on an egg-white cloth,  
Crushed strawberries! Come let us feast our eyes.

*WOMEN BEFORE A SHOP*

The gee-gaws of false amber and false turquoise attract them.  
'Like to like nature.' These agglutinuous yellows!

But the relationship is more clearly seen in Pound's explanation of the meaning of Vorticism for poetry. Like the Vorticist painter, the Vorticist poet, too, "will use only the primary media of his art," said Pound.

The primary pigment of poetry is the IMAGE.  
The Vorticist will not allow the primary expression of any  
concept or emotion to drag itself out into mimicry.  
In painting Kandinsky, Picasso.  
In poetry this by 'H. D.'

Whirl up sea—  
Whirl up you pointed pines,  
Splash your great pines  
On our rocks.  
Hurl your green over us,  
Cover us with your pools of fir.

By July, 1915, when the second number appeared, *Blast* had a slightly less belligerent tone. Surprisingly, *Blast* II even had a faintly patriotic odor about it. Active service in the trenches had begun to expel the youthful arrogance from at least one of the Vorticists. Gaudier-Brzeska wrote his last "Vortex" from the trenches in France, a sympathetic, human document, warm with humility, bright with new insight, the more tragic because its gifted author was so shortly to be killed in action.

I have been fighting for two months and I can now  
gauge the intensity of Life.

Human Masses teem and move, are destroyed and crop  
up again.

Horses are worn out in three weeks, die by the roadside.

Dogs wander, are destroyed, and others come along.

With all the destruction that works around us, nothing is changed, even superficially. *Life is the same strength*, the same moving agent that permits the small individual to assert himself. . . .

This war is a great remedy.

In the individual it kills arrogance, self-esteem, pride.

Just as surely as Futurism, Vorticism, too, was a casualty of the War. It was a too self-conscious creed of ersatz violence which collapsed of anemia when faced with the genuine, brutal violence of modern warfare on the Western Front.

### Imagism

Perhaps the most influential group of rebels in the prewar poetic renaissance was that oddly assorted coterie to which one may apply the roughly descriptive term Imagist. This is not the place to trace the history of the Imagist movement, to deal with the controversial personalities which it attracted, or to enter the labyrinth of personal animosities and tempestuous civil insurrections which arose within its camp. That task has been done. Here the Imagists must be considered primarily historically—that is, as only one of several parties to the prewar poetic revolt—and their similarities to other prewar . . . coteries pointed out. Special attention must therefore be given to two periodicals, the *New Freewoman* and the *Egoist*, around which the Imagists rallied and in which they assiduously whetted their knives for their enemies and greeted their friends with partisan huzzahs.

The *New Freewoman*, a feminist paper edited by Dora Marsden and financed by Harriet Shaw Weaver, appeared for the first time on June 15, 1913. Because Miss Marsden and Miss Weaver engaged Ezra Pound for "the task of finding literary contributors," it became apparent almost from the beginning that the *New Freewoman* would become a repository for poems of the Imagist school. Aldington's work appeared early in the life of the journal, along with verse by "H.D.," Amy Lowell, F. S. Flint, Skipworth Cannell, and William Carlos Williams. Early numbers

also contained critical articles on modern poetry by Rebecca West and Ford Madox Hueffer as well as frequent reviews of contemporary verse by Pound.

With a slight change in format, the *New Freewoman* became the *Egoist* with the number of January 1, 1914. Like its short-lived predecessor, the *Egoist* was published fortnightly, until January 1, 1915, when it became a monthly for the duration of the war. Never a journal to hide its light, the *Egoist* advertised itself as the "only fortnightly in England that an intelligent man can read for three months running." Miss Marsden edited the journal until 1915, the assistant editors being Richard Aldington and Leonard Compton-Rickett. When it became a monthly the editorship was taken over by Miss Weaver. When Aldington entered military service around the middle of 1917, T. S. Eliot inherited Aldington's position as Assistant Editor. By 1919 the *Egoist* Press had been established, and the *Egoist* staff had become increasingly interested in book publishing and less so in editing a magazine. The last number of the journal appeared in December, 1919. Its leading contributors, Eliot, Pound, and Aldington, were shortly to turn their efforts to the more famous and influential *Criterion*.

The *Egoist* succeeded in putting itself in the avant-garde of literary revolt from the beginning. A partial roster of those who contributed either verse or critical articles on poetry to the journal in 1914 amply suggests its penchant for the new: Aldington, Pound, Wyndham Lewis, F. S. Flint, Robert Frost, "H.D.," John Gould Fletcher, Amy Lowell, and William Carlos Williams. One of its proudest accomplishments was the serial publication of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in 1914-15 after it had been universally rejected by other publishers. Pound and Aldington alternated as book reviewers early in the life of the *Egoist* and, as one might expect, succeeded admirably in keeping things warm in their corner. Perhaps it was in the correspondence columns, however, that the hottest controversies raged. The *Egoist* had without doubt the most lively letters-to-the-editor columns in London. The editorial staff and friends of the paper were not above manufacturing letters under *noms de plume* to stir up a lagging controversy or start a new one. T. S.

Eliot did so on several occasions, and one discovers several amusingly fictitious names inscribed to letters in 1914 which bear unmistakable traces of the deft hand of Ezra Pound.

What did the prominent Imagists who contributed to the *New Freewoman* and the *Egoist* stand for? By and large they took their position somewhere near the middle of the [literary rebels], in which status they both agreed and disagreed with their . . . compeers. They agreed with all the prewar rebels that the new twentieth-century consciousness demanded a new poetry, that old subjects, and particularly old techniques, were *passéiste*. Along with the Futurists, the Imagists "proclaimed the need of the modern poet for a free form of verse. Both condemned rhetoric. Both . . . asserted the importance of complete freedom of play of images and analogies." The Imagists were attracted to "Futurism's vigor and energy, its hatred of the stylized, sentimental, and academic, and its concentration on its own times." On one crucial point, however, the Imagists took definite issue with Futurism: Marinetti's Futurist poems, Aldington argued, were not only too rhetorical and bombastic but also too formless and abstract. "There is a vast disorganised energy in these poems," he wrote, "and good journalistic observation. Their great drawback to some of us is their utterly unrestrained rhetoric, their use of abstractions, their vagueness. . . . M. Marinetti's poems are born in confusion and may perish in it." It was in his emphasis upon the necessity for form in poetry, upon "bringing content under careful, efficient control instead of allowing it to overflow onto the page," that the Imagist clearly parted company with the Futurist.

In their opposition to representational art, again, the Imagists joined forces with both Futurists and Vorticists. The major question facing young artists in 1914, Aldington declared, was simply, "Shall we, or shall we not have 'parochialism in art'—or to put it in different words: should artists confine themselves entirely to modern life and to the modern world for their detail as well as for the 'spirit' of their works?" The school of "the dust-bin and the back yard" is gaining strength. "If one does not deal in the latest type of aeroplane or the latest refinement in factories, then one is outside the pale." Too much modern art insists on



modernity not only of spirit, but also of detail. And Aldington advanced three reasons why realistic art was in his eyes bad art: first, realistic detail is uninteresting per se and quickly becomes "tedious and out-of-date"; secondly, he claimed "the right for every artist to use any subject he damn well pleases so long as he uses it well"; and thirdly, he found the realist "a very bad artist—as a rule. To drag smells of petrol, refrigerators, ocean greyhounds, President Wilson and analine dyes into a work of art will not compensate for lack of talent and of technique." Against the dust-bin school the Imagist, in the person of Aldington in this case, broke out two banners: the banner of artistic individualism, a kind of latter-day art-for-the-artist's sake; and, though the devices upon it are somewhat dimmer, the banner of art as private experience, with all that such an aesthetic implies of the aloof, scholarly, skeptical disregard for the plain reader.

Finally, the Imagists shared with all the parties of the prewar revolt . . . a strong antipathy to all things Victorian. Along with all their compeers, they took arms, for instance, against "cosmic" poetry. "Mistrust any poet using the word *cosmic*," Pound advised Harriet Monroe. The adjective was never precisely defined, though it seems to have been coined in an attempt to describe that segment of nineteenth-century verse which was didactic in conception or in which the poet's aim seemed to be more to convey general ideas or absolutes than to objectify an emotion or describe an object in the existential world. By loose extension the word came simply to connote "Victorian" or—an even more odious epithet—"Tennysonian." In a withering burst of youthful scorn, Rebecca West, while praising the Imagists for bringing austerity back to English verse, managed to condemn the contributors to *Georgian Poetry* I as mere belated Victorians:

Poetry should be burned to the bone by austere fires and washed white with rains of affliction: the poet should love nakedness and the thought of the skeleton under the flesh. But because the public will not pay for poetry it has become the occupation of learned persons, given to soft living among veiled things and unaccustomed to being sacked for talking too much. That is why from the beautiful stark bride of Blake it has become the idle hussy hung with ornaments kept by Lord Tennyson, handed on to Stephen Phillips and now supported at Devonshire Street by the Georgian school.



In no coterie perhaps did anti-Victorian feeling take quite the extreme proportions that it did among the Imagists; and in no school was the specific anti-Victorian tone which one usually associates with the twenties so evident. In their bland offhand dismissal of all Victorian poetry as utterly unworthy of serious consideration in the twentieth century, in the tone of supercilious condescension which they adopted toward the nineteenth century, in the very language they used for their purposes, the Imagists were a decade in advance of their time. Perhaps Richard Aldington expressed it best:

However often gentlemen from Highgate and the adjacent suburbs may write and protest it is nevertheless true that the majority of the poetry of the last century had nothing to do with life and very little to do with poetry. There was a plague of prettiness and a plague of pomposity and several other minor diseases—such as over-much suavity, the cult of decorated adjectives. And except for Browning and a little of Swinburne there was no energy which was not bombast, no rendering of life without an Anglican moral, no aesthetic without aesthetic cant.

The Imagists were seldom reluctant to argue their aesthetic in public print or to trumpet their new verse. One entire issue of the *Egoist*, that of May 1, 1915, was devoted exclusively to spreading the gospel. Ferris Greenslet wrote on "The Poetry of John Gould Fletcher"; John Gould Fletcher on "The Poetry of Amy Lowell" (Miss Lowell, by this time intent upon her own special variety of Imagism, was not represented); F. S. Flint on "The Poetry of H.D."; and Richard Aldington on "The Poetry of F. S. Flint." The admiration was universally mutual and the praise on all sides fulsome. The only discordant note was struck by Harold Monro, who mildly bearded the lions in their own den, telling them in essence that their poetic was neither so new nor so startling as they believed. The Imagists dwelt too exclusively on their own uniqueness, he wrote; "they would probably benefit in their own production by recognizing themselves more clearly as one of the latest groups in the forward march of English poetry—not the only one."

In spite of their shortcomings, the Imagists were no doubt the most significant prewar . . . coterie. The Futurists and Vorticists were sometimes more shocking than constructive, more

symptomatic of the pandemic discontent among prewar poets than influential. Though Ezra Pound coined the word "Imagist" and served as chief publicist for the movement, it was the theories supplied by T. E. Hulme which gave the early Imagist experiments their "authority and direction." Both men served their common purpose well; together they called the tune for one of the most lively phases of the prewar poetic renaissance. With Hulme as metaphysician and Pound as impresario, the Imagists "did a lot of useful pioneering work. They dealt a blow at the post-Victorian magazine poets. . . . They livened things up a lot. They made free verse popular. . . . And they tried to attain an exacting if narrow standard of style in poetry." Indirectly they did more. The Imagists, above all other prewar coteries, put into the hands of the poets of the twenties the technical charts and compasses by which to find their poetic way across the hard dry sands of the Wasteland.

# The Temper of the Twenties

|| Secularization and Innocence ||  
|| in the Literary Cosmopolis ||

FREDERICK J. HOFFMAN

There is a really serious question whether decades are feasible as units of time. What is so distinctive about the number ten, except as an aid in counting? Isn't it true that, looking at it in terms of generations, a writer's span comprehends two or three decades? Yet the 1920s seem to have been from the start designated as something distinguished and special. Why is this true?

There is, for one thing, the limitation of events. The Twenties were neatly blocked off by the War at one end and the Great Depression at the other; they were years that followed one great form of modern disaster and preceded another. They were therefore comparatively free, with the release that came from the ending of a major war, and not yet handicapped by the fears, suspicions, and doctrinal myopia that inhibited the writers of the 1930s. The war was a shock, but it was a *liberating* shock which left most of the energy and imaginative brilliance undamaged.

There is the curious matter of creative abundance. There are times like these, when writers who for a decade or so show no especially impressive talent but come to their time of genius at approximately the same time, within a few years of one another. In the case of the 1920s, the previous decade was a time of apprenticeship, of fits and starts, and of clarification. The years 1908-1915 were especially important, for example, to modern poetry and to the formulation of new critical principles, at the time when Pound and Eliot and many others were beginning.

The first real work was done then, but its results were seen in works of the early 1920s.

A number of writers—the names of Yeats, Gide, Mann, Joyce come to mind—transcend considerations of decade, though they as well presented their most clearly effective diagnostic portraits of the modern mind in the Twenties. Writers like Hemingway and Fitzgerald could not have produced anything but juvenilia before 1920; they were at their most brilliant in the decade following. Their writing was of the substance and of the manner of the postwar decade.

But perhaps most of all, there are atmosphere, spirit, mood, and élan. However difficult to define or describe, the “temper of the Twenties” was remarkable for its power of tolerance and encouragement. All forms of rebellion, protest, satire, and experiment, however erratic or naïve, were admitted. Perhaps it was no accident, therefore, that the finest and most precise literary insights into our special kinds of value, problem, and agony are given us in this decade.

Almost anyone can prove the decade’s brilliance by citing relevant texts. There is no comparable stretch of years; at least there has not been since the 1840s or the 1850s in American literature, the 1850s in French. A succession of works, which have held to their initial success in the decades following, forces attention to the 1920s and stirs the wonder over causes and reasons. In the brief period of 1921–1925 alone, we have *The Waste Land* (1922), *Ulysses* (1922), *The Magic Mountain* (1924), *Harmonium* (1923), and *The Great Gatsby* (1925). The second half of the decade matches it: *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *The Counterfeiters* (1926), *The Tower* (1928), *The Bridge* (1929), *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). These books we consider “classics”; they focus attention upon their time and upon a civilization of which they are a special manifestation. There are lesser lights as well: *Babbitt* (1922), which gave us a language of satire and parody; *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923), which continues to serve as point of reference in the analysis of modern romanticism; the cumbersome but perdurable *An American Tragedy* of Theodore Dreiser (1925); the symptomatic and cru-

cial *The Professor's House* of Willa Cather (1925); and of course, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929).

I list these titles not in a mood of celebration, but to suggest that the "temper" of the decade was not superficial. We have been persistently led to believe that the generation which Fitzgerald's Amory Blaine greeted at the conclusion of *This Side of Paradise* (1920) was guilty of a thousand errors in taste and of vulgar irresponsibility. This prejudice concerning the decade is maintained far beyond the success of Frederick Lewis Allen's *Only Yesterday* (1931), which established it.

It is important to note the way in which the decade's reputation was made. It ended in a financial crisis, which proved subsequently also to have been a moral crisis. To this moral perspective are added the expressions of repentance made by the men and women who most enjoyed the "gaudy spree." This dramatic "morning-after-the-decade-before" situation is nowhere better presented than in Fitzgerald's description of Charley Wales ("Babylon Revisited," written in 1930), as he faces his most severe critic, Marion Peters: "He believed in character; he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element. Everything wore out." (*Taps at Reveille*, 1935) Wales' ambition to "jump back a whole generation" in order once more to find "character" has an especial reference to his personal problem; but it is also intended as an expression of regret, that so remarkable a time had also proved so debilitatingly vulgar and irresponsible.

Such a view as this assumes a tradition of "character" that had momentarily been interrupted but should once again be sustained. We have been primarily a moral people since 1929; our moralities were re-enforced by concern over economic crises, which were in turn replaced by military urgencies. Since 1945 we have been too busy attempting to keep up with shocking scientific developments really to do more than cast an occasional nostalgic glance back at a time that now seems more fanciful than real.

In his imaginary dialogue on *The Democratic Vista* (1958), Richard Chase has one of his speakers (a professor of English



who talks very much as though he'd memorized Chase's other books) discuss the American years from 1912 to the present. The time from 1912 to 1918 was a "resurgence," a truly promising period; but its promise was lost in the general crackup of the postwar years: "The impact of the First World War fragmented and dispersed the Resurgence into the brilliant but unstable performances of the writers and artists of the 1920's. . . ." This is one way of viewing the decade; it is certainly true that most of the achievements of the 1920s had their sources in earlier decades—some of them much earlier than the time Chase so much admires.

If we examine these sources more closely, we may more properly appreciate the "temper of the Twenties." It seems to me that the late years of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th contained two major components of the Twenties spirit: the apparently substantial moral and economic structures of an established society; and detailed and systematic description of the skeptical means of destruction and rebellion. We needed only a convincing demonstration of the weaknesses that underlay society; this demonstration occurred in the War of 1914–1918. The skepticism and the rebellion survived the war, but the "enemy" did not. Mr. R. P. Blackmur once spoke (in a lecture at the Library of Congress) of "that explosion of talent" that occurred from 1922 to 1925, and suggested that all of the great works of those years "came deeply from the bourgeois humanist tradition" of the past. The great artists of the 1920s are truly descendants of the "bourgeois humanist tradition," but they are also rebels against it, the consequence of a surviving and triumphant skepticism.

It is at least in part a matter of generations. Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901) speaks brilliantly of the passing of the solid, capable, God-fearing generations of Protestant businessmen, and of their being menaced by the doubts and rejections of the newer generations. The later *Buddenbrooks* are haunted by thoughts of nihilism and death; the 20th century threatens the 19th, as the *Buddenbrook* dynasty moves toward its awkward and clumsy collapse. This history, of generations in decline, is repeated again and again in the literature of the prewar years. The



truth is that the *forms* of that society, so zealously and proudly guarded, were vulnerable; and the War, for all its having been justified in humanist terms, proved literally too much for its survival. The liberal, "genteel," bourgeois humanism was judged literally to be inadequate to the stresses and strains of modern violence.

The intellectual world of 1912–1918, of which Chase speaks so fondly, was neither strong nor precise in its formulations. It was a liberal world, held together by liberal imaginings and expectations. The men and women who lived in it were immensely good-willed but often naïve. The writers of the 1920s found their speculations quite thoroughly inadequate. Inadvisedly, they were held accountable for the disastrously wide chasm that opened in the War years between moral securities and social chaos. Most important of all, the moral and philosophical structures of the earlier society collapsed in the destructive blasts of the war. We were left, in 1920, with many minds and talents of great promise, who had both the glory and the responsibility of a radical individualism. But this was not the individualism of the Emersonian self, or even of the more cautiously hedged self-definition that Whitman offered at the end of the 19th century.

The "temper" of the Twenties was in this way historically caused. It was experimental, improvisatory, skeptical, and free. The literary achievements of the decade were marked by an immense self-esteem and egotism. Most of all, they were produced by men and women who—perhaps for the first time in our history—were convinced of the value of aesthetic discourse in and of itself. Each of the great works which the decade offered is in its own way an experimental departure from its predecessors. Each demonstrates the advantages of an aesthetic and a moral release from 19th century constraints. In each case, the forces of rebellion contained in the earlier century are brought forward and become the major incentives of the creative life.

If I were asked to characterize quickly the literary consequences of that life, I should say they were rather like these: an audacious confidence in individual perceptions; a comic self-consciousness with respect to a once formidable but now rather ludicrous "enemy"; ideological and philosophical flexibility; an

ease and an informality of discourse; and an impulsive desire to seek out the "new" in all imaginable areas of literature and life. All of this is of course unconventional, and in a special sense it is also unpolitical. But it was not superficial or without character; it may even be called "profound," though it was surely not pompous. The history of the 1920s is a most convincing demonstration of the value of an *avant garde* in a democratic society. Chase says of the phenomenon of the *avant garde*, that "In its critical function it is wherever anyone is trying to give a true account of the history and nature of our civilization." Members of the *avant garde* are engaged—in their major and their most serious occupations—in reformulations of principles and forms that their own skepticism has made necessary.

I should like to bring all of these essays in definition down to two principal ideas, or intellectual "conceits": these may be called the move toward *secularization* and the fundamental uses of *innocence*. As for the first, I should say that it is a necessary consequence of religious and moral collapse. The spirit does not disappear, or even weaken, but it needs a new language and new aesthetic adaptations. In a condition that is secular instead of traditionally "religious," the metaphors and symbols of religion are reexamined, and the *psychology* of the self redefined. Many of our major works are attempts to redefine a state of grace, or to portray the great difficulty of achieving one. But secularization is more than merely an account of the decline of past religious conventions. More significantly, it is a redistribution of the major metaphors of our lives, an attempt to give them new uses and new meanings.

The principal impetus of Joyce's *Ulysses* is this felt need of a recasting of accounts and balances. It appears at first sight a scramble of both forms and beliefs, but it is essentially Joyce's essay in the redirection and redistribution of all basic metaphors of the human condition. At times the effect is downright blasphemous, as in the opening scene, in which "Stately, plump Buck Mulligan" appears on the stairway, in a mockery of religious ceremony, intoning "*Introibo ad Altare Dei.*" But the total effect is less profane; it is a linking of pagan and Jewish rituals

and meditations with the Christian, to the persistent accompaniment of a brilliant adaptation of the Homeric analogy to quotidian and commonplace concerns. As in almost all other products of the 1920s, the object is not to destroy the religious substrata of human values but to redistribute the terms in which they had previously been stated and defined.

A host of other examples are available. Many of these are directly associated with the atmosphere of the War. In that War there were many Christs; one may almost say that Christ is assumed universally as the hero-victim of the War's circumstances. E. E. Cummings, on his way to *The Enormous Room* (1922), comes upon the wooden figure of such a Christ:

The wooden body clumsy with pain burst into fragile legs with absurdly large feet and funny writhing toes; its little stiff arms made abrupt, cruel, equal angles with the road. . . . There was in this complete silent doll a gruesome truth of instinct, a success of uncanny poignancy, an unearthly ferocity of rectangular emotion.

The suffering is there, but it has become grotesque and indefinable. It is no longer easily explainable along theological lines, but must be associated with a secular *situation*. The great consequence of secularization is the effort to make language and imagery correspond to the human circumstances to which they refer.

Another important characteristic of the literary Twenties has to do with the improvisation of language and manners. Despite the superficial gaiety and ease of the decade, its major literary scenes were often grim and forbidding. The pressure upon the individual was formidable. Literary heroes feel it intensely, and their behavior is often acutely melancholy. The final impact of Fitzgerald's *Gatsby* is a disaster. He is left alone at the end, as he was ignored throughout his lifetime. The energy of his romantic affirmation has no real or valid context. He becomes, in Nick Carraway's words, a "son of God—a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that—and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty." Into these remarks Fitzgerald concentrates a wealth of criticism, which reaches far into the decade's skeptical disapproval of the

Bruce Barton images of "Salvation and Five Per Cent." Most of the significant protagonists of this literature suffer a comparable distress of misplaced or dislocated affection and drive.

Neither the major forms nor the established manners of the past sufficed. Fitzgerald flaunted his eccentric manners in Manhattan and in its French suburbs. Mrs. Wharton's neat manneristic discourses upon the decline of moral proprieties disintegrated in the Twenties into feeble comedies of bad manners. The major weapons of criticism in the decade were satire and parody. These were all addressed to the task of proving that conventional practices were ludicrous. The principal areas of critical discourse were psychoanalysis and the Nietzschean rebellion. Freud provided the tools of analysis for the examination of what Nietzsche had described as the consequences of God's death.

All of this, temporarily at least, added up to an extraordinary egotism, a self-esteem of great force which had erratic results. Each major work of literature was unique and *sui generis*. For the first time, perhaps, in modern civilization, all patterns of society and tradition were subjected to fresh, original and outrageous scrutiny. Fundamental impulses concerning "right action" offered strange perspectives upon the past. Only the most original of experiments could emerge from this initial impetus. Blackmur remarks upon the literature of this time that "where the great novelists of our times have dealt with the troubles caused by the new knowledges (and the erosion of some of the old ones) in a kind of broad and irregular psychology, so the poets have been led to deal with them . . . in a kind of irregular and spasmodic, but vitalized metaphysics."

The "irregular metaphysics" was freshly inspired by a conscious trust in the validity of irrational or unaccustomed insights. The major poetic strategies were a consequence of the deliberate exploration of the discrete, specific object or event in personal experience and of the attempt to prove that poetry was informed by a special power of language and meaning. All of this intense critical activity is the obverse of the examination of manners and the past. It is in the line of progress for the discovery of secular values to take the place of fixed religious ones. In such poets as Wallace Stevens, theology is redefined in terms of ontol-



ogy and epistemology. The beginnings of the modern interest in archetypes, which tended to consider all religions and cultures as variants of one, correspondingly left the burden of moral definition to the individual poet. This is a condition in which a willed transcendence of the actual served to move self above the level of the real. There are infinite varieties of definition as a result. The symbolic orders of our long poems are forced and deliberately introspective. They are ingenious orderings of special insights, and their formal eccentricities immensely advanced the range of literary definition.

The levels of literature in the 1920s are as various as the levels of thought. Each of them defines precisely an individual's special recourse to knowledges, of both technique and metaphysics. It moves objectively to an introspective center. Each artist seems a Hans Castorp, set upon and fought over by a host of authorities on physical and metaphysical disease. Castorp seems a *true* image of modern man, a man on whom nothing is wasted, but who initiates nothing. The form defines the special qualities of his determination to explain the *malaise* of his time, as well as to point toward its cure. A common pressure is that of the depersonalizing force of organized knowledges upon the individual force of protest and belief.

What I have called the "uses of innocence" in the Twenties are in fact necessary revisions of experience. For obvious reasons, the attention of the Twenties was directed to present time. The greatest innocence conceives a present deprived of its past. Men discussed either the necessity of the present or the futility of attempting to escape from it. Major experiments in literature, from Stein to Faulkner, are explorations of the interrelationship of past and present, or carefully worked out strategies for representing the present condition and status of "the thing seen." The object and rhythm of life are freed of responsibility to abstractions. This was a peculiar form of innocent awareness, which was directly related to the driving need for fresh definition. Innocence takes two principal forms in the decade: an intense preoccupation with the immediate present, and the sense of dissociation from larger or deeper orders of experience.

As for the first, it led to many expressions of "arrogant eccen-

tricity," of self-centered folly. Nevertheless, from a multitude of eccentric practices have come most of our best respected modern literary traditions. If it were not for *Life* magazine and such journalists as Frederick Lewis Allen, the frivolities would long since have been forgotten. As I have said in *The Twenties*, the love of free and innocent intellectual maneuvering was immensely useful, in the manner of its removing stale cultural rubbish and establishing new forms of expression: "They were truly, recklessly, innocently, rawly, tenaciously naive. . . . But the best of them were from the beginning, and remained, endowed with talent, with reserves of irony, satire, and intelligent respect for the 'right word.' The best of them preserved in their work the exact *rapprochement* of experience with the act of experiencing, of action with the moral comedy of man acting."

The second of these characteristics of innocence is more difficult to fit into the pattern of our history. The very fact of dissociation was distressing. Eliot tried to narrow the feeling to an agony of disbelief or moral sloth, and he succeeded in convincing most of his contemporaries that a recovery of Christian asceticism was the sole means of salvation. But the problem of dissociation was analyzed in many other ways. The strongest of these was an enforced irrational mysticism, defined in terms of the special aesthetic values of the decade. It is true, as Chase has said, that this struggle for an aesthetic reordering of faith was very hard on the liberal tradition, and that the Twenties in consequence have the appearance of a brilliant but unstable performance. But the very exaggeration of its eccentricity forced upon the consciousness and conscience of modern man a sense of the need for frequent review of the tactics used for moral survival. Surely the all but purely doctrinal and editorial emphasis of the 1930s led to a major ideological disaster in the violence of the Spanish Civil War and the events of the early 1940s.

The significance of the Twenties for our century is a profound one; we have come back ever since 1930 to the truth of its initial and initiating premise, that no world-system is ever entirely fixed or immune from moral revision. The events of the decade have surely emphasized a salient truth, that a paradise of pure reason is beyond our reach and that the effort to impose one leads to



many stresses and agonies. Beyond this, the Twenties have re-enforced our conviction of the value of the nonconformist, the aberrant, erratic self, the *avant garde* of the human personality who may not always have the right answers but sees to it that the established ones don't enjoy an undeserved long life.

I should like to summarize the meaning of the decade, its apparent *advantages* over our own. First, one may generally concede to it a free, casual intimacy of intellectual and aesthetic exchange. There was generally a willingness to allow for "intellectual waste"; waste or a margin of error was not then so disastrous to contemplate. Further, social balances were more helpfully maintained by a shrewd sense of ridiculous and harmful extremes of idiocy. A remarkable, graceful, and useful flexibility in matters of human judgment was an immense advantage. All of these qualities contributed to the successful career of 1920's intellectual life, in its sustaining a "poetic," critical, ironic, and complex vision of the human condition.

# Heresy, Guilt, Munich

The Collapse of Popular Front Poetics  
in the Late Thirties

JULIAN SYMONS

The art, the ideas, the politics of a decade are never so nicely self-contained as historians like to make them. The Nineties contained Kipling as well as the artists who contributed to *The Savoy*; and, more than this, the Kiplingesque attitude and that of the Savoyards both sprang from the same social situation. So the heretics of the Thirties, Wyndham Lewis, George Orwell, Robert Graves, all represented something important in the decade. They showed the other side of the Popular Front medal, whereas the social ideas and literary activities of T. S. Eliot (say) became steadily more remote from what was going on.

We are swept away by a strange tide.  
Did Mr Eliot at Hyde  
Park Corner in 1917 boarding a bus  
Foresee it? He was not born in us  
But we in him.  
He gave us a voice, straightened each limb,  
Set us a few mental exercises  
And left us to our own devices.

Gavin Ewart

Those devices are emphatically not Mr. Eliot's. He bequeathed a style rather than an attitude, and the Christianity of the *Four Quartets* appeared not so much uncongenial as meaningless to the Thirties writers. Eliot's technical mastery as poet

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*From Julian Symons, The Thirties: A Dream Revolved (London: The Cresset Press, 1960).*

and dramatist was acknowledged, but in the realm of ideas he was regarded as an eccentric reactionary unlikely to do much harm. The writings of Wyndham Lewis and Orwell, however, aroused the fiercest social opposition. They became, as the decade went on, more and more like some terrible *memento mori*. 'If we were not as we are, if we had not been saved, this,' orthodox Artists and Pragmatists thought with a shiver as they contemplated the Fascist monster Lewis and the Trotskyist demon Orwell, 'is what we might have become.' Both Lewis and Orwell suffered from delusions of persecution, yet it is true also that they both were writers actually persecuted for their expression of heterodox and inconvenient opinions. The suggestion that Lewis's works should be boycotted through Left Book Club groups was seriously canvassed at one time, and Orwell believed that after the publication of *Homage to Catalonia* his work was rejected in many places where earlier it would have been received. Lewis was not a Fascist, although he wrote one article for the *British Union Quarterly*, and H. G. Wells's description of Orwell as 'a Trotskyist with flat feet' was more witty than truthful. They were pilloried because they presented such uncomfortable interpretations of the same image of reality that acted as model for the Popular Front orthodoxy.

'Politically I take my stand exactly midway between the Bolshevik and the Fascist,' Lewis wrote at the time when he was most obviously sympathetic to Fascism. 'The gentleman on my left I shake with my left hand, the gentleman on my right with my right hand. If there were only one (as I wish there were) I'd shake him with *both* hands.' This equating of Left with Right, this implication that violent change was the important thing and that the political form of the ensuing dictatorship did not greatly matter, horrified the Audience. Was it for this that they had reluctantly supported the 'good' use of force that was to defeat the 'bad' use of force by reactionaries? To be told that the force itself, the violence, was what mattered, and that once the slate had been wiped clean the benevolent dictator, Adolf, Benito or Josef, would be able to make a world fit for artists to live in?

Orwell's sins were different, but no less serious. They consisted in a persistent heterodoxy in relation to the basic assumptions

made particularly by the Pragmatists about the working class and the Soviet Union. The condition of the working class in Britain, the behaviour of the Communist Party in Catalonia, were things that Orwell had seen with his own eyes, and he drew from his observations deeply irritating and embarrassing conclusions. So far had the rebels of the early Thirties hardened into orthodoxy that they regarded it as almost irrelevant to consider whether what Orwell said was true. They said that the eye of the individual was always myopic, that he saw a picture inevitably blurred and incomplete; and to more direct questioning they answered in that phrase of Day Lewis's which could be used to justify any murder or atrocity: 'Will the use of violence in this particular, concrete situation benefit the majority of persons concerned?' What we saw during the Thirties was an attempt to deny utterly the validity of individual knowledge and observation. So, when Spender asked his friend Chalmers what he thought about the 1938 Moscow Trials, in which Yagoda, who had been responsible for the investigation that led to the earlier trials, was himself sentenced to death, Chalmers asked calmly: 'What trials? I've given up thinking about such things long ago.'

Not many of the intelligentsia had grown so strong a carapace of unthought: but still, their attitude towards the Soviet Union, their belief in what was incredible and their savage treatment of unbelievers, was the blackest betrayal of their own integrity. One must make a distinction here. The impulse that prompted the intelligentsia to support the Spanish Republican cause, whether heroically or absurdly manifested, was a generous one. They could not be aware of the deceits practised upon them by the Koestlers, the Cockburn-Pitcairns and others, nor did most of them realize for some time that they were pawns, used deliberately not for Spanish but for Russian ends. But the impulse that led them to express faith in the Soviet Union after the Moscow Trials had no better motive than self-preservation. Twitch away this blanket of belief, and they would be left naked and shuddering to face the winter wind of reality. It would be pointless to put down in detail the monstrous incongruities that they willingly swallowed, pointless because these arguments have been rehearsed so many times, and also because they are arguments no

longer. With the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 came the flight of the fellow-travellers, and this flight automatically reversed their verdict on the Moscow Trials, which now became obvious frame-ups. But they had not been deceived. In relation to the Soviet Union they had deceived themselves, and in the end one has to pay bitterly for such self-deceits.

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The assault on the standards of the Thirties made by Robert Graves and his disciples was aesthetic, and not political. Graves himself showed always a marked dislike for the manifestation of political feeling in art, and professed to think himself ignored for that reason. 'My entry in the great Left Dossier is now something like this,' he wrote ironically. 'Graves, Robert. Sometime friend of Siegfried Sassoon, the Pacifist poet. His critical investigation of folk-rhythms heralds dawn of PROLVERS-TEK.' Graves's view was that Auden's poetry, and by extension that of his close followers, was wholly imitative, and worthless. The imitation, in Auden's case, was of Graves himself and of Laura Riding (if Auden was in fact his literary offspring, Graves once said, he was not prepared to legitimize the child), and Graves later committed himself to the view that Auden was a poet who had perhaps not written a single original line. I well remember going to dinner with a Gravesian who produced with some relish a copy of 'Spain' and suggested that we should prepare a line by line exegesis of the poem showing its multifold debts to Graves and other writers. My refusal, which was combined with some mildly critical references to Laura Riding, was not well received. Audenites were as unpopular in the Graves circle as Trotskyists at a Communist Party conference.

The poetic talent of the Auden Group was questioned by others as the decade advanced. The stirrings of revolt were subterranean, but real. *We are all romantics today*, yes, but some are more romantic than others, and a number of young writers found themselves uncomfortably confined both by Left wing orthodoxy and by the sharp discouragement of vague poetic feeling in *New Verse*. That *nauseating concern for poetry* was being felt again, and a generation of writers had appeared above ground that was



to take Dylan Thomas as poetic herald of a New Apocalypse, an acknowledgement which the herald accepted with pop-eyed surprise. Then there were many writers as yet little known, like C. P. Snow and his scientific colleagues, who found the content of the proletarian work in *New Writing* trivial and the Audenesque jokes silly. There were devotees of the Twenties, like Anthony Powell, who once briskly said that he thought the work of the whole Auden Group worthless. There was Edith Sitwell, who dismissed Louis MacNeice's poems by saying that they were very dull and seemed to be covered in chocolate. The literary wars of the period were more spirited and more destructive than any conducted today; it may be worth recalling one of them, as an indication of—what? The resilience of literary reputation, perhaps.

In November 1934, G. W. Stonier reviewed in the *New Statesman* Miss Sitwell's book, *Aspects of Modern Poetry*. The book was, he said, very largely a defence of modern poetry against the Big Bad Wolf, Dr Leavis, whose opinion of Miss Sitwell's talents was known to be low. How odd it was, then, to find quite remarkable similarities between this book and Dr Leavis's own *New Bearings in Modern Poetry*, published a few years earlier.

'If the reader will compare Miss Sitwell's chapter on Yeats with Mr Leavis's remarks on the same poet, he will find that these two critics think more closely alike than Miss Sitwell's "attack" would seem to suggest. For example, Miss Sitwell begins by quoting Lang's sonnet, "The Odyssey"; this sonnet was quoted, with the same intention and effect, by Dr Leavis.'

Stonier went on to point out over a dozen cases in which the same passages had been quoted and very similar remarks made about them, and ended by saying that he preferred Dr Leavis. 'One never doubts his accuracy; Miss Sitwell's chapter on Hopkins contains numerous mistakes in quotations, besides misspelt names.'

The hunt was up. In the following week a correspondent gave a further nineteen parallel quotations in detail, and a week later Geoffrey Grigson discovered several parallels between Miss Sitwell and Herbert Read in their writings about Hopkins.



Sprung rhythm is not an innovation; it is the rhythm natural to English verse before the Renaissance. It is the rhythm of *Piers Ploughman* and of Skelton.

Read

We may see, therefore, that Sprung Rhythm is not an innovation. Indeed it is the rhythm of *Piers Ploughman* and the rhythm of Skelton.

Sitwell

At the same time Edith and Osbert Sitwell both wrote letters. Miss Sitwell said that had she known Dr Leavis was the author of the 'Odyssey' sonnet ('and I think him capable of it') she would have acknowledged her debt; Osbert Sitwell asked whether 'if I informed a class of school-children that the Normans invaded England in 1066 and if Dr Leavis had previously said the same thing, I should be guilty of plagiarising Dr Leavis?' Whether the use of Lang's 'Odyssey' as a starting point for considering the poems of Yeats is comparable to saying that the Normans invaded England in 1066—that, it may be, is still in doubt.

'There are grounds to fear that strong tendencies are drawing some members of the "post-war" group away from the People's Front. *New Verse*, the periodical that has served as a major rallying-ground for them, has by now lost every semblance of a genuine Left wing journal. . . . It is systematically hounding Day Lewis for what it regards as an excess of Communist loyalty. It has every appearance of becoming a cesspool of all that is rejected by the healthy organism of the revolutionary movement—a sort of miniature literary Trotskyism.'

So D. S. Mirsky in *International Literature*. The dread pejorative word, *Trotskyism*, had been spoken. As the Artists and Pragmatists became more dubious about Spain, Communism, Moscow Trials, so it became obviously the job of party-line stalwarts to keep backsliders up to the mark. In reply Grigson said that *New Verse* had not been founded as a wing journal, although 'its editorial view of the nature of poetry is not idealist'. He added, with characteristic bloodthirstiness, 'The Berts of *Left Review* will certainly shoot the Cyrils and Raymonds of the *New Statesman*. We may clap at that; it will be small loss. But as the years pass they will shoot the Audens and the MacNeices and the

Isherwoods', and that would be disastrous. It is interesting to notice that for the unpolitical Grigson, as for many others, 'Liberal' had become, like 'Fascist', a term of literary abuse. 'Mr Waley's fairly clean "Liberal" English seems much queerer and more lifeless than it did in 1918.'

[. . .]

To be as heretical as I was absolves one from feelings of guilt. It is the orthodox who feel guilty when the ground of their belief is taken away, it was the orthodox fellow-travellers, not Communist true believers or heretics, who turned to the consolations of psychology and symbolism.

It always seemed to me that Marxist materialism was absolutely irreconcilable with Freudian psychology, and I read with thorough approval John Strachey's scornful reference to Freud as 'one of the last great theorists of the European capitalist class' in *The Coming Struggle For Power*, and the criticism in *Left Review* which pointed out that the conclusions of psycho-analysis were largely drawn from a limited section of the leisured and cultured, and that 'Freud might never have heard of the fact that the human individual under Western civilization is a member of a class'. But any idea which in any period seems to correspond with a personal apprehension of reality will be rationalized so that it can co-exist with other and perhaps contradictory ideas. Thus, the materialist view of society presented by Strachey corresponded for many people with what they saw happening around them, but the psychological view of it derived from Freud corresponded very directly to what they felt in their own natures. Those who regarded themselves as both Freudians and social materialists had therefore a double set of values. They assessed their own behaviour and that of their friends by psychological tenets, while applying Marxist ideas to all mass social movements. It was inevitable that this should happen, for to say that Hitler was a psychopathological personality of a compulsive anal sadistic type was of no help at all in discovering how to get rid of him. Some of the politicians decided that psychology had its subsidiary uses. John Strachey, in writing of a book called *Freud and Marx*, forgot that Freud was a theorist of the capitalist class:

He (the author) shows that while Trotskyism, like fascism, is, of course, basically a political and economic phenomenon, yet one cannot exhaustively explain it without recourse to modern psychological knowledge. Above all one cannot guard against the recurrence of this terrible disease of degeneracy, to which men and women either within, or, more often, just on the fringes of the working class parties, have shown themselves subject, without recourse to psychological knowledge.

Must there not have been a blush on Strachey's cheek, must his pen not for a moment have faltered, when a few months ago he expressed the view that Trotsky was a great and ill-used man? But this is by the way. The Artists were not concerned with using psychology to prove political points. Psychology gave them a wider ground for expressing in art their feelings of guilt.

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'Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K, for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning.' One hardly needs to read further than the opening sentence of *The Trial* to understand why Kafka exerted so much influence over English prose writers in the late Thirties. Like Kafka's heroes they were aware of guilt without being able clearly to discover its nature; like them, were in rebellion against the authority which they respected, and to which they desired to submit. 'If an authority is good why should it not be feared?' K asks in *The Castle*, and this too was a question that fellow-travelling artists asked themselves. Yet the opposite view which may also be found in Kafka, 'All virtues are individual, all vices social', was again, in a way, exactly what they felt. And the working-out of the individual's struggle against authority with every possible complication and subtlety, the assertion of his code of values at the moment of their necessary and inevitable defeat, these things appealed to the deepest elements in their natures. I avoid, out of personal distaste for them, the obvious psychological interpretations, and say only that, like Kafka, these writers were unable to fulfil their longing for submission to an impersonal force.

Kafka's influence did not spring solely from the fact that artists

in the Thirties were able to identify his moral problems with their own, but also from the evident possibility of applying his symbolism to the social situation. Malraux and Hemingway had been able to say something directly about the social and moral problems of the time without using symbolism or descending to propaganda, but this direct approach was (as it seemed) possible because they were both men of action. The symbolism of Kafka offered another strategy to those who were not eager participants in warfare. The artists might tell the truth of our times symbolically or in parable. I remember going round, after first reading Kafka, telling my friends that his apparatus of ambiguity could be used for all sorts of purposes, comic, tragic or merely mysterious, and that such a technique might produce anti-Fascist fairy tales of great power and beauty.

[. . .]

Munich. Louis MacNeice is a wonderfully sensitive recorder of those weeks, expressing almost perfectly the feelings of the most intelligent members of the Audience; yet the emotion he records here, the appalled sense that a way of life was over, did not last.

Hitler yells on the wireless,  
 The night is damp and still  
 And I hear dull blows on wood outside my window;  
 They are cutting down the trees on Primrose Hill.  
 The wood is white like the roast flesh of chicken,  
 Each tree falling like a closing fan;  
 They want the crest of this hill for anti-aircraft,  
 The guns will take the view  
 And searchlights probe the heavens for bacilli  
 With narrow wands of blue.  
 And the rain came on as I watched the territorials  
 Sawing and chopping and pulling on ropes like a team  
 In a village tug-of-war; and I found my dog had  
 vanished  
 And thought 'This is the end of the old régime,'  
 But found the police had got her at St John's Wood  
 station  
 And fetched her in the rain and went for a cup  
 Of coffee to an all-night shelter and heard a taxi-driver  
 Say 'It turns me up

When I see these soldiers in lorries'—rumble of tumbrils  
Drum in the trees  
Breaking the eardrums of the ravished dryads—  
It turns me up; a coffee, please.

What one has to remember always in thinking of a period, and what one can never quite convey in writing about it, is that things bear quite a different appearance at the time to the artificial historian's neatness that is imposed upon them afterwards. What Munich showed to many people was the need to prepare for war; but many others, like James Maxton and George Lansbury, thanked Chamberlain for preserving peace, and hoped that the peace might be permanent because the alternative was so terrible to contemplate; and to supporters of the Popular Front, Munich was merely one more proof of the need for collective security, something that they took metaphorically in their stride. Their reaction was neither to wish for British rearmament nor to thank Chamberlain; it was rather to feel that although war would have been terrible, peace on such terms was even worse.

But once again  
The crisis is put off and things look better  
And we feel negotiation is not vain—  
Save my skin and damn my conscience.  
And negotiation wins,  
If you can call it winning,  
And here we are—just as before—safe in our skins;  
Glory to God for Munich.  
And stocks go up and wrecks  
Are salvaged and politicians' reputations  
Go up like Jack-on-the-Beanstalk; only the Czechs  
Go down and without fighting.

What was the whole affair but one further proof of what they had often maintained, that the Chamberlain Government would in the end always give way to Hitler? It seems in retrospect that one likely effect of the Munich settlement might have been a decrease in support of the Left Book Club, as its members saw that the Club had been powerless to influence events in any degree; but this was not at all the case. On the contrary, it made liberal sceptics like MacNeice believe for the first time that



collective action was essential, and that they must participate in it.

For from now on

Each occasion must be used, however trivial,

To rally the ranks of those whose chance will soon be gone

For even guerrilla warfare.

The nicest people in England have always been the least

Apt to solidarity or alignment

But all of them must now align against the beast

That prowls at every door and barks in every headline.

The Left Book Club never approached the figure of a hundred thousand members that had been prophesied in the early months, but the membership rose slowly until it topped sixty thousand, and Munich had no significant effect upon the graph of its rise. It is true that Victor Gollancz found himself looking again at the Club's activities and saw 'something rather wicked about it, mixed up with a great deal that was good: an element of Hitlerism, almost, in reverse', but this is a late gloss, and at the time Gollancz said nothing stronger than that 'in my view the publications of the Club have tended to concentrate overmuch (though by no means exclusively) on two or three points of view, and to forget that any author has a place in our ranks, provided only that his work is of value in the struggle for peace and a better social and economic order and against Fascism.' This, however, had no effect at all on the books chosen, nor did Gollancz feel at the time that the Club was the wrong vehicle for expressing his ideas. The discussion groups continued their activities with undiminished zeal, and the Labour Party became increasingly anxious about the political use of these groups. Herbert Morrison said that

There is ample evidence that the Left Book Club movement, through its groups, has become a political movement with substantial money behind it, and that one of its main activities is in the direction of manipulating and controlling local Labour parties. This cannot be tolerated.

[. . .]



One must see a double, and contradictory, process working in the Audience during these last years of the Thirties. To one side many of the Pragmatists and Artists were acknowledging with infinite reluctance the extent and nature of the deception in which they had willingly acquiesced, and were moving slowly away from all political attachments towards the point of view put forward by E. M. Forster, in *What I Believe*. Tolerance, good temper and sympathy, Forster said, were the prime virtues, personal relationships were at least 'comparatively solid, in a world full of violence and cruelty'. One should not give more than two cheers even for Democracy.

Democracy is not a Beloved Republic really, and never will be. But it is less hateful than other contemporary forms of government, and to that extent it deserves our support. It does start from the assumption that the individual is important, and that all types are needed to make a civilization. It does not divide its citizens into the bossers and the bossed—as an efficiency-regime tends to do. The people I admire most are those who are sensitive and want to create something or discover something, and do not see life in terms of power, and such people get more of a chance under democracy than elsewhere. They found religions, great or small, or they produce literature and art, or they do disinterested scientific research, or they may be what is called 'ordinary people', who are creative in their private lives, bring up their children decently, for instance, or help their neighbours. All these people need to express themselves; they cannot do so unless society allows them liberty to do so, and the society which allows them most liberty is a democracy.

It was towards such a political quietism, and away from belief in the Age of Faith ('It is extremely unpleasant really. It is bloody in every sense of the word') that one section of the Audience unconsciously moved. To this attitude there was counterposed that of anti-Forsterian liberals like MacNeice (taken as an example on the basis of the attitude shown in *Autumn Journal*) who felt that they had lived too much in the world of personal relationships, and that Fascism presented a threat before which all individualism must seem finicky. These reluctant recruits to the idea of collective security were not really an ade-

quate replacement for those who were deserting the cause, but this was not apparent at the time.

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These are public events. A private one, reported in the *Daily Express* of January 19, 1939, had more than a purely personal significance.

To USA, last night, to lecture and see about staging of their last play: poet Wystan H. Auden and collaborator Christopher Isherwood.

To this may be added a report in the *Evening Standard* a couple of months later.

The young pair are not wholly impressed with the New World. They shut themselves up in a flat in one of the city's less fashionable slum districts. Here, in conclave, they proceeded to evolve a new philosophy of life. Its main principle, I gather, is a negation of Auden's previous thesis that art is inseparable from politics.

## II

# The Pressure of Other Ideas in the Philosophical and Cultural Milieu



G. J. WARNOCK  
First Retrospect

WILLIAM VAN O'CONNOR  
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SHIV K. KUMAR  
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*Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel*

FREDERICK J. HOFFMAN  
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Le Frisson Nouveau

WYLIE SYPHER  
The Cubist Perspective—The New World of Relationships:  
Camera and Cinema



# First Retrospect

of English Philosophy since 1900: Absolute Idealism,  
Analysis, Logical Atomism, Logical Positivism

G. J. WARNOCK

Before passing from the philosophy of yesterday to that of today we may try the effect of an even more rapid, more Olympian survey of the position now reached, and its relation to a lengthier history. Very general remarks may be helpful, and are not always untrue. It is no doubt perilous to make them. But that cannot be helped.

In the species of Idealism which appeared so suddenly and violently in this country in the later years of the nineteenth century there was, perhaps, nothing fundamentally new. The notion that the proper concern of the philosopher was with the question 'What is the ultimate nature of Reality?' was a notion at least as old as Plato, and arguably older. Moreover it had long been felt, more or less confusedly, that this was no ordinary empirical question; there had been a persistent and quite proper tendency, as more and more aspects and departments of life and the world were made the subjects of systematic empirical study, to distinguish these as not within the philosopher's province. The philosopher's method of inquiry was to consist in reasoning. He was to consider—not challenging, or at least not challenging on their own level, the factual findings of other investigators—how Reality, how things in general, ought to be viewed, in such a way as to satisfy the demands of reason. Of course, what reason demands is not immediately clear; and in fact past philosophers

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*From G. J. Warnock, English Philosophy Since 1900 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958); Chapter V, pp. 52-60.*

could be quite illuminatingly classified in terms of the startlingly divergent answers they gave, or very often assumed, to the question what these demands were. What determined these answers might be said to be their various senses of what was satisfactory, ideally intelligible. Some found their ideal in tight deductive systems; others, very differently, in the notion of physical mechanism. Others again preferred explanations in terms of purpose. And there were some, as Hume in certain moods but pre-eminently Kant, whose concern was with the question whether *any* view could be both tenable and rationally satisfying.

Absolute Idealism can be distinguished chiefly as being a system for extremists. [It was in the first place highly and ambitiously metaphysical. The claim was made, that is, to establish striking and important conclusions about the universe as a whole, about Reality, not in this or that more or less superficial or limited aspect, but in its ultimate nature. The philosopher's concern with 'the whole' was constantly and powerfully contrasted with the merely partial or fragmentary interests of other disciplines; his endeavour to arrive at really 'ultimate' truths was distinguished from, say, scientific attempts to establish propositions that would serve for some non-ultimate purpose, or would satisfy some more or less arbitrary or provisional standard. It was held that what passed for truths in the world, or in the laboratory, were all, or almost all, somehow unsatisfactory—that for the philosopher there was not only something more, but also something very different, to be said.—*Inserted from p. 3.*] The supposed satisfactoriness only of the undifferentiated Absolute entailed the consequence that, in order to satisfy reason's demands, the whole apparatus not only of our, but of any, system of thought and speech must be dismantled, and a view substituted which might be occasionally guessed at or glimpsed, but which certainly could never be embodied in sober statement. In natural but perhaps unholy alliance with this novel extremism of thought, there occurred a striking rise in the temperature of philosophical writing. With honourable exceptions, the Idealists brought into British philosophy a species of vivid, violent, and lofty imprecision which even in general literature had hitherto been rare. That this was so was by no means unimportant. It



helped them to convey a vague general impression that they were concerned with far deeper questions, and concerned with them far more seriously and intently, than any of their predecessors had ever been. This impression has survived in some quarters to plague their successors. It was doubtless not dishonestly conveyed; but it is certainly mistaken. It is not an indication of blindness or bias to distinguish between the importance of what is said, and the emphasis or eccentricity in the manner of saying it. That distinction is often extremely important in philosophy.

From the point of view of this striking but short-lived philosophical extremism, Moore appears as a far more extraordinary figure than Russell. Certainly, Russell's world of indefinitely numerous, independent logical atoms is the metaphysical opposite of Bradley's Absolute. Certainly, the kind of logic which he thought of as exhibiting the pattern of linguistic perfection, and therefore the true picture of reality, was as far removed as possible from anything that Bradley would have felt to be satisfactory. His respect for mathematics and physics was un-Idealistic. But there is a sense, even so, in which he was playing the same game. He had his own strange notion of the rationally satisfactory, and in terms of it tried to 'give an account' of the world. What was new in this enterprise (and doubtless exceedingly important) was the detail of its execution; its general character was, on the contrary, wholly traditional. Moore, however, was a quite new kind of important philosopher. Though he did not deny the legitimacy of metaphysical ambitions, he was himself entirely without them. If (as he has said himself) his passion for argument had not been provoked into action by the strange doings of others, he might never have been a philosopher at all. For, in general, he did not feel it to be difficult at all to make out a world-view that would satisfy reason's demands. He found the view we all hold, the 'Common Sense view of the world', to be perfectly unsurprising, undistressing, quite certainly true. Perhaps he would have wished to adjust it a little here and there; and, being what he was, this might have occupied him for quite a long time. But this was not what he was really interested in doing. Quite certain of the truth of most things that we ordinarily believe, and profoundly sceptical of the possibility of deciding

on the truth or falsehood of large metaphysical theories, he engaged with astonishing pertinacity in the clarification—which he conceived as meaning the *analysis*—of any propositions, philosophical or otherwise, that engaged his interest. Part of the great interest and importance of this for others consists, I would suggest, in the fact that this is something which anyone can do—to practise philosophy in the manner of Moore, it is not necessary to have (as most of us doubtless have not) nor to pretend to have (as some at least would be unwilling to do) large-scale metaphysical anxieties. It is necessary only to want to get things clear. And this aim can be pursued, as it was conspicuously by Moore, with an utter absence of pretension, an air of intellectual respectability, provided otherwise by Russell but by Idealism at least not always. There are no doubt many who also take satisfaction in the absence from Moore's manner of writing of any aspiration to inappropriate literary virtues. Philosophy as he has pursued it can be seen to be work.

What then are the bearings in this setting of Logical Positivism? Here the situation is decidedly an odd one, owing, as so often, to discordance between theory and practice. In theory the Positivists had made a most radical departure. For they held, as it had never been held before, that philosophers as such could have no concern at all with questions of fact. The logical analysis of language was not regarded, as it had been by Russell and Moore and in some degree by all earlier philosophers, as *part* of the philosopher's business, but as the whole of it; it was explicitly held that there was nothing else for him to do. Positivists sometimes maintained, in defensive mood, that they ought not to be regarded as revolutionaries—for had not all philosophers from Plato onwards spent much of their time on the niceties of linguistic analysis? Certainly they had. But it had not hitherto been contended that language alone formed the entire subject-matter of philosophy. Those who maintained that this was radically new were quite right, and those who denied it were, perhaps, less than ingenuous.

However, I believe that to a really Olympian eye the Positivists, again, would look less extraordinary than Moore. For in fact they had, surely, their own metaphysical beliefs. Even if their

attachment to the Verification Principle is not, as it quite plainly could be, construed as itself expressing a metaphysical conviction, their later doctrines of Physicalism and the 'unity of science' fairly clearly express a particular world-view, a particular ideal of rational acceptability. They were no more reluctant than, say, Bradley would have been to throw over the plain opinions of the plain man, if these could not be squared with the demands of their peculiar principles. No doubt such disagreements were, in their careful moments, represented as not factual, but as 'syntactical' or analytic; but this, even if it were true, would not be decisive; for even the most overtly metaphysical paradox is not quite *ordinarily* at odds with our common opinions.

Continuing our lofty retrospect over the recent past, we may well be struck next by the very curious fact that all the successors of the Idealist empire, however variously related to it by practice or theory, had among themselves a strong family resemblance. Their interests, their principles, and even their prejudices turned out in fact to be remarkably alike. First, they had all arrived by their different routes at the view that the day-to-day labours of the philosopher consisted overwhelmingly in the *analysis of language*. For Moore this was simply the route to clearer understanding, a preliminary perhaps to metaphysical theory, but in practice taking up almost all of his time and attention. For the Logical Atomists the analysis of language was regarded as itself the key to metaphysical truth. Their whole thesis was derived in part, as Russell avowed, from the study of logic conceived as the syntax of a 'perfect language'; and the so-called 'location', through the fog of our imperfect language, of the ultimate facts that we really refer to, was to be achieved by the logical analysis of propositions. The Positivists were also engaged in linguistic analysis, officially without metaphysical ambitions; theirs was supposed to be the two-sided task, on the one hand of exposing the muddles of metaphysicians, and on the other hand of humbly clarifying the vocabularies of the scientist and the mathematician. Thus, in spite of their very substantial divergences in aim and disagreements in doctrine, what each party actually did was very much the same.

But the resemblance in practice went also further than this. All

parties were alike, not only in their concern with language, but also in their predominant concern with a particular part of it. They were interested almost exclusively in statements of fact. This is not, of course, in the least surprising. The Positivists wished to distinguish the truths of science from the alleged truths of metaphysics, and hence were concerned to draw a clear distinction between genuine statements of fact and mere impostors. The Atomists, bent on the location of atomic facts, had of course to take ordinary statements of fact as their point of departure. And Moore was mainly concerned with the analysis of what was, or at least might perhaps be, *true*, and hence he too made statements the topic of his inquiries.

More interesting, perhaps, is the further point that certain *prejudices* about statements were also common to all parties. This is shown in the commonly accepted notion of 'analysis', and in the commonly held conviction that analysis of this type was entirely adequate for philosophical purposes. The search for philosophical analyses always took the form of an attempt to formulate a sort of linguistic equation. On the left of the equation was to be the expression to be analysed, and on the right another expression, usually longer and more explicit, designed to be synonymous with or equivalent to the first—equivalent in the sense of being entailed by, entailing, and being logically independent of the very same things. It seems not to have been doubted that language did actually have the rather simple and perfectly rigid articulation presupposed by this faith in simple linguistic equations; nor does it appear to have occasioned any discomfort that they leave out of account all questions of non-verbal *context*—questions, that is, about the characteristic situations or circumstances in which, or purposes for which, linguistic expressions are typically employed. The practitioners of analysis operated in effect with a startlingly simplified picture of what a language is—the picture of a firmly and simply articulated system of expressions employed, not indeed without reference to fact, but in other respects in a total contextual vacuum, for the one sole purpose of stating things truly or falsely. The Logical Atomists can be said to have adopted this picture quite deliberately as representing the real state of affairs. For others it was implicit

only. But it was certainly present. For unless one pictured language to oneself in this way, it would be unreasonable to attach so much value to the standard procedure of analysis. It would be too clear that analyses of the standard pattern might often be undiscoverable, or if discovered, then often so very thinly informative as scarcely to merit the labour of formulation.

Thus there was in philosophical circles, say twenty years ago, a large measure of uniformity in practice, overlying, and to a great extent concealing from view, considerable diversity in aims and doctrines. It is not surprising that the situation was often then, and has often been since, misunderstood. It has been particularly tempting, I believe, for commentators outside the professional ring to identify, first, what in fact was common to all parties—pre-occupation with analysis of language; next, to take note of the novel idea that this was the sole proper business of philosophy—an idea sponsored only by Logical Positivism; and finally, confusing this singularity of doctrine with the general uniformity of practice, to decide that all philosophers of the day were Logical Positivists. This was in fact not true at any time. I am inclined to think that it was not even true that those philosophers who really were Logical Positivists were the most revolutionary or radical figures. By profession they were. But by temperament, by practice, and by force of example, far more *difference* was made, I believe, by the work of Moore. He was not only among the first to oppose both the manner and the matter of the Idealist 'tradition'; he was also far more profoundly *unlike* its practitioners. By comparison the Logical Atomists and even the Positivists have very much of the look of traditional figures. Their work has a truly 'philosophical' air which would not have been quite strange, though it might well have seemed disagreeable, to their predecessors. Moore's work is in essence so simple, so direct, so wholly unprejudiced and candid, as scarcely to seem philosophical at all. It is just argument. That, perhaps, is its peculiar virtue, and the secret of its power.



# Toward a History of Bloomsbury

|| Group Attitudes of an Intellectual Elite ||

WILLIAM VAN O'CONNOR

Reviewing Virginia Woolf's *A Writer's Diary* for the *New Yorker* W. H. Auden said it is "already too late to hope that someone will write a definitive history of Bloomsbury, that fascinating cultural milieu which formed itself during the twenties, and came to an end with the death of Virginia Woolf." There is, Auden adds, a history of its origins in Maynard Keynes's *Two Memoirs* (1949) and another account in David Garnett's autobiography, *The Golden Echo*, the first of several volumes. John Maynard Keynes, Virginia Woolf, Thoby and Adrian Stephen, Lytton Strachey, Desmond MacCarthy, and others who formed the group of friends that was to be called Bloomsbury, are dead; but its history might still be written, or contributed to, by Leonard Woolf, E. M. Forster, Duncan Grant, Clive and Vanessa Bell, to name no others. As a matter of fact, the Memoir Club that gave rise to Keynes's "My Early Beliefs" still meets, producing papers such as Clive Bell's "Recollections of Lytton Strachey," "Roger Fry," and "What Was Bloomsbury?" and at least one piece in Desmond MacCarthy's posthumous *Memories*. (The Memoir Club, incidentally, had its origin as the Novel Club, a plan whereby Virginia Woolf hoped to get MacCarthy to write a novel; each member was to read from a novel in progress. MacCarthy was, his friends say, a brilliant talker but bone-lazy. The plan did not succeed, but the group continued to meet and read their essays, frequently memories from their younger days.)

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From *Southwest Review*, 40 (Winter 1955).



And the scholarly studies of Bloomsbury have begun, with Irma Rantavaara's *Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury* and J. K. Johnstone's *The Bloomsbury Group*.

Bloomsbury has been called a mutual admiration society, and it is true that members of Bloomsbury have written a great deal, although sometimes sharply, about each other; Mrs. Woolf on Forster and Fry and Strachey, Forster on Mrs. Woolf and G. L. Dickinson—a figure at the edge of their set—Bell on Strachey and Fry, MacCarthy on Fry and Strachey, and so on. Their connections, naturally enough, extend beyond a narrow circle. For example, Raymond Mortimer, who now seems to be the doyen of critics in London, and who is second generation Bloomsbury, has written an introduction to the Penguin edition (1944) of Duncan Grant's paintings, and articles, from the inside, on Mrs. Woolf and Strachey in *Channel Packet*. If Bloomsbury was a mutual admiration society, there was ample reason for admiring. In Keynes they had one of the leading public figures of the age, and, in the judgment of Bertrand Russell, the most brilliant man in England. In Forster and Virginia Woolf they had two of the foremost novelists, and in David Garnett a very gifted fantasist. In Strachey they had the foremost biographer. In Desmond MacCarthy they had the lead critic for the *Sunday Times*. In Roger Fry and Clive Bell they had the leading art critics of the period. In Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell they had two gifted painters. And so on. Certainly Bloomsbury was an unusual group of friends, and it is no wonder that Bloomsbury fact and Bloomsbury myth are a little hard to separate.

One of the papers read at the Memoir Club, Vanessa Bell's "Old Bloomsbury," has been summarized in Noel Annan's *Leslie Stephen* (1951). The summary provides a useful introduction to the figures who composed Bloomsbury:

. . . the original circle, which gathered in Brunswick and Gordon Squares between 1904–15, had ceased to exist many years before the term became fashionable and other people inherited its name and reputation. The original members were Vanessa Bell, Virginia Woolf, Thoby and Adrian Stephen (the four children of Sir Leslie); Clive Bell and Leonard Woolf; J. M. Keynes, Duncan Grant and Roger Fry; Desmond and Molly MacCarthy; Lytton, Oliver, Marjorie and James

Strachey; Sidney Saxon Turner, musician and civil servant, R. T. J. Norton, mathematician and don; and on occasions E. M. Forster and Gerald Shove, who was a Fabian and a Cambridge economist, and married F. W. Maitland's daughter, whose great aunt was Julia Stephen.

Thoby Stephen, Bell, Woolf, Turner and Lytton Strachey had all met at Trinity where in 1899 they founded the Midnight Society which met on Saturdays to read plays and poetry at that hour. Keynes was brought into the circle through Strachey and Woolf, and Grant was cousin to the Stracheys. Lady Strachey knew the Stephens well through her friendship with Annie Ritchie. There were, of course, other visitors to the circle but this was the original nucleus.<sup>1</sup>

In "My Early Beliefs," Maynard Keynes shows how important to the group Professor G. E. Moore had been, and he extends the membership, as it were, of Bloomsbury a little beyond Vanessa Bell's listing:

I went up to Cambridge at Michaelmas 1902, and Moore's *Principia Ethica* came out at the end of my first year. I have never heard of the present generation having read it. But, of course, its effect on *us*, and the talk which preceded and followed it, dominated, and perhaps still dominates everything else. We were at an age when our beliefs influenced our behavior, a characteristic of the young which it is easy for the middle-aged to forget, and the habits of feeling formed then still persist in a recognizable degree. It is those habits of feeling, influencing a majority of us, which make this Club a collectivity which separates us from the rest. They overlaid, somehow, our otherwise extremely different characters—Moore himself was a puritan and precisionist, Strachey . . . a Voltairean, Woolf a rabbi, myself a nonconformist, Sheppard a conformist and (as it now turns out) an ecclesiastic, Clive [Bell] a gay and amiable dog, Sydney-Turner a quietist, Hawtry a dogmatist, and so on. Of those who had come just before, only MacCarthy and Ainsworth, who were much influenced by their personal feeling for Moore, came under his full influence. We did not see much of Forster at that time; who was already the elusive colt of a dark horse. It was only for us, those who were active in 1903, that Moore completely ousted McTaggart,<sup>2</sup> Dickinson, and Russell. The influence was not only overwhelm-

<sup>1</sup> There are similar accounts in Duncan Grant's "Virginia Woolf" (*Horizon*, III, June, 1941) and in Garnett's *The Golden Echo*.

<sup>2</sup> J. McT. E. McTaggart, Trinity College lecturer in philosophy from 1879 to 1923. G. L. Dickinson published *J. McT. E. McTaggart* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1931).

ing; but it was the extreme opposite of what Strachey used to call *funeste*; it was exciting, exhilarating, the beginning of a renaissance, the opening of a new heaven and a new earth, we were not afraid of anything.

Keynes then proceeds to examine Moore's philosophy, pointing out what the young men in the group accepted and what they chose to ignore. (Russell says, bluntly, that they left out Moore's morals.) He describes an intellectual milieu in which criticism was unsparing and constant, in which humor was both gay and biting.

They believed that nothing mattered but "states of mind," by which they meant "communion with objects of love, beauty and truth." Thus the group was contemptuous of worldly values, of wealth, power, or social position. (They satisfied their need for prestige by membership in their own intellectual aristocracy.) The group rejected Original Sin and subscribed to Man's Reasonableness, they rejected supernaturalism but insisted on man's religious nature. They were tolerant of sexual freedom, but in their own conduct rather proper. "Thus we were brought up," Keynes wrote, "with Plato's absorption in the good in itself, with a scholasticism that outdid St. Thomas, in calvinistic withdrawal from the pleasures and successes of Vanity Fair, and oppressed with the sorrows of Werther." Perhaps it is fairer to say that they were not indifferent to morality but opposed to those forms of morality that become weapons in philistine hands.

Desmond MacCarthy, in an essay on Henry James,<sup>3</sup> makes a point about how his group looked to experience for "states of mind."

Morality was either a means to attaining these goods of the soul, or it was nothing—just as the railway system existed to bring people together and feed them, or the social order that as many "ends" as possible should be achieved. These ends naturally refined themselves down to personal relations, aesthetic emotions and the pursuit of truth. We were perpetually in search of distinctions; our most ardent discussions were attempts to fix some sort of scale of values for experience. The tendency was for the stress to fall on feeling rightly rather than upon action.

<sup>3</sup> *Portraits* (1949 edition), pp. 164–65.

Naturally enough, James would and did appeal strongly to them, for James "cared immensely for spiritual decency; nothing in life beguiled him into putting anything before that."

MacCarthy's "Bloomsbury, an Unfinished Memoir," which is included in *Memories*, is truly unfinished, being mostly a sketch of Clive Bell as a Cambridge undergraduate, both *bon vivant* and intellectual. MacCarthy objected to the attacks on Bloomsbury as an exclusive club dedicated to "moral frivolity." MacCarthy denied that Bloomsbury was in any real sense a "movement."

Clive Bell has provided a good chronology in "What Was Bloomsbury?" for anyone writing the history of Bloomsbury, and, quite rightly, he also has insisted that proper attention be given to differences of opinion. The name, he says, was first applied by Mrs. Desmond MacCarthy—in a letter, dated about 1910, she called the group of friends "the Bloomsberries." Bell refers to the Cambridge group and the meetings in Gordon Square and Fitzroy Square, and he adds the names of those who joined them after 1914. These include Raymond Mortimer, a friend of Bell; Stephen Tomlin, who married into the Strachey family; Ralph Partridge, an Oxford lecturer and friend of Lytton Strachey; Sebastian Sprott and F. L. Lucas, friends of Keynes, who, with him, lived with the Bells and Grant for a time in Sussex; and Frances Marshall, who married Partridge. Obviously there is a difference between "Old Bloomsbury" and the later Bloomsbury, of the twenties, thirties, forties, and even fifties.

Bell, like MacCarthy, doubts the existence of Bloomsbury. Historians, he says, will not be able to find a central doctrine because there is none. By way of illustration, he says Strachey was interested in Elizabethan and eighteenth-century literature but disapproved of the interest of Fry and Bell in modern French literature and art. Keynes and Bell were much influenced by Moore, but Fry was anti-Moore, and Mortimer, Partridge, and Tomlin—all Oxford men—were indifferent to him. "At last they [historians] may come to doubt whether 'Bloomsbury' ever existed. And did it?"

It is quite true that in many respects the individual writers went their own ways, but as a group they had considerable coherence: their educational backgrounds, as Keynes indicates,

were very similar, and so were many of their convictions. They belonged to the intelligentsia of the Left; most of them came from upper-middle-class families; a number of them were pacifists or conscientious objectors; they were opposed to Orthodox Christianity; they believed friendship and aesthetic experience are of primary importance in the conduct of life; they believed in the relaxed manner, gaiety of spirit—and serious dedication. It may well be true that after 1914 the group was less homogeneous. Even so, the Woolfs and Bells were held together by ties of blood and marriage. Strachey and later Grant were two of Keynes's closest friends. Birrell and Garnett ran a bookstore for a time. And so on. Anyone reading Keynes's *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* and Strachey's biographies will immediately recognize the similarity in tone. Anyone reading Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and Keynes's broadcast inaugurating the British Art Council<sup>4</sup> (government subsidizing of the arts) will recognize a community of sentiment and doctrine. And many of the articles in E. M. Forster's *Two Cheers for Democracy* are in a sense Bloomsbury manifestos: the importance of friendship over politics and institutions, love, the great republic, art for its own sake, and so on.

One of the lives of Keynes, R. F. Harrod's *John Maynard Keynes* (1951), has an informative chapter on Bloomsbury, being especially useful in identifying the "minor" figures in the group, but it probably errs in making Keynes the central and revered figure. Also certain magazine articles that followed Virginia Woolf's death seem to imply, perhaps unintentionally, that Bloomsbury had its center in the Leonard Woolfs and the Hogarth Press. Both Bell and Garnett say that Keynes's friends treated him like any other member of the group, and he them, and, second, there was no center to the group; there were friends who saw each other in their various apartments over the years. The continuity of Bloomsbury, its center, whether it was or was not a movement and so on, are likely to depend in part on the observer.

Virginia Woolf in *A Writer's Diary* indicates that the idea of

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<sup>4</sup> *The Listener*, July 12, 1945.



Bloomsbury troubled her no little bit because her reputation and Bloomsbury were intertwined. On Saturday, March 16, 1935, she wrote:

I have had three severe swingeings lately: Wyndham Lewis; Mirsky; and now Swinnerton; and I am dismissed with it. I didn't read W. L.: and Swinnerton only affected me as a robin affects a rhinoceros—except in the depths of the night. . . . In last week's *Time and Tide* St. John Ervine called Lytton that "servile minded man . . ."

And on Monday, two days later:

Having just written a letter about Bloomsbury I cannot control my mind enough to go on with *The P's*. I woke in the night and thought of it. But whether to send it or not, I don't know. But now I must think of something else. Julian [Bell] and Helen last night . . . L advised me *not* to send the letter and after two seconds I see he is right. It is better, he says, to be able to say we don't answer. But we suggest a comic guide to Bloomsbury by Morgan [E. M. Forster] and he nibbles.

The letter presumably is the one entitled "Middlebrow, To the Editor of the *New Statesman*" which was to be published by Leonard Woolf in *The Death of the Moth*. Mrs. Woolf mentioned Bloomsbury frequently. For example, to Rose Macaulay she said: "All this rubbish about Bloomsbury; do you feel Marylebone or Chelsea, Kensington or Hampstead?" But, as Mrs. Woolf knew, Bloomsbury was not a place, it was an idea, and she, as much as anyone, felt it. The names that recur in her diary are David Garnett, the Stracheys, the MacCarthys, Roger Fry, E. M. Forster, Duncan Grant, the Bells, *et al.* And the attitudes expressed can be seen as Bloomsbury attitudes.

Miss Rantavaara, a Finn, says she undertook her *Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury*<sup>5</sup> because she was curious to know why the Cambridge lecturers she heard held such contradictory views about Bloomsbury. Her investigations led her to believe "that Bloomsbury cannot be properly understood without a comprehension of Virginia Woolf." The acknowledgments, to F. L. Lucas and to Leonard Woolf, at the front of her book tell us

<sup>5</sup> Helsinki, 1953.



something about her approach. She gives a good deal of attention to Clive Bell's *Civilization*, and one could infer that Lucas, closely associated with Bell, sees that as one of the more important documents. Bell's book was also indebted, as he says, to the opinions of Mrs. Woolf.

Miss Rantavaara presents the Cambridge world of McTaggart, Dickinson, Russell, Moore, and the others, as, in some form, it was inherited by or understood by Virginia Stephen. In fact, she gives it more attention than she gives the ideas of Mrs. Woolf's contemporaries, except, that is, for Bell's *Civilization*.

*Civilization* is Bloomsbury on its Epicurean side, but probably it is not as serious in tone as similar books by Keynes, Leonard Woolf, Forster, Garnett, or some of the others might have been. It is still Bloomsbury; it is highly critical of the English social structure and of the English public schools, it asks for tolerance and open discussion of all topics, it tries to establish a hierarchy of values leading to good "states of mind," and it sees the necessity for an intellectual elite, free from material struggles. Bell's utopia is arguable and many reviewers took issue with him, some of them using the occasion to give Bloomsbury a working over. One of Miss Rantavaara's more interesting chapters is "The Atmosphere of Bloomsbury," in which she rehearses some of the anti-Bloomsbury sentiments.

There is an interesting section on Leslie Stephen, and one is given a good sense of the spirit of rationality and helpfulness in the pre-World War I Cambridge. One almost sees them reading *The Way of All Flesh* or hears them arguing about the necessity of pacifism (Russell, Strachey, and Bell were conscientious objectors). However, Miss Rantavaara does not quite show us how this milieu became Mrs. Woolf's milieu. We assume that much of it did, but it would help to see the process. If Mrs. Woolf was the center of Bloomsbury Miss Rantavaara had some obligation to place her there for us—to let the reader see her alive in Bloomsbury. One of the relevant volumes, *Roger Fry*, is hardly mentioned.

*The Bloomsbury Group*<sup>6</sup> by J. K. Johnstone is also a useful

<sup>6</sup> Secker and Warburg, 1954, also Noonday Press, 1954.

book, but it is neither as useful nor as good as it might have been with the expenditure of a little more effort, or effort of a different sort. Chapter i is an expansion of Noel Annan's footnote, quoted above. Chapter ii is an explication of Moore's *Principia Ethica*, and a statement that this volume greatly influenced Fry, Keynes, Strachey, Forster, and Virginia Woolf. Chapter iii does for Fry's aesthetics what the preceding chapter did for Moore's philosophy. The following chapters are highly intelligent studies of Strachey, Fry, and Mrs. Woolf, and there is a concluding chapter of less than two pages, praising the Bloomsbury group for its contribution to the humanistic spirit: Moore's doctrine of the intrinsic good, Fry's insistence on the place of sensibility in human affairs, and the group's concern for individualism and friendship in a world increasingly collectivized and abstract.

Mr. Johnstone's book, which was a doctoral dissertation at the University of Leeds, is much less speculative than it might have been. For example, he gives very little attention to Lord Keynes, who was, after all, not merely a Bloomsbury notable but a very influential figure in the era between the wars. His Strachey-like treatment of the Versailles conference in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (apart from his statistical figures) was taken as straight fact, and it contributed no little bit to the common view of a greatly victimized Germany. Strachey was read as a literary man and due allowances were made for the ironic manner, his trimming down of Victorian solemnities. But Keynes was an economist, a man of figures and facts, and therefore told something close to the exact truth. Keynes's truth, on the literary side, was also Strachey's truth, cutting away at the reputations of the world's public figures. One is tempted to say that Keynes's portrait of President Wilson is not notably different from Strachey's Dr. Arnold.

Mr. Johnstone notes the differences between Bell, who is almost ignored, and Fry on the doctrine of "significant form," and he observes other differences. But his thesis—that Bloomsbury is a group—rather demands that Forster somehow "derive" from Fry (there is less trouble with Virginia Woolf, who obviously was greatly indebted to Fry), and he makes out a better case than dates and evidence would seem to allow. Fry did not join the Woolf-Bell gatherings until 1910, and Forster's earliest novels

were published in 1905, 1907, 1908, and 1910.<sup>7</sup> It is true enough that Forster was, like Fry, a Cambridge figure, the student and friend of G. Lowes Dickinson, but they were fifteen years apart. It is most unlikely that Fry influenced Forster the novelist. It is possible that Forster's interest in aesthetics (his fine essay on art for art's sake in *Two Cheers for Democracy* being a case in point) owes something to Fry.

If it is necessary to compare these two books, one may say, first, that they are different. Miss Rantavaara tries to do a great deal more with the antecedents of the group and to do something with the popular notions about Bloomsbury. Mr. Johnstone concentrates on Moore and Fry for doctrine and on Strachey, Forster, and Mrs. Woolf for the literary manifestations of the doctrine. Neither, unfortunately, treats the excellent fiction of Garnett. Miss Rantavaara is the better historian of Bloomsbury, but Mr. Johnstone is the better critic of individual works, when he is not dealing with influences. Whoever writes the next book on Bloomsbury will be greatly indebted to both of them.

English critics quite rightly stress the upper-middle-class origin of most members of Bloomsbury.<sup>8</sup> Auden mentioned it in his review of *A Writer's Diary*, and Stephen Spender, a frequent visitor at the Leonard Woolfs, made a good deal of it in his autobiography, *World Within a World*. Spender says that to the Bloomsbury set there was "something barbarous about our generation," the generation proclaiming the end of bourgeois civilization and welcoming the revolution that would end it. The careers of Virginia Woolf and her friends are summarized thus by Spender:

She and her circle formed a group of friends who shared the same ideas and who, within a common appreciation of high values, had a deep

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<sup>7</sup> Mr. Forster says he does not think he knew Fry when he was writing his fiction. He also says that if Fry had a theory of fiction it was not as a serious student of critical theory, that Fry was a highly intelligent man who theorized about everything, and if he had a theory of fiction probably it was held only tentatively and if he had had occasion to think further about it the theory would have been modified.

<sup>8</sup> Mr. Forster says the family origins of members of the group undoubtedly were important, if only because they had leisure to write or to paint.

loyalty for one another. Living in their small country houses, their London flats, full of taste, meeting at week-ends and at small parties, discussing history, painting, literature, gossiping greatly, and producing a few very good stories, they resembled those friends who at the time of the plague in Florence withdrew into the countryside and told the stories of Boccaccio. Our generation [the 1930's], unable to withdraw into exquisite tale-telling and beautiful scenery, resembled rather the *Sturm und Drang* generation of Goethe's contemporaries, terribly involved in events and oppressed by them, reacting to them at first enthusiastically and violently, later with difficulty and disgust.

T. S. Eliot in a note contributed to *Horizon* on Virginia Woolf also represents her as having maintained the upper-middle-class intellectual tradition:

Her position was due to a concurrence of qualities and circumstances which never happened before, and which I do not think will ever happen again. It maintained the dignified and admirable tradition of Victorian upper middle-class culture—a situation in which the producer was neither the servant of the exalted patron, the parasite of the plutocrat, nor the entertainer of the mob—a situation in which the producer and the consumer of art were on equal footing, and that neither the lowest nor the highest.

If Eliot's generalization is true of Mrs. Woolf, it is also true of her group.

Lytton Strachey's father was Lieutenant General Sir Richard, descended from a family that had achieved distinction as early as the sixteenth century, and his mother, a Grant, belonged to a notable Scotch family, her father being a successful governor in India and later governor of Jamaica. Duncan Grant, perhaps the best of the Bloomsbury painters, lived with Lady Strachey, his aunt, and her family during the absence of his own parents in India, and through the Stracheys he came to know the children of Leslie Stephen. The two families had had connections for several generations, and, as Raymond Mortimer wrote, they were "related to half the most scholarly families in England." And there were connections other than by blood or marriage. E. M. Forster's wealthy great-grandfather, Henry Thornton, was the leading figure in the Clapham Sect and Leslie Stephen's father, Sir James, was its chronicler. When David Garnett's grandfather, the author of *The Twilight of the Gods*, retired from his post at the British

Museum, he was feted by some of the leading literary figures, and the man who addressed the group was Leslie Stephen. Edward Garnett, David's father, probably was the best book editor of his generation. Francis Birrell's father was Augustine Birrell, a minister in Lord Asquith's cabinet. Fry's father was Sir Edward, a judge. Such families (the Keynes family were related to the Darwins, and so on) tended to form an intellectual aristocracy. They were not always well-to-do, but frequently they were, and they were accustomed, for the most part, to servants, comfort, travel, and country houses. They inherited good taste and a sense of obligation, and took the joys of the intellectual life for granted.

If they revolted against the Victorian world, as most of the Bloomsbury group did, they did not revolt as bohemians do, by living outside the middle-class world; they revolted inside, as intellectuals, in ways similar to the revolts of their parents. Mortimer says that in ridiculing the Victorians Strachey and Mrs. Woolf "used weapons forged in Victorian homes." (Lady Strachey in a letter to her son said, "I don't much fancy your taking up Queen Victoria to deal with. She could not help being stupid, but she tried hard to do her duty, . . . highly to her credit." Lady Strachey gave him a good deal of information, and so did her cousin, Lady Lytton, who had been one of Victoria's ladies-in-waiting.) "The mastery of a mass of detail," Mortimer said, "the solid and admirably proportioned architecture of Mr. Strachey's books are an inheritance from generations of civil servants." Mrs. Woolf and Lytton Strachey, he concluded, had in common "a voice that is never too loud, a skepticism that remains polite, and a disregard, that never becomes insulting, for the public taste. It is a quality of inherited culture." The division of classes, one assumes, would be readily accepted by such people, and by and large they do seem to accept it.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> In Keynes's *Essays in Biography* there is a section (pp. 79–83) on families that, for generations, have produced leaders in statesmanship and thought. Harrod says that Keynes "had no egalitarian sentiment; if he wanted to improve the lot of the poor and that quickly—and he believed that far more progress was possible than was being made—that was not for the sake of equality, but in order to make their lives happier and better. . . . The idea of destroying anything good in itself in the interest of equality was anathema to him."



*A Writer's Diary* makes it clear that, in Mrs. Woolf's mind, the social origins of James Joyce interfered very seriously with his ability as a writer. The entry for Wednesday, August 16, 1922, reads:

I should be reading *Ulysses*, and fabricating my case for and against. I have read 200 pages so far—not a third; and have been amused, stimulated, charmed, interested, by the first 2 or 3 chapters—to the end of the cemetery scene; and then puzzled, bored, irritated and disillusioned by a queasy undergraduate scratching his pimples. And Tom [T. S. Eliot], great Tom, thinks this on a par with *War and Peace!* An illiterate, underbred book it seems to me; the book of a self taught working man, and we all know how distressing they are, how egotistic, insistent, raw, striking, and ultimately nauseating.

Joyce, as a matter of fact, was a much better educated man than Virginia Woolf was a woman, and it would seem equally evident that his analytical powers were far greater than hers. When Joyce died, she made another entry (Wednesday, January 15, 1941), recalling Eliot's advocacy of Joyce, the Hogarth Press declining to publish *Ulysses*, and her own, as she mistakenly "remembers," mixed feeling about his genius:

. . . Then Joyce is dead: Joyce about a fortnight younger than I am. I remember Miss Weaver, in wool gloves, bringing *Ulysses* in typescript to our teatable at the Hogarth House. Roger I think sent her. Would we devote our lives to printing it? The indecent pages looked so incongruous: she was spinsterly, buttoned up. And the pages reeled with indecency. . . . Then I remember Tom in Ottoline's room at Garsington saying—it was published then—how could anyone write again after achieving the immense prodigy of the last chapter? He was, for the first time in my knowledge, rapt, enthusiastic. I bought the blue paper book, and read it here one summer I think with spasms of wonder, of discovery, and then again with long lapses of intense boredom. This goes back to a prehistoric world. And now all the gents are furbishing up their opinions, and the books, I suppose, take their place in the long procession.

Mrs. Woolf was very critical of Lady Ottoline Morrell for inviting an embroidress to one of her tea parties (it *may* of course have been an affectation in Lady Ottoline), and she sneers with a little too much self-satisfaction at the gaucheries of Arnold Bennett.



That she could, as her friends testify, be very kind and helpful has nothing to do with her also being of her class.

Forster, insofar as one judges from his novels and essays, is not merely amused by snobbery, he feels it a restrictive convention, an enemy of the spontaneous life. The whole issue in *A Room With a View* is whether Lucy, held in by convention and snobbery, will be able to understand the generous but unconventional Emersons, father and son. Convention, priggishness, and snobbery have a way of running together—and Forster has a good eye, much better than Mrs. Woolf's, for their connections. The essay "Mrs. Miniver" shows Forster's perception of snobbery in unlikely places and his understanding of what is gained and what lost with the passing of aristocracy. Mrs. Woolf wanted her characters to be self-aware, to feel, to be receptive to color, shape, tone, and the haunting evanescence (states of mind). Forster wants the educated heart and he understands, better than Mrs. Woolf did, that snobbery does not enlarge but restricts awareness.

In his introduction to *Memories*, Raymond Mortimer relates MacCarthy to Bloomsbury and to the "Bloomsbury manner":

A delighted interest in the variety of human experience was stronger in him than fastidiousness about the forms in which this was expressed. For the same reason, proud as he was to proclaim himself a highbrow, he made himself loved, as critic and broadcaster, by many who fancy that they hate highbrows.

David Garnett, both in his person and in *The Golden Echo*, is mild-mannered and kind. Leonard Woolf has given his energies to public service and, one may guess, sacrificed much of his own career to his wife's career. And so on. To give the members of Bloomsbury marks, merits or demerits, in terms of their pride or their humility would undoubtedly be fatuous. Snobbery and arrogance are relative matters, and a member of Bloomsbury, though in a milieu inviting arrogance, could also be humble in his relationship to intellectual integrity and high aesthetic standards.

Books about twentieth-century British art almost invariably treat the criticism of Fry as the best of its time, Bell's as, at least,

suggestive. Perhaps it is fair to say that Bell is also a popularizer, in a good sense of the term. Fry's *Vision and Design*, *Transformations*, *Duncan Grant*, *Reflections on British Painting* and Bell's *Art and Since Cézanne* are listed even in brief bibliographies. Less frequently there are references to Mrs. Woolf's *Roger Fry* and *Walter Sickert: a Conversation*.

The most dramatic public event in twentieth-century British painting was the first Post-Impressionism Exhibition in 1910, when England first saw Cézanne, Matisse, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Seurat, Picasso, and others. Eric Gill wrote of it in a letter to Sir William Rothenstein:

You are missing an awful excitement just now. . . . All the critics are tearing one another's eyes out over it and the sheep and the goats are inextricably mixed up. John says "it's a bloody show" and Lady Ottoline says "oh, charming." Fry says "what rhythm" and McColl says "what rot."

A second Post-Impressionist exhibition, held in 1912, included Vanessa Bell, Wyndham Lewis, Grant, and others. After these shows the artistic life of England was constantly involved with movements and theories: Futurism, Synchronism, Vorticism, etc. More than any other figure, as Forster observed, Roger Fry was the agent of these changes. Three of his Bloomsbury friends, MacCarthy, Bell, and Mrs. Woolf, have written their impressions of the man.

MacCarthy's piece on Fry, in *Memories*, provides a humorous account of the 1910 exhibition in the Grafton Galleries, and an affectionate image of Fry himself. MacCarthy says that Fry's willingness to go against public opinion was a mark of his disinterestedness, and that the only quality or characteristic he insisted on from his friends was candor. MacCarthy, who also wrote the catalogue for the 1952 exhibition of Fry's paintings, says further that "he bore with magnanimity the indifference to his own work of younger artists whom he had praised and taught." Clive Bell, although he places Fry as the foremost critic, seems not, at bottom, to have really liked him.

In Bell's analysis Fry's sensibility is seen as "trained" and much is made of his having at first been a science student; the upshot is

that he did not have innate sensibility, and lacked gusto. Again, his family tradition was puritanical, which led to his regarding his "principles as in some sort the will of God," and he wanted a generalization that fully accounted for all art. The scientist side in Fry made him willing to listen to all arguments, thus to enlarge his generalizations, but the puritan side made him uneasy with charm. Facts in large numbers have their way of resisting generalizations; therefore Fry was better at attacking or breaking down theories than in building his own.

Mrs. Woolf's biography has established Fry as "one of the most remarkable men of his age" and one of the most lovable. His other friends, Bell says, can but "bring a few flowers to his monument and cherish the inscription." But what Mr. Bell brings are not exclusively "flowers." Fry had boundless energy—but it produced impatience and a prodigious strength of will; and Bell records an instance of Fry's capacity for making others bend to his will. Fry also admired sincerity—but, "not to mince words, he was a champion gull"; and again Bell records a telling example. Fry is also seen as the poorest possible judge of men and, ironically, inordinately proud of his understanding of them; he was forever imagining plots and misinterpreting the motives of his friends. But this did not lead to serious problems—because he was easily diverted, by general discussion and by "gossip." Brutus was an honorable man, *but*. . . .

It is clear from *A Writer's Diary* that Mrs. Woolf had a deep affection for Fry, and, ironically, this may have contributed to the weakness of her *Roger Fry, A Biography*. Fry suffered many unhappy experiences, the worst undoubtedly being the insanity of his wife, and Mrs. Woolf writes with great sympathy for him. It is possible that a more skeptical view, like Bell's, would have produced a more interesting biography. Her attitude toward him is caught in this passage, a part of a speech she gave at an exhibition of his paintings: "While he was reasoning he was seeing; and while he was seeing he was reasoning. He was acutely sensitive, but at the same time he was uncompromisingly honest." It is clear that her intense interest in the visual arts owed a great deal to Fry. She was also indebted, of course, to her sister Vanessa and to their friend Duncan Grant.

Duncan Grant, who is represented in the Tate Gallery by six pictures,<sup>10</sup> undoubtedly owns a better reputation as a painter than either Fry or Vanessa Bell. Only Desmond MacCarthy seems to have held a very high opinion of Fry's paintings. Grant's reputation appears to have diminished that of Mrs. Bell. Of the relationship of the two friends, Raymond Mortimer (in the Penguin *Duncan Grant*, 1948) has said: "She is altogether a graver, less exuberant, artist; her landscapes and still-lives bear the signs of careful consideration and are all the better for this. The resemblances between her work and his have, I think, prevented her gifts receiving the full appreciation they merit."

Mortimer has also said that Grant and Mrs. Bell have for some forty years worked in close association. They collaborated in their decoration of various rooms including one for Virginia Woolf in Tavistock Square, one for the present Duchess of Wellington (the poet Dorothy Wellesley, in her Kent country house, called Penn's in the Ricks) and one for me in Endsleigh Place, at the corner of Gordon Square. (I moved two years ago [1952] and then gave the painted panels but not the painted doors to the Victoria and Albert Museum.) They both worked also for the Omega Workshop, which was a venture of Fry's; and later designed furnishing fabrics for a firm called Allan Walton, run by a painter of the name, now dead, whose work was doubtless influenced by Grant.

At present in the National Portrait Gallery there is a lead bust of Virginia Woolf by Stephen Tomlin, another Bloomsbury intimate. It was cast from an original in the possession of David Garnett and added to the collection in 1953. He also did fine heads of Julia and Lytton Strachey and Duncan Grant, all in Garnett's possession. Tomlin, the second son of Lord Tomlin, a Chancery judge, was married to Julia, the daughter of Oliver Strachey. He died in 1937, in his thirties.

There appears not to have been, other than for Mrs. Bell,

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<sup>10</sup> "Lytton Strachey," "Margery Strachey," "Vanessa Bell," "Lemon Gatherers," "Queen of Sheba," and "Dancers." Mrs. Bell is represented by "Flowers in the Jug." Mrs. Bell has done some of the jacket designs for Hogarth Press books, including those for *The Death of the Moth* and *The Captain's Death Bed*.

Grant, Fry, and Tomlin, a group of Bloomsbury artists.<sup>11</sup> Fry tended to dictate tastes, to the extent that Sickert, belonging to an older generation of painters, enjoyed asking promising young artists if they had been certified by Fry. Keynes, the Woolfs, the Bells, the Stracheys, Garnett, and others did of course collect modern art. Bloomsbury, then, may be said to have contributed a significant bit to the actual art of the period and to have contributed greatly to its taste and enthusiasm.

Perhaps Frank Swinnerton's comments in the often reprinted *The Georgian Literary Scene* (1935) best suggest the nature of the anti-Bloomsbury bias, at least on its journalistic side:

The odd thing about it is that Bloomsbury was politically Left, and only intellectually Royalist—royalist, you understand, to itself. . . . It dressed distinctively and—in the female part of it—did its hair as Mrs. Gaskell used to do hers a hundred years ago, wearing long earrings and in some way managing always to look sickly. . . . It was conversationally insincere, what one would call "strained" . . . It was very sensitive and sarcastic ("ahrony"); was full of jealous contempts; was spiteful and resented being ignored, although it went in a good deal for the wilful ignoring of others.

Swinnerton's little analyses of the writing of the various members of Bloomsbury—he treats the more eminent writers at some length, including Russell—do not quite bear out these preliminary generalizations; by and large, he is quite respectful of their achievements and their decency in human relationships.

However, there does seem to have been a Bloomsbury atmosphere, which certain temperaments found difficult to suffer. The nature of this atmosphere is suggested by what Harrod calls the "Bloomsbury voice," apparently the contribution of Lytton Strachey. When one wished to ridicule a comment he could speak in a thin, incredulous voice which MacCarthy called "a gnat-like

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<sup>11</sup> In the Tate collection there is also a portrait entitled "Vanessa" by Ethel Walker. According to David Garnett, Mrs. Bell and Miss Walker sometimes painted together but Miss Walker was not a member of the Bloomsbury group. Keith Baynes and Frank Dobson are also sometimes mentioned as having been offshoots from Bloomsbury.



voice." Constant alertness, watchfulness, and the ironic manner can, of course, be very wearing, and it is not surprising that the Bloomsbury manner was sometimes attributed to insincerity and a desire to seem superior.

None of the above remarks seem to apply exactly to the Virginia Woolf who emerges from *A Writer's Notebook*, and none of them, conceivably, would apply *exactly* to any single member of the group. Certain of the articles written about Mrs. Woolf after her death present her as friendly, warm, generous. The woman emerging from *A Writer's Diary* seems exacerbated and driven. Whatever the forces driving her, they led to a remorseless desire to be brilliant, to excel. There is, finally, for all the sensitivity, something a little inhuman in the notebooks—although this impression may be corrected by later excerpts, if these are ever published.

Bertrand Russell unhesitatingly accuses the group of intellectual arrogance. In "Portraits from Memory II," a discussion of Keynes and Strachey, he says:

The generation of Keynes and Lytton did not seek to preserve any kinship with the Philistine. . . . They aimed rather at a life of retirement among fine shades, and conceived of the good as consisting in the passionate mutual admirations of a clique of the *élite*. . . . From this atmosphere Keynes escaped into the great world, but Strachey never escaped.

According to Russell, Keynes did not find it "unpleasant to *épater les bourgeois*." Keynes had also, he says, a moralistic side, but it was involved in his Cambridge "religion," as he himself later called the early philosophy of his group, not in his public life. "When he concerned himself with politics and economics he left his soul at home. This is the reason for a certain hard, glittering, inhuman quality in most of his writing." Russell is extremely harsh with Strachey, stating unequivocally that a caricature was of more moment to him than the truth.

The overtones in Keynes's "My Early Beliefs" seem to imply that Russell and his old friends had had their differences, which may account for some of the harshness of Russell's portraits. Nonetheless the detached reader is bound to feel that "glitter-



ing," "hard," and "inhuman" are fair enough applied to either Keynes or Strachey. They do not tell everything about their styles—but they have a relevance.

The diversified views of Strachey published by those who knew him suggest a person difficult to understand: he could in appearance be exceedingly proper or very eccentric; he could be gay and playful, or withdrawn and morose; and so on. He was subject to bad health, and died from cancer at fifty-one. Clive Bell says he will be difficult for a biographer because he could hate, he knew "love and lust and that mysterious mixture of the two," and he was disinclined to put himself out. He wanted fame and was lazy. His letters, Bell adds, "should not be published till those he cared for and those who thought he cared for them are dead." Strachey's mordant irony is sometimes in the service of moral indignation, but other times, as in his notorious essay on Pope, a manner takes over, allowing him to insist on Pope's greatness but to offer only unpleasant views of the man and belittling comments on his talent. Strachey at his worst is Bloomsbury at its worst.

Max Beerbohm is referred to affectionately in *A Writer's Diary*, but Mrs. Woolf, though admiring, seems to have deplored his lack of intensity. In 1938, as recorded in the *Diary*, he told her that he regretted not having belonged to a group when he had been a young man. "Now dear Roger Fry who liked me was a born leader. No one so 'illuminated.' He looked it. Never saw anyone look it so much." The evening with Beerbohm, Mrs. Woolf noted, was not really serious. In certain respects Beerbohm might have fitted easily into the Bloomsbury group, but he lacked their intellectual rigor. In the National Portrait Gallery, where Fry's self-portrait also hangs, Beerbohm has a fine caricature of Fry, thoroughly "illuminated," entitled "A Law Giver, First King of Bloomsbury."

In his introduction to Keynes's *Two Memoirs* David Garnett recalls D. H. Lawrence's violent dislike of the Bloomsbury group. Lawrence, he says, was a prophet and he hated everyone whose creed prevented his ever becoming a disciple. "But I was a rationalist and a scientist, and I was repelled by his intuitive and dogmatic philosophy, whereas the ideas of my friends from Cambridge interested and attracted me." One week end in April,

1915, Garnett and Francis Birrell visited Lawrence, following which Lawrence wrote to Lady Ottoline Morrell to say how much they annoyed him, and also to Garnett himself, advising him to give up his Bloomsbury friends. To Lady Ottoline Lawrence wrote: "They are cased each in a hard little shell of his own and out of this they talk words. There is never for one second any outgoing of feeling and no reverence, not a crumb or grain of reverence. I cannot stand it."

In his paper Keynes recalls the visit of Lawrence to Cambridge, and especially a breakfast party Bertrand Russell gave for Lawrence and Keynes. Lawrence had remained silent, and Russell and Keynes had talked *at* Lawrence. What they had talked about Keynes had long since forgotten, but he wrote, "I expect it was pretty brittle stuff—not so brittle as Frankie Birrell's—but pretty brittle all the same." Keynes adds, preparing to look back at his early beliefs, that Lawrence not merely felt no positive worth in their attitude but was violently aware of a "*lack*." In Lawrence's letter to Lady Ottoline he had clearly expressed what was missing: they lacked *reverence*.

It is easy to understand therefore why a more recent critic, F. R. Leavis, and his *Scrutiny* associates<sup>12</sup> would dislike Bloomsbury. Like Lawrence, one of their revered figures, they are heavily moralistic and in Bloomsbury they find, to their chagrin, an air of amusement.

Perhaps *amusement* is not precisely the right word. But Bloomsbury was uneasy with greatness, with the ponderous, the solemn, even the solemnly comic like *Ulysses*, which Forster

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<sup>12</sup> Q. D. Leavis replied in a tone of outrage to Desmond MacCarthy's Leslie Stephen lecture (1937) at Cambridge—see *Scrutiny*, Vol. VII (March, 1939)—and her reviews of Mrs. Woolf's books were invariably harsh. For Thursday, September 1, 1938, Mrs. Woolf's notebook entry was ". . . a violent attack on *Three Guineas* in *Scrutiny* by Q. D. Leavis. I don't think it gave me an entire single thrill of horror. And I didn't read it through. A symbol though of what wiggings are to come. But I read enough to see that it was all personal—about Queenie's own grievances and retorts to my snubs. . . ." There are quite a few references to *Scrutiny* in *A Writer's Diary*. (Unfortunately these and other references are hard to find because the index was very poorly done.) On the other hand, *Scrutiny* has treated Forster with admiration.

cannot quite accept and which Mrs. Woolf found "underbred." But distinctions need to be made. Behind Bloomsbury amusement were solid achievement, education, taste, tradition. The reserve capital was considerable, and ironic amusement was less inflationary for them than it would be with certain groups. One can feel, with Lionel Trilling in his fine study of Forster, that the relaxed manner is an amiable vice. On the other hand, one may feel that in a curious way it is Forster's own greatness, his refusal, not twice or three times but ever, to be crowned or to wear the purple gowns. Perhaps as a group, or in their manifestos, Bloomsbury insisted a little too airily on its preference for the "highbrow" over the "middlebrow," and one may feel a little uneasy with Leonard Woolf's title *Hunting the Highbrow* (1927) or Raymond Mortimer's insistence on the "highbrow" in the preface to *Channel Packet*. On the other hand, they are quite right to insist on a preference for grade A over other grades. And, as intelligent people, they can make exceptions, as when Clive Bell observes that the rules seem against them but Kipling *can* write in a most moving way and the Parliament buildings *are* beautiful, or when Mortimer shrewdly separates the abilities from the disabilities in the writings of Mrs. Woolf or Strachey.

Again, their sense of amusement was a part of the reaction against Victorianism, or certain of the Victorian conventions. They belonged to and helped to form their age. In the years before World War I and even after it the spirit of liberalism, which is all anti-Victorianism was, was naturally the dominant spirit. It was easy enough in 1910 to hope for a cultural renaissance, as some of them did. And it was easy, even highly reasonable, to be pacifists like Bell and Strachey. Perhaps in Strachey and Mrs. Woolf we have almost pure types of the library writer.

To Strachey's ultimate credit, it is now much easier to tell the truth in biography, but it is not to his credit that "debunking" is even easier. The words *preposterous*, *absurd*, *ridiculous* were used tellingly, and the established order of things, in government, church, or family, was bound to be on the defensive when they were used. In Mrs. Woolf's books there are frequent ironies about English rituals in the law courts, the universities, the parliament. Mrs. Dalloway has many misgivings about the pretentiousness of

officialdom, and *Three Guineas* points out this weakness and that weakness in man-run institutions. Neither Strachey nor Mrs. Woolf is very good at holding things together. Mrs. Woolf acutely divides Conrad into sea captains and the skeptical Marlow, but there are no sea captains, with their simple but necessary beliefs, in her novels. Nor was Strachey able to match, as he had hoped to do, his "eminent" Victorians with admirable Victorians.

Maynard Keynes, as he grew older, became more than a little dubious about the sheer strength of intellect and judgment in ordering social and political events. In "My Early Beliefs" he said he had come to recognize the precariousness of civilization. Of his group in their earlier years, he said: "I can see us as waterspiders, gracefully skimming, as light and reasonable as air, the surface of the stream without any contact at all with the eddies and currents underneath." Forster not even as a young man was quite an orthodox liberal. He believes in the cultivation of the body and the mind, but he knows there are places the mind cannot quite reach. His Italian fauns can be natural and also cruel, and not all gentlemen of the cloth are hypocrites or fools. His hopefulness is dark-shadowed. *The Longest Journey* presents an almost Conradian world, though caught more lightly, gently, almost playfully.

The politics of Bloomsbury also was of the time. Leonard Woolf has been a very active Socialist, both as an essayist and speaker. Mrs. Woolf wrote essays about women's rights, and Forster has written and made speeches in liberal causes. Julian Bell, the son of the Clive Bells, was killed fighting for the Loyalists in Spain. Keynes, of course, was a leading figure, or adviser, in Mr. Attlee's government. But as Spender, Auden, and Eliot noted, the Bloomsbury group was upper-middle-class and their politics were in relation to the traditions of that class. They were liberals, like other intellectuals of their time, but certain of them, for whatever reasons, could both take it and leave it alone.

Alan Pryce-Jones, now editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, has written an article<sup>13</sup> relating the spirit of Bloomsbury to

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<sup>13</sup> "The Frightening Pundits of Bloomsbury," *The Listener*, 45, No. 1148, March 1, 1951, pp. 345-46.

the general spirit of the 1920's. A characteristic of intellectual and literary life after World War I, he says, was that it was taut, demanding, and ironic. Even the little things, as in the novels of Virginia Woolf, were looked at with microscopic eyes. In all of the important figures, in Aldous Huxley, or Eliot, or Ezra Pound, or in Lawrence or Katherine Mansfield there is a quality of *alertness*. The word "amusing" took on a special connotation in the 1920's, relating itself to a function of the intellect. "It might be applied to Alexander Calder's first mobiles or to a new collage or to a strange piece of orchestration; but you would have got a very frigid stare if you had called anything amusing which implied mere relaxation. . . ."

In recent years historians have begun to write histories not merely about "solid facts" but about mythical facts. The historian of Bloomsbury will have to deal with both sorts. It is easy to sympathize with Mr. Bell when he protests an article in the *Times* which said that Bloomsbury was against everything old and for everything new, providing the new be cryptic and caviar for the general. The *Times's* point, however, has an element of truth. Bloomsbury belongs to myth, and the myth presents the ironic Mr. Strachey tittering over some stupidity, the "illuminated" Mr. Fry turning his X-ray eyes on a French painting, the stiff and elegant Mrs. Woolf writing and rewriting her luminous sentences, and all of them, with their innumerable friends, laughing and talking, ever so intelligently. This is not quite the way it was either, but it offers a pleasant image for the historian to analyze.

An article by R. G. G. Price in a June, 1954, issue of *Punch* calls the Bloomsbury group "The Pre-Elizabethans," and gives them credit for having routed the philistines. "The militant lowbrow was defeated and the danger today is far more that the arts may be killed by kindness than that they will be suppressed." A little group of "Cambridge expatriates" caused this revolution. Mr. Price is mythologizing a little himself; but this too is a pleasant image, much to the credit of a Bloomsbury that has all too frequently been abused:

To-day Britain, having been a Rome, has the chance of becoming a Greece. During the post-war period London succeeded Paris as the



cultural capital of the civilized world, and philistinism has at least gone underground. The successors to Bloomsbury have attained positions of authority, and perhaps appear to the young painter or writer like a great wall of orthodoxy blocking his way; but at least it is a more civilized orthodoxy than the one it supplanted. The queues outside the Tate, the unexpectedly high listening figures of the Third Programme and the type of book taken increasingly out of the local public libraries do suggest that the country has returned some way towards the Mediterranean tradition.

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NOTE: I am grateful for a grant from the American Philosophical Society which helped make it possible for me to undertake a study of Bloomsbury. A number of people in England, some of them closely associated with Bloomsbury, have given me information and told me *their* opinions about what Bloomsbury was. Necessarily I have had to form my own opinions from all that I have read or heard, and therefore, as we say, I am responsible for the general impression created in this essay.



# Introduction to *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel*

|| and Connections with William James and Proust ||

SHIV K. KUMAR

The emergence of the stream of consciousness novel in contemporary fiction has provoked much controversy, but the basic issues involved still remain vague and unexplained. The new form of narrative has been variously defined, not infrequently from conflicting points of view; its origins are traced to sources which fail to reveal the real creative impulse behind this new mode of representing human experience. All this confusion results from a fundamental misunderstanding of the underlying intention of the new novelist, who does not conceive character as a state but as a process of ceaseless becoming in a medium which may be termed Bergson's *durée réelle*.

Before inquiring into the full implications of this approach, it may be useful here first to give a brief résumé of the various theories which have so far been advanced to explain the nature and scope of the new technique.

A popular theory, put forth by many critics, presents the stream of consciousness method as an inevitable sequel to the disintegration of values in the first quarter of this century, and an attempt to compensate by excessive experimentation for the spiritual vacuum prevailing everywhere. The new novel, therefore, is a manifestation, says H. J. Muller, of "the blurring of objective

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*From Shiv K. Kumar, Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1962). Footnotes have been omitted.*

reality and the dissolution of certainties in all fields of thought." Professor Weidlé also seems to support this view when he attributes extreme cultivation of technique to the highly subjective modes of artistic apprehension, unrelated to any established code of values. Proust, Joyce, Svevo and others, in his opinion, embody in their work an exaggerated form of *principium individuationis*. The new novel, therefore, is described as a withdrawal from external phenomena into the flickering half-shades of the author's private world. It will, however, be shown in the course of a detailed analysis of the work of Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce that the new prose-fiction does not imply a "withdrawal" from objective reality but constitutes, on the contrary, a deliberate effort to render in a literary medium a new realization of experience as a process of dynamic renewal.

According to others, the new technique derives from the psycho-analytical school of Jung, Freud and Adler. The spirit of Zürich, it is suggested, broods over Joyce's Dublin, Virginia Woolf's and Dorothy Richardson's London. The "business of producing the psychological novel has much in common", says a critic, "with the business of being psycho-analysed", and it is asserted that "the thought-stream novel usually can only be appreciated fully by people whose subconscious is in the same state as that of the author". F. J. Hoffman and Pelham Edgar, however, do not prescribe any such limits in their interpretation of the new technique. The former attempts to explain the purport of the stream of consciousness novelist as the representation of four different levels of consciousness: the conscious, the pre-conscious, the subconscious and the unconscious, as if the author had undertaken to solve a complex psychological problem in terms of literary symbols.

Robert Humphrey stresses another psychological aspect of the technique by defining it "as a type of fiction in which strong emphasis is placed on exploration of the pre-speech levels of consciousness for the purposes, primarily, of revealing the psychic being of the characters". This type of fiction becomes for him "essentially a technical feat".

Edward Bowling presents more or less the same view when he describes the new form of novel as "*a direct quotation of the*

*mind*—not merely of the language area but of the whole consciousness”. The pre-speech area thus again forms a predominant part of the range covered by the stream of consciousness novelist, who attempts to externalize sensations and ideas not normally expressed by words and images. Professor J. W. Beach, on the other hand, emphasizes “exploitation of the element of incoherence in our conscious process” as the “defining feature” of the new technique.

The interest of all stream of consciousness novelists in the contemporary psycho-analytical theories cannot be overestimated; the danger lies only in exaggerating this relationship and reading their novels as mere “liberation of suppressions”. To label Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage* as a document of “the Daphnean furtiveness of a woman’s mind”, would be as inaccurate as to treat *Ulysses* as a text-book of psychology and psychiatry. Nor again, would the work of Virginia Woolf yield any significant results if analysed in terms of psycho-analysis, since the stream of consciousness novelists are essentially concerned with presenting individual personality and experience in terms of artistic sensibility.

A psycho-analytical interpretation of the stream of consciousness novel would hardly illuminate its treatment and presentation of *la durée*, *mémoire involontaire* and intuition, nor would it bring out the significance of the various protagonists’ preoccupation with the ultimate nature of reality. It is here that Bergsonism attempts to reach out beyond the limits of psycho-analysis. In being more sympathetic towards aesthetic inclinations, more attuned to the mysterious nature of creative processes, Bergson’s philosophical theories of time, memory and consciousness provide a more useful clue to the understanding of the new technique. The emergence of time as a new mode of artistic perception in the contemporary novel would alone justify the Bergsonian approach as being more aesthetic than the mechanistic treatment of psycho-analysts.

The technique has also been described by some as a mere literary embellishment, a means of investing character, scene and incident with “wise bits of philosophy”, or iridescent “flashes of beauty”, lending to the entire narrative a touch of ethereality, of

"something spirit-like". This is how Ethel William Hawkins defines it—as something synonymous with a hypersensitive awareness of phenomena highly tinged with the observer's own evanescent moods. This theory obviously takes a very restricted view of the technique by ignoring altogether its aesthetic and philosophical implications.

This kind of novel has been analysed by others in terms of impressionistic painting, and referred to as "the Post-impressionistic Novel". "The problem of the twentieth-century novelist was the same as that of the twentieth-century painter". Is the technique to be photographic or impressionistic? asks Professor Isaacs, and proceeds to show how even the phraseology and imagery in Virginia Woolf's famous essay "Modern Fiction" are full of echoes from such works as R. M. Stevenson's exposition of Velasquez's art. These novelists, as Herbert Muller also affirms, have in various ways adapted to fiction the technique of the impressionistic painters, specially as it was supplemented by Cézanne.

But a closer examination will show that beyond suggesting a certain similarity of aesthetic intention, this theory also fails to offer a satisfactory explanation of the new technique of characterization. It would be incorrect to say that Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson or James Joyce was influenced by the impressionistic school of painting, which was itself a manifestation of the new awareness of reality as "*les données immédiates de la conscience*".

There is yet another school of criticism which relates the new technique to the symbolistic modes of expression. Speaking of the characters in *Ulysses*, Edmund Wilson remarks: "When we are admitted to the mind of any of them, we are in a world as complex and special, a world sometimes as fantastic or obscure, as that of the symbolist poet—and a world rendered by similar devices of language". In his use of the interior monologue—"symbolistic monologues"—Joyce fully exploits, according to Edmund Wilson, "the methods of symbolism". In their anti-mechanistic intentions, their emphasis on intimating things rather than stating them, their use of a complicated association of ideas, their insistence upon inventing a special language to express individual personality, the symbolists seem to imply a meta-

physic similar to Bergsonism. In fact, the work of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson is, in a certain sense, a continuation of symbolism.

But again, Bergsonism appears to offer a more comprehensive explanation of the literary and philosophical implications of the new novel than symbolism. Durational flux, which constitutes the essence of this technique, is obviously more Bergsonian than symbolistic in character, and the former in its wider scope seems to embrace the basic principles of the latter.

And lastly, the relation of the stream of consciousness narrative to such popular arts as the cinema has also been studied. Harry Levin suggests a similarity between this technique and *montage* under which he analyses the various aspects of *le monologue intérieur*. "Bloom's mind", he observes, "is neither a *tabula rasa* nor a photographic plate, but a motion picture, which has been ingeniously cut and carefully edited to emphasize the close-ups and fade-outs of flickering emotion, the angles of observation and the flashbacks of reminiscence. In its intimacy and in its continuity, *Ulysses* has more in common with the cinema than with other fiction. The movement of Joyce's style, the thought of his characters, is like unreeling film; his method of construction, the arrangement of this raw material, involves the crucial operation of *montage*."

There may be some justification for each of these expositions of the stream of consciousness novel, which has undoubtedly some elements in common with the post-impressionistic painting, the symbolist modes of expression, or even the cinema. But as mentioned earlier, none of these theories presents a comprehensive view and explains fully the precise nature and scope of the technique. The new novelist is neither exclusively an impressionistic delineator of character and scene, nor a psycho-analyst whose primary function is to render a clinical analysis of human motives and impulses. Characters like Mrs. Dalloway, Miriam Henderson and Stephen Dedalus are self-sufficient, deriving their validity from their creator's vicarious experience. They do not require the help of a psycho-analyst for any fuller understanding of them, for the "business of producing the psychological novel" is *not* the same as "the business of being psycho-analysed". Nor



again is the stream of consciousness technique an esoteric jigsaw of words and sentences, implying a withdrawal from objective reality into the author's own private world. On the contrary, this kind of novel seems to make a positive affirmation of a view of experience which can be apprehended better in terms of Bergson's durational flux.

Before investigating this parallelism more fully, it may be profitable to say a word about *le monologue intérieur* as employed by Edouard Dujardin, whose novel *Les Lauriers sont coupés* (1888) is supposed to have influenced James Joyce. Dujardin is also responsible for popularizing in literary criticism this term which, according to him, was invented by Valery Larbaud; "L'invention de l'expression, dans le sens que nous lui donnons aujourd'hui, semble être dûe à Valery Larbaud lui-même."

The credit, however, of originating the term "*monologue intérieur*" and presenting a detailed analysis of its various aspects, together with a comprehensive survey of its theory and practice in literary and philosophical history, belongs to Victor Egger who published in 1881 his scholarly treatise *La Parole Intérieure*. He defines it as "un des éléments les plus importants . . . de nos actes; la série des mots intérieurs forme une succession presque continue . . . le moi et la durée sont des idées équivalentes . . . c'est le moi; *je suis une pure succession*."

Later in 1930 when Edouard Dujardin, in the course of a series of literary conferences, gave an elaborate analysis of the interior monologue, he had little to add to Victor Egger's definition of it. "Le monologue intérieur," says Dujardin, "est, dans l'ordre de la poésie, le discours sans auditeur et non prononcé . . ."

The important point to note, however, is that both these commentators emphasize the element of fluidity in our states of consciousness. In the words of Dujardin: "la nouveauté *essentielle* qu'a apportée le monologue intérieur consiste en ce qu'il a pour objet d'évoquer *le flux ininterrompu* des pensées qui traversent l'âme du personnage . . ."

It is precisely this inner *flux ininterrompu* that Bergson designates as *la durée*, a process of creative evolution which does not lend itself to any logical or intellectual analysis. *La durée* or



psychological time thus becomes the distinguishing feature of the stream of consciousness novel. The new novelist accepts with full awareness inner duration against chronological time as the only true mode of apprehending aesthetic experience. Only in terms of the emergence of time as the fourth dimension can, therefore, one of the most important literary movements of this century be understood. "There is a plane geometry", writes Marcel Proust in a letter to his friend Antoine Bibesco, "and a geometry of space. And so for me the novel is not only plane psychology but psychology in space and time. *That invisible substance, time, I try to isolate.*" Again, towards the end of *Remembrance of Things Past*, he sums up his entire aesthetic theory:

"I should endeavour to render that Time-dimension by transcribing life in a way very different from that conveyed by our lying senses . . . everybody feels that we are occupying an unceasingly increasing place in Time, and this universality could only rejoice me since it is the truth, a truth suspected by each one of us which it was my business to try to elucidate . . . If, at least, time enough were allotted to me to accomplish my work, I would not fail to mark it with the seal of Time . . . and I would therein describe men, if need be, as monsters occupying a place in Time infinitely more important than the restricted one reserved for them in space . . ."

Every stream of consciousness novel bears this seal of time. Time, or as Bergson prefers to call it *la durée*, enters the field of creative thought as something incapable of measurement and intractable to such symbolical representations as hours, days, months and years which are only its spatialized concepts. Edouard, André Gide's protagonist in *The Coiners*, enunciates his theory of the novel as a breadthwise and depthwise cutting of "a slice of life", in preference to "the naturalist school" that "always cuts its slice in the same direction; in time, lengthwise." Gide, obviously, implies the durational as an integral mode of apprehension of reality as contrasted with the spatial rendering of life in fiction, for in the latter, time projected lengthwise is nothing but space.

The extent to which this new concept of time as an immeasurable and multidirectional process had permeated the European

novel of the first quarter of this century, may be assessed from these novelists who employed this stream of consciousness method in representing *la durée*.

Jacques Goddard, Jules Romains's protagonist in *The Death of a Nobody*, reflects on the theme of time; "In particular he had pondered upon time. Time seemed to him something quite arbitrary and elastic. He found it difficult to believe it was a dependable entity, and clocks seemed to him fallacious mechanisms for measuring it."

A similar realization of the elasticity of time dawns within the consciousness of Italo Svevo's hero in *The Nice Old Man*:

"I, on the contrary, am obstinately trying to do something else in this present and if, as I hope, there is time to develop an activity in it, I shall have proved that it is longer than it appears. It is hard to measure it and the mathematician who tried to do so would come hopelessly to grief, thus showing that it is not his work."

Virginia Woolf stresses this discrepancy between "time in the mind" and clock time more explicitly in *Orlando*. Thomas Wolfe in *Look Homeward Angel* and Gertrude Stein in *Composition as Explanation*, affirm almost the same view of duration. The work of Dorothy Richardson and James Joyce is no less an illustration of this subjective notion of time.

This "time in the mind" is symbolically represented by most of these novelists as a flowing river with memories and visions as its chief constituents. The flux of human experience consists in this perpetual mixing of memory with desire, making one "live in a mixed tense, as is man's lot, the grammar of which has, however, those pure tenses which seem made for the animals." This "horrible activity of the mind's eye", lies in our ceaseless response to a multiplicity of sensory impressions and recollections, the latter conditioning and therefore, in a sense, recreating each moment of experience. Time, no longer a mere extended image of space, now becomes the pure essence of reality, which may be described as "a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines, without any tendency to externalize themselves in relation to one another"; or, as a principle "of becoming which is reality itself."

The key to the emergence of the stream of consciousness novel lies in this new awareness of experience, this marked shift from a conception of personality as built round a hard and changeless core to a realization of it as a dynamic process. This reality is to be realized in immediate experience as flux, to be grasped by intuition or intellectual sympathy. *La durée* is the stuff of which this kind of novel is made.

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To understand completely the durational aspect of the new novel, it will be necessary to examine in detail the philosophical significance of the work of Marcel Proust, who is often associated with certain aspects of the technique as employed by Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. It must, however, be admitted at the outset that Proust does not use the stream of consciousness method of narrative; in fact, instead of completely immersing himself in the stream of becoming, he retains the right to elucidate, analyse, comment and judge. But in most of his observations on the art of the novel, he seems to provide the new novelist with a suitable working credo.

Proust always claimed to have presented in his work "a whole theory of memory and consciousness, although not directly projected in logical terms." In denouncing intellect as a spatializing tendency, in recognizing the supremacy of involuntary memories over voluntary memories and the validity of fugitive impressions as significant phenomena, in endeavouring to bring reality within the fold of his work with the "least possible shrinkage", in "respecting" in the matter of style "the natural progress of my thought", and lastly, in emphasizing the importance of *la durée* in a work of art, Proust supplies all the ingredients of the stream of consciousness technique, except, of course, its practical application.

The work of Proust has, therefore, a two-fold significance to the student of the stream of consciousness novel; first because many younger novelists found in him a confirmation of what was already dawning within their own minds, and secondly, because he proved to be, though quite unwittingly, a provocative introduction to Bergson's philosophy of time, memory and conscious-

ness. Although it is often futile to trace direct influences, the relation between a particular philosophy and a certain form of art may be so intimate that the study of one in terms of the other becomes immensely rewarding.

In the case of Proust at least it is not difficult to establish even direct relationships between him and the French philosopher. A pupil of Bergson's at the Sorbonne (1891-93), and his nephew by virtue of the philosopher's marriage with his cousin Neuburger, he found himself oscillating all his life between Yea and Nay. In a letter to Georges de Lauris in 1909, he wrote:

"I am glad you have read some Bergson and liked him. It is as though we had been together on a great height. I don't know *L'Évolution Créatrice* . . . but I have read enough of Bergson, the parabola of his thought is already sufficiently discernible after only a single generation . . . Besides, I think I have told you of my great respect for him . . . and of the great kindness he has always shown me . . ."

On the other hand, in an interview he gave to Elsie Joseph Bois, published in *Le Temps* of November 1913, he said:

"I should not in any way feel ashamed to describe my books as 'Bergsonian novels', if I thought they were, for in every period, literature has tried to attach itself after the event, naturally, to the reigning philosophy. But it would not be accurate, for my work is dominated by the distinction between the 'mémoire involontaire' and 'mémoire volontaire', a distinction which is not only not to be found in M. Bergson's philosophy, but is even contradicted by it."

We shall have occasion to show in a subsequent chapter how this basis on which Proust always tried to deny Bergson's influence is refuted by the latter's clear distinction between "pure memory" and "voluntary memory". But whatever be his relation with Bergson, Proust certainly renders a very faithful presentation of the Bergsonian theories of memory, *la durée* and consciousness.

Among the English writers of the first quarter of this century, we may mention T. E. Hulme who, through his various critical essays on Bergson's aesthetics and translation of *Introduction à la*

*métaphysique*, enabled many contemporary poets and novelists to realize in Bergson an articulation of their own awareness of experience as flux. In his essay entitled "Bergson's Theory of Art", he seems to justify the impulse behind the new technique:

"The process of artistic creation would be better described as a process of discovery and disentanglement. To use the metaphor which one is now so familiar with—the *stream of inner life*, and the definite crystallized shapes on the surface—the big artist, the creative artist, the innovator, leaves the level where things are crystallized out into these definite shapes, and, diving down into *the inner flux*, comes back with a new shape which he endeavours to fix."

This "new shape" is obviously a durational pattern which reveals an inner reality of things as against their crystallized surface. Therefore, although one may find oneself in this durational flux, as if one were "en présence d'une désorganisation", this is none the less reality itself.

During the last years of his life Hulme was contemplating a book on "Modern Theories of Art", a synopsis of which appears as an appendix to his *Speculations*. In the third chapter of this proposed book he planned to show how "rough analyses which artists themselves have given . . . can be interpreted in the light of new psychology—Bergson." In another chapter he intended further to elaborate Bergson's theory in terms of "actual and intimate acquaintance with emotions involved—*Time and Free Will, Introduction à la Métaphysique—L'Effort Intellectuel—Laughter*."

Many other English contemporaries of Hulme felt sympathetically interested in the new philosophy. When Bergson came to the notice of the so-called "Bloomsbury Group" is not clear, but it is worth noting that Desmond MacCarthy, in a dedicatory letter to Roger Fry (dated 1914), accompanying his translation of Jules Romains's novel, *The Death of a Nobody*, drew Bergson to Fry's attention:

"At the end of the book there is an attempt to portray in the emotions of a young man walking down a rain-swept boulevard one late afternoon, a conception of the world not unlike that



which M. Bergson's philosophy suggests. How far such experiences are engendered by reading M. Bergson, and how far they are independent, M. Romaines can tell better."

This is, however, not an essential question to ask Jules Romaines or any other stream of consciousness novelist. To suggest that the new form of fiction emerged under the direct influence of Bergson would be rather misleading. In fact, Bergson was himself, like those he is supposed to have influenced, a manifestation of the *Zeitgeist*. It should, therefore, be more appropriate to say that in his philosophy one finds a most effective articulation of that intuitive sense of fluid reality of which sensitive minds were becoming aware in the early years of this century. This new realization of experience as flux manifests itself in contemporary fiction in the form of the stream of consciousness novel.

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William James's analysis of consciousness seems to supplement Bergson's theory of the "stream of life"; it may, therefore, also be helpful to understand the former's presentation of thought as a continuum.

The phrase "stream of consciousness", it may be noted, was first used by William James in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), and later introduced into literary criticism by May Sinclair who, in her article on Dorothy Richardson in the *Egoist* of April 1918, wrote: ". . . there is no drama, no situation, no set scene. Nothing happens. It is just life going on and on. It is Miriam's stream of consciousness, going on and on."

William James, like Bergson, believes that "empty our minds as we may, some form of *changing process* remains for us to feel, and cannot be expelled." Our psychic kaleidoscope is perpetually forming itself into new patterns. Like Bergson again, he exposes the Humian doctrine that our consciousness consists of discrete fragments capable of repeating themselves. On the contrary, he observes that consciousness cannot be analysed into fragments or "chopped up in bits". "Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. *In talking of it hereafter,*



*let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life."*

In this "wonderful stream of consciousness" sensory images form the halting places or "substantive parts", and the thoughts of relations or "transitive parts" denote places of "flight". But it must be remembered that the former are mere terms of convenience and do not indicate or suggest any break in the continuous flow of consciousness, for even these "substantive parts" are invariably suffused with notions of "flight" or "movement".

Elsewhere, William James refers to the "halo or penumbra surrounding the image", "the overtone, halo or fringe", suggested also by Virginia Woolf in her description of life as "a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end." And when she calls upon the new writers to convey "this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display . . ." and, citing the example of James Joyce, asks them to "record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall . . . trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance", she defines the basic philosophical sanction behind the stream of consciousness novel.

What James calls "halo, or fringe", and Virginia Woolf "luminous halo", is nothing else than those transitional phases of our mental processes which mark the merging of the past into the present, and the fading of the present into the future, thus making experience a continuum. In James's words again, "*the knowledge of some other part of the stream, past or future, near or remote, is always mixed in with our knowledge of the present thing . . . these lingerings of old objects, these incomings of new, are the germs of memory and expectation, the retrospective and the prospective sense of time. They give that continuity to consciousness without which it could not be called a stream.*" It is this durational aspect of consciousness which defines the basis of the stream of consciousness novel.

We may here say a word about the present moment of experience which forms the exclusive material in the traditional novel, unless a writer chooses to introduce the past in a flashback, or

what Dr. David Daiches calls "memory digression". According to the new concept of durational flux, the present loses its static nature and ceaselessly fades into the past and future. William James gives this concept a new name—"the specious present", and defines it as "a bow and a stern, as it were—a rearward- and a forward-looking end." In contemporary psychological fiction this specious present is always instinctively felt and sometimes directly described by novelists who employ a highly subjective, though not necessarily the stream of consciousness, technique. Gertrude Stein, for instance, calls it the "prolonged present":

"I wrote a negro story called *Melanctha*. In that there was a constant recurring and beginning there was a marked direction of being in the present although naturally I had been accustomed to past present and future, and why, because the composition forming around me was a *prolonged present*".

We can easily see a certain correspondence between Gertrude Stein's and William James's conception of fluid present. Their exposition of the qualitative aspect of time, however, is not as comprehensive as that of Bergson, who remains the true embodiment of the new awareness of *durée créatrice*.

In the context of these observations, it will be seen that much new light can be thrown on the stream of consciousness form of narrative and characterization by studying it in relation to the theory of durational flux as expounded by Bergson. Interpreted in terms of *mémoire involontaire*, *la durée* and intuition, this kind of novel acquires a new meaning and coherence, and ceases to be "the offspring of a creator's negative mood".

In Bergson's philosophy one finds an attempt to correlate the new philosophical awareness with methods and ideals of literary composition, particularly prose-fiction. We shall now try to present in the next chapter, what may be called, "Bergson's theory of the novel", based on his observations on the novelist's art, scattered in his various philosophical writings.

# The Problem of Influence

of Freudianism on the Literary Mind

FREDERICK J. HOFFMAN

iii

Such criticism as this [by Herbert Read] has justified some attention because of its intelligence and because of the suggestions it offers for a final aesthetic appraisal of Freudian influence. We may note that critics have been concerned with two kinds of inquiry: the psychological nature of the artist, and the suggestions which psychoanalysis has made regarding modern efforts to revise and alter the formal and stylistic character of literature. This latter problem is central to the study of modern aesthetics.

The experimental writing of the twentieth century saw in the unconscious a linguistic problem which required a revision in the matter of imagery and symbolism. Many writers were willing to go beyond the mere "stream of consciousness" manner of arranging phrases in a fluid pattern, and of suspending the control of space-time over mind. For them the "stream" must resemble the "flow" of the unconscious psychic life. Hence the eccentricity, and the unintelligibility of much modern experimental writing. An ideal approximation to the unconscious cannot be looked for in literature; even when words are most plastic—that is, when they suggest a variety of meanings and lend themselves readily to visual diffusion—they are still words, and as such only indirectly represent the affective and concrete "life of the unconscious." Yet

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*From Frederick J. Hoffman, Freudianism and the Literary Mind, 2nd ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957). Footnotes have been renumbered.*

words are the writer's tools. He cannot employ paints or electric wires; nor can he leave the page blank, as one irate critic suggests.<sup>1</sup> If the unconscious is so difficult to represent, why bother? Why renounce our habitual communication to find what even Freud admits is accessible to the conscious mind only by careful and painstaking inference? Isn't a metaphorical description more satisfactory than a "faithful transcript"? The experimenters reply that, for various reasons, it is within the range of artistic possibility—though, perhaps, not within the range of the reader's comprehension<sup>2</sup>—to reproduce the unconscious. They believed that this "new writing" should follow, not the laws of ordinary communication, but the dictates of the unconscious itself. Since this is a repudiation of the laws governing communication, it may be considered an instance of the hyperindividualism that characterized much of the revolt of the twenties. Surrealism is its foster-child. The surrealist would go directly to the unconscious itself and leave out the intermediate avenues by which it approaches consciousness. Freud "discovered" the unconscious by devious methods, and he found that we can have access to it by measuring the peculiarities and disguises which distinguish its attempts to break through to reality. The surrealists wish to integrate dream with reality (by which they mean, of course, "make reality subservient to dream"). Surrealism is an extreme example of what has come from Freud's exploration of the unconscious mind of man. But Freud explored the unconscious, not by "remaining within it" but by measuring by means of it the complex and deep resources of the human psyche. As Herbert Muller has put it: "He [Freud] conceived the unconscious as primary only because more rudimentary, and sought always to control it. They [the surrealists] conceive it as the source of beauty and truth, and seek to exploit it."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Prescott, "James Joyce: A Study in Words," in *PMLA*, LIV (1939), 314. "Joyce will call his next work *tabula rasa* and will regale the reader with hundreds of pages of closely bound paper, every one of which will be innocent of printer's ink. . . ."

<sup>2</sup> We have *Transition* proclaiming among other things, "the Plain Reader be damned!" "Proclamation," in *Transition*, XVII (1929).

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Muller, "Surrealism: a Dissenting Opinion," in *New Directions in Prose and Poetry, 1940*, ed. James Laughlin (Norfolk, Conn., 1940), 553. Cf.

The coincidence of Freud's with surrealist thinking—André Breton had once planned to become a psychiatrist—called attention to the possibilities of the dream-life. It was the surrealists' intention not only to exploit these possibilities for themselves but also to sponsor the irrational or unconscious life as the property of all men. They tried to ally themselves with the Communist International, claiming kinship on the grounds of their common hatred of bourgeois morals and restrictions.

It is with their influence upon aesthetic theory and practice that we are most concerned, however. It is their purpose, says David Gascoyne (who since 1938 has no longer been one of them), "to extend indefinitely the limits of 'literature' and 'art' by continually tending to do away with the barrier that separates . . . the printed page or the picture-frame from the world of real life and action."<sup>4</sup> More specifically they are interested in exploiting the aesthetic possibilities of unconscious metaphor, hoping to find within the unconscious a riot of imagery and unsyntactic profusion, "a perpetual flow of irrational thought *in the form of images.*"

Surrealism began with the destructive nonsequiturs of Parisian dadaism. Dadaism was launched noisily in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1916, and continued in Paris until about 1922. Perhaps it was the desire to subject revolt to some form of aesthetic discipline which caused the establishment of surrealism. In the words of its first manifesto, surrealism wished to destroy the restrictions of

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Kenneth Burke, "Surrealism," *ibid.*, 563-79. Muller's essay on surrealism, though intelligent and just, is another indication of his growing distrust of the irrational in literature. He sees in almost every literary use of irrational themes a suspicious alliance with the forces of evil in modern society—more specifically, with Hitler. In his *Science and Criticism* (New Haven, 1943), a book otherwise temperate and wise, he refers to this change of heart: ". . . in my book on the modern novel, written some years ago, I noted the obvious limitations and excesses of D. H. Lawrence's work but ended by stressing its values. I felt, rightly or wrongly, that in a science-governed age both literature and philosophy needed his impassioned rendering of the 'unknown modes of being' and his exaltation of old ways of feeling. Today I should stick by almost any given sentence in the chapter. Yet I should also shift my emphasis and dwell more on the dangers of Lawrence's attitude. In Hitler's world there are men enough to glorify the Unconscious, rally behind the instinctive and irrational." *Ibid.*, 15 n.

<sup>4</sup> David Gascoyne, *A Short Survey of Surrealism* (London, 1935), x.



rationalism because " 'the methods of logic are applied nowadays only to the resolution of problems of secondary interest. . . . Under colour of civilisation, under pretext of progress, all that rightly or wrongly may be regarded as fantasy or superstition has been banished from the mind.' " <sup>5</sup>

The attachment to Freud is more than accidental. The surrealist practice was first to reject all of the limitations of the ego, sublimation as well as repression; secondly, to use the unconscious as source of both aesthetic and moral departures from the norm; and finally, to break loose altogether from the analyst's control and tutoring of the unconscious, to which the analyst of course attached primary importance. Subsequent additions to surrealist theory have accepted the unconscious desire or wish as the end of activity, poetic or otherwise.

The three principles of surrealistic aesthetics and morality are called the Objective Hazard, Estrangement of Sensation, and Black Bile. The first is perhaps the most strictly original contribution. It begins by assuming that the unconscious desire is the single arbiter of action. Freud's cautious and almost lifelong preoccupation with the Pleasure Principle and the Reality Principle is thus eliminated at one stroke. The Objective Hazard disregards this example of psychoanalytic caution. Freud had insisted that, although the unconscious drive is for immediate satisfaction of instinctual desires, this drive is halted and its energies retarded by the rude shock with reality and the consequent efforts of the ego to protect the psyche from any repetition of its painful experience. Surrealists regard such precautionary efforts on the part of the ego and its social assistants as mere interference. The unconscious, instinctual desire must leap out of its prison and find brutal and violent satisfaction.

We live in Society, we have desires, and we find obstacles to their realization; we are fighting for the realization of our desires. We are fighting against all obstacles to their realization. Our morality leads us to an ethic of desire because the artist in following what Freud called

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted, *ibid.*, 59-60.

Pleasure as opposed to Reality expressed desires more clearly than other men do, and takes the lead in the field of hope.<sup>6</sup>

The second of the three principles, Estrangement of Sensation, is of course linked with the linguistic and illogical habits of the unconscious as they are exposed in the manifest dreams and in other situations developed by the psychoanalyst. The literature of surrealism regards the eccentricity of language and the illogical suspension of intelligible comparison as central to its expression of reality. "Everything that produces estrangement, from a broken motorcar to the Pyramid of Cheops, from deep sea life to the dance at the Savoy in Harlem, can produce this estrangement and therefore be poetic."<sup>7</sup> There is no such thing as formal beauty in surrealist aesthetics. The surrealist relies upon the shocking—comically shocking—persistence of disorder to convey its poetic or pictorial impression of unconscious reality. The image ought to "bring about the fusion of two mutually distant realities." Thus the image of Lautréamont (nineteenth-century predecessor of surrealism), the "chance meeting, on a dissecting table, of a sewing machine and an umbrella," succeeds in bringing "about the union of two mutually distant realities upon a plane equally unrelated to either of them."<sup>8</sup> The surrealist will go to the dream report as often as it furnishes examples of such coincidences. But later statements by surrealists lead one to believe that they have not been altogether satisfied with what the dream report has to offer. "I think we have exaggerated," says Calas, "the poetic value, not of the unconscious image, but of the free-association method which is the *modus operandi* of psychoanalytical confession. . . . There is in [the poet's] care no psychoanalyst to command the rhythm of the poem like a God, a father or a lover; unless the poet discovers the rhythm himself his images will remain inert." The limitations of the analyst's procedures—which the surrealist never really considered anyway—

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<sup>6</sup> Nicolas Calas, "The Meaning of Surrealism," in *New Directions in Prose and Poetry, 1940* (Norfolk, Conn.), 389.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Gascoyne, *A Short Survey of Surrealism*, 66.

have struck him as endangering the freshness and originality of surrealist expression; for the symbols and images of the dream do recur with monotonous regularity and similarity. The great difference between the surrealist poet and the analytic patient must again be stressed: "Freud's patients are merely victims; the poet, by the sole fact that he creates, is a *hero*, a hero who suffers assuredly, who feels inferiorities which are often terrible, but one who has discovered a world he can explore and conquer, a world, moreover, of high social significance, and cannot be degraded to the rank of patient."<sup>9</sup>

The third of these principles, Black Bile, Breton's *l'humour noir*, is a kind of introjected irony, an irrational laughter which the poet expresses when he is aware of the violent incongruities of unconscious reality. Freud had shown in his *Wit and Its Relationship to the Unconscious* that the intention behind laughter can be quite cruel.

Surrealism, thanks to the discoveries of Freud, has managed to go very deeply into the process of affective reaction and has discovered that when irony becomes really revolutionary (from the point of view of the poet) it becomes something much more cruel than what is understood when we use the term irony. . . . It is laughter of the most disagreeable kind and with the most disturbing effects.<sup>10</sup>

This laughter does not exclude the scatological, though it does not necessarily exalt it. It is a humor associated with the shock of dislocation from conscious signposts of good and evil.

These and other indications of the totally irrational must be associated with the history of Freud's influence on modern literature; the influence is undeniable. The surrealists, however, have themselves marked the limits of their debt to Freud. They reject all but his description of the unconscious, and they accept that, not for the reasons for which Freud himself introduced it, but for their own reasons. Their contributions to modern literature are perhaps more symptomatic than constructive. Some value must

<sup>9</sup> Nicolas Calas, "The Light of Words," in *Arson*, I (1942), 16.

<sup>10</sup> Calas, "The Meaning of Surrealism," *loc. cit.*, 390. For a brief but concise study of the sources of surrealism in nineteenth-century French literature, see Wallace Fowlie, *Age of Surrealism* (New York, 1950).

be admitted in their unceasing attacks upon credulity, for the imagery of surrealist poetry is often accidentally striking and effective, and the plastic representation of incongruity is a ceaseless hindrance to stuffy platitudes about the "spiritual significance of the arts."

## iv

Freud's interpretation of the dream has remained an important influence. As a result of it the writer has revised his view of himself as an artist, and of his responsibility to his readers. Experimental writers expect their readers to participate in the creative act in an ingenious way. The elements of commonality which any reader of nineteenth-century fiction may enjoy are not so easily accessible. If a writer is not merely capricious—that is, if his images are not so remote that only he knows what they mean—then the reader may discover the meanings for himself. The traditional dramatic critics speak of a suspension of judgment necessary for an acceptance of theatrical conventions. The modern reader is forced to a "suspension of censor" in order that he may explore, with his author, the devious ways of dream-consciousness. Freud speaks of "secondary elaboration" as a means by which the censor operates with respect to a dream already completed. The reader, when he says, "This is grotesque; this is absurd," reacts in essentially the same way as the dream-self, when it remarks, "Well, after all, it's only a dream."

At this point the analogy between patient and reader breaks off. So far as adopting the analyst's point of view will help make the path to understanding simpler, the reader may do so; but he is no more interested in "curing the hero" than a reader of conventional fiction is interested in having the villain put to death or the heroine enjoy a full-dress wedding. There is a point at which the aesthetic and the scientific points of view part company. Psychoanalysis may have rich suggestions for the artist, but curing the hero is not one of them.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Chapter VIII, for discussion of Sherwood Anderson and psychoanalysis.

Freud's therapy dealt with neurotic patients almost entirely, but the intellectual of our time accepted his conclusions concerning character as universally applicable, for two reasons: (1) Freud had shown in the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* and *Wit and Its Relationship to the Unconscious* that the distinction between normal and abnormal was primarily one of degree and not of kind, and that every person was at least potentially neurotic. (2) Observation of the life around him and of the world within him led the young intellectual to much the same conclusion.

The influence of abnormal psychology upon character analysis was readily admitted. Whether the hero of our twentieth-century novel is an analyst (as in the case of Lewisohn's *The Island Within*) or a patient (as in Arthur Koestler's *Arrival and Departure*), certain conclusions about his character derive their psychological quality from the analytic environment. What we speak of as the "struggle of wills" in traditional fiction, becomes, for the "clinical novelist," a struggle against the forces of repression. What might have been considered an honorable submission to fate, or the beautiful expression of filial piety is explained as an infantile fixation or a "parental complex."<sup>12</sup> As a result of the introduction of psychoanalytic theory, there was a renewed interest in neurotics; they were regarded as a mirror of the world. The danger is that this preoccupation with the "abnormal or eccentric" does not prove anything except that people are often neurotic or abnormal. Shakespeare's fools are honorable persons, conveying important truth in the guise of nonsense, which they often found necessary because the world had closed the door on "common sense." Dostoevski's Prince Myshkin is, after all, a wise man in his way, whose sympathy and naïveté reach depths not appreciated by those ambitious and sensible people around him. But the twentieth-century writer, instead of assuming that the normal and abnormal were not isolated types—as Freud had suggested—often took the abnormal for the normal. This pessimistic view of life was part of the tradition of revolt; perspective

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<sup>12</sup> Thus, in May Sinclair, *The Life and Death of Harriet Frean* (New York, 1922), 97, Priscilla had fallen ill only as a means of holding her husband: It was "pure hysteria. Robin wasn't in love with her and she knew it."



was frequently lost. The pessimism of the naturalist assumed that external forces left no room for individual free will; man was a plaything of these forces. The pessimism of the psychological novelist is an extension of this same naturalism. Freud explained that no fact of the mental life was without its cause. The psychological novelist would like to regard his pessimism as of a deeper dye. To some writers of his type, the search for life was more accurately a "search for death." One might explain all this by remarking that modern man held to no fixed illusions; but the larger world-negation came to adjust desire to reality. When the opportunity for social protest offered itself, many of these novelists gladly turned to it, for it at least offered an object of attack outside the self.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the devious course which Freudianism took after it left the clinical environment of its origins, we may sketch the main Freudian contributions to literature. (1) *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and especially the chapter on the "Dream-work," affected writers variously. It suggested the existence of an unconscious life in which patterns of conduct were not superficial, but complex. It offered the dream as a convenient summary of character-motivation, and even as a part of the plot-structure itself. It called the attention of writers to the need for a new language—a language based upon the devices of condensation, displacement, multiple determination, and secondary elaboration. In so doing, it suggested to experimentalists the idea of employing "absurdities" in their writing—that is, a repudiation of what is logical and syntactic, for what is illogical and ungrammatical.

(2) *The Three Contributions to a Theory of Sex*, together with other books of the time, and Freud's earlier book of *Introductory Lectures* furnished a set of psychological terms which were often applied with more facility than judgment. Among the traditional situations which novelists have exploited for ages, the psychological novelist made some alterations in treatment. The parent-child relationship, if it was allowed to extend beyond

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<sup>13</sup> In this aspect of twentieth-century fiction the popular notions of both Adler and Jung also played a role—though these were usually referred (if they were referred to anything at all) to their sources in Freudian psychology. The "inferiority complex" and the extrovert-introvert division of types were both often lumped together as "Freudian terms."

the period of adolescence and caused a subsequent disparagement of "masculine qualities," was treated as a form of oedipus complex—though individual writers gave this idea their own modifications. The "eternal triangle" remained triangular, but it was often treated as a problem of modern sex-ethics. Forms of maladjustment were often regarded as signs of ego-fixation, or narcissism.

(3) Freud's monographs on social and theological matters had only a limited and an indirect influence. The pessimistic conclusion that social institutions, and the arts as well, were mere illusions occasionally stimulated writers to underline their study of modern pessimism. Waldo Frank, for example, regarded the altering of an institution as insufficient for social change, since institutions were, for the most part, "hampering illusions of power and order." Freud's doctrine of the recurrence of certain phylogenetic patterns, which he developed in *Totem and Taboo*, influenced Thomas Mann's treatment of the Joseph story. Mann also hopefully emphasized Freud's brief reference to the future of analysis as a task of building and strengthening the ego by means of making its union with culture and society more and more attractive and its task of regulating the id correspondingly easier.

(4) The clinical situation was itself responsible for many incidental sub-plots and especially for satire. The idea of resistance claimed much interest both in discussions and in satires of such discussions in literature. The transference situation was ideal material for satire, and was generally treated satirically. The psychoanalyst was himself a new fictional type—though it is extremely doubtful that he will ever reach the status in fiction which the kindly or courageous physician has long enjoyed.

Of the many diverse influences which affected twentieth-century writing, Freud was an important one. He was, however, only a single member of a large fraternity of thinkers who had some bearing upon the thought and the fiction of the twenties. It is now our problem to estimate the diversity and the strength of Freud's influence, by examining in detail the works of a number of novelists—among them, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Sherwood Anderson, Waldo Frank, Franz Kafka, and Thomas Mann.

# Le Frisson Nouveau

Baudelaire and the Symbolist Movement

J. M. COHEN

'Vous dotez le ciel de l'art d'on ne sait quel rayon macabre', wrote Victor Hugo in a letter congratulating Baudelaire on *Les Fleurs du Mal* of 1857, 'vous créez un frisson nouveau'.<sup>1</sup> Hugo had himself for fifty years endeavoured to arouse new thrills, and the supernatural was a device that had been exploited not only by himself and his generation, but by writers as far back as the middle of the eighteenth century. Swedenborg had described his experiences on the borders of the unknown, and the Gothick novelists, in their endeavour to provide 'pleasing thrills'—to use Horace Walpole's words—had set the ghosts walking through many a deserted manor long before Baudelaire began to write of a new kind of strangeness, which he did not attempt to make 'pleasing'.

Baudelaire, indeed, provided a new thrill, which shocked and horrified a Paris used to ghost stories and literary dabblings in the occult. For where E. T. A. Hoffmann and others had described the external marvels and perils which a man might meet and over which he might triumph, Baudelaire presented his own mind and heart as a ghostly limbo from which there was no escape into another and more comfortable world. He in fact *internalized* the supernatural, substituting the thrill of psycho-

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<sup>1</sup> You have thrown an indescribable and eerie light into the artistic sky. You are creating a new thrill.

logical complexity for the outworn devices of hauntings and psychic appearances.

The romantic poet—Shelley, Hugo, Byron—saw himself as a hero, the successor to Prometheus or Hercules. Though society rejected him, he believed that he had been chosen to bring it great benefits, to acquaint it with the powers of inspiration, and even to perform the labours of political leader and prophet. Whatever his doubts about the external world, he unhesitatingly believed in himself as a figure of undivided purpose, capable of decisive criticism and action.

Baudelaire too was to some extent his own hero. He was, at the same time a surgeon performing an autopsy upon himself, but not upon society. For the subject of his poetry was invariably himself, not as a single hero but as a divided man. One of the most revealing of his self-dissections is to be found in 'La Voix', not otherwise one of the more important poems in *Les Fleurs du Mal*. The division is immediately stated by the conflicting voices that speak to the child brought up on the dust and ashes of the classical past:

Mon berceau s'adossait à la bibliothèque,  
 Babel sombre, où roman, science, fabled,  
 Tout, la cendre latine et la poussière grecque,  
 Se mêlaient. J'étais haut comme un in-folio.  
 Deux voix me parlaient. L'une, insidieuse et ferme,  
 Disait: 'La Terre est un gâteau plein de douceur;  
 Je puis (et ton plaisir serait alors sans terme!)  
 Te faire un appétit d'une égale grosseur.'  
 Et l'autre: 'Viens! oh! viens voyager dans les rêves,  
 Au delà du possible, au delà du connu!'<sup>2</sup>

The poet has no doubt which voice to follow. Even boundless pleasure and equally boundless appetite to enjoy it are less attractive than a life of dreams. Byron would have accepted the sweet

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<sup>2</sup> My cradle backed on the library, a dark Babel in which romance, science and story, everything, the ashes of Rome and the dust of Greece, were mixed. I was the size of a folio. Two voices addressed me. The first, insidious and assured, said: 'Earth is a cake full of sweetness. I can (and your pleasure would then be boundless!) give you an appetite of the same size'. And the other said: 'Come, oh come and travel in dream, beyond the possible, beyond the known!'

cake and consumed it with a chosen companion among the Greek Isles; Hugo would have feasted upon it with his family and friends, interrupting his pleasure at times to vituperate against some favourite enemy; Shelley would have rejected it for some quintessential nectar on which the spirits feed. But Baudelaire prefers a voyage of discovery beyond the frontiers of possibility and knowledge. And this journey is not an outward exploration of nature or society, but a descent into the depths of his own heart. It is from this moment of choice, he says, that he dates his 'wound' and his 'evil destiny':

C'est d'alors

Que date ce qu'on peut, hélas, nommer ma plaie  
Et ma fatalité. Derrière les décors  
De l'existence immense, au plus noir de l'abîme,  
Je vois distinctement des mondes singuliers,  
Et de ma clairvoyance extatique victime,  
Je traîne des serpents qui mordent mes souliers<sup>3</sup>

The poem's imagery is ill-assorted; the 'wound' is a clinical comparison that will be repeated by many modern poets down to W. H. Auden, who in his early poetry addresses it ironically as a pampered and rather tiresome friend, and to Eliot's 'wounded surgeon' in 'East Coker'. But the Bacchante's snakes seem to have crept down from the library shelves behind the infant's cradle. The modern poet will prove not an ecstatic victim but a perplexed interpreter of his rare moments of clairvoyance.

Baudelaire carries his claim further, and compares himself to the prophets who, like him, loved the desert and the sea-shore, thus calling up associations with the Desert Fathers. But with clairvoyance and prophecy goes also a certain naivety. So deep is this vision that often the poet confuses fact with illusion, and with his eyes on the sky stumbles as he walks. His voice, however, comforts him with the assurance that this too brings a benefit:

Garde tes songes;

Les sages n'en ont pas d'aussi beaux que les fous.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> It is from then that there dates what can, alas, be called my wound and my evil destiny. Behind the backcloth of vast existence, in the blackest of the pit, I clearly see strange worlds, and as the ecstatic victim of my own clairvoyance, I drag snakes behind me that bite at my shoes.

<sup>4</sup> Preserve your dreams; fools have more beautiful dreams than the wise.



Clairvoyant, prophet, fool, and dreamer, Baudelaire is, nevertheless, no dweller in artificial paradises; these would be as tasteless to him as the cloying cake of worldly pleasure. The two themes that occur most constantly in his poetry are those of the voyage over unknown seas, and the search among childhood memories for some secret innocence, long ago forgotten:

le vert paradis des amours enfantines,  
Les courses, les chansons, les baisers, les bouquets,  
Les violons vibrants derrière les collines,  
Avec les brocs de vin, le soir, dans les bosquets.<sup>5</sup>

Here once more the despised library has given the poet his imagery. For this is the classical Arcadia, the shepherds' Sicily of Theocritus, the *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, recalled by Baudelaire's contemporary Edouard Manet. In Manet's picture the theme of innocence is treated more simply; the naked and the clothed sit unselfconsciously side by side. But into Baudelaire's vision enters the same division as in his other poems. For his is not only the green paradise of childish lovers; it is also, paradoxically,

L'innocent paradis plein de plaisirs furtifs.<sup>6</sup>

Poets of the past, Shelley, Wordsworth, Hugo, had looked back on childhood as an age when intimations of the spiritual world were clear and direct. Among lesser writers there had grown up a sentimentality that led to the later mawkishnesses of *Peter Pan*. But Baudelaire remembered not only the innocent picnics of his childhood, but also the premature intimations of adulthood that accompanied them.

Doubt and contradiction pervade not only the memories of the new writer who purveys *le frisson nouveau*, and his own view of himself. They also affect his attitude to the act of poetic creation. Gautier, an elder contemporary of Baudelaire, saw the ideal poem as one of ever increasing clarity. The more difficult the

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<sup>5</sup> The green paradise of childish loves, the races, the songs, the kisses, the bunches of flowers, the violins thrumming behind the hills, and jugs of wine at evening in the woods.

<sup>6</sup> The innocent paradise full of furtive pleasures.

material, the greater the need of craftsmanship. To him, a man of uncomplicated attitudes, complex thought, such as Baudelaire's, would have provided a special challenge to clarity. For only perfection of utterance could possess eternity:

Oui, l'œuvre sort plus belle  
 D'une forme au travail  
 Rebelle,  
 Vers, marbre, onyx, émail.  
 Point de contraintes fausses!  
 Mais que pour marcher droit  
 Tu chausses,  
 Muse, un cothurne étroit.  
 Fi du rythme commode,  
 Comme un soulier trop grand,  
 Du mode  
 Que tout pied quitte et prend!<sup>7</sup>

Baudelaire aimed at no such formal perfection, and hardly any poets since his day have attempted to conform to Gautier's ideal. The tendency has been to make the line conform to the thought, and reproduce the turns, obscurities and contradictions of a complex argument in language as broken and baffling. Licence for this predominant difficulty, which has robbed modern poetry of so many readers, was given by Paul Verlaine, a disciple of Baudelaire, whose defence of his own not very difficult style was conceived as an answer to Gautier's call for formal perfection. Its scorn for rhyme—though Verlaine was a master of rhyme—its praise of imprecision, and its assault on rhetoric, provide a theoretical justification for much modern poetry which deliberately matches imprecision of thought with imprecision of language and, in its swift colloquial changes of mood and stress, seeks to represent a mind reaching out towards experiences for which satisfactory words hardly exist. These lines of Verlaine apply

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<sup>7</sup> Yes, the work of art emerges more beautiful from a form which resists working, verse, marble, onyx, enamel.

No false constraints! But to walk straight, Muse, put on a narrow buskin.

Shame on the easy rhythm, like a shoe that is too large, of a kind that every foot can put on and take off.

more fittingly to the intricacies of Rilke, Eliot or the Italian, Eugenio Montale, than to his own poetry of simple nuance:

Il faut aussi que tu n'aïlles point  
 Choisir tes mots sans quelque méprise:  
 Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise  
 Où l'Indécis au Précis se joint. . . .  
 Prends l'éloquence et tords-lui son cou!  
 Tu feras bien, en train d'énergie,  
 De rendre un peu la Rime assagie.  
 Si l'on n'y veille, elle ira jusqu'où?<sup>8</sup>

Baudelaire himself made no break with the formal conventions; many of his lines recall lines of equal psychological subtlety in Racine. His scorn for antiquity was greatly overstated. It was in his choice of moments from the past, in his greater sympathy for Rome's decadence than for her prime, that he differed from the poets of previous centuries. As one of the first of the self-styled Decadents, he felt a special affinity with the Empire in its decadence, since he suspected that he too was living towards the end of a cycle of civilization.

Despite the decline of classical reading and the more extensive knowledge of history and science that have changed our culture in the last hundred years, the attitude of the modern poet to the Greco-Latin inheritance has certainly not been one of neglect. The ancient myths and the literature of Greece and Rome continue to provide them with subjects, since they set out the archetypal situations which each poet has felt compelled to reinterpret in terms of his own fresh insights. Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*, Yeats's variations on Sophoclean themes, Pound's Greek and Latin reconstructions, Valéry's refinements on Greek philosophical thought, are examples that readily come to mind. It is in their choice among the ancient masters that poets since Baudelaire have differed from those of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They no longer think of the classical ideal as one of

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<sup>8</sup> Also you must be a little mistaken in choosing your words: there is nothing more precious than the grey song where indecision is joined with precision. . . . Take eloquence and wring its neck! You will do well while you are about it to give Rhyme a little correction. To what lengths will it go if we do not watch it?

faultless perfection; a grinning Tanagra figurine seems to them to represent the Greek spirit more perfectly than a Laocoon in the formal agony of his battle with the serpents.

One of the last French poets to accept the older classical values, and to remain unaffected by the modern division of mind and purpose, José-Maria de Hérédia, wrote sonnets of a technical perfection that conformed to Gautier's ideal, in each of which he drew, as on a medal, some scene to typify an aspect of the ancient past. It is noteworthy that he came to this past almost as a stranger, having been born in Cuba. His sonnet 'Antoine et Cléopâtre' presents, therefore, an outsider's view of a historical moment seen as a picture, into which feeling and movement hardly enter before the last line:

Tous deux ils regardaient, de la haute terrasse,  
L'Égypte s'endormir sous un ciel étouffant  
Et le Fleuve, à travers le Delta noir qu'il fend,  
Vers Bubaste ou Saïs rouler son onde grasse.

Et le Romain sentait sous la lourde cuirasse,  
Soldat captif berçant le sommeil d'un enfant,  
Ployer et défaillir sur son cœur triomphant  
Le corps voluptueux que son étreinte embrasse.

Tournant son tête pâle entre ses cheveux bruns  
Vers lui qu'enivraient d'invincibles parfums,  
Elle tendit sa bouche et ses prunelles claires;  
Et sur elle courbé, l'ardent Impérator  
Vit dans les larges yeux étoilés de points d'or  
Toute une mer immense où fuyaient des galères.<sup>9</sup>

The poet seems to stand aside from his subject. The classical names, the Latinate conventionality of the adjectives, the deliber-

<sup>9</sup> From the high terrace, they both watched Egypt sleeping beneath a stifling sky, and the river rolling its oily waves towards Bubastis or Sais, through the black Delta that it divides.

And beneath his heavy armour, the Roman, a captive soldier cradling a child's slumber, felt the voluptuous body grasped in his embrace yielding and fainting on his triumphant heart.

Turning her head, pale amid her dark hair, towards him who was maddened by irresistible perfumes, she offered her mouth and her clear eyes.

And bent over her, the passionate Emperor saw in her wide eyes, starred with golden specks, a whole vast sea on which galleys were in flight.

ate introduction of the ancient word *Imperator*, all remove the poem from its own century into a past so remote that even the prophecy of its last line hardly brings it nearer to the present day. Shakespeare's *Cleopatra*, by contrast, requires no archaeological substantiation; she is contemporary and timeless; the gods are introduced only to be eclipsed:

The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,  
 Burn'd on the water; the poop was beaten gold,  
 Purple the sails, and so perfumèd that  
 The winds were love-sick with them, the oars were silver,  
 Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made  
 The water which they beat to follow faster,  
 As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,  
 It beggar'd all description; she did lie  
 In her pavilion—cloth-of-gold of tissue—  
 O'er-picturing that *Venus* where we see  
 The fancy outwork nature: on each side her  
 Stood pretty-dimpled boys, like smiling *Cupids*,  
 With divers-coloured fans, whose wind did seem  
 To glow the delicate cheeks, which they did cool,  
 And what they undid did.

While the *Hérédia* sonnet is lifted out of realism by the sudden widening of the panorama and the hint of magical divination in its conclusion, *Enobarbus*'s speech attains the same effect from the beginning by the use of luxuriant metaphor. These are respectively the Classical and the Baroque way of arousing that thrill which Hugo admired in *Baudelaire*. The modern poet, however, in building up a similar scene, presents it on two levels at once. True to the division which he has recognized in his own mind, he is painter and commentator at once; the scene is presented, and with it, as an ironic frame, a statement of the context in which he sees it. The second section of *T. S. Eliot*'s 'Waste Land' begins with a reference to *Enobarbus*'s opening.

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,  
 Glowed on the marble.

This, like the recital of place-names in *Hérédia*'s first lines, suggests the timeless majesty of the scene. *Virgil* produced a



similar effect by writing lines that recalled passages from Homer. But Eliot is not describing heroic actions; he is presenting a modern situation of uncertainty, contradiction and doubt. Therefore, ironically, he introduces references to a number of poets of the past, building his scene out of acknowledged borrowings from Milton, Virgil and Ovid. But where Hérédia and Virgil are certain of their respectful attitude to the past, Eliot uses legend as a comment on actuality, and the patter of the everyday pub and street-corner as a method of casting disrespect on the present. He portrays a kept woman's luxury in terms of Cleopatra's barge, and introduces only the representation of a classical scene in a tapestry on her wall, to hint at a different set of values that cannot make its voice heard at the present day:

Above the antique mantel was displayed  
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene  
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king  
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale  
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice  
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,  
'Jug Jug' to dirty ears.

The strength of the poem lies in its contrasts and parallels. This is the same world as that in which Ovid wrote the tale of Philomel, but it is also the world of a perplexed woman who lives in luxury and can understand nothing:

My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.  
Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.

Contrast and parallel also heighten the effect of Lorca's poems about the feud between the Gipsies and the Civil Guard, sordid squabbles that are raised to poetry by their primæval quality. For similar bands have fought similar knife-battles in Andalusia ever since the Punic wars, and the judge who rides down to count the dead and record the event is so timeless a figure that he cannot remember what parties it is that have been fighting:

El juez, con guardia civil,  
por los olivares viene.

Sangre resbalada gime  
 muda canción de serpiente.  
 —Señores guardias civiles:  
 aquí pasó lo de siempre.  
 Han muerto cuatro romanos  
 y cinco cartagineses.<sup>10</sup>

This Lorca passage illustrates another deliberate confusion in modern poetry: the substitution of one kind of sense perception for another. The spilt blood becomes audible, thus suggesting the groans of the dying men, which are not otherwise heard; and the red trickle on the ground is described not by its colour but by its imaginary silent song, by its failure in fact to make any sound at all. This exchange between aural and visual impressions is a sign of the exhaustion of language. Had Lorca described the blood of the dying men as red, and its trickle as snakelike, he would have been repeating a conventional effect, and would have failed to strike the reader's imagination. A similar device or conceit, was used in the seventeenth century, especially in Spain, by poets trying to rival the hyperbole of the great masters of the Renaissance. This is one of the features of the Gongoristic style. Thus the minor poet Gabriel Bocángel compares a trumpet's sound over the sea to the flight of an invisible metal bird.

Clearly in a poetry concerned with comment rather than description, the mind, which co-ordinates the findings of the senses, can be permitted to draw on all four indiscriminately, and to jumble their messages. Some modern poets—Edith Sitwell and Wallace Stevens in particular—have attempted to develop the idea of *correspondances*, first put forward by Baudelaire, and to make sound alone suggest associations and feelings. Rimbaud, in his sonnet 'Voyelles', drew up a list of supposed universal relationships between colour and sound:

A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The judge comes with the civil guard through the olive plantations. . . . Slippery blood groans its silent snake's song—Gentlemen of the civil guard, this is the same old story. Four Romans have been killed and five Carthaginians.

<sup>11</sup> A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue

and concluded by assigning to the long O of the Greeks a mystical significance like that attributed by the Hindus to the divine syllable AUM:

O, suprême clairon plein de strideurs étranges,  
 Silences traversés des Mondes et des Anges:  
 —O l'Omega, rayon violet de Ses Yeux!<sup>12</sup>

More recent poets, however, have resorted to this confusion of the senses only sporadically using it as a means of avoiding a stock association between noun and adjective or in order to administer a special shock to the reader.

The poet's divided mind, his political disillusion, his claim to clairvoyance, his changed attitude to the past, his different ideal of artistic perfection, and the confusion of his senses all contribute to the *frisson nouveau*, which poetry has continued to arouse in its readers from Baudelaire's time to that of Eugenio Montale, Dylan Thomas, and even younger poets of the present decade. But two even more revolutionary changes have occurred since Baudelaire's time, which have carried modern poetry far beyond the point at which Hugo saw it when he so generously welcomed *Les Fleurs du Mal*. In the century since 1857, the poet's attitude both to language and to time have fundamentally altered.

Baudelaire's poetry, as has been noted, was both formally and in its vocabulary completely traditional. Even his prose poems, *Le Spleen de Paris*, do not advance beyond the stage of lyrical prose already reached by de Quincey and Poe and by sundry minor writers of prose poems in France. It was principally in England that the demand was heard for a poetic diction close to that of popular speech. Wordsworth had advocated it, but failed to find it. Byron had often found it, but failed to advocate it. Tennyson and Arnold had returned to the grand style, and Browning, anxious though he was to extend the resources of his medium, was fatally hampered by his addiction to the Elizabethan blank verse line. Even when he is most inventive, his verse follows the rhythms of literature, not of speech.

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<sup>12</sup> O, highest trumpet, full of strange stridencies, silences crossed by Worlds and Angels: O Omega, violet beam of His Eyes!

The one example of a poet who had broken with the forms, the rhythms and the language of tradition was Walt Whitman, whose freedoms greatly attracted various minor French poets of the generation that followed Baudelaire. But his style could not be aped. Though it acted as an encouragement to the inventors of *vers-libre*, which has been the predominant measure of modern poetry, Whitman's example could only have been followed by a poet sufficiently convinced of his message to let it dictate its own rhetoric.

Agés, precedents, have long been accumulating undirected materials,  
America brings builders, and brings its own styles.

The immortal poets of Asia and Europe have done their work and  
pass'd to other spheres,  
A work remains, the work of surpassing all they have done.

A new poetry that saw itself to be at the end of an epoch could not use a voice of such confidence. Whitman was too little concerned with half-lights and contradictions, too insensitive to the details of poetic texture to be a fit model for the new poets of France, which had been humbled and depressed by the war of 1870, or of a Europe moving towards an epoch of disastrous wars and revolutions. Only two twentieth-century poets owe any considerable debt to Whitman, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Pablo Neruda, and both, as Communists, have believed themselves to be, like Whitman, heralds of a new age.

The new poetic language and rhythms owe far more to the lesser French poet of the 'eighties, Jules Laforgue, than to Browning or Whitman. Laforgue, a sensitive ironist with an ear for folk-song, music-hall patter and the new slang of the cities, perfected in his last poems the subtly cadenced line that Eliot took over from him for 'Prufrock', and that was adapted also by such French poets as Guillaume Apollinaire a year or two earlier.

Laforgue's is the strength of a sound compromise. Neither rhyme nor rhythm is abandoned. But the rhyme is no longer part of a regular scheme, and sometimes yields to assonance or alliteration. The pattern of sound, in fact, is applied evenly to a whole passage rather than at certain fixed points in it: and this practice has been developed by subsequent poets as various as Neruda and

Dylan Thomas. But this tendency has been greatly strengthened in England by the influence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and of the alliterative Anglo-Saxon and Middle English verse from which he developed his techniques. Laforgue's strictly cadenced *vers-libre*, however, with its train of allusions and broken rhythms, still appears as original and contemporary as it did when it was written. No innovators have succeeded in making his magnificent poem on the coming of winter appear less exciting.

Allons, allons, et hallali!  
 C'est l'Hiver bien connu qui s'amène;  
 Oh! les tournants des grandes routes,  
 Et sans petit Chaperon Rouge qui chemine! . . .  
 Oh! leurs ornières des chars de l'autre mois,  
 Montant en don quichottesques rails  
 Vers les patrouilles des nuées en déroute  
 Que le vent malmène vers les transatlantiques bercails!  
 Accélérons, accélérons, c'est la saison bien connue, cette fois.  
 Et le vent, cette nuit, il en a fait de belles!  
 Ô dégats, ô nids, ô modestes jardinets!  
 Mon cœur et mon sommeil: ô échos des cognées! . . .<sup>13</sup>

It is the same sound of axes as in the last act of *The Cherry Orchard*. Laforgue is a poet of endings and memories. He looks back to childhood with the same divided feelings as Baudelaire. He remembers a freshness of vision, but with it the boredom of a recurrent refrain, the constant repetition of tuneless scales practised behind closed shutters on hot Sunday evenings. His prevailing mood is ironic, his habitual gesture a shrug and a wry smile. Yet philosophically, he is a courageous poet, able to accept the nothingness of much that is generally accepted as reality, and yet to pursue some ultimate meaning behind that blank façade.

Laforgue's vision of time is of some cyclic repetition in which

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<sup>13</sup> Forward, forward, and away! It is the usual winter coming on. O bends in the high roads, without Little Red Riding Hood walking there! Oh their ruts of last year's carts, climbing like quixotic rails towards the retreating cloud patrols, that are harried by the wind towards transatlantic folds! Hurry, hurry, this time it is the familiar season, and tonight the wind has done some fine work! O destruction! O nests, O modest gardens! My heart and my slumber: O echoes of axes! . . .



the same events, recalling the same incidents from literature, fairy tale or childhood, return and return, bringing ever increasing boredom. The panorama of time has closed in on the modern poet. There is for him only the moment of intense experience; all the rest is memory or foreboding. A sonnet by Edwin Muir crystallizes a situation that owes something of its intensity to familiarity with the new physics of relativity, but more to the modern poet's inability to believe, as Hugo or Tennyson believed, in a possible betterment of human conditions by means of man-guided progress. Muir describes man's situation as one in which—to quote the title of his poem—'There is Nothing there but Faith':

Nothing, it seemed, between them and the grave.  
 No, as I looked, there was nothing anywhere.  
 You'd think no ground could be so flat and bare:  
 No little ridge or hump or bush to brave  
 The horizon. Yet they called that land their land,  
 Without a single thought drank in that air  
 As simple and equivocal as despair.  
 This, this was what I could not understand.  
 The reason was, there was nothing there but faith.  
 Faith made the whole, yes all they could see or hear  
 Or touch or think, and arched its break of day  
 Within them and around them every way.  
 They looked: all was transfigured far and near,  
 And the great world rolled between them and death.

The landscape and the situation echo those of Browning's 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came'. Yet here the incidents of the knight's journey, the hideous scapegoat horse, the brothers who had been overthrown in the same ordeal, even the hint of a spectral adversary, are absent. What remains is a timeless moment in the experience of a nameless *they*, in which the possession of faith turned defeat into victory. This is the moment that most concerns contemporary religious poets. They do not treat of belief and disbelief as Browning did in 'Christmas Eve' and 'Easter Day', but of the sudden presence or absence of faith or vision. T. S. Eliot's glimpse of a hidden reality in 'Ash Wednes-

day', which foreshadows a similar moment in the rose garden in 'Burnt Norton', may seem to express a positive and unshakable faith acquired in an instant:

The silent sister veiled in white and blue  
 Between the yews, behind the garden god,  
 Whose flute is breathless, bent her head and signed  
 but spoke no word.

Yet a line or two later comes the return to the unenlightened level of common living:

And after this our exile.

In the same way the departure of just such a vision leads the Spanish poet Miguel de Unamuno to ask his despairing question at the end of his poem 'Hermosura':

La noche cae, despierto,  
 me vuelve la congoja,  
 la espléndida vision se ha derretido,  
 vuelvo a ser hombre.  
 Y ahora dime, Señor, dime al oído:  
 tanta hermosura  
 ¿matará nuestra muerte?<sup>14</sup>

Neither poet is concerned with dogma, or with questions of belief and disbelief. What matters to both is the glimpse of the 'still point of the turning world', the central experience of the mystic. To Eliot it brings assurance, followed by a resigned return to the common level of living, while Unamuno's moment of insight only plunges him deeper into the anxious questionings of the divided man. But the preoccupation of both is with the mystical approach, whereas that of the nineteenth-century poet was with institutional religion.

The *frisson nouveau* has thus brought not only a new way of feeling, a new attitude of the poet to himself, but also a new

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<sup>14</sup> Night falls, I awake, my anxiety returns, the splendid vision has melted away, I am a man once more. And now tell me, Lord, tell me in my ear: Will our death abolish all this beauty?

attitude to religious truth. Though many contemporary religious poets belong in name to the Roman Church, their standpoint as poets is essentially a Protestant one. What most preoccupies them is the individual's experience of God outside time, and without reference to theology or creed.

# The Cubist Perspective

## The New World of Relationships: Camera and Cinema

Philosophy, Science, and the Arts

WYLIE SYPHER

"In the museum," Cézanne remarked, "the painter learns to think." By 1890, when he was painting *The Basket of Apples*, Cézanne was thinking hard, spilling these thoroughly realized apples across the top of a table that is speculatively broken upward on the right, tipping the surface until the fruit would, in nature, be rolling off, treating the napkin as a single white plane even if it droops over the edge of the table. The plate and other objects are warped into new gravitational fields of vision like those in Lautrec's scenes, where figures are buoyed up by steep graphic perspective.

This painting reminds us that a century earlier, at the close of the enlightenment, Immanuel Kant wrote that human experience is possible only when we have "a concept of an intelligible world." Dare to think, urged Kant: *sapere aude*. However faintly Pope thought, he had a concept of an intelligible world and could utilize the Newtonian world order in his verse. The nineteenth-century poet like Tennyson often dreaded to follow the scientist—perhaps because the scientists who most nearly affected men "as enjoying and suffering beings" were now biologists, not

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*From Wylie Sypher, Rococo to Cubism in Art and Literature (New York: Random House, 1960).*

mathematicians. During the nineteenth century, art and science became alienated as they had not been alienated in the enlightenment; thus the intellectual roots of art were cut. Experiments such as impressionism and the naturalistic novel adapted certain methods from science; yet on the whole art and science seemed to be two incompatible kinds of experience or knowledge, and scientific theory and aesthetic theory seemed contrary. Matthew Arnold despairingly asked in his essay on "Literature and Science" how poetry can "exercise the power of relating the modern results of natural science to man's instinct for conduct, his instinct for beauty?" He was forced to admit, "I do not know how." He was in any case sure that science without poetry did not suffice. On an earlier page we have noted the effects of this alienation on poetry, for in his essay written in 1926 I. A. Richards asked whether the modern poet can be expected to deal with a God who is subject to a theory of relativity. Significantly enough, T. S. Eliot, whom Richards takes as an example of the plight of the modern poet, helpless before the science that has destroyed his beliefs, makes his maturest poetic statements by writing verse that is an "act of the mind" as well as a confession of faith:

Time present and time past  
 Are both perhaps present in time future,  
 And time future contained in time past. . . .  
 What might have been is an abstraction  
 Remaining a perpetual possibility  
 Only in a world of speculation.  
 What might have been and what has been  
 Point to one end, which is always present.

(*"Burnt Norton"*)

Eliot is more intelligent than Pope, and has, perhaps unconsciously, made our most conceptual scientific theory—a theory of relativity—apposite to poetry now that this theory is "manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings."

Wallace Stevens is another who insisted that the great feat of poetic imagination "lies in abstraction. The achievement of the romantic, on the contrary, lies in minor wish-fulfillment, and it is



incapable of abstraction." Stevens does not of course mean rationalism; nevertheless he proposes that "we live in the mind." We have just noticed also how Paul Valéry argues that "the clear distinct operations of the mind" are not opposed to poetry; rather, poetry requires "our will to intelligence, and exercising to the full our powers of understanding." Valéry's hero is M. Teste, who holds, like Stevens, that "it is by a sort of abstraction that the work of art is constructed." The poem as a work of abstract thought demands what Stevens calls "liberty of the mind." Stevens goes on: "The truth seems to be that we live in the concepts of the imagination before the reason has established them." Immanuel Kant would have understood this statement. For Kant, at the height of the enlightenment, would have assumed that imaginative activity sometimes coincides with conceptual activity. Have we not been misled by the nineteenth-century romantic belief that the imagination means either emotional power or the concrete image, the metaphor alone. We have not supposed there is a poetry of ideas.

Cubism is above all an "art of conception," and it was born of thinking done by Cézanne and by Nabis like Sérusier, who said, "A painter must be intelligent." Gleizes and Metzinger repeat: "Without denying either sensation or emotion, the cubist has raised painting to the level of the mind"—*La peinture exigeait donc les connaissances solides*. This solves Baudelaire's problem of transposing *volupté* to *connaissance*. T. S. Eliot, speaking for the moderns, has said, "The only method is to be very intelligent."<sup>1</sup> We know what Eliot owes to the symbolists and the artists of the late nineteenth century who freed the motif from the anecdote, the illustrative, the weight of the object in its ordinary guise. Gleizes and Metzinger underscore the importance of this heritage of abstraction, to which Gauguin and the Nabis contributed so much, when they remark that "the visible world does not become the real world except by the operation of thought." They add: "It is not enough for a painter to see a thing; he must *think* it."

The fauvist painters, too, were able to abstract both line and

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Alvarez, *The Shaping Spirit*, 1958, 21.

color, and it is hard to say whether Picasso's *Demaiselles d'Avignon* (1907) is fauvist or cubist; yet it remains true that the cubists did what the fauves did not: they developed a theory—a theory that has the closest agreement with the theories of our science. Fauvism and cubism are alike quests for style, but the analysis of the world was pressed further in cubism, which undertook to represent the object in its “total existence.”<sup>2</sup> In his *Theory of Figure Painting* André Lhote stresses what demands cubist art made on the mind: “The more the intelligence enters into the creation of a work of art, the more the painting can be said to have a maximum of existence.” I. Rice Pereira, one of the neo-plastic painters, has said, “Every space has its own geometric structure and dimensions and belongs to different levels of experience.” This sounds like a sentence from Alberti or another renaissance theorist; for in the renaissance, science was an aspect of art, and the painter, like the cubist or post-cubist, was aware of the mathematic of his day. The renaissance was creative partly because, like the enlightenment, it was eager to assimilate science to art.

Among the blockages in nineteenth-century art was the inability, or unwillingness, of the artist to utilize science intelligently, to make art genuinely contemporary. Or, worse, the science that most readily aroused a response was Darwinian biology, which seemed to sanction strong impulse and romantic feeling rather than intelligence.

Rodin's failures as an artist are informative. Temperamentally he was kin to Delacroix, and had a Wagnerian need to express energy, the nineteenth-century dynamism that disturbed Henry Adams and sent him, for refuge, to Chartres. To find an idiom for the titanic, Rodin experimented with wave-motions in his sculpture—the romantic motion that drove the great breaking billow in Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*. Rodin's groups of figures curve inward, then are thrust horizontally outward in a surge leaping out of the block, like the head of *La Tempête* crying out in direct emotive attack. Rodin also specialized in the anatomical fragment—the hand, the head, the muscular body

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<sup>2</sup> André Salmon, *La Jeune Peinture Française*, Paris, 1912, 50.

emerging from the unfinished marble. This is a brand of symbolism, for only a few details are stated. *The Last Vision* derives from Michelangelo's unfinished giants as well as from the techniques of symbolism—only a head, a suggestion of crossed hands, a translation of sculptural volumes into dim pictorial terms. It is significant that the Rodin Museum is hung with Carrière's gray misty paintings, for Carrière blurs everything he touches. Rodin substitutes vagueness for sculptural realization except in a few items like *La Femme Accroupie*, a massive simplification almost Egyptian. This evasive poetic technique is in sharp contrast to the sculptural value of Cézanne's proto-cubist planes. Rodin, in fact, never found his style, and there is an abiding conflict between his cloudy implications and his inherent fleshliness, a conflict from which Wagner also suffered. The vagueness reminds us of Maeterlinck; the mass reminds us of Michelangelo and the baroque. Rodin never reached any such conciliation as Renoir's sculptural abundance; and at moments he becomes a kind of John Singer Sargent in stone. Some of the Wagnerism is due to Rodin's quest for myth, leading him to subjects like *Eve*, *Orpheus*, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, the archetypal huge *Man Walking*, and the pompous cliché of *The Thinker*. Much of this titanism is merely emotional luxury, like *The Gates of Hell*. Some, like *The Kiss*, is simply vulgar.

Rodin's technical device is the intertwining of his figures, a tactic that gives the stone mobility and opens his volumes into a sculptural space later explored by Henry Moore. But Rodin never discovered the simultaneous space of an authentic modern like Cézanne or Calder, who uses the mobile as a solution to the problem of activity in sculpture. Instead, Rodin only complicates the old three-dimensional scenographic space: we must pass *around* his figures in spite of their intertwining and wave-motions; we do not see them in the cinematic perspective of cubist painting or abstract sculpture, a poly-dimensional space where time is "flattened" as it is in the montage-vision of Boccioni's *Bottle Developing in Space*, or Archipenko's openwork figures. Since Rodin's episodes develop in a Euclidean space-time system, the romantic forms of *Chute d'un Ange*, *Oceanides*, or *Fugit Amor* move within a space that is volumetric but not simulta-

neous. Rodin can render one profile at a given instant, episodically, and his surfaces appear, burst, and change within a succession of instants no matter how they intertwine. His work is endowed with the nineteenth-century sense of force; there is something Bernini-like in the explosion of his masses. But he lacks the architectural context of baroque sculpture, and his figures exist in a formless romantic infinity, not the framework of the baroque theatre. *The Gates of Hell* violates the architectural notion of a portal: their extreme mobility should have been expressed by a *revolving* door, and they are not baroque but picturesque. Rodin rebelled against the confines of Euclidean space without conceiving any other structure. He needed a relativity theory to make time another dimension of space, treated simultaneously as a field in which sculpture moves. He needed not the mythical poetry of the romantics and Wagner but the geometric constructions of Antoine Pevsner or Naum Gabo, who take motion in space as an aspect of contour in time.

With cubism these blockages disappear. They disappear in Cézanne, who was intelligent as Rodin was not. It is not desirable to depend heavily on Cézanne's often-quoted statement, "Represent nature by means of the cylinder, the sphere, the cone. . . ." There are few cylinders, spheres, or cones in his painting. But there is a new occupation of space, for Cézanne was instinctively contemporary and somehow able to cope with the deeper problems behind the brushwork of Courbet and the early tachism of the impressionists, who broke up time by light, and space by their modular constructions. So in Cézanne the problem of sensation yielded to the problem of representation, which is the problem of Cézanne's conception of the world. It is a problem he attacks directly, without evasions. He did not read science or philosophy; like many great painters he seems to have been almost illiterate—certainly inarticulate. Nevertheless he was, in Gertrude Stein's sense of the word, contemporary because he felt strongly the new world of relationships in space being discovered in the philosophy of F. H. Bradley and the predecessors of Einstein—Riemann, Clifford, and Gauss.

In 1875 Clifford was writing that our ordinary laws of geometry do not apply to small portions of space, that these portions

are comparable to little hills on the surface of a plane, and that distortion passes like waves from one portion of space to another. Van Gogh must have *felt* this motion when he painted the enormously powerful curved local spaces in ravines and water; much as Cézanne *felt* the dislocations of space in representing the masses of Montagne Sainte-Victoire, which appear to model the dimensions around them. In his landscapes Van Gogh forces the synthetist designs invented by Gauguin to bulge into the contours of a new topography that is nearly magnetic in direction.

In retrospect we can see the full significance of the cubist movement that made art contemporary and found a style. Cubism is a fruition of modern thought; for it was based, as Francastel states, on new conditions of life, on new formal techniques, and indirectly on a whole fund of scientific and philosophical speculation. I. Rice Pereira has said that modern painting is an image of our cognition, and that space is a symbolic extension of man's being. So it is with the cubists and their followers, since cubism is an art that expresses the condition of modern man, who has been forced to live in a world where there are, as Whitehead put it, no longer any simple locations, where all relations are plural.

Technically cubism is a breakdown of three-dimensional space constructed from a fixed point of view: things exist in multiple relations to each other and change their appearance according to the point of view from which we see them—and we now realize that we can see them from innumerable points of view, which are also complicated by time and light, influencing all spatial systems. Cubism is an attempt to *conceive* the world in new ways, just as renaissance art was an attempt to conceive the world in new ways. Thus the modes of abstraction that have grown from cubism have involved the intelligence. In a passage on "Art and Science" Naum Gabo indicates how these two are now interdependent:

Whatever exists in nature, exists in us in the form of our awareness of its existence. All creative activities of Mankind consist in the search for an expression of that awareness. . . . The artist of today cannot possibly escape the impact science is making on the whole mentality of the human race. . . . The artist's task is not so pragmatic and straightfor-



ward as the scientist's; nevertheless, both the artist and the scientist are prompted by the same creative urge to find a perceptible image of the hidden forces in nature of which they are both aware. . . . I do not know of any idea in the history of man's culture that developed in a separate and independent compartment of the human mind. . . . To my mind it is a fallacy to assume that the aspects of life and nature which contemporary science is unfolding are only communicable through science itself. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Cubism may go beyond the modernity of science, for as Braque saw, "Art disturbs; science reassures." The truly contemporary artist is always slightly in advance of science for he is conscious of the atmosphere about him in a way the scientist or critic is not. Picasso painted *Guernica* long before Hiroshima was annihilated. Dostoevsky plumbed the unconscious before Freud. Braque and the early cubists eagerly accepted the challenge to deal with the object in all its new ambiguities: to disturb our vision of things, because as Braque remarks, "It is always desirable to have two notions—one to demolish the other."

The ideas behind cubist painting are reflected in all the modern arts. In writing on the music of poetry Eliot has seen that verse can suggest new "correspondences" in an age of relativity: "The music of a word is, so to speak, at a point of intersection: it arises from its relation first to the words immediately preceding and following it, and indefinitely to the rest of its context; and from another relation, that of its immediate meaning in that context to all the other meanings which it has had in other contexts, to its greater or less wealth of association." Hence, also, the art of Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*, where each portmanteau phrase is an intersection in multidimensional meaning. Adrian Leverkuehn, the Faustian hero of Thomas Mann's novel, experiments with modulations between distant keys, "using the so-called relation of the third, the Neapolitan sixth," finding that "relationship is everything. And if you want to give it a more precise name, it is ambiguity."

Cubism exploited the rich ambiguity of the modern object

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Gyorgy Kepes, *The New Landscape*, 1956, a book that has proved valuable throughout the entire chapter, especially his study of "laminated" space.

exactly while science and the cinema were also discovering ambiguities in the modern view of things. The theory of relativity that evolves through F. H. Bradley, Whitehead, Einstein, and modern mathematics is only the scientific expression of "the new landscape" of the twentieth century, a landscape revealed for the first time in cubist painting and the cinema. Describing this landscape, Charles Morris has written: "Contemporary man must be able to move among and between diverse perspectives, cultural perspectives on the earth, spatial and temporal perspectives in the cosmos." Ortega y Gasset has furnished us with a philosophy of "perspectivism," which represents the complexity and ambiguity of our existence.

The changing perspectives on which we build our existence appear in the cinema, a modern form of illusion that relates motion, time, and space in a new kind of composition. It may well be that according to the law of technical primacy—the theory that in each era all the arts fall under the influence of one of the arts—the cinema has technical primacy during the years between the rise of cubism and the present. By the cinema one naturally means not Hollywood, which ordinarily uses the camera merely to record a nineteenth-century plot, but an artistic technique of presenting things as they exist in time by means of a composite perspective. The daguerreotype arrested things in space and time and used the old renaissance perspective, the closed scene, with posed figures, seen from a fixed angle. This rather documentary technique had its influence on the realistic novel, *trompe l'oeil*, and Degas' angle of vision. But the technique of the camera never produced a style until photography broke away from the old renaissance laws of composition and dealt with the problems of changing appearances in time and space. Then the camera, used with artistic consciousness, became the cinema and revised the stylizations of the daguerreotype into the multidimensional art that is deeply congenial to cubist painting. Whenever a technique produces a theory—that is, when a technique like photography becomes conscious—the groundwork for a style is laid. By 1912 Delaunay seems to have been conscious of a basically cinematic technique when he studied the *rythme tourbillant* of his colored disks. Gertrude Stein, with her sense that art must

"live in the actual present," described all the modern arts as cinematic, although she doubted she had "ever seen a cinema" when she wrote *The Making of Americans* and claimed that "this our period was undoubtedly the period of the cinema and series production." "I was doing," she says, "what the cinema was doing, I was making a continuous succession of the statement of what that person was until I had not many things but one thing." Her early stories were "made up of succession and each moment having its own emphasis that is its own difference and so there was the moving and the existence. . . ."

By its revolution in thought and method of representing the world cubism created a cinematic style. The cubists began by rejecting the renaissance illusions of three-dimensional space and a closed orthogonal perspective. They renounced the figment of chiaroscuro along with the subterfuge of arranging solid volumes in a false distance. André Lhote boldly said he rejected "all the precautions which Old Masters took to cover up the arbitrariness of their chosen methods." So too, Ortega asked whether anything could be more artificial than Euclidean geometry—on which painting had been based. The cubists created a new flat perspective; they broke open the volumes of things by spreading objects upon shifting interrelated planes that did not violate the surface of the canvas, the space at the disposal of the painter as painter. This flat perspective meant also that painting could reintegrate itself with the wall, which could be treated like a cinematic screen. By representing the several faces of things simultaneously, the cubist dealt with the old problem of time and motion in new ways; objects "moved," but they were also immobilized in a complex design, offered to us in their calm being, their plural aspects conceived together. If the cubists "assassinated" objects, "so much the worse for objects"—as Picasso said to Zervos. This destruction was actually the reorganizing of the world by the mind. When Gleizes and Metzinger claim that the visible world becomes real only by the agency of thought, they are merely following Gauguin's principle that "art is an abstraction drawn from nature."<sup>4</sup> The cubist object no longer has a single or simple identity.

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<sup>4</sup> André Lhote, *La Peinture Libérée*, Paris, 1956.

Yet this assassination of the object was not like the symbolist-expressionist distortion of things, for the cubists were nearly scientific in their destructions, loving the object and seeking to study it in its silent, dynamic power. In his talks with Zervos, Picasso said, "There isn't any such thing as abstract art. You must always start with something. Afterward you can remove all traces of actuality. There's no danger then anyway, because the idea of the object will have left its indelible mark." The cubist object remains even after it "is no longer discernible." The cubist found his reality among the shifting appearances of things. Gleizes and Metzinger saw in an object a multiple reality that can be defined only by multiple images: "An object hasn't any absolute form. It has many: as many as there are planes in the domain of meaning . . . Autant d'yeux à contempler un objet, autant d'images essentielles." In the same way Picasso took the painter's task as recording *une impression multidimensionnelle*. Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler says that the main interest of cubists was to state in two dimensions what seems to have three—a form of polyphonic vision counterpointing the many facets of objects into a whole. Therefore, Kahnweiler insists, cubist painting is close to the new music of Satie and Schoenberg, which is horizontal in melody and vertical in harmony.

Cubist painting resolves the old conflict, disturbing to Descartes and John Locke and the academicians, between the "primary" qualities of an object (those features known to abstract thought—its mathematical properties) and its "secondary" qualities (those felt by the senses—its material properties). For the cubist both are aspects of the object, and neither is the ground of its reality. The cubist object is a point at which thought about the object (our conception of it) penetrates and reorders sense impressions and feelings. In its purity cubist painting refuses to attract us by appealing strongly to the eye or the emotions. It uses low hues and restrained lines; it breaks up the potent rhythm of the romantic line and confines itself to neutral greys, greens, tans, blues, black, and white. The cubist painter does not make a violent attack upon the object or upon us; he reduces the glaring fauvist color and surging line to an idiom of transparencies and a pictorial, instead of a spatial or emotive, depth. It is noted that the influence of Cézanne eventually killed fauvism.

At its extreme purity—in Braque's painting—cubism is a study of the very techniques of representation—painting about the methods of painting, a report on the reality of art. With Braque's intelligent and lyrical vision cubism devoted itself to what the French call the *tableau-tableau*—the painter's painting—which investigates both the object and the means of painting this object. As a *tableau-tableau* cubism reaches its most refined introspections, its most acute self-consciousness. Yet cubism was not at first doctrinaire; its relation to the world was too genuine. Braque's painting is a formal but not, however, an abstract world, since he never loses contact with the texture of objects he studies and destroys, the bottles, violins, fruits, and musical scores he fixes in the "luminous silent stasis" which James Joyce believed is the artistic triumph. Braque has a deep, long attachment to the still life, but the still life becomes for him a "poetic creation": "The painter," he explains, "doesn't try to reconstruct an anecdote but to establish a pictorial fact."<sup>5</sup> The *fait pictural*—the tableau-object—has complex and ambiguous modes of existence, belonging to different orders of reality, different levels of being, between the worlds of art and life. Sometimes to show how his painting adjusts to any level of reality the cubist assimilated into his pictorial world the very elements of actuality alien to painting—fragments of cord, cloth, newsprint, wood. Indeed, to show the equivocal relationships into which his work could enter—and also to affirm the existence of a world of art—the cubist needed collage, the texture of objects themselves, to underscore the points of intersection. The device of collage is one of the guarantees of the integrity of cubist art, its refusal to accept subterfuge, its denial of the single identity of things.

To prove that art and life intersect, that thought enters things, that appearance and reality collide, or coincide, at the points we call objects, the cubist relied on certain technical devices: a breaking of contours, the *passage*, so that a form merges with the space about it or with other forms; planes or tones that bleed into other planes and tones; outlines that coincide with other outlines, then suddenly reappear in new relations; surfaces that

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<sup>5</sup> "Pensées sur l'Art," *Confluences*, May, 1945.



simultaneously recede and advance in relation to other surfaces; parts of objects shifted away, displaced, or changed in tone until forms disappear behind themselves.<sup>6</sup> This deliberate "oscillation of appearances" gives cubist art its high "iridescence." However we describe it, cubist painting is a research into the emergent nature of reality, which is constantly transforming itself into multiple appearances, at once fact and fiction. Cubism is a moment of crisis in the arts when "description and structure conflict" in a world of plural vision and classic form. Above all cubism refused any melodramatic stress, the literary subject, the "big" anecdote; it was not interested in the isolated episode, or the climax. Instead cubism was an ingenious examination of reality in its many contingencies, an experimental painting with the hardihood of modern science and thought.

Thus cubists gradually disengaged the object from three-dimensional space, from a limited, fixed point of view, and "dismantled" it into planes which give an illusion of closure and depth but which are always moving and readjusting themselves to one another. The cubist world knows both change and permanence; it is a region of process, arrest, transition, where things emerge into recognition, then revise their features; an Uncertainty Principle operates here as it does in the new science.

While the cubists were living in the Bateau Lavoisier on the Montmartre slope their friend Princet, an amateur mathematician, used to talk with some of them about the science that has conceived our world as a structure of emergent relationships determined by one's point of view. The cubist world is the world of a new physics, of F. H. Bradley, who in 1893 in *Appearance and Reality* stated that reality can have no absolute contours but varies with the angle from which one sees it: "We have to take reality as many, and to take it as one, and to avoid contradiction." Anticipating Whitehead's theory of the essential relevance of every object to all other objects in the universe, Bradley

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<sup>6</sup> My résumé of cubist techniques is drawn from Winthrop Judkins' article, "Toward a Reinterpretation of Cubism," *Art Bulletin*, XXX, December, 1948, 270-278, and from Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, *The Rise of Cubism*, 1949. See also John Golding, *Cubism*, 1959, which appeared while this book was in press.

defined the identity of a thing as the *view* we take of it—what Whitehead later called our prehension of it. Appearances belong to reality, and reality is intrinsic in varying appearances. Space is for Bradley only “a relation between terms which can never be found.” Like Whitehead and the relativists, Bradley accepts the “irreducible plurality of the world” and affirms that “plurality and relatedness are but features and aspects of a unity.” The absolute manifests itself in change, and changes reveal the nature of reality: “appearance without reality would be impossible, and reality without appearance would be nothing.” Bradley’s ingenious diagram makes this notion clearer than Whitehead ever did: many relations are possible within reality, which allows us to construct appearances from many points of view—

A	B	C	D
B	A	D	C
C	D	A	B
D	C	B	A

If these terms are given, we may read them in many directions and make contrary senses. The appearance of any item like A makes a design, though this design has no independent existence apart from the whole situation in which it appears. If we see only diagonals, then our reality will be limited to a pattern of A and D. But the configuration of the A items as a diagonal takes meaning only in relation to the other items B, C, D, which are relevant to any patterns we are able to select. In fact, any shifting of B, C, or D at once alters the appearance of A. Bradley lays the foundation for an existentialist approach, since each of the features of a situation is engaged in a total complex.

Whitehead expanded this theme of the essential relevance of all aspects of reality to reality itself: “all entities or factors in the universe are essentially relevant to each other’s existence” since “every entity involves an infinite array of perspectives.” In theory there is no such thing any longer as “simple location” in a universe where nothing can be located without involving everything else. By the same token there is no such thing in theory as an isolated instant in time, which becomes a function of motion:

things cannot be placed by simple here and now when all speeds seem to be the same in relation to the speed of light. Thus

The misconception which has haunted philosophic literature throughout the centuries is the notion of "independent existence." There is no such mode of existence; every entity is only to be understood in terms of the way in which it is interwoven with the rest of the Universe. (*Essays in Science and Philosophy*)

The world is a structure of variable relationships and multiple appearances.

To see why perspectives in cubist painting were "inquisitorial" and why the cubist world was a complex of shifting planes, we need to consider what Whitehead means by an event, which is the ultimate concrete entity in reality. A thing is an event which focusses out of process a certain complex of relations from a certain point of view; but every event or thing involves the rest of the universe—all other events and all other points of view. "An event," Whitehead remarks, "has to do with all that there is." It seems to be independent, but it is not; its independence is seen only by cutting away its relations to everything else and regarding it in isolation—that is, taking a very limited view of its actuality:

The event is what it is, by reason of the unification in itself of a multiplicity of relationships. The general scheme of these mutual relationships is an abstraction which presupposes each event as an independent entity, which it is not, and asks what remnant of these formative relationships is then left in the guise of external relationships. The scheme of relationships as thus impartially expressed becomes the scheme of a complex of events variously related as wholes to parts and as joint parts within some one whole . . . the part evidently is constitutive of the whole. Also an isolated event which has lost its status in any complex of events is equally excluded by the very nature of an event. So the whole is evidently constitutive of the part.

(*Science and the Modern World*)

Nature is therefore a structure of "emergent relationships"—emerging, according to our point of view, from the substrate neutral activity which must be called process because it has no features of itself and is like a fog out of which appear the

various objects taking form for us depending on our prehension. Forms will differ as our prehensions change. And our prehensions change according to our situation in time and space. Things are merely an area of tension in constantly emerging conditions. An object or a fact is only a residue from the process continually under way in our universe.

In such a universe where things have no simple locations the old Newtonian values of absolute space and absolute time have gone. The only constant left is the speed of light, which is so nearly instantaneous that all spaces, times, and motions seem levelled when measured against it. The speed of light consumes differences in space and time until each location seems to be only an illusion depending on a local point of view. Suppose, for example, the eye could move with the speed of light and see, instantaneously, all the separate still shots along the outspread reel of a movie: these separate still shots, which appear extended in time and space when they are projected on a screen, would appear together, simultaneously, in a configuration that is static—as if the reel were run off instantaneously. Then we should be able to take in the total course of events at a glance; the sequence of episodes on the film would not be a plot unfolding in time or even by cause-and-effect, but a certain pattern of relationships that was there all the while, as a “given” in the first place. But for any eye unable to take in the total situation with the speed of light, the various events will emerge in time and space and motion according to the speed with which the still shots are projected. At either end of the scale of motion, there is no motion—and the time of the unfolding of these events is an illusion created by the rate at which the reel is run off.

Furthermore, the total configuration would have no meaning apart from the individual shots, each of which is an event in which all the other events are involved. The concrete event—the individual shot—is one aspect of a total configuration, which becomes only an abstraction without the individual shots or events of which it is composed. The film has no meaning apart from its separate shots; yet the meaning of the separate shots derives from their situation within the abstraction of the total film. Permanence has no meaning apart from change; the ab-

stract and the concrete are two facets of a total structure. In Bradley's phrase, we must take this reality as many and as one, and avoid contradiction. But as Whitehead also says, "the very character of what is real is the transition of things, the *passage* one to another." Our world is a manifold of changing relationships which expresses itself as a "community of occasions" where every concrete actuality takes its place as an "irreducible stubborn fact" in an emergent total design.

If we assume, therefore, that abstract ideas are the basis of reality, we "misplace our concreteness" because all values are rooted in "matter-of-fact events" which are real enough but do not exist independently of other events. "The actuality is the value." Once again Whitehead foreshadows the existentialism of Sartre or Camus, who believe that individual man's existence is the ultimate reality of human experience, and that each man is inalienably free to act; yet in acting he involves himself in an engagement or commitment with all the Others. Whenever I choose, as I must, I choose for *you* also. Sartre says that "the destiny of man is placed within himself" since each must choose for himself and the value of one's life is generated by these choices. In this sense existence precedes essence. Yet by a contradiction inherent in reality when a man acts he commits himself to all other men, "deciding for the whole of mankind" and taking on "complete and profound responsibility." As with Whitehead, the concrete and the abstract are only two aspects of the same situation. The reality of human experience is always singular; but in choosing for myself I make history by choosing for others who impinge upon me. The existentialist says: I define myself by my relations with others who are *not* me; the Other is not the Self, but the Self needs the Other to realize the identity of the Self. Existentialism, then, is a philosophic extension of Whitehead's notion that the salvation of reality is the concreteness of the actual event, which loses meaning, however, apart from all events that have ever been or will ever be. The sum of Whitehead's relativity and our existentialism is that there is no simple location or independent existence in the sense of isolated existence. The essence of reality is in the relations entered into by each concrete event, each thing and person.



In all these ways cubism was modern since it was an analysis of the multiple identity of objects, their emergent relationships and engagement with other objects and events. Theo van Doesburg wrote: "A style comes into being when, after achieving a collective consciousness of life, we are able to set up a harmonious relationship between the inner character and the outward appearance of life."<sup>7</sup> Or as Gertrude Stein put it, "the composition in which we live makes the art which we see and hear." The cubist was not only contemporary; he was prophetic. The techniques of passage, transition, and transformation within and about the object expressed the collective consciousness of modern experience as nineteenth-century art did not. In Delaunay's *Tour Eiffel* (1910) the oscillations of the modern movement, the flickering consciousness of the new century with its cinematic eye and its laminated space were apparent. The atmospheric continuum of the impressionists was broken up into a dynamic collision of shots taken from different angles.

Delaunay uses the simultaneous perspective which finds its technique in the cinema and is common to all the modern arts, being adapted after cubism to the methods of abstract and non-objective painting and sculpture and reappearing as tachism. Eisenstein notes that while cubism was flourishing in France, montage was thought to be "everything" in the cinema. In his words, montage is "a complex composed of film strips containing photographic images" so arranged that two or more shots are seen together, or nearly together, in a compound image. Thus "the polyphonic structure achieves its total effect through the composite sensation of all the pieces as a whole." Based not on sequence but counterpoint, montage compels us to see things in multiple perspective, telescoping time and fixing representation in a spliced image like the flattened cubist perspective.

Eisenstein explains the montage principle by quoting from René Guilleré's article on the jazz age, which equates the cinematic technique with syncopation:

In both art and literature creation proceeds through several perspectives, simultaneously employed. The order of the day is intricate syn-

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in *Dictionary of Abstract Painting*, ed. Michel Seuphor, 1957, 43.

thesis—bringing together viewpoints of an object from below and viewpoints from above.

Antique perspective presented us with geometrical concepts of objects—as they could be seen only by an ideal eye. Our perspective shows us objects as we see them with both eyes—gropingly. We no longer construct the visual world with an acute angle, converging on the horizon. We open up this angle, pulling the representation against us, upon us, toward us. . . . That is why we are not afraid to use close-ups in films: to portray man as he sometimes seems to us, out of natural proportions. . . .

In other words, in our new perspective—there is no perspective. (Quoted in *Film Sense*)

Guilleré means there is no one perspective, but synchronization or jazz syncopation with rhythms stated in sharp profiles brought up into the foreground.

Cézanne's still lifes had already synchronized perspectives in this way, tipping surfaces and breaking the horizon, bending the edges of plates and deforming curves into flat patterns. The deformation takes on a cinematic motion in Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), showing how the expressionistic distortions invented by Gauguin, Lautrec, and Art Nouveau were adapted to the cubist analysis of space. Whether or not under the influence of African sculpture, the *Demoiselles* proves that expressionism was influenced by the analysis of perspective in early cubism; and this analysis led to the filmlike montage passages at the right of Picasso's painting. The fragmented bodies of the *Demoiselles* flicker into multiple vision, the sliding planes of Braque's chessboards and tables. Cubism absorbed much of the disturbance in fauvist painting and theorized it into a style, a representation of modern time and space which could be treated only by means of the compound image with its simultaneous changing relationships. If Art Nouveau led toward fauvism and abstract art, cubism after the *Demoiselles* transcribed both Art Nouveau and fauvism into contemporary cinematic statement.

The intricate synthesis of the cinema was used with great virtuosity in Picasso's *Atelier de la Modiste* in 1926, a painting that seems to be projected on a screen in black and white in mobile complications adapting the double outline (*Wasserspie-*

gel) technique of Art Nouveau to a jazz syncopation. The painting is nearly a full illustration of the cinematic perspective defined by Eisenstein: there is even the effect of the close-up, the representation being pulled upon us, with flattening and distortion of outlines. These involved and shifting silhouettes give a new dimension to the graphic art of Beardsley, and they have the expressive foreshortening of Matisse's fauvist space. They are also closely related to the biomorphic forms of Joan Miró. The three figures and their reflected images, the mirror (or the doorway), the table, the chair are seen "with both eyes" in several perspectives—a montage study of activity held "close to the wall." As in a movie, the third dimension is reduced to an optical illusion, and space becomes an ideogram, losing its realistic value to enter a pictorial composition. There *is*, of course, an ingenious triptych-like basic organization, although the extraordinary passage of the images over the entire surface is another result of impressionist experiments with the fleeting appearances of things. All these cinematic techniques are carried over into *Guernica* (1937), which adds to the montage of the *Atelier* the implication of being a cartoon, thus bringing a note of contemporary journalism. Again Picasso works in black and white, perhaps suspecting that the cartoon-strip in the press is like the movie. The syncopation is much more frantic in *Guernica*, convulsing and compounding the jazz of the *Atelier* to a progressive phase.

Picasso's use of montage is increasingly learned, as it is in James Joyce. He extracts, for example, a mythical dimension from his montage in *Girl Before a Mirror* (1932). Resorting to the archetypal theme of Vanity—the mediaeval motif of Beauty regarding her own image—he treats his Girl in a stained-glass technique, adapting to boudoir uses a *Belle Verrière* diapered background as basic geometry along with the leaded mediaeval medallion. Who is this Girl? If we "read" the two parts of the painting—the Girl and her Image—we discover that she is a contemporary Mary who is also Isis, Aphrodite, the Adolescent before her Mirror. There is also a Freudian image of the self, the daylight or conscious self at the left echoed in the Id-image on the right, the dark self. So the Virgin or Vanity or Venus here presents herself under two more guises: Diana and Hecate, the

light and dark phases of the moon-goddess; or, perhaps, Persephone, the goddess who leads a double existence during the fertility-cycle. The dark self also suggests the savagery of the maenad; or the figures on a totem pole; or the shrouded body, the mummy, about to be laid in the grave; or the Fayum portraits on Coptic sarcophagi. The shrouded figure, in turn, suggests the veiled image of the nun who has died to the world, to vanity. And the breasts are not only breasts but apples; so here is a modern Eve, her womb seen in two different perspectives. Anticipating the X-ray technique of Tchelitchew, Picasso has analyzed the organs of the two images by a roentgen-view; there is an X-ray of the skeleton, the ribs, in the darker image; then the ribs become a quite different motif in the Girl herself, who seems to be wearing a striped bathing suit and thus becomes a bathing-beauty—again the modern Venus. The multiple images of the full and crescent moon, the full and profile body and face, the skeletal and fleshly features create a montage that has psychological, religious, and legendary meaning as well as abstract design in line and color. The fauvist distortions have been intellectualized into a cinematic style that synchronizes.

The principle of synchronization has been the basis of even the mechanical devices of the new century—the synchromesh gear is a means by which varying speeds and parts are brought into adjustment. Gertrude Stein suspected that the cinema is the primary art of the twentieth century because it synchronizes. If, she says, the artist is to be contemporary he must have the "time-sense" of his day; and the time-sense of this century is symbolized in the American assembly-line method of production; the automobile is conceived as a whole and assembled from its parts by a process of prefabrication. In the nineteenth century, with its historical and evolutionary time-sense, its plotted novels with their cause-and-effect sequence of events, their climactic scenes, their logical denouements, there was "the feeling of beginning at one end and ending at another." Now there is a "conception of the whole," the synchronization corresponding to cinematic montage or juxtaposition of elements. The twentieth-century mobile design synchronizes changing forms into patterns where time is a function of space; not only in Calder's mobiles,

but as early as 1912, when Boccioni's sculpture *Bottle Developing in Space* opened up composite views of the solid object by means of syncopation, which is jazz movement and the inherent tempo of the early twentieth century.

Gertrude Stein remarks that melodramatic events have lost their meaning for us; there are no longer "decisive" battles but, instead, total wars during which the irreducible concrete fact is the G.I. standing on a street corner waiting for something to happen. Our perspective has been flattened even historically. "And so what I am trying to make you understand," Gertrude Stein wrote, "is that every contemporary writer has to find out what is the inner time-sense of his contemporariness." Our time-sense is cinematic because, as she says, "In a cinema picture no two pictures are exactly alike each one is just that much different from the one before." There is a writer's "building up" of an image from recurrent statements each a little different from the one before and after.

Whitehead has pointed out that what looks like permanence is actually only recurrence. Therefore from our sense of movement emerges a total pattern, the montage that brings Representation A into counterpoint with Representation B in a design that is at once mobile and static. Gertrude Stein remarks, "The better the play the more static." This strange opinion is due to her contemporary sense of a total configuration—a modern law of fatality that has some resemblance to a Greek sense of fatality in a drama where man suddenly finds himself in a certain *situation*. The cubist-cinematic time-sense is classic in this way, for all classic art has a certain stillness that is a synoptic view of action.

In some of her short stories Gertrude Stein attempted to catch the time-sense of the cinema to illustrate the notion that there is no such thing as repetition and that recurrence is the genuine modern movement, the recurrence of separate "shots" in the film—images differing from each other only minutely but giving a sense of existence in time and space. Nothing happens in these stories, which are static and must be read as if they presented in "flattened" form a situation to be taken only in its total configuration. "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" (1922) is this sort of experiment in a cinematic mode:



Helen Furr had quite a pleasant home. Mrs. Furr was quite a pleasant woman. Mr. Furr was quite a pleasant man. Helen Furr had quite a pleasant voice a voice quite worth cultivating. She did not mind working. She worked to cultivate her voice. She did not find it gay living in the same place where she had always been living. She went to a place where some were cultivating something, voices and other things needing cultivating. She met Georgine Skeene there who was cultivating her voice which some thought was quite a pleasant one. Helen Furr and Georgine Skeene lived together then. . . .

They stayed there and were gay there, not very gay there, just gay there. They were both gay there, they were regularly working there both of them cultivating their voices there, they were both gay there. Georgine Skeene was gay there and she was regular, regular in being gay, regular in not being gay, regular in being a gay one who was not being gay longer than was needed to be one being quite a gay one. They were both gay then there and both working there then.

The last paragraph suggests Whitehead's idea that events are a form of recurrence taking place in process. Indeed this prose gets as close as it can to the process from which events emerge.

Eisenstein intends, like Gertrude Stein, to do away with theatre, the nineteenth-century story. Instead, he bases his cinematographic technique on the Japanese ideogram, which he sees as a form of montage. Once again, then, we come to Pound's use of the ideogram for "superposition"—"that is to say it is one idea set on top of another." If Eisenstein seems to have taken some of his notions about montage from the Japanese *kabuki*, a stylized dramatic form, Pound, we know, took his "superpository images" from Fenollosa's studies of the ideogram. Apollinaire developed his "calligrams" almost at the same hour while Pound, Eisenstein, and the cubists were using the same perspective. The short poem known as the *haiku* also led imagist verse toward a cinematic technique, which appears in the synchronization and syncopation of Eliot's *Waste Land*, in turn indebted to Pound's ideogrammatic methods. In effect both Pound and Eliot began writing as imagist poets who developed a technique much like Eisenstein's in the film; for Eisenstein says he wanted to "dismember" events into a montage of various shots, and "by combining these monstrous incongruities, we newly collect the disintegrated event into one whole." He uses an "optical counterpoint" like the

counterpoint in the traditionalist verse of Eliot, who closes *The Waste Land* with a syncopated passage resembling the syntax of the film—a “graphic conflict”—or the collisions in Japanese theatre, where two features or sides of an actor are sharply posed:

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down  
*Poi s'ascese nel foco che gli affina*  
*Quando fiam uti chelidon*—O swallow swallow  
*Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*  
 These fragments I have shored against my ruins  
 Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.  
 Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
 Shantih shantih shantih

In his essay on the cinema Malraux says that the nineteenth century had a fanatic need of the Object in painting which went along with the plotted narrative in literature. The new method is, instead, *découpage*, truncating the object and making a symbol of it in cinema and literature. The *découpage* in Eliot's passage is really the method in Pound's *Cantos*, which are built about certain motifs treated by superposition of images excerpted from Eastern and Western history and literature. These superpositions—an extremely complex montage—are striking in Pound's use of Chinese history in *Cantos* LII–LXI, and in the Chinese ideograms embedded throughout the later stretches of his ambitious work with its flattened and timeless perspective or syncopation. In *Canto* LXXV the mention of Buxtehude and the “Stammbuch of Sachs in yr/luggage” is followed by a musical score, serving for the rest of the *Canto*. Thus Pound and Eliot create a multidimensional vision, and even their irony is due to a montage-principle of placing together statements having an entirely different poetic tone, as when Eliot opens the third section of *The Waste Land* by complicated and most divergent references and images, causing incongruities that are like the intentional discords in our music or painting.

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf  
 Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind  
 Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.  
 Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,  
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends  
Or other testimony of summer nights. . . .

The lines show that Eliot's impersonal theory of poetry is also a form of montage, for, as he says, the contemporary poet works with the poetry of the past, employing it in new relations for new effects. He exploits traditional motifs, as Picasso did in *Girl Before a Mirror*; he has only a medium to use, not a personality—and in this he parts from the symbolists, and the fauves. So Eliot uses Marvell's lines

But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near

in wholly unexpected relations:

But at my back in a cold blast I hear  
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

This is what Eliot calls, in his essay on Joyce, the "mythical" method of the novel: "manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity." It is Eliot's own means of "making the modern world possible for art."

Joyce's *Ulysses* illustrates the montage principle in its widest application. Leopold Bloom is a modern Ulysses who during his day in Dublin re-creates in "mythical" episodes the events of the *Odyssey*, meeting his Telemachus in the young Stephen, confronting the Sirens and Circe, descending to the underworld when Paddy Dignam is buried, returning to that unfaithful Penelope in the person of Molly Bloom, who, like Picasso's *Girl*, is an archetypal image of the great goddess debased by Joyce's composite vision. The portmanteau language here and in *Finnegans Wake* gives instantaneous cross references between myth, philology, psychology, and music; and it adapts itself to stream-of-consciousness, which is likewise montage. As Leopold Bloom walks through the cemetery after Paddy's funeral he invents a new "eulogy in a country churchyard":

Besides how could you remember everybody? Eyes, walk, voice. Well, the voice, yes: gramophone. Have a gramophone in every grave or keep it in the house. After dinner on a Sunday. Put on poor old greatgrand-

father Kraahraark! Hellohellohello amawfullyglad kraark awfullyglad-aseeragain hellohello amarawf kopthsth. Remind you of the voice like the photograph reminds you of the face. Otherwise you couldn't remember the face after fifteen years, say. For instance who? For instance some fellow that died when I was in Wisdom Hely's.

The montage at Paddy's grave is more simultaneous, since Leopold is aware, instantaneously, of the need to take off his hat, the sickening plunge of the coffin, the chap in the mackintosh he doesn't know, Ned Lambert's nice soft tweed, his own dressy suits when he lived in Lombard Street, the spatter of rain. The port-manteau texture is most complex in *Finnegans'* multiple layers of language, an X-ray technique applied to syntax as well as consciousness.

As early as *Portrait of the Artist* Joyce was doing away with conventional perspective, opening up the narrative in Eisenstein's sense, pulling it against us in a new immediacy like a film close-up, shifting its language from prose to poetry and giving an impression of the various facets of consciousness, changing from the texture of the diary to the sermon to dialog to meditation—devices already exploited in that freakish eighteenth-century novel *Tristram Shandy*, one of the first experiments in montage, dislocations in time, double exposures of sensibility.

Even the "metaphysical complexities" admired by the New Critics are cinematic, for "ambiguity" and "irony" are said to bring together conflicting moods, and do not arise from *alternations* of mood, as in comic relief, but from juxtaposition. We now see that Shakespeare had his own montage; he did not alternate comic and tragic (as the nineteenth-century critics used to explain) but fused his comic and tragic meanings in a truly modern way in his intenser plays like *Hamlet*, where the Prince's antic disposition makes his jesting with Ophelia and Polonius a sign of disgust nearly unbearable, as it is in the graveyard when he asks Horatio, "Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till 'a find it stopping a bunghole?" Similarly Eliot's Prufrock by a wrenching irony says he should have been a pair of claws scuttling across the floor of silent seas.

Montage effects are deep in the absurdist themes of our existential thought. Man's existence as we now see it is a conflict or

collision of opposites. These contradictions in present experience are not reconcilable by logic; yet they are, as Kierkegaard said, reconciled in *me*. Man is free only when he is engaged; he is heroic but comic; he must act rationally without having any rational premises to stand on; he finds his self only in the face of "the others"; his being is grounded in nothingness; his very consciousness is a form of *dédoublement*, a splitting open of experience by an awareness that he is aware, a dissociation of the self watching the self. One's personality dissolves into changing profiles, which must be seen together. Existentialism is an "ethic of ambiguity."

Ortega y Gasset, like the cubists, supposes that the structure of reality depends on the view we take of it: there are as many views as there are modes of consciousness. His philosophy of perspectivism is an attempt of the contemporary mind to cope with contradictions between doubt and belief, between the mind and reality outside the mind: "Perspective is the order and form that reality takes for him who contemplates it," Ortega writes. The grave philosophic error is to suppose there is an absolute perspective. That is to do in philosophy what renaissance perspective did in space—to presume there is only one system. There is no absolute space because there is no absolute perspective. To be absolute, space would cease being real and become only an abstraction; and thus Ortega accepts the premises from which Bradley and Whitehead began, namely, that many differing perspectives co-exist in reality:

Perspective is one of the component parts of reality. Far from being a disturbance of its fabric, it is its organizing element. A reality which remained the same from whatever point of view it was observed would be a ridiculous conception. . . .

Every life is a point of view directed upon the universe. Strictly speaking, what one life sees, no other can. . . . The persistent error . . . is the supposition that reality possesses in itself, independently of the point of view from which it is observed, a physiognomy of its own. . . . But reality happens to be, like a landscape, possessed of an infinite number of perspectives, all equally veracious and authentic. The sole false perspective is that which claims to be the only one there is.

(*The Modern Theme*)



To confine a view of reality to a single or orthodox conception is to empty it of meanings. To suppress the individual is to amputate the content of reality and impoverish it for all of us. That is why Ortega defines liberalism as the supremely civilized virtue, the capacity to live with the enemy. Once Ortega remarked that no two cameras can take the same photograph of a scene. As man changes his point of view, reality changes its nature for him. In a world of private and changing perspectives "the reality of the object increases as its relationships increase."<sup>8</sup> The meanings of reality emerge within reality itself. Or, as Ozenfant put it, "Cubism is painting conceived as related forms which are not determined by any reality external to those related forms." Ortega and the cubists yield us a fuller vision of reality than was possible in any art based on a single angle. If one of the properties of reality is to reorganize itself from different points of view, then the cubist dismantling of the object is one of the amplest readings of reality in Western art.

The cubist painter never deceived himself that his images represented the world as it "is," or that his imitation was issued on any gold standard of reality. For the cubist, reality is at once actual *and* fictitious, depending on our approach to it and our situation within it. During his cubist phase Picasso said, "From the point of view of art there are no concrete or abstract forms, but only forms which are more or less convincing lies." Our illusion conditions the nature of reality, and reality produces our illusions. As Bradley once remarked, without reality there is nothing to "appear" although these "appearances" are not reality. Thus cubists accepted the object; for them the world exists as it did not for their forebears the symbolists. Cubist painting is a scene of conciliation between the naïve opposites of nineteenth-century art—realism and symbolism. The cubist destroyed the solid factual world of photography, penetrating this world by thought, making it real, as Gleizes and Metzinger said, by the impact of the mind upon it, by studying its relation to consciousness. He achieved what Cézanne hoped to achieve, something

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<sup>8</sup> On Ortega's perspectivism I am generally indebted to Leon Livingstone's article "Ortega y Gasset's Philosophy of Art," *PMLA*, LXVII, 1952, 609-655.

solid *and* artificial. Kahnweiler said that the cubist object appears "simultaneously," its multidimensional existence signified by intersections of planes on the surface of the canvas. The cubist painted object is reconstructed into another order of being, removed from the injuries of time and space, for depth is no longer equated, as it was in renaissance vision, with the time it takes to enter that depth. Yet the cubist does not deny the value of time, for it is time that causes changing appearances. The time in which cubist objects exist is a new co-ordination—inherent in space. The cubist object has an ambiguous contemporary mode of being, a plural identity apparent only as a passage between thing and idea, fact and fiction. Cubism is a structure emerging from process. It has literary as well as painted and sculptured forms.



### III

## Views and Theories of the Modernist Movement



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# Imagism and Its Consequences

GRAHAM HOUGH

Literature, by a fortunate dispensation, does not reflect very accurately the convulsions of the social order. Its revolutions sometimes precede the social ones, sometimes follow them, sometimes, it would seem, overlap them quite pointlessly. In any case the cultural historian has no difficulty in finding the relations he is disposed to find. He deals in large masses of material; the phenomena are so numerous that they can surely be connected in more ways than the ingenuity of a commentator can devise. But as soon as we begin to look closely at a particular patch of literature we are likely to see it developing according to its own principles, which have their own interest, and are likely to be at least partly fortuitous in their relations to the wars, technologies or movements of classes that are their temporal accompaniments. The dispensation is fortunate, for it is a happy instance of what we mean by the freedom of the spirit.

Looked at in a sufficiently apocalyptic light, the extraordinary outbreak of genius and novelty in the literature of the early part of this century can be seen as the response of the imagination to the appalling moral and political history of our age. And so no doubt it is, and all the books with crisis, revolt, dilemma and hazard in their titles are right. But part of the imaginative response has always been to occupy itself with other things than crises and hazards. "I particularly admired your use of the plu-

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*From Graham Hough, Reflections on a Literary Revolution (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1960).*

perfect subjunctive," as Claudel once remarked to Gide. The imagination has its own procedures and its own stratagems, different for every art in which it expresses itself. In the visual arts and in music the devices may be of international range. In literature they can hardly be that, for each language has its own procedure, never held quite in common with that of any other. The closer we come to a particular literature the more closely its features will be seen to depend on the state of the language at the time, the state of previous writing in it, the prestige or the declining fortune of special forms. In short, a literary revolution must be a *literary* revolution if it is to be anything. It may accompany or be accompanied by almost any other kind of revolution, at almost any distance. But unless we are looking at literature as a symptom of something else (a possibly respectable occupation, but not that of the literary critic) what must be attended to is the behaviour of literature itself.

The years between 1910 and the second world war saw a revolution in the literature of the English language as momentous as the Romantic one of a century before. It is an Anglo-American development that is itself part of a whole European affair. Beside the names of Yeats, Joyce, Eliot and Pound we should wish to place those of Gide, Valéry and Thomas Mann, perhaps Proust and Rilke from an earlier generation. Here is our identification parade for the modern spirit in letters. But here too we have such a huge and various collective phenomenon that almost anything we care to say about it would be true of some part or other; the target is so large that any chance-aimed shot would be sure to hit it somewhere. If we look at it *en masse* we shall soon find ourselves speaking of crisis in Western values, of dissociation of sensibility, of alienation, and disinherited minds. Looking from this vertiginous height we shall surely be able to make many observations that are true, the more easily since they are not liable to the contradictions of particularity. Let us descend and recover balance by observing a fixed spot—London in the years just before 1914. It was there that the English cell of an almost world-wide poetic conspiracy was being incubated—the first plot against the literary establishment for over a hundred

years. Of course foreign agents were at work; there had been correspondence with France and the Orient; a person from Idaho and one from St. Louis were actually present.

So in the next few years "modern poetry" came into being. Strangely, it is still modern poetry, the same article, sold under the same name. The revolution is long past. Of the central revolutionary quartet—Pound, Eliot, Joyce and Wyndham Lewis—"the men of 1914," as Lewis liked to call them (it is characteristic that the turn of phrase should be borrowed from European revolutionary politics) two are dead, one legally irresponsible, and the fourth is happily still with us, the greatest living man of letters.\* A generation has had to pass to bring about this change of aspect. But nothing has happened to dispute with their productions the title of modern letters. No *avant-garde* has advanced any farther. There is no *avant-garde*. When I was a boy "modern poetry" was to be distinguished from poetry simple. Poetry was inherited from parents and learnt at school; it was the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and "The Solitary Reaper." Modern poetry was read in a different context; neither one's parents nor anyone at school knew anything about it. Modern poetry is now academically respectable. It is taught in college courses, and the exposition of it gives employment to many worthy persons. But it is still almost as distinct from "poetry" as ever. Distinct in the general imagination, and not only in that; even among those who seriously profess the arts there is a feeling of the discontinuity between the literature of our century and that of any previous one. The singularity of modern poetry, for example, is one of the arguments used by C. S. Lewis to support his hypothesis of a great rift in our culture just before the present age.

This consciousness of modernity is a distinctively modern thing; it is largely the work of the revolutionary generation itself. Pound's essays were called *Make It New*. In the stream of advice and exhortation he offered to young writers there is a continual insistence on novelty and on being up-to-date. "No good poetry is ever written in a manner twenty years old." "The scientist does

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\* [T. S. Eliot died in 1965.]

not expect to be acclaimed as a great scientist until he has *discovered* something.”<sup>1</sup> In both his and Eliot’s criticism we are always hearing about “what remains to be done,” “what is to be done next.” A curious instance of this acute period-consciousness occurs quite recently, in Mr. Eliot’s introduction to Pound’s *Literary Essays*. He cites as one of the tricks of malevolent critics—“to quote what a writer said twenty or thirty years ago as if it was something he had said yesterday.”<sup>2</sup> It is hard to imagine Johnson or Coleridge or Arnold finding it “malevolent” to quote a twenty-year-old dictum without the appropriate date. Lest I be suspected of malevolence may I add that the date of this remark is 1954, a date far removed from the dust of revolutionary conflict. Plainly the instigators of the late poetic innovation were badly frightened by a *Zeitgeist*, and the effects have been lasting.

The new poetry was new in the twenties, and it is still new, in the sense that we have nothing newer. As early as 1935 we find Sir Herbert Read, in an essay called *Form in Modern Poetry*, complaining of backsliding, of a decline in revolutionary and experimental ardour. It might be that the new tradition had established itself, that we now have a body of followers working in an accepted mode. But this is not true, or true only in a very restricted area. The revolution of 1914 was quite as momentous as the Romantic one of over a century before, but it was different. The Romantic change was not at all antipathetic to ancient and deep-rooted tendencies. In many ways it was a return to them; the old textbook term is after all the Romantic Revival. The result is that its habits of feeling and expression are a model for the next hundred years. The nineteenth-century shelves are stuffed with Wordsworthian poems, Keatsian poems and Byronic poems. The modern revolution has had a different fate. In one direction, in the establishment of a modern colloquial poetic idiom, the younger writers have certainly learnt the lesson of their elder contemporaries. All that purgation of poetic diction that has been so carefully and beautifully worked out, both in theory and in practice, by Mr. Eliot has become an almost abso-

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<sup>1</sup> *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (London, 1954), pp. 6, 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xi.

lute critical rule. The rule has been formulated, with something less than complete approval, in a recent essay by John Crowe Ransom: "That is simply a bad poem whose unfashionable or dated diction the plain reader spots at the first reading." But other parts of the newly-conquered territory are being little cultivated. A belated critical posse in full jungle kit still hacks its way through these no longer very forbidding areas, in the pages of the semi-academic reviews; and that is about all. The influence of the generation of 1914 was always of a peculiar kind. On taste, ideas and feelings about literature it was dynamic, radical, and in the end largely triumphant. A diluted version of Mr. Eliot's critical doctrine (and that includes, at one remove, a great deal of the doctrines of Hulme, Pound and Lewis) is by now the possession of undergraduates and schoolboys. Mr. Eliot's version of English literary history is as much an orthodoxy as Matthew Arnold's was a generation before. Yet the direct effect on literary practice has been strangely small. There is no other poem of any significance remotely like *The Waste Land*; the metrics and the ordonnance of Pound's *Propertius* have had no successors whatever; no one has ever seriously attempted to emulate Joyce's most characteristic experiments; and the extraordinary bundle of detestations that go to make up Wyndham Lewis are so arbitrary that they are a monument to nothing but himself.

A rich and vigorous body of literature has established itself, but has not established a workable tradition. A possibility (it has been faintly entertained by Mr. Blackmur)<sup>3</sup> is that it is not through this self-consciously "modern" literature that the main road runs; that these writers are not the transmitters of the most vigorous poetic life of our time. Perhaps the authentic torch has been borne by writers of a more traditional cast—shall we say by Robert Frost, Robert Graves and E. M. Forster? But this is not really a possibility. It is not the admirable workers in traditional modes who have given the twentieth century its peculiar kind of vitality. The suggestion is entertained only to be dismissed. As I show it to the door I become aware of one of its relatives faintly demanding admittance. Deep in the folk-memory of English liter-

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<sup>3</sup> R. P. Blackmur, *Anni Mirabiles, 1921-25* (Washington, 1956), p. 41.



ary critics is the echo of a time when it was possible to speak of something called "the English spirit." Few, in a state of full vigilance, would allow this faded trope to escape their lips now. But I intend to employ it, not meaning whatever Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch would have meant by it, but meaning something like the spirit of the language, the whole drift and pressure given by the whole body of poetry written in English. The suggestion that knocks at the door is that specifically "modern" poetry is hostile to this spirit and has tried to move against that pressure. A few very powerful talents succeeded in establishing idiosyncratic positions. No one since has been powerful enough to take up the same stance or sufficiently supple and adaptable to go back and take up the old path where it left off. This is at least plausible as far as English is concerned, though in America it may be less so. It need not surprise us when we consider that two of the "men of 1914" were Americans, one an Irishman, and the origins of the other shrouded in mystery.

The suggestion may be allowed to stand in the doorway, for we are not yet in a position to examine its credentials. We have not yet asked what the nature of the twentieth-century revolution is, so we cannot yet know how it is related to the English poetic tradition. It is notable that whatever was happening in those years has not yet acquired a name. Mr. Blackmur has referred to the whole European movement, with which the English one belongs, as Expressionism. I should not be very happy with this as far as our domestic affair is concerned. Expressionism in art has Germanic connotations, and the literature we are considering is Anglo-American profoundly influenced by France. And Expressionism is a name for a kind of critical doctrine, a doctrine of personality and self-expression, that is precisely the one *not* held by our twentieth century school. I should like to have a name; it is a nuisance not to have one for something one is always discussing; but I should prefer to look nearer home and hope to fare better.

If we look into the archives of the period of revolutionary preparation, the name that is going about is Imagism. A "school of images" is referred to. Ezra Pound announces that as for the future the "Imagistes" have that in their keeping. This was in a

note to the complete poetical works of T. E. Hulme (five poems), published at the end of *Ripostes* in 1912. Several forms of an Imagist manifesto exist; and Ezra Pound's "A few don'ts by an Imagist" appeared in *Poetry* in 1913. And there are several Imagist anthologies, the first under the auspices of Ezra Pound, others under those of Amy Lowell. In the narrow sense, the name refers to a movement whose history was brief, broken and querulous, whose poetic results were minuscule. The refinement of our numbers was to be accomplished by the introduction of the *haiku*, the Japanese poem of seventeen syllables. The tongue that Milton spake is not easily compressed into seventeen-syllable units; and even in its longer flights Imagism remains a small affair. But as a centre and an influence it is not small. It is the hard irreducible core of a whole cluster of poetic ideas that extend far beyond Imagism as a movement. Imagist ideas are at the centre of the characteristic poetic procedures of our time, and there is a case for giving the word a wider extension.

Imagism sounds like a by-blow from Symbolism. Image and symbol—we have been pestered by both words long enough; often we do not distinguish between them. If we were talking about continental Europe instead of the Anglo-American literary world there would be no need to make much play with Imagism. Symbolism is already there, well established and more or less understood. There have been several attempts to see the new poetry in English simply as a part of this earlier European movement. Edmund Wilson sees it in this way, as a large extension of Symbolism, in *Axel's Castle*. But this justly famous book was written in the middle of the development that it describes, and has been overtaken by the event. Its introductory chapter on Symbolism seems thin today, though it was nourishing at the time. Sir Maurice Bowra, largely concerned with Europe, has written of modern literature as the heritage of Symbolism. More recently, Frank Kermode, in a brief, brilliant, unhistorical essay, *Romantic Image*, has conflated Symbolism and Imagism, and even seen both of them as a continuation of the Romantic road. However, there is room for a distinction here, and not only room, but a real need for it.

Though Symbolism is in a sense a late development of Roman-

tic thought it takes a decisively new turn. The great Romantic writers (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats) all see literature as deeply rooted in experience. The confessional poem, the truth that has been "proved upon our pulses," the attitude of those "to whom the miseries of the world are misery and will not let them rest"—these are its characteristic expressions. Symbolism moves in the direction of an autonomous art, severed from life and experience by an impassable gulf. The Symbolists share with the Romantics the reliance on the epiphany, the moment of revelation; but they differ sharply about its status in nature and its relation to art. Wordsworth's spiritual life is founded on such moments of illumination, and it is the business of his poetry both to describe them and to relate them to the whole experience of a long ordered lifetime. For the Symbolist poet there is no question of describing an experience; the moment of illumination only occurs in its embodiment in some particular artistic form. There is no question of relating it to the experience of a lifetime, for it is unique, it exists in the poem alone. Rimbaud's *alchimie du verbe* is not a mere phrase, for the poet not only transmits, he creates the revelations that make up his world.

Symbolism therefore has strong transcendental overtones. The poet is a magus, calling reality into existence. Or he is the sole transmitter of a mysterious system of correspondences that actually pervades the universe, but only becomes apparent in art. Or he is capable of evoking from the *Anima Mundi* symbols of the profoundest import, but strictly unexpoundable, for their content is inseparable from the form of their first expression. At times we seem to be in something like the medieval symbolic universe. But that symbolism has a key, a key given once and for all in revelation. Since the means of grace and some means of instruction are available to all, it was in a sense a joy in widest commonalty spread; while the Symbolist universe reveals itself only in glimpses, only in art, and only to initiates.

Now while modern literature has been afflicted with a persistent hangover from the rich Symbolist symposium, the magical and transcendental pretensions of Symbolism have almost entirely disappeared. It is only in the work of the early Yeats that we can find the Symbolist doctrine in full bloom. Even here it is

considerably contaminated with a non-literary occultism—theosophy, spiritualism, Madame Blavatsky and the order of the Golden Dawn. It is doubtful whether we can properly speak of a Symbolist movement in English poetry, in a historical sense. Of course, if we like to take Symbolism as a universal, recurrent phenomenon we can rope in such diverse figures as Blake and Herman Melville, and no doubt a dozen others, and make some use of the concept. I am speaking of Symbolism as a more or less dateable historical development, as the term is used in French literature. This development several times looks as though it is going to occur in English, but it never comes to much, though relations with the French movement were frequent and beguiling. There was a foreshadowing of French Symbolism in the Pre-Raphaelites; there were many importations of Symbolist doctrine in the nineties; but it is not until the years before the first world war that French doctrines and practice showed signs of giving rise to a new poetry in England.

The history is complicated, and it has still only partly been written. There are probably many reasons that Symbolism took such feeble roots in England. We had a little of it of our own already; English poetry lacks a Baudelaire to stand as *éminence grise* behind the movement; above all, Symbolist influence on sensibility was not paralleled by a close study of Symbolist forms. The *fin-de-siècle*, fertile in sentiments and attitudes that are important for modern literature, was curiously powerless to find forms to match them; and it was not until the years around 1910 that a radically new poetry, and that implies a new poetic form, really begins to appear in English. In those years, when the group that were later to call themselves Imagists were laying their plans, the transcendental pretensions of Symbolism were no longer easy to entertain. The career of Mallarmé had ended in silence and something like despair. *Un coup de dès jamais n'abolira le hasard*. Rimbaud's defection to slave-trading in Africa was itself a symbol of the inefficacy of magical Symbolism; and the innocuous chastities of Japanese poetry in dilute translation were focussing attention on the surface properties rather than on the mystic attributes of the symbol.

Certain aspects of Symbolist doctrine persist, but the nature of

the attention is changed. Revelation becomes technique, incantation becomes a code of prohibitions. What emerges is a new phenomenon, to which we rightly give a new name—Imagism. Not to deal in definition at this stage, and in the hope that things will become clearer as we go on, we can describe it roughly as Symbolism without the magic. The symbol, naked and unexplained, trailing no clouds of glory, becomes the image.

Let us clip a few flowers from the imagist's garden of maxims:

An image is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.

Go in fear of abstractions.

The natural object is always the adequate symbol.

I believe that the proper and perfect symbol is the natural object, that if a man uses "symbols" he must so use them that their symbolic function does not obtrude; so that a sense, and the poetic quality of the passage, is not lost to those who do not understand the symbol as such, to whom, for instance, a hawk is a hawk.<sup>4</sup>

Unexceptionable sentiments, according to the canons of much modern poetics; but compare them with some pure symbolist pronouncements:

A symbol is indeed the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual flame.<sup>5</sup>

Je dis: une fleur! et, hors de l'oubli où ma voix relègue aucun contour, en tant que quelque chose d'autre que les calices sus, musicalement se lève, idée même et suave, l'absente de tous bouquets.<sup>6</sup>

These alone will serve to illustrate the way the symbol has become *opaque* in transforming itself into the image. No transparent envelopes, or mysterious absences, or invisible essences. Direct treatment of the *thing*, we are told, is the great object. T. E. Hulme's early criticism hammers away at accurate description, hardness, clarity. And we know what came of it:

<sup>4</sup> *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, pp. 5, 9.

<sup>5</sup> W. B. Yeats, *Essays* (London, 1924), p. 142.

<sup>6</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres Complètes* (Pleiade, Paris, 1945), p. 368.



The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough.<sup>7</sup>

Those dozens of little poems in Pound's *Ripostes* and later; clear, limited, without resonance, without transparency. "The natural object is always the adequate symbol"—but of what? Of nothing but itself. A world composed of atomic notations, each image separate from all the others. They neither lead into each other nor to apprehension on any other level. There is in all Pound's practice and theory at this time a positivism, a defiant insistence on the surface of things, and an insistence that the surface of things is all.

Pound writes of Laurent Tailhade:

I think this sort of clear presentation is of the noblest tradition of our craft. It is surely the scourge of fools. It is what may be called the "prose tradition" of poetry, and by this I mean that it is a practice of speech common to good prose and good verse alike. . . . It means constation of fact. It presents. It does not comment. . . . It is not a criticism of life. I mean it does not deal in opinion. It washes its hands of theories. It does not attempt to justify anybody's ways to anybody or anything else.<sup>8</sup>

But even Pound could not consistently maintain that the clear presentation of the object was the sole aim of poetry. Though he often talks in T. E. Hulme's terms, as though presentational accuracy was an end in itself, in other places the natural object is seen as the equivalent of an emotion. Poetry is the art of making equations for emotions. But it is an equation of which one side only is to be presented. Imagist convention forbids that most ancient recipe for a poem—the poem in which first a natural object is presented, and then some reflection on human experience that arises from it, or is in some way parallel to it. As a student of Provençal Pound must have been familiar with the *reverdie* and its long history—the spring song, whose first stanza presents "the soote sesoun that bud and bloom forth brings," whose later ones present the happy love that resembles it, or the

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<sup>7</sup> Copyright 1926 by Ezra Pound. Reprinted by permission of *New Directions*.

<sup>8</sup> "The Approach to Paris." *The New Age*, Oct. 2, 1913.

unhappy love that contrasts with it. By his subsequent lights it is only possible for the poet to say "It is Spring"—and, unspoken, on no account to be uttered, only to be understood—"if you care to make any deductions from this to my state of mind, you may." But since the natural object is always the adequate symbol the poem will not make itself responsible for any of these deductions.

I leaned against a sturdy oak,  
I thought it was a trusty tree;  
But first it bent and syne it broke,  
Sae did my true love lightly me.

This is too explicit for true Imagist principles. The proper procedure is to be seen in Pound's "Fan-Piece, for her Imperial Lord":

O fan of white silk,  
clear as the frost on the grass-blade,  
You also are laid aside.<sup>9</sup>

So far, merely a change of rhetorical convention; a laconic novelty of procedure that has its own charm. We know well enough what the Imagists are tired of. They are tired of Arnold's "Dover Beach"; the extended picture of the moonlight, the beach and the tide; and then the inevitable, the too-long expected "The sea of faith was once too at the full . . ."; the melancholy nineteenth-century automatism by which no natural object can appear without trailing its inglorious little cloud of moralising behind it. They were right to be tired. One aspect of the history of poetry is an intermittent warfare against automatisms, clichés of feeling and expression. Only an intermittent warfare, for there are long periods when poetry can rest, contented, healthy and active, within a set of received conventions. But these periods come to an end. This was a time when the battlefield had again become particularly active.

From this point of view Imagism was good tactics, and the skirmish was conducted with vigour and address. But tactics are not principles, and there is always danger when they are erected

<sup>9</sup> Copyright 1926 by Ezra Pound. Reprinted by permission of *New Directions*.

into principles. Pound was particularly liable to make this transformation. His insistence on procedure and technique is the beginning of this. "A few don'ts"; as though the writing of poetry is the adroit employment of a series of gimmicks; the continual invocation of "the expert"; the deference (in writing that shows little deference) to the progress of the natural sciences:

What the expert is tired of to-day the public will be tired of to-morrow.

It is not necessary that a poem should rely on its music, but if it does rely on its music that music must be such as will delight the expert.

The scientist does not expect to be acclaimed as a great scientist until he has *discovered* something. He begins by learning what has been discovered already. He goes from that point onward.

The best history of literature, more particularly of poetry, would be a twelve-volume anthology in which each poem was chosen . . . because it contained an invention, a definite contribution to the art of verbal expression.<sup>10</sup>

When Imagist doctrine was reinforced by Pound's study (if it can be called study) of Chinese, and his understanding (which was a misunderstanding) of the nature of Chinese ideogram, the gimmicks were well on the way to becoming a principle. When Pound took over Fenollosa's manuscripts he also took over the idea that the originally pictographic nature of the Chinese written character was still a subsistent force, that the reader actually *saw* the image in the complex ideogram. All scholars now agree that this is mistaken; even if they did not, it is on the face of it impossible; as impossible as to suppose that the reader of English resuscitates every dead metaphor as he goes along, thinks of weighing when he ponders, or of the stars when he considers. Even though it was untrue, this way of thinking might have given rise, when applied to an Indo-European language, to some sort of doctrine of radical metaphor—that poetry proceeds by distilling the quintessence of language. This, we have been told, is one of the keys to Mallarmé. But Pound shows no interest in this sort of speculation. His supposed nugget of wisdom from the East is used to provide a cultural foundation for the doctrine of

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<sup>10</sup> *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, pp. 5, 6, 17.

the image. Chinese uses picture-writing and so ought we. A strain of crotchety hostility to the traditions of Western thinking begins to appear. An obscure ideological war is invented in which Confucius knocks out Aristotle and abstraction and discursive thought are left in ruins. Poetry proceeds by the juxtaposition of ideograms, and new ideogram is old image writ large. The unit of poetry is the pictograph, the record of a significant glimpse.

From then on the doctrine burgeons, flourishes, spreads its roots and sends up suckers in every direction. (Many of us have been suckers for it at one time or another.) It connects itself easily with other speculations and manoeuvres which start from a different point but begin to converge with Imagism. Joyce's "epiphany," the moment in which the essential nature of an object reveals itself, is presented with a good deal of Thomistic top-dressing; but it is really a survival from magical Symbolism, and our sense of this is confirmed by the *fin-de-siècle* prose in which the earlier Joycean epiphanies are often enshrined. The moment of revelation need not be a revelation of beauty or transcendence. The customs-house clock, Stephen tells Cranly, might suddenly be epiphanised—manifest itself in its essence.<sup>11</sup> Or more frequently, a quotidian object suddenly reveals not only its own nature, but that of the forces that went to make it, or of the whole circumambient situation: "one of those brown brick houses which seem the very incarnation of Irish paralysis." This can become something like a form of Imagist doctrine; more sophisticated, without the pinched prohibitory air that hangs round Imagism. It produces similar technical results—the instantaneous glimpse of a phenomenal object as the basic symbolic counter. *Portrait of the Artist* is built out of a succession of such instants. Compared with the startling technical innovations of Joyce's later work its method is unsurprising. It is nevertheless one of the earliest examples of a narrative, a development, presented by a series of unlinked scenes or shots.

One of the most celebrated offshoots of the Imagist idea is Mr. Eliot's Objective Correlative. We are all heartily sick of the phrase, even Mr. Eliot, so I will only recall briefly its original

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<sup>11</sup> James Joyce, *Stephen Hero* (New York, 1955), p. 210.

formulation. "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."<sup>12</sup> Objections have been made to the "expressionist" character of this passage—the suggestion that the business of the poet is to find external manifestations for previously determinate emotions. I wish to point to something rather different—the suggestion that the whole natural world offers to the poet a collection of bric-à-brac from which he takes selections to represent emotional states. "Direct presentation of the thing"—the image so produced exists to be one side of an equation the other side of which is an emotion. Plainly an eccentric view of the poet's procedure. We can hardly suppose that either the author of the *Iliad* or the author of

Christ, that my love was in my arms  
And I in my bed again

were collecting *objets trouvés* in this way. Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote "The Wreck of the Deutschland" because he was moved by the account of a shipwreck in which five nuns were drowned; he did not go round looking for a suitable disaster to match an emotion that he already had. This is possibly a position that Mr. Eliot, who wrote of it a long time ago, would not wish to maintain in its full rigour. But we must in some sense hold him to it, for it has consequences in other parts of his thinking about poetry. There is the idea that coherence and validity of thought have nothing to do with poetic worth; Dante made great poetry out of a strong and beautiful philosophy, Shakespeare out of a muddled one, but this does not affect their merit as poets. There is the related idea that poets do not "think," they take over the thought of their time. This would make the poet's activity something like painting flowers on china plates that he had bought ready-made from the factory; and I am sure that this is not what Mr. Eliot means; but it is what he appears to be saying. There is

<sup>12</sup> "Hamlet and His Problems," *The Sacred Wood* (London, 1920), p. 100.



the idea that meaning is a kind of sop thrown to the intellect, like the bit of meat the burglar keeps to give to the dog, while the "poetry" does its work.<sup>13</sup> These are all pervasive ideas in modern, post-symbolist poetic strategy, and they are all related to the root idea that the substance of poetry is the image and its resonances.

The doctrine has its corollary when we come to consider the major structure of poetry; one that is startlingly at variance with the classical view. If poetry is a matching up of images with emotions its underlying framework consists of emotions. Its order is therefore an order of emotions. In classical poetic theory (by classical I mean here one that prevailed generally from the Greeks till some time in the nineteenth century) the order of poetry was an order of events or thoughts. Events are capable of causal connection, thoughts of logical connection; the one is the structure of narrative or dramatic poetry, the other of philosophic or reflective poetry. Only in the briefest lyric can we find an order that is simply that of emotions; and classical poetic theory was not deduced from brief lyrics. One does not insist on an Aristotelian rigour of construction; but even in the looser forms the sense of a syntax of events or the syntax of thoughts is preserved; and criticism insisted on it. Emotions are not capable of such a syntax. A pattern can be made of them, by simple juxtaposition, but it will hardly be an integrated pattern, unless there runs through it the thread of narrative or logic. Imagist poetry has therefore been obliged to invoke *another kind of logic*, a logic of emotions that works in its own way, and is supposed to be especially suitable for poetry. The most compendious expression of this notion is to be found in Mr. Eliot's introduction to St. John Perse's *Anabase*:

. . . any obscurity of the poem, on first readings, is due to the suppression of 'links in the chain,' of explanatory and connecting matter, and not to incoherence, or to the love of cryptogram. The justification of such abbreviation of method is that the sequence of images coincides and concentrates into one intense impression of barbaric civilisation. The reader has to allow the images to fall into his memory successively

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<sup>13</sup> T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London, 1933), p. 151.

without questioning the reasonableness of each at the moment; so that, at the end, a total effect is produced.

Such selection of a sequence of images and ideas has nothing chaotic about it. There is a logic of the imagination as well as a logic of concepts. People who do not appreciate poetry always find it difficult to distinguish between order and chaos in the arrangement of images; and even those who are capable of appreciating poetry cannot depend upon first impressions. I was not convinced of Mr. Perse's imaginative order until I had read the poem five or six times. And if, as I suggest, such an arrangement of imagery requires just as much 'fundamental brainwork' as the arrangement of an argument, it is to be expected that the reader of a poem should take at least as much trouble as a barrister reading an important decision on a complicated case.<sup>14</sup>

This document is worth examining in some detail. The occasion is particular, but the application is general. What is outlined is the method of a school. Three layers are to be discerned in this ingenious piece of discourse. The first is simply descriptive. We are told of a "sequence of images," of images that fall into the memory successively with no question of reasonableness, of resultant obscurity. This is a general description of Imagist technique; it is the procedure of *Anabase*; it is also the procedure of *The Waste Land* and the *Cantos*. The second layer, interwoven with the first, but we are attempting to separate it, is one of justification. Two justifications of this method are in fact offered. They are not compatible with each other. The first is that any appearance of obscurity is merely due to the suppression of connecting matter: the logic of the poem is like the logic of any other kind of discourse, but it is presented in a concentrated and elliptical form. The second justification, however, is that the poem is constructed according to a "logic of the imagination" which is different from ordinary logic. It requires as much effort as the construction of an argument, but it is evidently of a different kind. And besides these layers, of description and justification,

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<sup>14</sup> From *Anabase* by St. John Perse, translated by T. S. Eliot, copyright 1938, 1949, by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., and reprinted with their permission. Throughout, the quotations from T. S. Eliot's *Collected Poems* (copyright 1936, by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.) are used by permission of the publishers.

there is a third layer of knock-me-down *argumentum ad hominem*, designed to cause alarm and despondency in the breasts of persons who have not yet accepted the first two. Such persons do not appreciate poetry, cannot distinguish between order and chaos, and, in their benighted triviality, have probably never thought of assimilating the action of a reader of poetry to that of a barrister getting up a brief.

There is much in this sort of argument that arouses suspicion. The device of dismissing one's opponents as unqualified instead of convincing them that they are wrong is one that works only with the very unsophisticated or the very easily scared. It has been greatly overworked by the founding fathers of modern poetics. Only poets can judge poetry; this is a matter for the expert; certificates of culture countersigned by Confucius, Lancelot Andrews and Rémy de Gourmont to be produced on admission—but these minatory gestures have dwindled into a curious historic ritual; and they have been discussed elsewhere. A more serious question is whether the Imagist procedure here described is an ordinary mode of discourse telescoped and abbreviated, or whether some special "logic of the imagination" is involved.

Let us look at the organisation of *The Waste Land*. In detail, and in some places, the first explanation works well enough. The twenty opening lines of the poem can be seen as an elliptical narrative, with fragments of reflection and direct speech. ("April is the cruellest month. . . . [we] went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten. . . . And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke's.") In principle it could be expanded, the links could be supplied; what we have is the natural result of the attempt at pruning and concentrating nineteenth-century poetic method. The sense of an existing but not definitely stated plot is still there. It will require a great deal more latitude to apply this argument to the major structure of the poem. We know now that it was of considerably greater length, and attained its present proportions under the direction of Ezra Pound. We have always known that "Death by Water," the Phlebas the Phoenician section, was not originally part of *The Waste Land*, since it is a translation from the French of the last section of an earlier poem "Dans le Restaurant." Its insertion was again due to Pound. We

know too that "Gerontion" was at one time to be included but was in the end left out to become a separate poem.<sup>15</sup> If this is the logic of the imagination it is evidently patient of a good deal of outside influence. There is a curious fortuitousness about it. And mere ellipsis, the omission of connecting links, will not serve as an explanation of the changes of speaker, shifts in time, scene and mode of address, the liberation of the image from all continuity that give the poem its peculiarly coruscating surface. In the poem as a whole the sense of an unspoken underlying plot has completely disappeared.

I cannot think that the problems raised by the structure of *The Waste Land* have been faced. They have been a party matter, a matter for polemic or defence; they have been a shibboleth; to accept this sort of technique was at one time a sort of touchstone for participation in modern poetry. Above all, the methodological anfractuosités of the piece have fulfilled one of the main economic functions of poetry in this century—they have given employment to a host of scholiasts. But they have hardly been a matter for disinterested enquiry. While the poem was still capable of causing bewilderment it established itself. The brilliance of the imagery, the auditory and incantatory grandeur of its best passages, stole into the consciousness and became a part of our poetical property; it became ungrateful, almost indecent to ask of what sort of continuum these fragments were a part. And we became satisfied with a level of coherence that we should never have found sufficient in any earlier poem. The unity of emotional effect withdrew attention from the logical discontinuity, the extraordinary rhetorical diversity. A poem about frustration, aridity, fear and the perversions of love—these signs were to be read by anyone. They were read, and in combination with the modern urban imagery they instigated the critics who said that the poem expressed "the disillusionment of a generation." For this, some years later, they were sternly reproved by the author; but they were no doubt expressing, in their way, the only sense they had of

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<sup>15</sup> See *Letters of Ezra Pound* (New York, 1950), pp. 169–172. It is also noteworthy that in John Rodker's circular for *Bel Esprit*, a proposed literary fund, *The Waste Land* is referred to as "a series of poems." (*Letters of Ezra Pound*, p. 175).

a unity of purpose in the poem. Meanwhile, prompted by the notes, many persons who had stopped reading *The Golden Bough* looked at it again, and those who had never heard of Miss Jessie Weston read *From Ritual to Romance*. None of them were bold enough to say in public that these studies did little to advance their understanding. Certainly they directed attention to recurring symbolism of death and rebirth, drought and rain. But this was the kind of pattern that in earlier poetry had been only secondary to structure of another kind; it could not be seen as constituting a structure in itself. So we turned to more peripheral matters. We looked up the quotations from Dante and Baudelaire, and our apprehension of isolated lines increased in depth. *Turdus aonalaschkae pallasii*, whose water-dripping song is justly celebrated, doubtless afforded satisfaction to many. And the volume of exegesis increased, the explanations that did not explain, the links that connected nothing to nothing. And by the time that the movement of modern poetry had gone far enough for it to be a possible object of contemplation and enquiry, one shrank from asking the real questions, lest what was after all one of the great poetic experiences of our time should be still further buried beneath yet another load of waste paper.

But the questions remain—above all the question of what really makes the poem a totality, if it is one at all. If we can imagine some ideal critic, acquainted with the poetical tradition of Europe, yet innocent of the spirit of our age, and if we can imagine ourselves persuading him to leave the question of total structure in abeyance, “to allow the images to fall into his memory successively without questioning the reasonableness of each”—he would still be struck by the extraordinary rhetorical incongruities. He would find within its four hundred lines passages that are narrative, others that are dramatic, descriptive, lyric, hallucinatory and allusive. The theory of genres was never watertight or exhaustive, but never before was there a poem of this length, or perhaps of any other length, in which the modes were so mixed. Nor is the rhetorical level any more constant than the rhetorical mode. A modern and highly individual elegiac intensity, pastiche Renaissance grandeur, sharp antithetical social comment in the Augustan manner, the low mimetic of public



house conversation—all these and probably several other styles are found side by side. The relation of these is sometimes obvious; it is one of calculated contrast. But it is a question how hard such contrasts of texture can be worked in a relatively short poem without disastrous damage to the unity of surface. It is not so much in the obvious collisions of the high and the low styles that this is felt. That kind of calculated shock action is a limited effect, and the intention of producing the shock itself provides a medium between the two elements. It is the use of language in different and unrelated fashions in different parts of the poem that is disruptive. There is the lovely, romantically evocative manner of the hyacinth girl passage:

Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,  
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not  
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,  
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

These lines live unhappily in the same poem with:

Endeavours to engage her in caresses  
Which still are unrequited, if undesired.  
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;  
Exploring hands encounter no defence;  
His vanity requires no response,  
And makes a welcome of indifference.

The uneasiness does not arise from incompatibility of tone and feeling, but because the two passages are using language in utterly different ways; the first to evoke, by overtones and connotations, the trembling ghost of an intense emotion that is never located or defined; the second to define a situation by precise denotation and intelligent analysis. It is as though a painter were to employ a pointilliste technique in one part of a picture, and the glazes of the high renaissance in another.

When we come to the content of the separate passages the situation is disturbing in another way. It has become fashionable to refer to these contents as "themes," suggesting a vaguely musical analogy; and suggesting, too, I suppose, that the "themes" of a

poem are related to each other only as the themes of a musical composition are. But themes in a poem are made of words, and words have meanings; our attention is never arrested at the verbal surface; it proceeds to what the words denote. They denote objects, persons and ideas; and it is very difficult altogether to dispel the notion that the objects, persons and ideas in a single poem should be in some intelligible relation to one another. A very little inspection of the commentaries, or questioning of readers of the poem, will show that this is not the case with *The Waste Land*; there is no certainty either about what is denoted, or how it is related to other denotations. It is sometimes suggested, for example, that the hyacinth girl is or might be the same as the lady who stayed with her cousin the archduke a few lines earlier. To me it has always been obvious that these fragmentary glimpses showed us, and were designed to show us, two different kinds of women and two different kinds of human relationship. I suppose that those who think otherwise have taken at least as much trouble and are no greater fools than I. And I see no means by which the matter could be decided.

We have already remarked that Phlebas the Phoenician had a prior existence in another context and was included by chance or outside suggestion. True, a place is rather arbitrarily prepared for him; Madame Sosostriis the clairvoyant, who is supposed to be using a Tarot pack, produces the card of the drowned Phoenician sailor—which is not a member of the Tarot pack—in order to suggest in advance that Phlebas has some part in the structure of the poem. But what his part is remains quite uncertain. Here the commentators for the most part insist on resolutely marking time, for fear of committing themselves to a false step; and we are even bidden to observe that the “currents” which pick the drowned Phlebas’s bones have a forerunner in the “currants” in the pocket of Mr. Eugenides the Smyrna merchant. Surely the last refuge of baffled imbecility.

It has been said that the poem adopts a “stream of consciousness” technique;<sup>16</sup> and this sounds reassuring without committing us to anything very much. But it is precisely what the poem does

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<sup>16</sup> Grover Smith, *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* (Chicago, 1956), p. 58.

not do. The advantage of the "stream of consciousness" technique is that it allows a flood of images, more or less emancipated from narrative or logical continuity, while still preserving a psychological continuity—the continuity of inhering in a single consciousness. *The Waste Land* conspicuously foregoes this kind of unifying principle. One desperate expedient has been to fasten on Mr. Eliot's note to line 218: "Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character,' is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. . . . What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem." In the light of this it can be suggested that the whole poem is Tiresias's "stream of consciousness."<sup>17</sup> This is probably to give the note more weight than it can bear, and in any case, it does little to the purpose. Who was Tiresias? A man who had also been a woman, who lived forever and could foretell the future. That is to say, not a single human consciousness, but a mythological catch-all, and as a unifying factor of no effect whatever.

I should like to commit myself to the view that for a poem to exist as a unity more than merely bibliographical, we need the sense of one voice speaking, as in lyric or elegiac verse; or of several voices intelligibly related to each other, as in narrative with dialogue or drama; that what these voices say needs a principle of connection no different from that which would be acceptable in any other kind of discourse; that the collocation of images is not a method at all, but the negation of method. In fact, to expose oneself completely, I want to say that a poem, internally considered, ought to make the same kind of sense as any other discourse.

This should amount to a frontal attack on the main positions of modern poetics. I cannot feel that I have the equipment for this enterprise, nor if I had that it would be the right way to proceed. If the conviction I have baldly stated is just, its justice will be seen, in due time, not by virtue of a puny attack from a single criticaster, but by what Johnson calls the common sense of readers uncorrupted by literary prejudice. So I only wish to press

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58. See also George Williamson, *A Reader's Guide to T. S. Eliot* (New York, 1957), p. 123.

my point in two directions of which I feel fairly certain, neither of them quite central.

For the first I return to the sentence of Johnson I have just quoted. "By the common sense of readers uncorrupted with literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtlety and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honours." These are words that no one who cares about poetry in our century can read without a twinge. The appeal to a body of readers who are not specialists or eccentrics, who are merely representative of the common sentiment and intelligence of human kind, is one we feel ourselves so little able to make, one that we know so well, if we are honest, ought to be made—that we can think of it only with a feeling of distress. Where is contemporary poetry read, and where is it written? In the universities. Who reads it? Students; professional students of literature mostly, and professors, who expect to write papers on it, or to lecture on it—to "explicate" it, in the current technical cant. What has become (not to go back to some pre-lapsarian Eden) of the kind of public that even so recent a poet as Tennyson could enjoy? It has been warned off; it has been treated to sneers, threats and enigmas. It has been told so often that it has no status and no business in the sacred wood, and it has found the business actually being transacted there so remote from its ordinary apprehension, that it has turned away, in indifference, or disgust, or despair. A complex of social reasons is often produced to account for this; no doubt some of them are valid. A covert notion of social determinism is invoked to produce a sensation of comforting hopelessness about almost any undesirable situation today. But that is not my business. I am only concerned with what is intrinsic to poetry; and much of the reason for the narrow appeal of modern poetry is in the poetry itself. The wilful Alexandrianism, the allusiveness and multiplicity of reference, above all, the deliberate cultivation of modes of organisation that are utterly at variance with those of ordinary discourse—these are the main reasons for the disappearance of Johnson's common reader. It is hard to say this, for to say it lines one up with the hostile, the malicious and the Philistine, with all those who hate and suspect the exploring sensibility and have never made the attempt to

penetrate into the imaginative life of their time. But it is sometimes necessary to risk being put in bad company for the sake of saying what seems to be true. One can only hope that one has better reasons for saying it.

For my second point I hope to produce a better reason. The poem that abandons the syntax of narrative or argument and relies on the interplay of "themes" or the juxtaposition of images according to the mysterious laws of poetic logic is not, so far as it is doing anything positive at all, doing anything that poetry has not done before. Clustered and repeated images, contrasts or echoes among them, a half-heard music of this kind has always been part of poetic effect. We have always partly known it, and modern criticism has done much to make it explicit. But in all poetry before our time this music has been background music. What we have heard with the alert and directed attention has been something different. It has been a story, or an argument, or a meditation, or the direct expression of feeling. Modern criticism has aroused our sense of this second sub-rational layer in our appreciation of poetry. Perhaps the most signal instance of this is the Shakespeare criticism of Wilson Knight, which sees the plays not as patterns made by character in action, but as "expanded metaphors," patterns of "themes" and "images." Modern poetry in the Imagist mode has performed the extraordinary manoeuvre of shifting its whole weight to this second level. It has shorn itself of paraphrasable sense, of all narrative or discursive line, and relies on the play of contrasted images alone. In doing so it has achieved a startling concentration and brilliance of the individual image, and a whole new rhetoric of its own, with its own special kind of fascination. I still wish to maintain that it is an inadequate rhetoric, inadequate for anything but very short poems and very special effects—states of madness and dream, for example. I take it that the case of Pound's *Cantos* goes without saying; they are the wreckage of poetry; brilliant passages, sometimes long, sometimes the merest splinters, floating in a turbid sea of stammering and incoherent mumble. But even in *The Waste Land* and the *Four Quartets*, where the level of the individual passages is far more consistent, and where it is just possible to give their arrangement some sort of publicly valid justifica-



tion, the organising principle is still quite inadequate for poems of this scope. These poems survive, and will survive, not assisted by their structure, but in spite of it.

This is true of much of the work of Pound, Eliot and Wallace Stevens—to name three of the founding fathers of modern poetry. Their poetry suffers, even on the level on which it functions so persuasively and brilliantly, from the lack of any other level, the lack of public, explicit, paraphrasable discourse. We know, of course, about the “heresy of paraphrase” as it has been called—that we ought never to suppose that a paraphrase can tell us what a poem is “about.” Perhaps we ought never to paraphrase a poem; but as with many other things that we ought never to do, we ought also to be able to feel that we could do it. The virtue that we exercise in not making a conceptual prose translation of a modern poem is generally a fugitive and cloistered virtue; for it would not be possible to give any such translation if we tried. To attempt to explain to an intelligent person who knows nothing about twentieth-century poetry how *The Waste Land* works is to be overcome with embarrassment at having to justify principles so affected, so perverse, so deliberately removed from the ordinary modes of rational communication. If poetry were to go on in this way it would develop before long into an esoteric entertainment with as much relevance to the experience of the common reader as, say, heraldry or real tennis. The imagist revolution was a sort of spring-cleaning; a much-needed spring-cleaning that got rid of a great deal of the fusty, obstructive and dust-gathering matter that had cluttered up the weaker poetry of the nineteenth century. But the house has not been comfortable to live in ever since. And the clotted rubbish of academic imagist criticism is already beginning to fill it up again. There is no reason to be optimistic about this situation. Poetry can degenerate into a meaningless esoteric exercise, and go on that way for centuries. It has happened. But perhaps it will not happen to us. And we have the example of the greatest poet of the early twentieth century to show that it need not. It is something of a paradox that Yeats, whose beliefs are often supposed to be more fantastic and irrational than those of any other great mind of our time, should never have lost his faith in rational order and the disposing intelligence as the guiding principle of a poem.

# The Cult of Experience in American Writing

PHILIP RAHV

## I

Every attentive reader of Henry James remembers that highly dramatic scene in *The Ambassadors*—a scene singled out by its author as giving away the “whole case” of his novel—in which Lambert Strether, the elderly New England gentleman who had come to Paris on a mission of business and duty, proclaims his conversion to the doctrine of experience. Caught in the spell of Paris, the discovery of whose grace and form is marked for him by a kind of meaning and intensity that can be likened only to the raptures of a mystic vision, Strether feels moved to renounce publicly the morality of abstention he had brought with him from Woollett, Mass. And that mellow Sunday afternoon, as he mingles with the charming guests assembled in the garden of the sculptor Gloriani, the spell of the world capital of civilization is so strong upon the sensitive old man that he trembles with happiness and zeal. It is then that he communicates to little Billham his newly acquired piety toward life and the fruits thereof. The worst mistake one can make, he admonishes his youthful interlocutor, is not to live all one can.—“Do what you like so long as you don’t make my mistake . . . Live! . . . It doesn’t so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven’t had that, what *have* you had? . . . This place and these impressions . . . have had their abundant message for me, have just dropped *that* into my mind. I see it now . . . and more than you’d believe or I can express . . . The

right time is now yours. The right time is any *time* that one is still so lucky as to have . . . Live, Live!"

To an imaginative European, unfamiliar with the prohibitive American past and the long-standing national habit of playing hide and seek with experience, Strether's pronouncements in favor of sheer life may well seem so commonplace as scarcely to be worth the loving concentration of a major novelist. While the idea that one should "live" one's life came to James as a revelation, to the contemporary European writers this idea had long been a thoroughly assimilated and natural assumption. Experience served them as the concrete medium for the testing and creation of values, whereas in James's work it stands for something distilled or selected from the total process of living; it stands for romance, reality, civilization—a self-propelling autonomous "presence" inexhaustibly alluring in its own right. That is the "presence" which in the imagination of Hyacinth Robinson, the hero of *The Princess Casamassima*, takes on a form at once "vast, vague, and dazzling—an irradiation of light from objects undefined, mixed with the atmosphere of Paris and Venice."

The significance of this positive approach to experience and identification of it with life's "treasures, felicities, splendors and successes" is that it represents a momentous break with the then dominant American morality of abstention. The roots of this morality are to be traced on the one hand to the religion of the Puritans and, on the other, to the inescapable need of a frontier society to master its world in sober practice before appropriating it as an object of enjoyment. Such is the historical content of that native "innocence" which in James's fiction is continually being ensnared in the web of European "experience." And James's tendency is to resolve this drama of entanglement by finally accepting what Europe offers on condition that it cleanse itself of its taint of evil through an alliance with New World virtue.

James's attitude toward experience is sometimes overlooked by readers excessively impressed (or depressed) by his oblique methods and effects of remoteness and ambiguity. Actually, from the standpoint of the history of the national letters, the lesson he taught in *The Ambassadors*, as in many of his other works, must be understood as no less than a revolutionary appeal. It is a

veritable declaration of the rights of man—not, to be sure, of the rights of the public, of the social man, but of the rights of the private man, of the rights of personality, whose openness to experience provides the sole effective guaranty of its development. Already in one of his earliest stories we find the observation that “in this country the people have rights but the person has none.” And in so far as any artist can be said to have had a mission, his manifestly was to brace the American individual in his moral struggle to gain for his personal and subjective life that measure of freedom which, as a citizen of a prosperous and democratic community, he had long been enjoying in the sphere of material and political relations.

Strether’s appeal, in curiously elaborated, varied, as well as ambivalent forms, pervades all of James’s work; and for purposes of critical symbolization it might well be regarded as the compositional key to the whole modern movement in American writing. No literature, it might be said, takes on the qualities of a truly national body of expression unless it is possessed by a basic theme and unifying principle of its own. Thus the German creative mind has in the main been actuated by philosophical interests, the French by the highest ambitions of the intelligence unrestrained by system or dogma, the Russian by the passionately candid questioning and shaping of values. And since Whitman and James the American creative mind, seizing at last upon what had long been denied to it, has found the terms and objects of its activity in the urge toward and immersion in experience. It is this search for experience, conducted on diverse and often conflicting levels of consciousness, which has been the dominant, quintessential theme of the characteristic American literary productions—from *Leaves of Grass* to *Winesburg, Ohio* and beyond; and the more typically American the writer—a figure like Thomas Wolfe is a patent example—the more deeply does it engulf him.

It is through this preoccupation, it seems to me, that one can account, perhaps more adequately than through any other factor, for some of the peculiarities of American writing since the close of its classic period. A basis is thus provided for explaining the unique indifference of this literature to certain cultural aims

implicit in the aesthetic rendering of experience—to ideas generally, to theories of value, to the wit of the speculative and problematical, and to that new-fashioned sense of irony which at once expresses and modulates the conflicts in modern belief. In his own way even a writer as intensely aware as James shares this indifference. He is the analyst of fine consciences, and fine minds too, but scarcely of minds capable of grasping and acting upon those ineluctable problems that enter so prominently and with such significant results into the literary art developed in Europe during the past hundred years. And the question is not whether James belonged among the “great thinkers”—very few novelists do—but whether he is “obsessed” by those universal problems, whether, in other words, his work is vitally associated with that prolonged crisis of the human spirit to which the concept of modernity is ultimately reducible. What James asks for, primarily, is the expansion of life beyond its primitive needs and elementary standards of moral and material utility; and of culture he conceives as the reward of this expansion and as its unflinching means of discrimination. Hence he searches for the whereabouts of “Life” and for the exact conditions of its enrichment. This is what makes for a fundamental difference between the inner movement of the American and that of the European novel, the novel of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Flaubert and Proust, Joyce, Mann, Lawrence, and Kafka, whose problem is invariably posed in terms of life’s intrinsic worth and destiny.

The intellectual is the only character missing in the American novel. He may appear in it in his professional capacity—as artist, teacher, or scientist—but very rarely as a person who thinks with his entire being, that is to say, as a person who transforms ideas into actual dramatic motives instead of merely using them as ideological conventions or as theories so externally applied that they can be dispensed with at will. Everything is contained in the American novel except ideas. But what are ideas? At best judgments of reality and at worst substitutes for it. The American novelist’s conversion to reality, however, has been so belated that he cannot but be baffled by judgments and vexed by substitutes. Thus his work exhibits a singular pattern consisting, on the one



hand, of a disinclination to thought and, on the other, of an intense predilection for the real: and the real appears in it as a vast phenomenology swept by waves of sensation and feeling. In this welter there is little room for the intellect, which in the unconscious belief of many imaginative Americans is naturally impervious, if not wholly inimical, to reality.

Consider the literary qualities of Ernest Hemingway, for example. There is nothing Hemingway dislikes more than experience of a make-believe, vague, or frigid nature, but in order to safeguard himself against the counterfeit he consistently avoids drawing upon the more abstract resources of the mind, he snubs the thinking man and mostly confines himself to the depiction of life on its physical levels. Of course, his rare mastery of the sensuous element largely compensates for whatever losses he may sustain in other spheres. Yet the fact remains that a good part of his writing leaves us with a sense of situations unresolved and with a picture of human beings tested by values much too simplified to do them justice. Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren have recently remarked on the interrelation between qualities of Hemingway's style and his bedazzlement by sheer experience. The following observation in particular tends to bear out the point of view expressed in this essay: "The short simple rhythms, the succession of coordinate clauses, the general lack of subordination—all suggest a dislocated and ununified world. The figures which live in this world live a sort of hand-to-mouth existence perceptually, and conceptually, they hardly live at all. Subordination implies some exercise of discrimination—the sifting of reality through the intellect. But Hemingway has a romantic anti-intellectualism which is to be associated with the premium which he places upon experience as such."<sup>1</sup>

But Hemingway is only a specific instance. Other writers, less gifted and not so self-sufficiently and incisively one-sided, have come to grief through this same creative psychology. Under its conditioning some of them have produced work so limited to the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. "The Killers," by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, in *American Prefaces*, Spring 1942.

recording of the unmistakably and recurrently real that it can truly be said of them that their art ends exactly where it should properly begin.

"How can one make the best of one's life?" André Malraux asks in one of his novels. "By converting as wide a range of experience as possible into conscious thought." It is precisely this reply which is alien to the typical American artist, who all too often is so absorbed in experience that he is satisfied to let it "write its own ticket"—to carry him, that is, to its own chance or casual destination.

In the first part of *Faust* Goethe removes his hero, a Gothic dreamer, from the cell of scholastic devotion in order to embroil him in the passions and high-flavored joys of "real life." But in the second part of the play this hero attains a broader stage of consciousness, reconciling the perilous freedom of his newly-released personality with the enduring interests of the race, with high art, politics, and the constructive labor of curbing the chaotic forces in man and nature alike. This progress of Faust is foreshadowed in an early scene, when Mephisto promises to reveal to him "the little and then the great world."—*Wir sehen die kleine, dann die grosse Welt.*—The little world is the world of the individual bemused by his personal experience, and his sufferings, guilt-feelings, and isolation are to be understood as the penalty he pays for throwing off the traditional bonds that once linked him to God and his fellow-men. Beyond the little world, however, lies the broader world of man the inhabitant of his own history, who in truth is always losing his soul in order to gain it. Now the American drama of experience constitutes a kind of half-*Faust*, a play with the first part intact and the second part missing. And the Mephisto of this shortened version is the familiar demon of the Puritan morality-play, not at all the Goethian philosopher-sceptic driven by the nihilistic spirit of the modern epoch. Nor is the plot of this half-*Faust* consistent within itself. For its protagonist, playing Gretchen as often as he plays Faust, is evidently unclear in his own mind as to the role he is cast in—that of the seducer or the seduced?

It may be that this confusion of roles is the inner source of the famous Jamesian ambiguity and ever-recurring theme of be-

trayal. James's heroines—his Isabel Archers and Milly Theales and Maggie Ververs—are they not somehow always being victimized by the "great world" even as they succeed in mastering it? Gretchen-like in their innocence, they none the less enact the Faustian role in their uninterrupted pursuit of experience and in the use of the truly Mephistophelean gold of their millionaire-fathers to buy up the brains and beauty and nobility of the civilization that enchants them. And the later heroes of American fiction—Hemingway's young man, for instance, who invariably appears in each of his novels, a young man posing his virility against the background of continents and nations so old that, like Tiresias, they have seen all and suffered all—in his own way he, too, responds to experience in the schizoid fashion of the Gretchen-Faust character. For what is his virility if not at once the measure of his innocence and the measure of his aggression? And what shall we make of Steinbeck's fable of Lennie, that mindless giant who literally kills and gets killed from sheer desire for those soft and lovely things of which fate has singularly deprived him? He combines an unspeakable innocence with an unspeakable aggression. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to say that in this grotesque creature Steinbeck has unconsciously created a symbolic parody of a figure such as Thomas Wolfe, who likewise crushed in his huge caresses the delicate objects of the art of life.

## II

The disunity of American literature, its polar division into above and below or paleface and redskin writing, I have noted elsewhere. Whitman and James, who form a kind of fatal antipodes, have served as the standard examples of this dissociation. There is one sense, however, in which the contrast between these two archetypal Americans may be said to have been overdrawn. There is, after all, a common ground on which they finally, though perhaps briefly, meet—an essential Americanism subsuming them both that is best defined by their mutual affirmation of experience. True, what one affirmed the other was apt to negate; still it is not in their attitudes toward experience as such that the difference between them becomes crucial but rather in their

contradictory conceptions of what constitutes experience. One sought its ideal manifestations in America, the other in Europe. Whitman, plunging with characteristic impetuosity into the turbulent, formless life of the frontier and the big cities, accepted experience in its total ungraded state, whereas James, insisting on a precise scrutiny of its origins and conditions, was endlessly discriminatory, thus carrying forward his ascetic inheritance into the very act of reaching out for the charms and felicities of the great European world. But the important thing to keep in mind here is that this plebeian and patrician are historically associated, each in his own incomparable way, in the radical enterprise of subverting the puritan code of stark utility in the conduct of life and in releasing the long compressed springs of experience in the national letters. In this sense, Whitman and James are the true initiators of the American line of modernity.

If a positive approach to experience is the touchstone of the modern, a negative approach is the touchstone of the classic in American writing. The literature of early America is a sacred rather than a profane literature. Immaculately spiritual at the top and local and anecdotal at the bottom, it is essentially, as the genteel literary historian Barrett Wendell accurately noted, a "record of the national inexperience" marked by "instinctive disregard of actual fact." For this reason it largely left untouched the two chief experiential media—the novel and the drama. Brockden Brown, Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville were "romancers" rather than novelists. They were incapable of apprehending the vitally new principle of realism by virtue of which the art of fiction in Europe was in their time rapidly evolving toward an hitherto inconceivable condition of objectivity and familiarity with existence. Not until James did a fiction-writer appear in America who was able to sympathise with and hence to take advantage of the methods of Thackeray, Balzac, and Turgeniev. Since the principle of realism presupposes a thoroughly secularized relationship between the ego and experience, Hawthorne and Melville could not possibly have apprehended it. Though not religious men themselves, they were nevertheless held in bondage by ancestral conscience and dogma, they were still living in the afterglow of a religious faith that drove the ego,

on its external side, to aggrandize itself by accumulating practical sanctions while scourging and inhibiting its intimate side. In Hawthorne the absent or suppressed experience reappears in the shape of spectral beings whose function is to warn, repel, and fascinate. And the unutterable confusion that reigns in some of Melville's narratives (*Pierre, Mardi*), and which no amount of critical labor has succeeded in clearing up, is primarily due to his inability either to come to terms with experience or else wholly and finally to reject it.

Despite the featureless innocence and moral-enthusiastic air of the old American books, there is in some of them a peculiar virulence, a feeling of discord that does not easily fit in with the general tone of the classic age. In such worthies as Irving, Cooper, Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, and Lowell there is scarcely anything more than meets the eye, but in Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville there is an incandescent symbolism, a meaning within meaning, the vitality of which is perhaps only now being rightly appreciated. D. H. Lawrence was close to the truth when he spoke of what serpents they were, of the "inner diabolism of their underconsciousness." Hawthorne, "that blue-eyed darling," as well as Poe and Melville, insisted on a subversive vision of human nature at the same time as cultivated Americans were everywhere relishing the orations of Emerson who, as James put it, was helping them "to take a picturesque view of one's internal possibilities and to find in the landscape of the soul all sorts of fine sunrise and moonlight effects." Each of these three creative men displays a healthy resistance to the sentimentality and vague idealism of his contemporaries; and along with this resistance they display morbid qualities that, aside from any specific biographical factors, might perhaps be accounted for by the contradiction between the poverty of the experience provided by the society they lived in and the high development of their moral, intellectual, and affective natures—though in Poe's case there is no need to put any stress on his moral character. And the curious thing is that whatever faults their work shows are reversed in later American literature, the weaknesses of which are not to be traced to poverty of experience but to an inability to encompass it on a significant level.



The dilemma that confronted these early writers chiefly manifests itself in their frequent failure to integrate the inner and outer elements of their world so that they might stand witness for each other by way of the organic linkage of object and symbol, act and meaning. For that is the linkage of art without which its structure cannot stand. Lawrence thought that *Moby Dick* is profound *beyond* human feeling—which in a sense says as much against the book as for it. Its further defects are dispersion, a divided mind: its real and transcendental elements do not fully interpenetrate, the creative tension between them is more fortuitous than organic. In *The Scarlet Letter*, as in a few of his shorter fictions, and to a lesser degree in *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne was able to achieve an imaginative order that otherwise eluded him. A good deal of his writing, despite his gift for precise observation, consists of phantasy unsupported by the conviction of reality.

Many changes had to take place in America before its spiritual and material levels could fuse in a work of art in a more or less satisfactory manner. Whitman was already in the position to vivify his democratic ethos by an appeal to the physical features of the country, such as the grandeur and variety of its geography, and to the infinite detail of common lives and occupations. And James too, though sometimes forced to resort to makeshift situations, was on the whole successful in setting up a lively and significant exchange between the moral and empiric elements of his subject-matter. Though he was, in a sense, implicitly bound all his life by the morality of Hawthorne, James none the less perceived what the guilt-tossed psyche of the author of *The Marble Faun* prevented him from seeing—that it is not the man trusting himself to experience but the one fleeing from it who suffers the “beast in the jungle” to rend him.

The Transcendentalist movement is peculiar in that it expresses the native tradition of inexperience in its particulars and the revolutionary urge to experience in its generalities. (Perhaps that is what Van Wyck Brooks meant when, long before prostrating himself at his shrine, he wrote that Emerson was habitually abstract where he should be concrete, and vice versa). On a purely theoretical plane, in ways curiously inverted and idealis-

tic, the cult of experience is patently prefigured in Emerson's doctrine of the uniqueness and infinitude, as well as in Thoreau's equally steep estimate, of the private man. American culture was then unprepared for anything more drastic than an affirmation of experience in theory alone, and even the theory was modulated in a semi-clerical fashion so as not to set it in too open an opposition to the dogmatic faith that, despite the decay of its theology, still prevailed in the ethical sphere. "The love which is preached nowadays," wrote Thoreau, "is an ocean of new milk for a man to swim in. I hear no surf nor surge, but the winds coo over it." No wonder, then, that Transcendentalism declared itself most clearly and dramatically in the form of the essay—a form in which one can preach without practicing.

### III

Personal liberation from social taboos and conventions was the war-cry of the group of writers that came to the fore in the second decade of the century. They employed a variety of means to formulate and press home this program. Dreiser's tough-minded though somewhat arid naturalism, Anderson's softer and spottier method articulating the protest of shut-in people, Lewis's satires of Main Street, Cabell's florid celebrations of pleasure, Edna Millay's emotional expansiveness, Mencken's worldly wisdom and assaults on the provincial pieties, the early Van Wyck Brooks's high-minded though bitter evocations of the inhibited past, his ideal of creative self-fulfillment—all these were weapons brought to bear by the party of rebellion in the struggle to gain free access to experience. And the secret of energy in that struggle seems to have been the longing for what was then called "sexual freedom"; for at the time Americans seeking emancipation were engaged in a truly elemental discovery of sex whose literary expression on some levels, as Randolph Bourne remarked, easily turned into "caricatures of desire." The novel, the poem, the play—all contributed to the development of a complete symptomatology of sexual frustration and release. In his *Memoirs*, written toward the end of his life, Sherwood Anderson recalled the writers of that period as "a little band of soldiers who were going

to free life . . . from certain bonds." Not that they wanted to overplay sex, but they did want "to bring it back into real relation to the life we lived and saw others living. We wanted the flesh back in our literature, wanted directly in our literature the fact of men and women in bed together, babies being born. We wanted the terrible importance of the flesh in human relations also revealed again." In retrospect much of this writing seems but a naïve inversion of the dear old American innocence, a turning inside out of inbred fear and reticence, but the qualities one likes in it are its positiveness of statement, its zeal and pathos of the limited view.

The concept of experience was then still an undifferentiated whole. But as the desire for personal liberation, even if only from the less compulsive social pressures, was partly gratified and the tone of the literary revival changed from eagerness to disdain, the sense of totality gradually wore itself out. Since the nineteen-twenties a process of atomization of experience has forced each of its spokesmen into a separate groove from which he can step out only at the risk of utterly disorienting himself. Thus, to cite some random examples, poetic technique became the special experience of Ezra Pound, language that of Gertrude Stein, the concrete object was appropriated by W. C. Williams, super-American phenomena by Sandburg and related nationalists, Kenneth Burke experienced ideas (which is by no means the same as thinking them), Archibald MacLeish experienced public attitudes, F. Scott Fitzgerald the glamor and sadness of the very rich, Hemingway death and virile sports, and so on and so forth. Finally Thomas Wolfe plunged into a chaotic recapitulation of the cult of experience as a whole, traversing it in all directions and ending nowhere.

Though the crisis of the nineteen-thirties arrested somewhat the progress of the experiential mode, it nevertheless managed to put its stamp on the entire social-revolutionary literature of the decade. A comparison of European and American left-wing writing of the same period will at once show that whereas Europeans like Malraux and Silone enter deeply into the meaning of political ideas and beliefs, Americans touch only superficially on such matters, as actually their interest is fixed almost exclusively on

the class war as an experience which, to them at least, is new and exciting. They succeed in representing incidents of oppression and revolt, as well as sentimental conversions, but conversions of the heart and mind they merely sketch in on the surface or imply in a gratuitous fashion. (What does a radical novel like *The Grapes of Wrath* contain, from an ideological point of view, that agitational journalism cannot communicate with equal heat and facility? Surely its vogue cannot be explained by its radicalism. Its real attraction for the millions who read it lies elsewhere—perhaps in its vivid recreation of “a slice of life” so horribly unfamiliar that it can be made to yield an exotic interest.) The sympathy of these ostensibly political writers with the revolutionary cause is often genuine, yet their understanding of its inner movement, intricate problems, and doctrinal and strategic motives is so deficient as to call into question their competence to deal with political material. In the complete works of the so-called “proletarian school” you will not find a single viable portrait of a Marxist intellectual or of any character in the revolutionary drama who, conscious of his historical role, is not a mere automaton of spontaneous class force or impulse.

What really happened in the nineteen-thirties is that due to certain events the public aspects of experience appeared more meaningful than its private aspects, and literature responded accordingly. But the subject of political art is *history*, which stands in the same relation to experience as fiction to biography; and just as surely as failure to generalize the biographical element thwarts the aspirant to fiction, so the ambition of the literary Left to create a political art was thwarted by its failure to lift experience to the level of history. (For the benefit of those people who habitually pause to insist on what they call “strictly literary values,” I might add that by “history” in this connection I do not mean “history books” or anything resembling what is known as the “historical novel” or drama. A political art would succeed in lifting experience to the level of history if its perception of life—any life—were organized around a perspective relating the artist’s sense of the *society* of the dead to his sense of the *society* of the living and the as yet unborn.)

Experience, in the sense of “felt life” rather than as life’s total

practice, is the main but by no means the total substance of literature. The part experience plays in the aesthetic sphere might well be compared to the part that the materialist conception of history assigns to economy. Experience, in the sense of this analogy, is the substructure of literature above which there rises a superstructure of values, ideas, and judgments—in a word, of the multiple forms of consciousness. But this base and summit are not stationary: they continually act and react upon each other.

It is precisely this superstructural level which is seldom reached by the typical American writer of the modern era. Most of the well-known reputations will bear out my point. Whether you approach a poet like Ezra Pound or novelists like Steinbeck and Faulkner, what is at once noticeable is the uneven, and at times quite distorted, development of the various elements that constitute literary talent. What is so exasperating about Pound's poetry, for example, is its peculiar combination of a finished technique (his special share in the distribution of experience) with amateurish and irresponsible ideas. It could be maintained that for sheer creative power Faulkner is hardly excelled by any living novelist, yet he cannot be compared to Proust or Joyce. The diversity and wonderful intensity of the experience represented in his narratives cannot entirely make up for their lack of order, of a self-illuminating structure, and obscurity of value and meaning. One might naturally counter this criticism by stating that though Faulkner rarely or never sets forth values directly, they none the less exist in his work by implication. Yes, but implications incoherently expressed are no better than mystifications, and nowadays it is values that we can least afford to take on faith. Moreover, in a more striking manner perhaps than any of his contemporaries, Faulkner illustrates the tendency of the experiential mode, if pursued to its utmost extreme, to turn into its opposite through unconscious self-parody. In Faulkner the excess, the systematic inflation of the horrible is such a parody of experience. In Thomas Wolfe the same effect is produced by his swollen rhetoric and compulsion to repeat himself—and repetition is an obvious form of parody. This repetition-compulsion has plagued a good many American writers. Its first and most conspicuous



victim, of course, was Whitman, who occasionally slipped into unintentional parodies of himself.

Yet there is a positive side to the primacy of experience in late American literature. For this primacy has conferred certain benefits upon it, of which none is more bracing than its relative immunity from abstraction and otherworldliness. The stream of life, unimpeded by the rocks and sands of ideology, flows through it freely. If inept in coping with the general, it particularizes not at all badly; and the assumptions of sanctity that so many European artists seem to require as a kind of guaranty of their professional standing are not readily conceded in the lighter and clearer American atmosphere. "Whatever may have been the case in years gone by," Whitman wrote in 1888, "the true use for the imaginative faculty of modern times is to give ultimate vivification to facts, to science, and to common lives, endowing them with glows and glories and final illustriousness which belong to every real thing, and to real things only." As this statement was intended as a prophecy, it is worth noting that while the radiant endowments that Whitman speaks of—the "glows and glories and final illustriousness"—have not been granted, the desired and predicted vivification of facts, science, and common lives has in a measure been realized, though in the process Whitman's democratic faith has as often been belied as confirmed.

#### IV

It is not the mere recoil from the inhibitions of puritan and neo-puritan times that instigated the American search for experience. Behind it is the extreme individualism of a country without a long past to brood on, whose bourgeois spirit had not worn itself out and been debased in a severe struggle against an old culture so tenacious as to retain the power on occasion to fascinate and render impotent even its predestined enemies. Moreover, in contrast to the derangements that have continually shaken Europe, life in the United States has been relatively fortunate and prosperous. It is possible to speak of American history as "successful" history. Within the limits of the capitalist

order—and until the present period the objective basis for a different social order simply did not exist here—the American people have been able to find definitive solutions for the great historical problems that faced them. Thus both the Revolutionary and the Civil War were complete actions that once and for all abolished the antagonisms which had initially caused the breakdown of national equilibrium. In Europe similar actions have usually led to festering compromises that in the end reproduced the same conflicts in other forms.

It is plain that until very recently there has really been no urgent need in America for high intellectual productivity. Indeed, the American intelligentsia developed very slowly as a semi-independent grouping; and what is equally important, for more than a century now and especially since 1865, it has been kept at a distance from the machinery of social and political power. What this means is that insofar as it has been deprived of certain opportunities, it has also been sheltered and pampered. There was no occasion or necessity for the intervention of the intellectuals—it was not mentality that society needed most in order to keep its affairs in order. On the whole the intellectuals were left free to cultivate private interests, and, once the moral and aesthetic ban on certain types of exertion had been removed, uninterruptedly to solicit individual experience. It is this lack of a sense of extremity and many-sided involvement which explains the peculiar shallowness of a good deal of American literary expression. If some conditions of insecurity have been known to retard and disarm the mind, so have some conditions of security. The question is not whether Americans have suffered less than Europeans, but of the quality of whatever suffering and happiness have fallen to their lot.

The consequence of all this has been that American literature has tended to make too much of private life, to impose on it, to scour it for meanings that it cannot always legitimately yield. Henry James was the first to make a cause, if not a fetish, of personal relations; and the justice of his case, despite his vaunted divergence from the pioneer type, is that of a pioneer too, for while Americans generally were still engaged in "gathering in the preparations and necessities" he resolved to seek out "the ameni-

ties and consummations." Furthermore, by exploiting in a fashion altogether his own the contingencies of private life that fell within his scope, he was able to dramatize the relation of the new world to the old, thus driving the wedge of historical consciousness into the very heart of the theme of experience. Later not a few attempts were made to combine experience with consciousness, to achieve the balance of thought and being characteristic of the great traditions of European art. But except for certain narratives of James and Melville, I know of very little American fiction which can unqualifiedly be said to have attained this end.

Since the decline of the regime of gentility many admirable works have been produced, but in the main it is the quantity of felt life comprised in them that satisfies, not their quality of belief or interpretative range. In poetry there is evidence of more distinct gains, perhaps because the medium has reached that late stage in its evolution when its chance of survival depends on its capacity to absorb ideas. The modern poetic styles—metaphysical and symbolist—depend on a conjunction of feeling and idea. But, generally speaking, bare experience is still the *leitmotiv* of the American writer, though the literary depression of recent years tends to show that this theme is virtually exhausted. At bottom it was the theme of the individual transplanted from an old culture taking inventory of himself and of his new surroundings. This inventory, this initial recognition and experiencing of oneself and one's surroundings, is all but complete now, and those who persist in going on with it are doing so out of mere routine and inertia.

The creative power of the cult of experience is almost spent, but what lies beyond it is still unclear. One thing, however, is certain: whereas in the past, throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, the nature of American literary life was largely determined by national forces, now it is international forces that have begun to exert a dominant influence. And in the long run it is in the terms of this historic change that the future course of American writing will define itself.

# The Modern as Vision of a Whole Situation

STEPHEN SPENDER

The confrontation of the past with the present seems to me the fundamental aim of modernism. The reason why it became so important was that, in the early stages of the movement, the moderns wished to express the *whole* experience of modern life.

The feeling that the modern world, even if its values are fragmented, nevertheless shares a fate that in being modern is whole, is important. It results doubtless from contrasting the past as variety of traditions and the present as the single irremediable event which is progress. The present is looked upon as a fatal knowledge that has overtaken the whole of civilization and has broken the line of tradition with the past. This situation can therefore only be apprehended as a whole, as tragedy or overwhelming disaster, unless indeed it can be viewed optimistically.

If the concept of wholeness is abandoned then at once work becomes fragmentary, the parts cut off from the whole. This is the characteristic of futurism that it separates the future finally from the past. It is also the characteristic of the reaction against modernism, which accepts the idea that there can only be "minor" fragmented art. Thus today when certain poets and critics say that they can only aim at elegance and correctness of form, they reveal that they have accepted the idea of writing within a fragmentary part of the fragmented situation, instead of trying to comprehend the situation itself in a single vision that

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*From Partisan Review, 29 (Summer 1962).*

restores wholeness to the fragmentation, even by realizing it as disaster.

Of course, a reaction against the modern movement was inevitable, and there is no argument that it should have continued until the present time. It demands respect however when it lingers on in the work of that heroic survivor, Samuel Beckett. Beckett is characteristically modern in that he makes his audience aware that the mysterious eloquent apathy of his characters is the result of a whole external disaster in surrounding history.

When we read the following by Miss Pamela Hansford Johnson on Literature in *The Baldwin Age* we ask ourselves whether it is not Miss Johnson who is "in retreat":

The full retreat began in the years between 1922 and 1925, the years that saw *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Ulysses*. It was the retreat into perimental experiment in verbal and oral techniques: and it pretty well dominated the English novel for the next thirty years . . .

What shrivelled away in their work was any contact between man and society. "Bloomsday" is Bloom's alone and no-one else's: Mrs. Dalloway, if she is anything at all, is merely herself, walking in her own dream of a private world. Everything dropped away from the novel but Manner: all that counted was how the thing was done, and never the thing itself. We must blame no writer for the influence he exerts on his successors: to have been an influence at all is a seal of achievement. Yet the followers of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce began to lead the novel into sterility. And nobody saw anything wrong in that inexorable and dangerous process. Why not? Because life was growing too hard for writers to face, and quiet lay in impotency alone.

It is difficult to disentangle this. It reads like lines deliberately crossed in order to confuse and mislead. For example, in the muddling up of Joyce and Mrs. Woolf as though they were one flesh like Hamlet's uncle and his mother, or Sir Charles and Lady Snow; and writing that no one "saw anything wrong" in these writers—as though F. R. Leavis and Wyndham Lewis had not spent years conducting the most vigorous polemics against Virginia Woolf (as also against James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence).

The passage confuses two important issues. For while on the one hand it is untrue to imply that there was no contact between from, or decide him on, taking it. This is usually an example of the



man and society in James Joyce, it is true that the method of the interior monologue, which in *Ulysses* was a technique for presenting not just his main characters but also a whole society as a state of consciousness, became in Virginia Woolf's work largely an instrument for projecting her own sensibility; and in that of other writers, for subjective outpourings.

The important point which becomes suppressed in Miss Hansford Johnson's essay, is that although Joyce employed a technique of subjective monologue in his work, the intent of his writing was to achieve an almost total objectivity. *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* may not be complete successes. It is difficult to imagine how they could be, considering that the aim of Joyce in *Ulysses* was to invent an imaginative form which would express the whole experience of modern life, and in *Finnegans Wake*, the whole of history. Perhaps they were gigantic achievements which include elements of gigantic failure. But to dismiss them as mere "experiments" whose discoveries have been usefully absorbed into the novels of C. P. Snow is to overlook what remains truly important and challenging about them: that they attempt to envisage modern life as a whole complexity enclosed within a consciousness conditioned by circumstances that are entirely of today. They state a challenge which perhaps they did not meet and which perhaps cannot be met, although they indicate the scale of it. And what has come after the works which Miss Hansford Johnson so easily dismisses is fragments of a fragmented view of civilization, and is on an altogether lesser scale.

The movements of modern literature and art are programs of techniques for expressing this whole view of the past-future confrontation. There are different types of programs which might be analyzed as establishing the following categories:

1. Realization through new art of the modern experience.
2. The invention through art of a pattern of hope, influencing society.
3. The idea of an art which will fuse past with present into the modern symbolism of a shared inner life.
4. Art as pattern for a technique of living through self-induced sensation.
5. The Revolutionary concept of Tradition.

1. *Realization* is the primary gesture of modernism, the determination to invent a new style in order to express the deeply felt change in the modern world. Industrial towns, machines, revolutions, scientific thinking, are felt to have altered the texture of living. Everyday language and taste reflect these changes, even though the image they mirror is ugly. It is only art that remains archaic, forcing its ideas into forms and manners that are out-moded. Therefore artists have to learn the idiom of changed speech, vision and hearing, and mold the modern experience into forms either revolutionized or modified.

The outstanding characteristic of realization is, then, the great attention paid to inventing an idiom which responds to the tone of voice of contemporaries, the changed vision of a world of machines and speed, the rhythms of an altered contemporary tempo, the new voice of a humanity at times when the old social hierarchies are breaking down.

The street speaks the idiom and the idiom, in the mind of the artist, invents the form. Joyce and Eliot in their early work are realizers of the modern idiom in their poetry and their poetic prose. In music, Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* is a classic example of the realization of the 1920's in Germany as idiom. In his Blue Period, Picasso had supremely this quality of realization, like the Eliot of *Preludes*:

I am moved by fancies that are curled  
Around these images, and cling;  
The notion of some infinitely gentle  
Infinitely suffering thing.

The human element is often reduced to pathos, clownishness, in *Wozzeck*, Blue Period Picasso, the early Eliot. In Apollinaire as in some of the German Expressionists, this clownishness acquires a quality of touching and nobly absurd heroism.

2. By the pattern of hope, I mean—and this certainly will seem an unfashionable view today—the idea that modern art might transform the contemporary environment, and hence, by pacifying and ennobling its inhabitants, revolutionize the world (there is, surely, a pun on this idea in the program of Eugene Jolas in his magazine *transition*—"the revolution of the word").

The word *hope* has to be understood seriously, as Malraux still intended it when he entitled his Spanish civil war novel *Espoir*. Early in the century, hope was based on the international inter-arts community of the alliance between the ballet, architecture, furniture design, painting, music and poetry, all of them participating in the movement to revolutionize taste, and at the same time make it an operative acting and criticizing force in modern life. The way in which art might revolutionize the environment and hence, by implication, people living in it, is explored in many of the manifestoes of poets and painters early in the century. The famous *Der Blaue Reiter* (1914), the anthology of the group of painters which was founded in Munich in 1909, is prefaced with remarks of which these are characteristic:

“Everything which comes into being, on earth can only have its beginning.” This sentence by Daeubler might stand written over all our inventing and all our aims. A fulfillment will be attained, some time, in a new world, in another existence (*Dasein*). On earth we are only able to state the theme. This first volume is the prelude to a new theme . . . We wander with our passionate wishes through the art of this time and through the present age.

This is touching, innocent, mysteriously exciting. The same dream of transforming the world—but this time the world of actuality in which we live—is expressed by Wyndham Lewis, a decade later, in *The Tyro*:

Art, however, the greatest art, even, has it in its power to influence everybody. Actually the shapes of the objects (houses, cars, dresses and so forth) by which they are surrounded have a very profound subconscious effect on people. A man might be unacquainted with the very existence of a certain movement in art, and yet his life would be modified directly if the street he walked down took a certain shape, at the dictates of an architect under the spell of that movement, whatever it were. Its forms and colors would have a tonic or a debilitating effect on him, an emotional value. Just as he is affected by the change of the atmosphere, without taking the least interest in the cyclonic machinery that controls it, so he would be directly affected by any change in his physical milieu.

A man goes to choose a house. He is attracted by it or not, often, not for sentimental or practical reasons, but for some reason that he does not seek to explain, and that yet is of sufficient force to prevent him

functioning of the aesthetic sense (however underdeveloped it may be in him) of which we are talking. The painting, sculpture and general design of today, such as can be included in the movement we support, aims at nothing short of a physical reconstructing and recording of the visible part of the world.

The theme of hope re-connects an art, which has been driven inwards into the isolated being of the artist, with the external world, by accomplishing a revolution in the community which is taught to share the visions of modern artists. In being victimized, oppressed, and in having dreams, the artist already meets the insulted and the oppressed who pray for change, although their aspirations may be far removed from his visions. But it is important to him that his visions are nevertheless closer to the poor and the powerless than to those who are rich and enjoy power. Hence the current of revolutionary feeling which runs alike through dadaist, expressionist and surrealist manifestoes. Each group claims to be the true revolutionaries of life, and that the stream which it represents would join with the stream of the social revolution; if only the revolutionaries were not too philistine to realize that modern art represents the democracy of the unconscious forces which should be equated with economic democracy! Hence the surrealists were later to insist that they were Communists. Some of them—Aragon, Tristan Tzara—even, as surrealists, joined the Communist Party, later to renounce surrealism as bourgeois. The smile was on the face of the tiger.

3. Art which will transform reality into shared inner life, is the converse of (2) which would transform inner vision into outer social change. It is the idea that the images of the materialist modern world can be "interpreted," made to become symbols of inner life where they are reconciled with the older things symbolized by words like "jug," "mountain," "star," "cross." This process was the infinitely patient research of experience of Rilke. It finds its completest realization in the *Duino Elegies*, where the Angels are set up as almost machine-like figures over the human landscape in which there is the fair, the world of values that are money. The angels are perpetually occupied in transforming the world of outward materialism back into inner tragic values.

The connection of poetry here with iconographic modern

painting is evident. One of the *Duino Elegies* is inspired by Picasso's *Les Saltimbanques*, in which Rilke sees the method of interpretation of the performers in the fairground who are at once traditional and contemporary.

The fascinating letter (Sierre: 13.11.25) of Rilke to Witold von Hulewicz deserves to rank with Shelley's famous essay as a twentieth century *Defence of Poetry*. If Shelley saw poets as the "unacknowledged legislators," Rilke saw them as the inventors of a machinery of symbolism which transforms the actual into the significant material of inner being, reconciling within ourselves the past and the present. The whole letter requires the closest attention, and the few passages here quoted are only used to fortify this argument:

We, the men of the present and today, we are not for one moment in the world of time, nor are we fixed in it; we overflow continually towards the men of the Past, towards our origin and towards those who apparently come after us. In that most vast, *open* world all beings are—one cannot say "contemporaneous," for it is precisely the passage of Time which determines that they all *are*. This transitoriness rushes everywhere into a profound Being.

This reads perhaps like oriental philosophy, but it is the view which provides in the most concrete sense the groundwork of Rilke's poetry:

The Elegies show us engaged on this work, the work of the perpetual transformation of beloved and tangible things into the invisible vibration and excitability of our nature, which introduces new "frequencies" into the pulsing fields of the universe . . .

The view put forward here, which is also surely the "groundwork" for the eclecticism of Yeats, is that values, become detached from facts, can nevertheless remain liquescent and molten in our consciousness. Whatever the objections to this view (and the objections are all of the kind that point out that to expect men to believe in values that are unsupported by dogmas and institutions is expecting altogether too much), a world of constant change can only be confronted by values so intensely imagined, so spiritualized, that they become independent of dogmas, institutions, and actual traditional objects. All has to be reborn



each instant as memory to confront external change. And if the poets are incapable of such incandescence, then the divorce between dogmatic beliefs they nurture in themselves for the sake of their art, and the world of changing appearances will become evident. Or those who are today's up-to-date critics tied to the values of the Great Tradition will become tomorrow's antiquaries. As Rilke puts the matter:

Even for our grandfathers a house, a fountain, a familiar tower, their very clothes, their coat, was infinitely more, infinitely more intimate; almost every object a vessel in which they found something human or added their morsel of humanity. Now, from America, empty different things crowd over to us, counterfeit things, the veriest dummies. A house, in the American sense, an American apple or one of the vines of that country has *nothing* in common with the house, the fruit, the grape into which have entered the hope and mediation of our forefathers. The lived and living things, the things that share our thoughts, these are on the decline and can no more be replaced. *We are perhaps the last to have known such things.* The responsibility rests with us not only to keep remembrance of them (that would be but a trifle and unreliable), but also their human or 'laric' value ('laric' in the sense of household gods). The earth has no alternative but to become invisible—IN us, who with a portion of our being have a share in the Invisible, or at least the appearance of sharing; we who can multiply our possessions of the Invisible during our earthly existence, in us *alone* can there be accomplished this intimate and continual transmutation of the Visible into the Invisible . . . just as our destiny becomes unceasingly more present, and at the same time invisible, in us.

The machinery of the symbolism of the angels becomes apparent. They are the agents which transform the memoried past into the invisible which flows over and acts upon the present.

4. The Alternate Life of Art. By this I mean something different from (2) the hope that art might become the agency for inspiring a transformed society, and (3) the use of art to interpret the external materialism into the language of inner life. The Alternate Life is when it is intended that the processes of art are brought close to the borderline ecstatic or sexual experiences. I am thinking here of the exaltation of violence, sexual relations, madness, drugs, through art which is regarded by the artist as a

transition towards the actual experience of these states. Lawrence surely often regarded his writing not as an end but as a means of inducing in the reader a state of feeling which would release in him the "dark forces" or "phallic consciousness," or the approach to the mystic-physical sexual union which were more important to him than the writing on the page.

The tendency here is to regard writing as hallucinatory: that is to say as a literary technique for inducing non-literary sensations. The poet, supposedly, has a peculiar insight into life-sensations which he upholds as more "real" than the externals which are everyday reality. The surrealists used poetry as a technique for inducing states of mind supposedly super-real. It might be said that surrealist writing is itself the super-reality, but if this were true, it would only be in the way that incantation may itself be what is invoked: a strangeness of feeling without language that lies beyond the threshold of the words. However much one disapproves of non-literary aims in literature, nevertheless there is importance for literature itself in the view of writing as provider of alternate life. For we live in a time when material values are generally regarded as the most important ones, sometimes for selfish reasons, but sometimes also (as in the case of those who want to improve the material conditions of the poor) for altruistic ones. Therefore the view that there are "other" values of living becomes extremely important for art, even if it accepts the subsidiary position of being only a means to attain ends which lie outside art. The definition of surrealism, by André Breton, which I quote from David Gascoyne's *Surrealism*, is relevant:

SURREALISM, n. Pure psychic automatism, by which it is intended to express, verbally, in writing, or by other means, the real process of thought. Thought's dictation, in the absence of all control exercised by the real reason and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations.

ENCYCL. *Philos.* Surrealism rests in the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of association neglected heretofore; in the omnipotence of the dream and in the disinterested play of thought. It tends definitely to do away with all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in the solution of the principal problem of life.

Just as futurism is the expression of an impulse to repudiate the whole of the past which is common to several movements

called by different names, so surrealism has features in common with quite a few other movements. All the "alternate life of art" movements attempt to discover through art, or to use art to discover, spiritual, sensual, or esoteric forces, which restore the balance of inner life against industrialized societies.

The tendency to seek such a compensation of life through art, and of art through life, was already present with Byron, Keats and Shelley. "Oh for a life of pure sensation!" apostrophized Keats.

Sensuality tinged with despair and anticipation of death tended to produce a mood in which he regarded the taste of a peach or rose, with its further suggestion of a drug, as lines of poetry, lines of poetry as a peach or rose. He was tasting, I suggest, at these moments the taste of his own being as a poet, and delighting in it. Today at a later stage of individual despair there is a meeting ground in drugs, violence, sexual relations, hallucination, madness, between poets and non-poets who live the life of poetry regarded as experienced sensation. The "dark forces" released through sexual passion or through "phallic consciousness," the mystical-physical sexual union, surely suggest in Lawrence a meeting in which the art-sensation is the equivalent of the life-sensation. The reader is recommended to have sex in the way which will identify for him the sensation described in the words. Significantly, Lawrence disapproved all sex which is not experienced exactly in the way that he describes, or prescribes it. And the purpose of this is not, of course, pornographic. It is to assert the proximate reality and force of experienced sensation against the abstract supra-personal forces of machinery and social organization.

Here, the confusion of art-experience with life-experience seems dangerous. The example of movements such as that of the Beats in America shows the degradation of life, through art and of art through life, which follows from the substitution of what is supposed to be the life of the artist for the effort required to create art.

5. By the Revolutionary concept of Tradition, I mean the introduction, into certain works, of selected traditions. Often such use of tradition seems outrageous to those who regard them-

selves as traditionalists. A famous example of the transformation, distortion and even perversion of a tradition into expression of ideas that may seem its opposite, is Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*. The traditionally catholic consciousness of Baudelaire realizes itself in the pursuit of evil. Grace is discovered in damnation, and the only part of the faith that does not seem to have undergone a terrible transmutation, is the doctrine of Original Sin. The process by which the little flowers of St. Francis become in the late nineteenth century the flowers of evil, can also be reversed, and a certain intensity of corruption or debauchery can be taken as a sign of grace. Claudel was converted to catholicism by reading the poems of Rimbaud, *poète maudit, par excellence*.

The justification of this conversion of traditions into art which seems almost their opposite is, of course, that for the person who has been really born into the true life of the tradition the modern world produces the distortion. If Ulysses were a wanderer on the stage of the twentieth century, he would be Leopold Bloom. Such a view may seem too sophisticated, too much part of a world, in which the poet, or man of letters, has become so isolated from everything except literature, that there is something dubious about his claiming to have beliefs in the same sense as ordinary human beings might have them. One may suspect that the beliefs of poets who are also critics and who have made profoundly intellectual analyses of the effects of the world around them on their situations as poets may have been improvised to bolster up their own vocation. This is especially so, I think, when the poet appears to see nothing else in the sum of human progress than its undermining of the traditional positions of art.

But when one turns to writers like Gerard Manley Hopkins in whom faith seems undoubtedly more important than literary vocational self-interest, one sees the necessity of revolutionizing traditions in order to express faith in terms of modern life, as directly arising out of the need for expression. And in a poet like Wilfred Owen, in whom the human individuality predominates over the thought-out position of the strategic man of letters, one notes an irony towards the traditional view of poetry as beauty, which compares with that of Leopold Bloom being the incarnation of Ulysses in his modern Dublin setting.

The idea of tradition as an explosive force, an unknown quantity almost, an apocalyptic mystery, something sought out from the past and chosen by the modern artist, perhaps in a spirit of grotesque mimicry, something disturbing and shocking, belongs to the early phase of modernism in poetry and fiction. In painting it still retains the enormous eclecticism of Malraux's *Musée Imaginaire*, the whole of visual art contained within the walls of the contemporary skull, and in one timeless moment. In an important paper on The Spirit of Modern Art (published in *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. I, No. 3, June 1961) J. P. Hodin, discussing the visual arts, offers a definition of the modern:

Modern Art is cognition, the findings of which, often highly specialized and elaborated on an analytical basis, are organized into a new visual order. Linking up with a tradition of its own choice, of universal significance and without limitations in time and thus breaking with the chronological tradition generally acknowledged in art history, it strives for a synthesis in the work of the individual artist and through the mutual influence of its different trends upon one another; a many-faceted process moving towards a new unitary concept, a new artistic tonality, in other words, a style.

This definition would scarcely apply to poetry and criticism in the English language since the 1930's. It throws light on the breaking up of the once single modern movement into different tendencies in each art. One sees this process in Eliot's development. *The Waste Land* admits of a complete eclecticism in the choice of tradition. But with *Ash Wednesday* and *Four Quartets* the choice has been narrowed to the Christian and, more specifically, to the English Church. Parallel with this, there is in Eliot's criticism, a corresponding narrowing down of the concept of tradition. When Eliot defended *Ulysses* and the earlier work of Ezra Pound, his concept of tradition surely extended to the pagan. He greatly admired Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and I surmise that he thought that whatever could be used as a myth was suitable as tradition.

In Yeats's *A Vision*, a book in which he considered that he had compiled the storehouse of symbols, myths and imagery for his



poetry, there is also freedom of choice in tradition. And of course Pound, in the *Cantos*, is as eclectic as a painter like Picasso in his wide wandering over all history and all mythology.

Although the reputation of Yeats is unimpaired, and although Pound's cantos are vigorously defended, nevertheless the tendency of recent poetry and criticism is against the freedom of choice of tradition which Yeats, and Pound, and Joyce, and Eliot, in *The Waste Land*, shared with the painters and with Stravinsky. The modern painter, according to Mr. Hodin's account of what makes him modern, might be seen as asking himself "What tradition should I choose, that would best serve my purpose in inventing my own new style?" But the attitude which has more and more divided the poets from the painters is that poets have been influenced by critics to ask themselves "what tradition am I already in?" And the critics have also pressed upon them that the correct answer to this question is the answer discoverable to criticism. They have argued, against Mr. Hodin, that there is no such thing as freedom to choose a tradition which at the same time breaks with the "chronological tradition." There is—they have suggested—a choice between true tradition and no tradition. True tradition is that past which survives in a continuous—if very fragile—line into present life, so that if you apprehend it with critical intelligence, it can put you into contact with some pattern of living in the past. Thus it might be said that although we do not live in a Christian society, nevertheless, there is a lifeline of Christian tradition which will lead us back imaginatively and intelligently to true Christian communities. But, in this sense, there is no pagan tradition. There is just a pagan past.

The prevalent argument is more and more on the lines that so far from there being a freedom of choice among traditions, there are extremely few lifelines leading back into past traditions. From this there naturally follows the idea that there is only one true tradition anyway, and debate in America and England becomes more and more concentrated on discussing which is the true line of the tradition. The tradition is in the Church, say some. Others, embarrassed by the fact that it is difficult to agree to this without having to accept the Church's creed, argue that the tradition is in the "organic community," or New England, or

the South; and since there is no question of being able to revive these communal patterns, they conclude that the tradition exists simply in the library of works written by the best writers who were privileged to belong to a place and time when the tradition flourished as actual living.

These lines of thought have disrupted, in literature, what was essentially modern: the vision of the present confronted by the past as a whole state of being. The vision of a whole modern world—a whole fatality—related to a past which is also whole, if only in not being modern, is, let me emphasize again, essentially the characteristic of the modern. As Rilke writes in the letter already cited: “We let it be emphasized again, in the sense of the Elegies WE are the transmuters of the earth; our whole existence here, the flights and falls of our love, all strengthen us for this task (besides which there is really no other).”

The connection of the idea of wholeness (the past as a whole, the task of the artist to interpret it into the wholeness of the present fatality) with freedom of choice to select any part of the past as tradition, should be apparent. The attitude of most recent critics to the traditional in the work of D. H. Lawrence, demonstrates the way in which a partial interpretation can be super-imposed on what, in the life and work of the writer himself, was the search for wholeness. F. R. Leavis, Richard Hoggart and others acclaim Lawrence as the great exemplar of the alternative tradition: the chapel-going, Bunyanesque, proletarian. In doing this they make him the champion of what is hopefully looked forward to as a new socialist puritan revolution, with roots in Cromwellian England, against the upper class public school Oxford and Cambridge and Bloomsbury culture.

It is of course quite possible to quote from *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and several of his essays to make him fit such a role. On the whole, Lawrence was probably more of a socialist than a Fascist or the blood-and-soil race-conscious Nazi whom Bertrand Russell saw in him. But even though the socialist and puritan working-class sentiments he sometimes expressed may prove that he was capable of playing the kind of part that is now being written out of his own books for him, in fact he refused it, even though he wrote some of its speeches. His actions and the greater

part of his writing show that he was largely concerned with getting away from the very tradition which he is now being written (or analyzed) into. And those who put him back in this tradition have somehow to ignore the fact that he left Nottingham and England and wandered over the earth in search precisely of a tradition which he felt to be lacking as much among his "own" people as among the Bloomsbury intellectuals. Moreover the traditions—whether of Italian peasants, Etruscans, Aztec or pueblo Indians—of which he went in search were precisely those which, from the point of view of the literary sociologists who are concerned with establishing effective connections between past and present, were most illusory and useless.

The reason why Lawrence in fact refused the role now being thrust on him of leader of an English alternative tradition puritan revival is, surely, that he rejected the idea of being that kind of partisan. Although he was as much against the English upper class and the Oxbridge common rooms as any inmate of a Red Brick University common room could wish, he was not *for* Nottingham and the mines either. He had virtuous weaknesses which made partisan action impossible for him—a complete inability to co-operate with sociological types, and professors: above all a blind, hysterical hatred of industrial ugliness, and an utter unwillingness to work for any cause which had to deal in its terms. But the real objection is that he was, despite his contempt for all the literary sets, in the most essential respect a modern: that is to say, he saw contemporary civilization as a whole consciousness which would eventually engulf all the future and which already had only left in primitive civilizations those pockets of unctemporary existence which he sought out. And in thinking that hope for the future could only begin by a change of consciousness occurring within the individual, and between individuals in their mutual spiritual and physical awareness, he was committing his trust to people who were points of consciousness of what had happened to the whole of civilization and who realized that the answer to this was also the total change of consciousness.

What I have described here as the revolutionary concept of tradition was, then, of fundamental importance to the modern movement, because it permitted creative minds to view the whole

significant past of art at all times and places as an available tradition out of which modern forms and style might derive. The reversal to the idea of institutionalized or continuous tradition probably contributed more than any other cause to the collapse in literature of the modern movement. The difference between all that was what Hodin calls "a tradition of its own choice" and connected, institutionalized tradition, is apparent, I think in the gulf that separates *The Waste Land* from *Four Quartets*. It may well be that the change was, in literature, at all events, inevitable. All the same the price that is paid for the present reaction is the abandonment of the aim of representing a whole modern situation, which produced the greatest works of the modern movement: withdrawn into the limited fortified area that is the outpost of what remains of the continuous line of the tradition, poets turn away from the vast areas of the modern world where these connections no longer count, critics use the communicating lines as a means of getting back into the works of the past, and condemning all that is modern and unprecedented. Myth becomes split off from tradition, mere illustration for academic poems by academic poets. Inevitably, poetry seems as an art to have receded, and while painters digress into futurism, the most hopeful tendency in literature is the realism of novelists and playwrights oblivious of the aims that were modern, but at least contemporaries in the manner of Arnold Bennett, and energetic propagandists of an impassioned argument that they are in the line of the true tradition. In place of the upper class tradition—universally admitted to be in decline—they have in England set up their little standard of insularity.

Although the present reaction may be inevitable, it seems impossible, on the premises now put forward by criticism and by novelists and playwrights content to be contemporaries in a limited social realist tradition, that work on the scale of the greatest achievements earlier in the century could be written. Re-consideration of the aims of the modern and an attempt to relate them to the most vigorous developments today, are surely necessary.

# The Ideology of Modernism

GEORG LUKACS

It is in no way surprising that the most influential contemporary school of writing should still be committed to the dogmas of 'modernist' anti-realism. It is here that we must begin our investigation if we are to chart the possibilities of a bourgeois realism. We must compare the two main trends in contemporary bourgeois literature, and look at the answers they give to the major ideological and artistic questions of our time.

We shall concentrate on the underlying ideological basis of these trends (ideological in the above-defined, not in the strictly philosophical, sense). What must be avoided at all costs is the approach generally adopted by bourgeois-modernist critics themselves: that exaggerated concern with formal criteria, with questions of style and literary technique. This approach may appear to distinguish sharply between 'modern' and 'traditional' writing (i.e. contemporary writers who adhere to the styles of the last century). In fact it fails to locate the decisive formal problems and turns a blind eye to their inherent dialectic. We are presented with a false polarization which, by exaggerating the importance of stylistic differences, conceals the opposing principles actually underlying and determining contrasting styles.

To take an example: the *monologue intérieur*. Compare, for instance, Bloom's monologue in the lavatory or Molly's monologue in bed, at the beginning and at the end of *Ulysses*, with Goethe's early-morning monologue as conceived by Thomas Mann in his *Lotte in Weimar*. Plainly, the same stylistic technique is being employed. And certain of Thomas Mann's remarks

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*From Georg Lukacs, Realism in Our Time (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).*



about Joyce and his methods would appear to confirm this.

Yet it is not easy to think of any two novels more basically dissimilar than *Ulysses* and *Lotte in Weimar*. This is true even of the superficially rather similar scenes I have indicated. I am not referring to the—to my mind—striking difference in intellectual quality. I refer to the fact that with Joyce the stream-of-consciousness technique is no mere stylistic device; it is itself the formative principle governing the narrative pattern and the presentation of character. Technique here is something absolute; it is part and parcel of the aesthetic ambition informing *Ulysses*. With Thomas Mann, on the other hand, the *monologue intérieur* is simply a technical device, allowing the author to explore aspects of Goethe's world which would not have been otherwise available. Goethe's experience is not presented as confined to momentary sense-impressions. The artist reaches down to the core of Goethe's personality, to the complexity of his relations with his own past, present, and even future experience. The stream of association is only apparently free. The monologue is composed with the utmost artistic rigour: it is a carefully plotted sequence gradually piercing to the core of Goethe's personality. Every person or event, emerging momentarily from the stream and vanishing again, is given a specific weight, a definite position, in the pattern of the whole. However unconventional the presentation, the compositional principle is that of the traditional epic; in the way the pace is controlled, and the transitions and climaxes are organized, the ancient rules of epic narration are faithfully observed.

It would be absurd, in view of Joyce's artistic ambitions and his manifest abilities, to qualify the exaggerated attention he gives to the detailed recording of sense-data, and his comparative neglect of ideas and emotions, as artistic failure. All this was in conformity with Joyce's artistic intentions; and, by use of such techniques, he may be said to have achieved them satisfactorily. But between Joyce's intentions and those of Thomas Mann there is a total opposition. The perpetually oscillating patterns of sense- and memory-data, their powerfully charged—but aimless and directionless—fields of force, give rise to an epic structure which is *static*, reflecting a belief in the basically static character of events.

These opposed views of the world—dynamic and developmental on the one hand, static and sensational on the other—are of crucial importance in examining the two schools of literature I have mentioned. I shall return to the opposition later. Here, I want only to point out that an exclusive emphasis on formal matters can lead to serious misunderstanding of the character of an artist's work.

What determines the style of a given work of art? How does the intention determine the form? (We are concerned here, of course, with the intention realized in the work; it need not coincide with the writer's conscious intention). The distinctions that concern us are not those between stylistic 'techniques' in the formalistic sense. It is the view of the world, the ideology or *weltanschauung* underlying a writer's work, that counts. And it is the writer's attempt to reproduce this view of the world which constitutes his 'intention' and is the formative principle underlying the style of a given piece of writing. Looked at in this way, style ceases to be a formalistic category. Rather, it is rooted in content; it is the specific form of a specific content.

Content determines form. But there is no content of which Man himself is not the focal point. However various the *données* of literature (a particular experience, a didactic purpose), the basic question is, and will remain: what is Man?

Here is a point of division: if we put the question in abstract, philosophical terms, leaving aside all formal considerations, we arrive—for the realist school—at the traditional Aristotelian dictum (which was also reached by other than purely aesthetic considerations): Man is *zoon politikon*, a social animal. The Aristotelian dictum is applicable to all great realistic literature. Achilles and Werther, Oedipus and Tom Jones, Antigone and Anna Karenina: their individual existence—their *Sein an sich*, in the Hegelian terminology; their 'ontological being', as a more fashionable terminology has it—cannot be distinguished from their social and historical environment. Their human significance, their specific individuality cannot be separated from the context in which they were created.

The ontological view governing the image of man in the work of leading modernist writers is the exact opposite of this. Man,

for these writers, is by nature solitary, asocial, unable to enter into relationships with other human beings. Thomas Wolfe once wrote: 'My view of the world is based on the firm conviction that solitariness is by no means a rare condition, something peculiar to myself or to a few specially solitary human beings, but the inescapable, central fact of human existence.' Man, thus imagined, may establish contact with other individuals, but only in a superficial, accidental manner; only, ontologically speaking, by retrospective reflection. For 'the others', too, are basically solitary, beyond significant human relationship.

This basic solitariness of man must not be confused with that individual solitariness to be found in the literature of traditional realism. In the latter case, we are dealing with a particular situation in which a human being may be placed, due either to his character or to the circumstances of his life. Solitariness may be objectively conditioned, as with Sophocles' Philoctetes, put ashore on the bleak island of Lemnos. Or it may be subjective, the product of inner necessity, as with Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyitsch or Flaubert's Frédéric Moreau in the *Education Sentimentale*. But it is always merely a fragment, a phase, a climax or anticlimax, in the life of the community as a whole. The fate of such individuals is characteristic of certain human types in specific social or historical circumstances. Beside and beyond their solitariness, the common life, the strife and togetherness of other human beings, goes on as before. In a word, their solitariness is a specific social fate, not a universal *condition humaine*.

The latter, of course, is characteristic of the theory and practice of modernism. I would like, in the present study, to spare the reader tedious excursions into philosophy. But I cannot refrain from drawing the reader's attention to Heidegger's description of human existence as a 'thrownness-into-being' (*Geworfenheit ins Dasein*). A more graphic evocation of the ontological solitariness of the individual would be hard to imagine. Man is 'thrown-into-being'. This implies, not merely that man is constitutionally unable to establish relationships with things or persons outside himself; but also that it is impossible to determine theoretically the origin and goal of human existence.

Man, thus conceived, is an ahistorical being. (The fact that

Heidegger does admit a form of 'authentic' historicity in his system is not really relevant. I have shown elsewhere that Heidegger tends to belittle historicity as 'vulgar'; and his 'authentic' historicity is not distinguishable from ahistoricity). This negation of history takes two different forms in modernist literature. First, the hero is strictly confined within the limits of his own experience. There is not for him—and apparently not for his creator—any pre-existent reality beyond his own self, acting upon him or being acted upon by him. Secondly, the hero himself is without personal history. He is 'thrown-into-the-world': meaninglessly, unfathomably. He does not develop through contact with the world; he neither forms nor is formed by it. The only 'development' in this literature is the gradual revelation of the human condition. Man is now what he has always been and always will be. The narrator, the examining subject, is in motion; the examined reality is static.

Of course, dogmas of this kind are only really viable in philosophical abstraction, and then only with a measure of sophistry. A gifted writer, however extreme his theoretical modernism, will in practice have to compromise with the demands of historicity and of social environment. Joyce uses Dublin, Kafka and Musil the Hapsburg Monarchy, as the locus of their masterpieces. But the locus they lovingly depict is little more than a backcloth; it is not basic to the artistic intention.

This view of human existence has specific literary consequences. Particularly in one category, of primary theoretical and practical importance, to which we must now give our attention: that of *potentiality*. Philosophy distinguishes between *abstract* and *concrete* (in Hegel, 'real') *potentiality*. These two categories, their interrelation and opposition, are rooted in life itself. *Potentiality*—seen abstractly or subjectively—is richer than actual life. Innumerable possibilities for man's development are imaginable, only a small percentage of which will be realized. Modern subjectivism, taking these imagined possibilities for actual complexity of life, oscillates between melancholy and fascination. When the world declines to realize these possibilities, this melancholy becomes tinged with contempt. Hofmannsthal's *Sobeide* expressed the reaction of the generation first exposed to this experience:

The burden of those endlessly pored-over  
And now forever perished possibilities . . .

How far were those possibilities even concrete or 'real'? Plainly, they existed only in the imagination of the subject, as dreams or day-dreams. Faulkner, in whose work this subjective potentiality plays an important part, was evidently aware that reality must thereby be subjectivized and made to appear arbitrary. Consider this comment of his: 'They were all talking simultaneously, getting flushed and excited, quarrelling, making the unreal into a possibility, then into a probability, then into an irrefutable fact, as human beings do when they put their wishes into words.' The possibilities in a man's mind, the particular pattern, intensity and suggestiveness they assume, will of course be characteristic of that individual. In practice, their number will border on the infinite, even with the most unimaginative individual. It is thus a hopeless undertaking to define the contours of individuality, let alone to come to grips with a man's actual fate, by means of potentiality. The *abstract* character of potentiality is clear from the fact that it cannot determine development—subjective mental states, however permanent or profound, cannot here be decisive. Rather, the development of personality is determined by inherited gifts and qualities; by the factors, external or internal, which further or inhibit their growth.

But in life potentiality can, of course, become reality. Situations arise in which a man is confronted with a choice; and in the act of choice a man's character may reveal itself in a light that surprises even himself. In literature—and particularly in dramatic literature—the denouement often consists in the realization of just such a potentiality, which circumstances have kept from coming to the fore. These potentialities are, then, 'real' or concrete potentialities. The fate of the character depends upon the potentiality in question, even if it should condemn him to a tragic end. In advance, while still a subjective potentiality in the character's mind, there is no way of distinguishing it from the innumerable abstract potentialities in his mind. It may even be buried away so completely that, before the moment of decision, it has never entered his mind even as an abstract potentiality. The



subject, after taking his decision, may be unconscious of his own motives. Thus Richard Dudgeon, Shaw's *Devil's Disciple*, having sacrificed himself as Pastor Andersen, confesses: 'I have often asked myself for the motive, but I find no good reason to explain why I acted as I did.'

Yet it is a decision which has altered the direction of his life. Of course, this is an extreme case. But the qualitative leap of the denouement, cancelling and at the same time renewing the continuity of individual consciousness, can never be predicted. The concrete potentiality cannot be isolated from the myriad abstract potentialities. Only actual decision reveals the distinction.

The literature of realism, aiming at a truthful reflection of reality, must demonstrate both the concrete and abstract potentialities of human beings in extreme situations of this kind. A character's concrete potentiality once revealed, his abstract potentialities will appear essentially inauthentic. Moravia, for instance, in his novel *The Indifferent Ones*, describes the young son of a decadent bourgeois family, Michel, who makes up his mind to kill his sister's seducer. While Michel, having made his decision, is planning the murder, a large number of abstract—but highly suggestive—possibilities are laid before us. Unfortunately for Michel the murder is actually carried out; and, from the sordid details of the action, Michel's character emerges as what it is—representative of that background from which, in subjective fantasy, he had imagined he could escape.

Abstract potentiality belongs wholly to the realm of subjectivity; whereas concrete potentiality is concerned with the dialectic between the individual's subjectivity and objective reality. The literary presentation of the latter thus implies a description of actual persons inhabiting a palpable, identifiable world. Only in the interaction of character and environment can the concrete potentiality of a particular individual be singled out from the 'bad infinity' of purely abstract potentialities, and emerge as the determining potentiality of just this individual at just this phase of his development. This principle alone enables the artist to distinguish concrete potentiality from a myriad abstractions.

But the ontology on which the image of man in modernist literature is based invalidates this principle. If the 'human condi-

tion'—man as a solitary being, incapable of meaningful relationships—is identified with reality itself, the distinction between abstract and concrete potentiality becomes null and void. The categories tend to merge. Thus Cesare Pavese notes with John Dos Passos, and his German contemporary, Alfred Döblin, a sharp oscillation between 'superficial *verisme*' and 'abstract Expressionist schematism'. Criticizing Dos Passos, Pavese writes that fictional characters 'ought to be created by deliberate selection and description of individual features'—implying that Dos Passos' characterizations are transferable from one individual to another. He describes the artistic consequences: by exalting man's subjectivity, at the expense of the objective reality of his environment, man's subjectivity itself is impoverished.

The problem, once again, is ideological. This is not to say that the ideology underlying modernist writings is identical in all cases. On the contrary: the ideology exists in extremely various, even contradictory forms. The rejection of narrative objectivity, the surrender to subjectivity, may take the form of Joyce's stream of consciousness, or of Musil's 'active passivity', his 'existence without quality', or of Gide's '*action gratuite*', where abstract potentiality achieves pseudo-realization. As individual character manifests itself in life's moments of decision, so too in literature. If the distinction between abstract and concrete potentiality vanishes, if man's inwardness is identified with an abstract subjectivity, human personality must necessarily disintegrate.

T. S. Eliot described this phenomenon, this mode of portraying human personality, as

Shape without form, shade without colour,  
Paralysed force, gesture without motion.

The disintegration of personality is matched by a disintegration of the outer world. In one sense, this is simply a further consequence of our argument. For the identification of abstract and concrete human potentiality rests on the assumption that the objective world is inherently inexplicable. Certain leading modernist writers, attempting a theoretical apology, have admitted this quite frankly. Often this theoretical impossibility of understanding reality is the point of departure, rather than the exalta-

tion of subjectivity. But in any case the connection between the two is plain. The German poet Gottfried Benn, for instance, informs us that 'there is no outer reality, there is only human consciousness, constantly building, modifying, rebuilding new worlds out of its own creativity'. Musil, as always, gives a moral twist to this line of thought. Ulrich, the hero of his *The Man without Qualities*, when asked what he would do if he were in God's place, replies: 'I should be compelled to abolish reality.' Subjective existence 'without qualities' is the complement of the negation of outward reality.

The negation of outward reality is not always demanded with such theoretical rigour. But it is present in almost all modernist literature. In conversation, Musil once gave as the period of his great novel, 'between 1912 and 1914'. But he was quick to modify this statement by adding: "I have not, I must insist, written a historical novel. I am not concerned with actual events. . . . Events, anyhow, are interchangeable. I am interested in what is typical, in what one might call the ghostly aspect of reality.' The word 'ghostly' is interesting. It points to a major tendency in modernist literature: the attenuation of actuality. In Kafka, the descriptive detail is of an extraordinary immediacy and authenticity. But Kafka's artistic ingenuity is really directed towards substituting his *angst*-ridden vision of the world for objective reality. The realistic detail is the expression of a ghostly un-reality, of a nightmare world, whose function is to evoke *angst*. The same phenomenon can be seen in writers who attempt to combine Kafka's techniques with a critique of society—like the German writer, Wolfgang Koeppen, in his satirical novel about Bonn, *Das Treibhaus*. A similar attenuation of reality underlies Joyce's stream of consciousness. It is, of course, intensified where the stream of consciousness is itself the medium through which reality is presented. And it is carried *ad absurdum* where the stream of consciousness is that of an abnormal subject or of an idiot—consider the first part of Faulkner's *Sound and Fury* or, a still more extreme case, Beckett's *Molloy*.

Attenuation of reality and dissolution of personality are thus interdependent: the stronger the one, the stronger the other. Underlying both is the lack of a consistent view of human nature.

Man is reduced to a sequence of unrelated experiential fragments; he is as inexplicable to others as to himself. In Eliot's *Cocktail Party* the psychiatrist, who voices the opinions of the author, describes the phenomenon:

Ah, but we die to each other daily  
 What we know of other people  
 Is only our memory of the moments  
 During which we knew them. And they have changed since then.  
 To pretend that they and we are the same  
 Is a useful and convenient social convention  
 Which must sometimes be broken. We must also remember  
 That at every meeting we are meeting a stranger.

The dissolution of personality, originally the unconscious product of the identification of concrete and abstract potentiality, is elevated to a deliberate principle in the light of consciousness. It is no accident that Gottfried Benn called one of his theoretical tracts '*Doppelleben*'. For Benn, this dissolution of personality took the form of a schizophrenic dichotomy. According to him, there was in man's personality no coherent pattern of motivation or behaviour. Man's animal nature is opposed to his denaturalized, sublimated thought-processes. The unity of thought and action is 'backwoods philosophy'; thought and being are 'quite separate entities'. Man must be either a moral or a thinking being—he cannot be both at once.

These are not, I think, purely private, eccentric speculations. Of course, they are derived from Benn's specific experience. But there is an inner connection between these ideas and a certain tradition of bourgeois thought. It is more than a hundred years since Kierkegaard first attacked the Hegelian view that the inner and outer world form an objective dialectical unity, that they are indissolubly married in spite of their apparent opposition. Kierkegaard denied any such unity. According to Kierkegaard, the individual exists within an opaque, impenetrable 'incognito'.

This philosophy attained remarkable popularity after the Second World War—proof that even the most abstruse theories may reflect social reality. Men like Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger, the lawyer Carl Schmitt, Gottfried Benn and others passionately

embraced this doctrine of the eternal incognito which implies that a man's external deeds are no guide to his motives. In this case, the deeds obscured behind the mysterious incognito were, needless to say, these intellectuals' participation in Nazism: Heidegger, as Rector of Freiburg University, had glorified Hitler's seizure of power at his Inauguration; Carl Schmitt had put his great legal gifts at Hitler's disposal. The facts were too well-known to be simply denied. But, if this impenetrable incognito were the true '*condition humaine*', might not—concealed within their incognito—Heidegger or Schmitt have been secret opponents of Hitler all the time, only supporting him in the world of appearances? Ernst von Salomon's cynical frankness about his opportunism in *The Questionnaire* (keeping his reservations to himself or declaring them only in the presence of intimate friends) may be read as an ironic commentary on this ideology of the incognito as we find it, say, in the writings of Ernst Jünger.

This digression may serve to show, taking an extreme example, what the social implications of such an ontology may be. In the literary field, this particular ideology was of cardinal importance; by destroying the complex tissue of man's relations with his environment, it furthered the dissolution of personality. For it is just the opposition between a man and his environment that determines the development of his personality. There is no great hero of fiction—from Homer's Achilles to Mann's Adrian Leverkühn or Sholochov's Grigory Melyekov—whose personality is not the product of such an opposition. I have shown how disastrous the denial of the distinction between abstract and concrete potentiality must be for the presentation of character. The destruction of the complex tissue of man's interaction with his environment likewise saps the vitality of this opposition. Certainly, some writers who adhere to this ideology have attempted, not unsuccessfully, to portray this opposition in concrete terms. But the underlying ideology deprives these contradictions of their dynamic, developmental significance. The contradictions co-exist, unresolved, contributing to the further dissolution of the personality in question.

It is to the credit of Robert Musil that he was quite conscious of the implications of his method. Of his hero Ulrich he re-



marked: 'One is faced with a simple choice: either one must run with the pack (when in Rome, do as the Romans do); or one becomes a neurotic.' Musil here introduces the problem, central to all modernist literature, of the significance of psychopathology.

This problem was first widely discussed in the Naturalist period. More than fifty years ago, that doyen of Berlin dramatic critics, Alfred Kerr, was writing: 'Morbidity is the legitimate poetry of Naturalism. For what is poetic in everyday life? Neurotic aberration, escape from life's dreary routine. Only in this way can a character be translated to a rarer clime and yet retain an air of reality.' Interesting, here, is the notion that the poetic necessity of the pathological derives from the prosaic quality of life under capitalism. I would maintain—we shall return to this point—that in modern writing there is a continuity from Naturalism to the Modernism of our day—a continuity restricted, admittedly, to underlying ideological principles. What at first was no more than dim anticipation of approaching catastrophe developed, after 1914, into an all-pervading obsession. And I would suggest that the ever-increasing part played by psychopathology was one of the main features of the continuity. At each period—depending on the prevailing social and historical conditions—psychopathology was given a new emphasis, a different significance and artistic function. Kerr's description suggests that in naturalism the interest in psychopathology sprang from an aesthetic need; it was an attempt to escape from the dreariness of life under capitalism. The quotation from Musil shows that some years later the opposition acquired a moral slant. The obsession with morbidity had ceased to have a merely decorative function, bringing colour into the greyness of reality, and become a moral protest against capitalism.

With Musil—and with many other modernist writers—psychopathology became the goal, the *terminus ad quem*, of their artistic intention. But there is a double difficulty inherent in their intention, which follows from its underlying ideology. There is, first, a lack of definition. The protest expressed by this flight into psychopathology is an abstract gesture; its rejection of reality is wholesale and summary, containing no concrete criticism. It is a gesture, moreover, that is destined to lead nowhere; it is an escape into nothingness. Thus the propagators of this ideol-

ogy are mistaken in thinking that such a protest could ever be fruitful in literature. In any protest against particular social conditions, these conditions themselves must have the central place. The bourgeois protest against feudal society, the proletarian against bourgeois society, made their point of departure a criticism of the old order. In both cases the protest—reaching out beyond the point of departure—was based on a concrete *terminus ad quem*: the establishment of a new order. However indefinite the structure and content of this new order, the will towards its more exact definition was not lacking.

How different the protest of writers like Musil! The *terminus a quo* (the corrupt society of our time) is inevitably the main source of energy, since the *terminus ad quem* (the escape into psychopathology) is a mere abstraction. The rejection of modern reality is purely subjective. Considered in terms of man's relation with his environment, it lacks both content and direction. And this lack is exaggerated still further by the character of the *terminus ad quem*. For the protest is an empty gesture, expressing nausea, or discomfort, or longing. Its content—or rather lack of content—derives from the fact that such a view of life cannot impart a sense of direction. These writers are not wholly wrong in believing that psychopathology is their surest refuge; it is the ideological complement of their historical position.

This obsession with the pathological is not only to be found in literature. Freudian psychoanalysis is its most obvious expression. The treatment of the subject is only superficially different from that in modern literature. As everybody knows, Freud's starting point was 'everyday life'. In order to explain 'slips' and day-dreams, however, he had to have recourse to psychopathology. In his lectures, speaking of resistance and repression, he says: 'Our interest in the general psychology of symptom-formation increases as we understand to what extent the study of pathological conditions can shed light on the workings of the normal mind.' Freud believed he had found the key to the understanding of the normal personality in the psychology of the abnormal. This belief is still more evident in the typology of Kretschmer, which also assumes that psychological abnormalities can explain normal psychology. It is only when we compare Freud's psychology with

that of Pavlov, who takes the Hippocratic view that mental abnormality is a deviation from a norm, that we see it in its true light.

Clearly, this is not strictly a scientific or literary-critical problem. It is an ideological problem, deriving from the ontological dogma of the solitariness of man. The literature of realism, based on the Aristotelean concept of man as *zoon politikon*, is entitled to develop a new typology for each new phase in the evolution of a society. It displays the contradictions within society and within the individual in the context of a dialectical unity. Here, individuals embodying violent and extraordinary passions are still within the range of a socially normal typology (Shakespeare, Balzac, Stendhal). For, in this literature, the average man is simply a dimmer reflection of the contradictions always existing in man and society; eccentricity is a socially-conditioned distortion. Obviously, the passions of the great heroes must not be confused with 'eccentricity' in the colloquial sense: Christian Buddenbrook is an 'eccentric'; Adrian Leverkühn is not.

The ontology of *Geworfenheit* makes a true typology impossible; it is replaced by an abstract polarity of the eccentric and the socially-average. We have seen why this polarity—which in traditional realism serves to increase our understanding of social normality—leads in modernism to a fascination with morbid eccentricity. Eccentricity becomes the necessary complement of the average; and this polarity is held to exhaust human potentiality. The implications of this ideology are shown in another remark of Musil's: 'If humanity dreamt collectively, it would dream Moosbrugger.' Moosbrugger, you will remember, was a mentally-retarded sexual pervert with homicidal tendencies.

What served, with Musil, as the ideological basis of a new typology—escape into neurosis as a protest against the evils of society—becomes with other modernist writers an immutable *condition humaine*. Musil's statement loses its conditional 'if' and becomes a simple description of reality. Lack of objectivity in the description of the outer world finds its complement in the reduction of reality to a nightmare. Beckett's *Molloy* is perhaps the *ne plus ultra* of this development, although Joyce's vision of reality as an incoherent stream of consciousness had already

assumed in Faulkner a nightmare quality. In Beckett's novel we have the same vision twice over. He presents us with an image of the utmost human degradation—an idiot's vegetative existence. Then, as help is imminent from a mysterious unspecified source, the rescuer himself sinks into idiocy. The story is told through the parallel streams of consciousness of the idiot and of his rescuer.

Along with the adoption of perversity and idiocy as types of the *condition humaine*, we find what amounts to frank glorification. Take Montherlant's *Pasiphae*, where sexual perversity—the heroine's infatuation with a bull—is presented as a triumphant return to nature, as the liberation of impulse from the slavery of convention. The chorus—i.e. the author—puts the following question (which, though rhetorical, clearly expects an affirmative reply): 'Si l'absence de pensée et l'absence de morale ne contribuent pas beaucoup à la dignité des bêtes, des plantes et des eaux . . . ?' Montherlant expresses as plainly as Musil, though with different moral and emotional emphasis, the hidden—one might say repressed—social character of the protest underlying this obsession with psychopathology, its perverted Rousseauism, its anarchism. There are many illustrations of this in modernist writing. A poem of Benn's will serve to make the point:

O that we were our primal ancestors,  
 Small lumps of plasma in hot, sultry swamps;  
 Life, death, conception, parturition  
 Emerging from those juices soundlessly.

A frond of seaweed or a dune of sand,  
 Formed by the wind and heavy at the base;  
 A dragonfly or gull's wing—already, these  
 Would signify excessive suffering.

This is not overtly perverse in the manner of Beckett or Montherlant. Yet, in his primitivism, Benn is at one with them. The opposition of man as animal to man as social being (for instance, Heidegger's devaluation of the social as '*das Man*', Klages' assertion of the incompatibility of *Geist* and *Seele*, or Rosenberg's racial mythology) leads straight to a glorification of the abnormal and to an undisguised anti-humanism.



A typology limited in this way to the *homme moyen sensuel* and the idiot also opens the door to 'experimental' stylistic distortion. Distortion becomes as inseparable a part of the portrayal of reality as the recourse to the pathological. But literature must have a concept of the normal if it is to 'place' distortion correctly; that is to say, to see it *as* distortion. With such a typology this placing is impossible, since the normal is no longer a proper object of literary interest. Life under capitalism is, often rightly, presented as a distortion (a petrification or paralysis) of the human substance. But to present psychopathology as a way of escape from this distortion is itself a distortion. We are invited to measure one type of distortion against another and arrive, necessarily, at universal distortion. There is no principle to set against the general pattern, no standard by which the petty-bourgeois and the pathological can be seen in their social context. And these tendencies, far from being relativized with time, become ever more absolute. Distortion becomes the normal condition of human existence; the proper study, the formative principle, of art and literature.

I have demonstrated some of the literary implications of this ideology. Let us now pursue the argument further. It is clear, I think, that modernism must deprive literature of a sense of *perspective*. This would not be surprising; rigorous modernists such as Kafka, Benn, and Musil have always indignantly refused to provide their readers with any such thing. I will return to the ideological implications of the idea of perspective later. Let me say here that, in any work of art, perspective is of overriding importance. It determines the course and content; it draws together the threads of the narration; it enables the artist to choose between the important and the superficial, the crucial and the episodic. The direction in which characters develop is determined by perspective, only those features being described which are material to their development. The more lucid the perspective—as in Molière or the Greeks—the more economical and striking the selection.

Modernism drops this selective principle. It asserts that it can dispense with it, or can replace it with its dogma of the *condition*



*humaine*. A naturalistic style is bound to be the result. This state of affairs—which to my mind characterizes all modernist art of the past fifty years—is disguised by critics who systematically glorify the modernist movement. By concentrating on formal criteria, by isolating technique from content and exaggerating its importance, these critics refrain from judgment on the social or artistic significance of subject-matter. They are unable, in consequence, to make the aesthetic distinction between *realism* and *naturalism*. This distinction depends on the presence or absence in a work of art of a 'hierarchy of significance' in the situations and characters presented. Compared with this, formal categories are of secondary importance. That is why it is possible to speak of the basically *naturalistic* character of modernist literature—and to see here the literary expression of an ideological continuity. This is not to deny that variations in style reflect changes in society. But the particular form this principle of naturalistic arbitrariness, this lack of hierarchic structure, may take is not decisive. We encounter it in the all-determining 'social conditions' of Naturalism, in Symbolism's impressionist methods and its cultivation of the exotic, in the fragmentation of objective reality in Futurism and Constructivism and the German *Neue Sachlichkeit*, or, again, in Surrealism's stream of consciousness.

These schools have in common a basically static approach to reality. This is closely related to their lack of perspective. Characteristically, Gottfried Benn actually incorporated this in his artistic programme. One of his volumes bears the title, *Static Poems*. The denial of history, of development, and thus of perspective, becomes the mark of true insight into the nature of reality.

The wise man is ignorant  
of change and development  
his children and children's children  
are no part of his world.

The rejection of any concept of the future is for Benn the criterion of wisdom. But even those modernist writers who are less extreme in their rejection of history tend to present social and historical phenomena as static. It is, then, of small importance whether this condition is 'eternal', or only a transitional

stage punctuated by sudden catastrophes (even in early Naturalism the static presentation was often broken up by these catastrophes, without altering its basic character). Musil, for instance, writes in his essay, *The Writer in our Age*: 'One knows just as little about the present. Partly, this is because we are, as always, too close to the present. But it is also because the present into which we were plunged some two decades ago is of a particularly all-embracing and inescapable character.' Whether or not Musil knew of Heidegger's philosophy, the idea of *Geworfenheit* is clearly at work here. And the following reveals plainly how, for Musil, this static state was upset by the catastrophe of 1914: 'All of a sudden, the world was full of violence. . . . In European civilization, there was a sudden rift. . . .' In short: thus static apprehension of reality in modernist literature is no passing fashion; it is rooted in the ideology of modernism.

To establish the basic distinction between modernism and that realism which, from Homer to Thomas Mann and Gorky, has assumed change and development to be the proper subject of literature, we must go deeper into the underlying ideological problem. In *The House of the Dead* Dostoevsky gave an interesting account of the convict's attitude to work. He described how the prisoners, in spite of brutal discipline, loafed about, working badly or merely going through the motions of work until a new overseer arrived and allotted them a new project, after which they were allowed to go home. 'The work was hard,' Dostoevsky continues, 'but, Christ, with what energy they threw themselves into it! Gone was all their former indolence and pretended incompetence.' Later in the book Dostoevsky sums up his experiences: 'If a man loses hope and has no aim in view, sheer boredom can turn him into a beast. . . .' I have said that the problem of perspective in literature is directly related to the principle of selection. Let me go further: underlying the problem is a profound ethical complex, reflected in the composition of the work itself. Every human action is based on a presupposition of its inherent meaningfulness, at least to the subject. Absence of meaning makes a mockery of action and reduces art to naturalistic description.

Clearly, there can be no literature without at least the appear-

ance of change or development. This conclusion should not be interpreted in a narrowly metaphysical sense. We have already diagnosed the obsession with psychopathology in modernist literature as a desire to escape from the reality of capitalism. But this implies the absolute primacy of the *terminus a quo*, the condition from which it is desired to escape. Any movement towards a *terminus ad quem* is condemned to impotence. As the ideology of most modernist writers asserts the unalterability of outward reality (even if this is reduced to a mere state of consciousness) human activity is, *a priori*, rendered impotent and robbed of meaning.

The apprehension of reality to which this leads is most consistently and convincingly realized in the work of Kafka. Kafka remarks of Josef K., as he is being led to execution: 'He thought of flies, their tiny limbs breaking as they struggle away from the fly-paper.' This mood of total impotence, of paralysis in the face of the unintelligible power of circumstances, informs all his work. Though the action of *The Castle* takes a different, even an opposite, direction to that of *The Trial*, this view of the world, from the perspective of a trapped and struggling fly, is all-pervasive. This experience, this vision of a world dominated by *angst* and of man at the mercy of incomprehensible terrors, makes Kafka's work the very type of modernist art. Techniques, elsewhere of merely formal significance, are used here to evoke a primitive awe in the presence of an utterly strange and hostile reality. Kafka's *angst* is the experience *par excellence* of modernism.

Two instances from musical criticism—which can afford to be both franker and more theoretical than literary criticism—show that it is indeed a universal experience with which we are dealing. The composer, Hanns Eisler, says of Schönberg: 'Long before the invention of the bomber, he expressed what people were to feel in the air raid shelters.' Even more characteristic—though seen from a modernist point of view—is Theodor W. Adorno's analysis (in *The Ageing of Modern Music*) of symptoms of decadence in modernist music: 'The sounds are still the same. But the experience of *angst*, which made their originals great, has vanished.' Modernist music, he continues, has lost touch with the

truth that was its *raison d'être*. Composers are no longer equal to the emotional presuppositions of their modernism. And that is why modernist music has failed. The diminution of the original *angst*-obsessed vision of life (whether due, as Adorno thinks, to inability to respond to the magnitude of the horror or, as I believe, to the fact that this obsession with *angst* among bourgeois intellectuals has already begun to recede) has brought about a loss of substance in modern music, and destroyed its authenticity as a modernist art-form.

This is a shrewd analysis of the paradoxical situation of the modernist artist, particularly where he is trying to express deep and genuine experience. The deeper the experience, the greater the damage to the artistic whole. But this tendency towards disintegration, this loss of artistic unity, cannot be written off as a mere fashion, the product of experimental gimmicks. Modern philosophy, after all, encountered these problems long before modern literature, painting or music. A case in point is the problem of *time*. Subjective Idealism had already separated time, abstractly conceived, from historical change and particularity of place. As if this separation were insufficient for the new age of imperialism, Bergson widened it further. Experienced time, subjective time, now became identical with real time; the rift between this time and that of the objective world was complete. Bergson and other philosophers who took up and varied this theme claimed that their concept of time alone afforded insight into authentic, i.e. subjective, reality. The same tendency soon made its appearance in literature.

The German left-wing critic and essayist of the Twenties, Walter Benjamin, has well described Proust's vision and the techniques he uses to present it in his great novel: 'We all know that Proust does not describe a man's life as it actually happens, but as it is remembered by a man who has lived through it. Yet this puts it far too crudely. For it is not actual experience that is important, but the texture of reminiscence, the Penelope's tapestry of a man's memory.' The connection with Bergson's theories of time is obvious. But whereas with Bergson, in the abstraction of philosophy, the unity of perception is preserved, Benjamin shows that with Proust, as a result of the radical disintegration of

the time sequence, objectivity is eliminated: 'A lived event is finite, concluded at least on the level of experience. But a remembered event is infinite, a possible key to everything that preceded it and to everything that will follow it.'

It is the distinction between a philosophical and an artistic vision of the world. However hard philosophy, under the influence of Idealism, tries to liberate the concepts of space and time from temporal and spatial particularity, literature continues to assume their unity. The fact that, nevertheless, the concept of subjective time cropped up in literature only shows how deeply subjectivism is rooted in the experience of the modern bourgeois intellectual. The individual, retreating into himself in despair at the cruelty of the age, may experience an intoxicated fascination with his forlorn condition. But then a new horror breaks through. If reality cannot be understood (or no effort is made to understand it), then the individual's subjectivity—alone in the universe, reflecting only itself—takes on an equally incomprehensible and horrific character. Hugo von Hofmannsthal was to experience this condition very early in his poetic career:

It is a thing that no man cares to think on,  
And far too terrible for mere complaint,  
That all things slip from us and pass away,  
And that my ego, bound by no outward force—  
Once a small child's before it became mine—  
Should now be strange to me, like a strange dog.

By separating time from the outer world of objective reality, the inner world of the subject is transformed into a sinister, inexplicable flux and acquires—paradoxically, as it may seem—a static character.

On literature this tendency towards disintegration, of course, will have an even greater impact than on philosophy. When time is isolated in this way, the artist's world disintegrates into a multiplicity of partial worlds. The static view of the world, now combined with diminished objectivity, here rules unchallenged. The world of man—the only subject-matter of literature—is shattered if a single component is removed. I have shown the consequences of isolating time and reducing it to a subjective category.



But time is by no means the only component whose removal can lead to such disintegration. Here, again, Hofmannsthal anticipated later developments. His imaginary 'Lord Chandos' reflects: 'I have lost the ability to concentrate my thoughts or set them out coherently.' The result is a condition of apathy, punctuated by manic fits. The development towards a definitely pathological protest is here anticipated—admittedly in glamorous, romantic guise. But it is the same disintegration that is at work.

Previous realistic literature, however violent its criticism of reality, had always assumed the unity of the world it described and seen it as a living whole inseparable from man himself. But the major realists of our time deliberately introduce elements of disintegration into their work—for instance, the subjectivizing of time—and use them to portray the contemporary world more exactly. In this way, the once natural unity becomes a conscious, constructed unity (I have shown elsewhere that the device of the two temporal planes in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* serves to emphasize its historicity). But in modernist literature the disintegration of the world of man—and consequently the disintegration of personality—coincides with the ideological intention. Thus *angst*, this basic modern experience, this by-product of *Geworfenheit*, has its emotional origin in the experience of a disintegrating society. But it attains its effects by evoking the disintegration of the world of man.

To complete our examination of modernist literature, we must consider for a moment the question of allegory. Allegory is that aesthetic genre which lends itself par excellence to a description of man's alienation from objective reality. Allegory is a problematic genre because it rejects that assumption of an immanent meaning to human existence which—however unconscious, however combined with religious concepts of transcendence—is the basis of traditional art. Thus in medieval art we observe a new secularity (in spite of the continued use of religious subjects) triumphing more and more, from the time of Giotto, over the allegorizing of an earlier period.

Certain reservations should be made at this point. First, we must distinguish between literature and the visual arts. In the latter, the limitations of allegory can be the more easily overcome

in that transcendental, allegorical subjects can be clothed in an aesthetic immanence (even if of a merely decorative kind) and the rift in reality in some sense be eliminated—we have only to think of Byzantine mosaic art. This decorative element has no real equivalent in literature; it exists only in a figurative sense, and then only as a secondary component. Allegorical art of the quality of Byzantine mosaic is only rarely possible in literature. Secondly, we must bear in mind in examining allegory—and this is of great importance for our argument—a historical distinction: does the concept of transcendence in question contain within itself tendencies towards immanence (as in Byzantine art or Giotto), or is it the product precisely of a rejection of these tendencies?

Allegory, in modernist literature, is clearly of the latter kind. Transcendence implies here, more or less consciously, the negation of any meaning inmanent in the world or the life of man. . . .

. . . For the conviction that phenomena are *not* ultimately transferable is rooted in a belief in the world's rationality and in man's ability to penetrate its secrets. In realistic literature each descriptive detail is both *individual* and *typical*. Modern allegory, and modernist ideology, however, deny the *typical*. By destroying the coherence of the world, they reduce detail to the level of mere particularity (once again, the connection between modernism and naturalism is plain). Detail, in its allegorical transferability, though brought into a direct, if paradoxical connection with transcendence, becomes an abstract function of the transcendence to which it points. Modernist literature thus replaces concrete typicality with abstract particularity. . . . The only purpose of transcendence—the intangible *nichtendes Nichts*—is to reveal the *facies hippocratica* of the world.

That abstract particularity which we saw to be the aesthetic consequence of allegory reaches its high mark in Kafka. He is a marvellous observer; the spectral character of reality affects him so deeply that the simplest episodes have an oppressive, nightmarish immediacy. As an artist, he is not content to evoke the surface of life. He is aware that individual detail must point to general significance. But how does he go about the business of

abstraction? He has emptied everyday life of meaning by using the allegorical method; he has allowed detail to be annihilated by his transcendental Nothingness. This allegorical transcendence bars Kafka's way to realism, prevents him from investing observed detail with typical significance. Kafka is not able, in spite of his extraordinary evocative power, in spite of his unique sensibility, to achieve that fusion of the particular and the general which is the essence of realistic art. His aim is to raise the individual detail in its immediate particularity (without generalizing its content) to the level of abstraction. Kafka's method is typical, here, of modernism's allegorical approach. Specific subject-matter and stylistic variation do not matter; what matters is the basic ideological determination of form and content. The particularity we find in Beckett and Joyce, in Musil and Benn, various as the treatment of it may be, is essentially of the same kind.

If we combine what we have up to now discussed separately we arrive at a consistent pattern. We see that modernism leads not only to the destruction of traditional literary forms; it leads to the destruction of literature as such. And this is true not only of Joyce, or of the literature of Expressionism and Surrealism. It was not André Gide's ambition, for instance, to bring about a revolution in literary style; it was his philosophy that compelled him to abandon conventional forms. He planned his *Faux-Monnayeurs* as a novel. But its structure suffered from a characteristically modernist schizophrenia: it was supposed to be written by the man who was also the hero of the novel. And, in practice, Gide was forced to admit that no novel, no work of literature could be constructed in that way. We have here a practical demonstration that—as Benjamin showed in another context—modernism means not the enrichment, but the negation of art.

# The Poetry of Reality

J. HILLIS MILLER

Reality is not that external scene but the life that is lived in it. Reality is things as they are. The general sense of the word proliferates its special senses. It is a jungle in itself.<sup>1</sup>

A change in literature as dramatic as the appearance of romanticism in the late eighteenth century has been taking place during the last fifty years. This book tries to explore the change through a study of six writers who have participated in it. Each of the chapters which follow attempts to show the configuration of themes which permeates one writer's work and unifies it. This chapter describes the historical milieu within which the particular worlds of the six writers may be followed in their planetary trajectories.

My interpretation of these writers questions the assumption that twentieth-century poetry is merely an extension of romanticism. A new kind of poetry has appeared in our day, a poetry which grows out of romanticism, but goes beyond it. Many twentieth-century poets begin with an experience of the nihilism which is one of the possible consequences of romanticism. My chapter on Conrad attempts to identify this nihilism by analysis of a writer who follows it into its darkness and so prepares the way beyond it. Each succeeding chapter describes one version of

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace Stevens, *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), pp. 25, 26.

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From *J. Hillis Miller, Poets of Reality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

the journey beyond nihilism toward a poetry of reality. The new art which gradually emerges in the work of Yeats, Eliot, Thomas, and Stevens reaches full development in the poetry of William Carlos Williams.

Much romantic literature presupposes a double bifurcation. Existence is divided into two realms, heaven and earth, supernatural and natural, the "real" world and the derived world. It is also divided into subjective and objective realms. Man as subjective ego opposes himself to everything else. This "everything else" is set against the mind as object of its knowledge. Though some preromantic and romantic writers (Smart, Macpherson, Blake) speak from the perspective of a visionary or apocalyptic union of subject and object, earth and heaven, many romantic poets start with both forms of dualism. They must try through the act of poetry to reach the supersensible world by bringing together subject and object. To reach God through the object presupposes the presence of God within the object, and the romantic poets usually believe in one way or another that there is a supernatural power deeply interfused in nature.

Writers of the middle nineteenth century, as I tried to show in *The Disappearance of God*,<sup>2</sup> tend to accept the romantic dichotomy of subject and object, but are no longer able to experience God as both immanent and transcendent. God seems to Tennyson, to Arnold, or to the early Hopkins to have withdrawn beyond the physical world. For such poets God still exists, but he is no longer present in nature. What once was a unity, gathering all together, has exploded into fragments. The isolated ego faces the other dimensions of existence across an empty space. Subject, objects, words, other minds, the supernatural—each of these realms is divorced from the others, and man finds himself one of the "poor fragments of a broken world."<sup>3</sup> Accepting this situation as a necessary beginning, the Victorian poets try to reunite the fragments, to bring God back to earth as a "fusing flame" present

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<sup>2</sup> The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Arnold's phrase, in "Obermann Once More," *Poetical Works*, ed. C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 320.



in man's heart, in nature, in society, and in language, binding them together in "one common wave of thought and joy."<sup>4</sup>

Another way of thinking grows up side by side with that of the mid-nineteenth-century poets. A God who has disappeared from nature and from the human heart can come to be seen not as invisible but as nonexistent. The unseen God of Arnold or Tennyson becomes the dead God of Nietzsche. If the disappearance of God is presupposed by much Victorian poetry, the death of God is the starting point for many twentieth-century writers.

What does it mean to say that God is dead? Nietzsche's "mad-man" in *The Joyful Wisdom* announces the death of God, and explains it:

"Where is God gone?" he called out. "I mean to tell you! *We have killed him*,—you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither does it now move? Whither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above and below? Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker? Shall we not have to light lanterns in the morning? Do we not hear the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we not smell the divine putrefaction?—for even Gods putrefy! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!"<sup>5</sup>

Man has killed God by separating his subjectivity from everything but itself. The ego has put everything in doubt, and has defined all outside itself as the object of its thinking power. Cogito ergo sum: the absolute certainty about the self reached by Descartes' hyperbolic doubt leads to the assumption that things exist, for me at least, only because I think them. When everything exists only as reflected in the ego, then man has drunk up the sea. If man is defined as subject, everything else turns into object. This includes God, who now becomes merely the highest

<sup>4</sup> "Obermann Once More," pp. 320, 323.

<sup>5</sup> Book III, Section 125, trans. Thomas Common (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1960), pp. 167, 168.

object of man's knowledge. God, once the creative sun, the power establishing the horizon where heaven and earth come together, becomes an object of thought like any other. When man drinks up the sea he also drinks up God, the creator of the sea. In this way man is the murderer of God. Man once was a created being among other created beings, existing in an objective world sustained by its creator, and oriented by that creator as to high and low, right and wrong. Now, to borrow the passage from Bradley which Eliot quotes in the notes to "The Waste Land," "regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul."

When God and the creation become objects of consciousness, man becomes a nihilist. Nihilism is the nothingness of consciousness when consciousness becomes the foundation of everything. Man the murderer of God and drinker of the sea of creation wanders through the infinite nothingness of his own ego. Nothing now has any worth except the arbitrary value he sets on things as he assimilates them into his consciousness. Nietzsche's transvaluation of values is the expunging of God as the absolute value and source of the valuation of everything else. In the emptiness left after the death of God, man becomes the sovereign valuer, the measure of all things.

Many qualities of modern culture are consonant with the definition of man as a hollow sphere within which everything must appear in order to exist. The devouring nothingness of consciousness is the will to power over things. The will wants to assimilate everything to itself, to make everything a reflection within its mirror. Seen from this perspective, romanticism and technology appear to be similar rather than antithetical.

Romanticism attempts to marry subject and object through the image. The romantic image may be the representation of object within the sphere of the subject, as in Wordsworth, or the carrying of subject into the object, as in Keats, or the wedding of subject and object, as in Coleridge, but in most of its varieties an initial dualism, apparent or real, is assumed. Romanticism develops naturally into the various forms of perspectivism, whether in the poetry of the dramatic monologue or in the novel, which, in its concern for point of view, is perfectly consonant with romanti-

cism. The development of fiction from Jane Austen to Conrad and James is a gradual exploration of the fact that for modern man nothing exists except as it is seen by someone viewing the world from his own perspective. If romantic poetry most often shows the mind assimilating natural objects—urns, nightingales, daffodils, or windhovers—the novel turns its attention to the relations between several minds, but both poetry and fiction usually presuppose the isolation of each mind.

Science and technology, like romanticism, take all things as objects for man's representation. This may appear in a theoretical form, as in the numbers and calculations which transform into mathematical formulas everything from subatomic particles to the farthest and largest galaxies. Or it may appear in a physical form, the humanization of nature, as earths and ores are turned into automobiles, refrigerators, skyscrapers, and rockets, so that no corner of the earth or sky has not been conquered by man and made over in his image.

Romantic literature and modern technology are aspects of a world-embracing evolution of culture. As this development proceeds, man comes even to forget that he has been the murderer of God. The presence of God within the object, as it existed for the early romantics, is forgotten, and forgotten is the pathos of the Victorians' reaching out for a God disappearing over the horizon of an objectified world. The triumph of technology is the forgetting of the death of God. In the silence of this forgetting the process of universal calculation and reduction to order can go on peacefully extending its dominion. The world no longer offers any resistance to man's limitless hunger for conquest. This process has continued through the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, and is the chief determinant of man's sensibility in many parts of the world today. Many people have forgotten that they have forgotten the death of God, the living God of Abraham and Isaac, Dante and Pascal. Many who believe that they believe in God believe in him only as the highest value, that is, as a creation of man, the inventor of values.

Only if the nihilism latent in our culture would appear as nihilism would it be possible to go beyond it by understanding it.

In spite of two world wars, and the shadow of world annihilation, this is a course which our civilization has not yet chosen, or had chosen for it. Nevertheless, a central tradition of modern literature has been a countercurrent moving against the direction of history. In this literature, if not in our culture as a whole, nihilism has gradually been exposed, experienced in its implications, and, in some cases, transcended.

The special place of Joseph Conrad in English literature lies in the fact that in him the nihilism covertly dominant in modern culture is brought to the surface and shown for what it is. Conrad can best be understood as the culmination of a development within the novel, a development particularly well-marked in England, though of course it also exists on the continent and in America. After the attempt to recover an absent God in nineteenth-century poetry, a subsequent stage in man's spiritual history is expressed more fully in fiction than in poetry. The novel shows man attempting to establish a human world based on interpersonal relations. In the novel man comes more and more to be defined in terms of the strength of his will, and the secret nihilism resulting from his new place as the source of all value is slowly revealed.

Conrad is part of European literature and takes his place with Dostoevsky, Mann, Gide, Proust, and Camus as an explorer of modern perspectivism and nihilism. Within the narrower limits of the English novel, however, he comes at the end of a native tradition. From Dickens and George Eliot through Trollope, Meredith, and Hardy the negative implications of subjectivism become more and more apparent. It remained for Conrad to explore nihilism to its depths, and, in doing so, to point the way toward the transcendence of nihilism by the poets of the twentieth century.

In Conrad's fiction the focus of the novel turns outward from its concentration on relations between man and man within civilized society to a concern for the world-wide expansion of Western man's will to power. Conrad is the novelist not of the city but of imperialism. Several consequences follow from this. He is able to show that society is an arbitrary set of rules and judgments, a house of cards built over an abyss. It was relatively

easy for characters in Victorian fiction to be shown taking English society for granted as permanent and right. The fact that Western culture has the fragility of an edifice which might have been constructed differently is brought to light when Conrad sets the "masquerade" of imperialism against the alien jungle. With this revelation, the nature of man's will to power begins to emerge, and at the same time there is a glimpse of an escape from nihilism.

The will to power seemed a subjective thing, a private possession of each separate ego. Though the struggle for dominance of mind against mind might lead to an impasse, nonhuman nature seemed to yield passively to man's sovereign will. Everything, it seemed, could be turned into an object of man's calculation, control, or evaluation. In "Heart of Darkness" (1899) Conrad shows how imperialism becomes the expansion of the will toward unlimited dominion over existence. What begins as greed, the desire for ivory, and as altruism, the desire to carry the torch of civilization to the jungle, becomes the longing to "wring the heart" of the wilderness and "exterminate all the brutes." The benign project of civilizing the dark places of the world becomes the conscious desire to annihilate everything which opposes man's absolute will. Kurtz's megalomania finally becomes limitless. There is "nothing either above or below him." He has "kicked himself loose of the earth," and in doing so has "kicked the very earth to pieces."

It is just here, in the moment of its triumph, that nihilism reverses itself, as, in Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, Leverkühn's last and most diabolical composition leads through the abyss to the sound of children's voices singing. Conrad's work does not yet turn the malign into the benign, but it leads to a reversal which prepares for the daylight of later literature. When Kurtz's will has expanded to boundless dimensions, it reveals itself to be what it has secretly been all along: nothing. Kurtz is "hollow at the core." Into his emptiness comes the darkness. The darkness is in the heart of each man, but it is in the heart of nature too, and transcends both man and nature as their hidden substance and foundation.



When the wilderness finds Kurtz out and takes "a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion,"<sup>6</sup> then the dawn of an escape from nihilism appears, an escape through the darkness. By following the path of nihilism to the end, man confronts once again a spiritual power external to himself. Though this power appears as an inexpressibly threatening horror, still it is something beyond the self. It offers the possibility of an escape from subjectivism.

The strategy of this escape will appear from the point of view of the tradition it reverses, the most dangerous of choices, a leap into the abyss. It will mean giving up the most cherished certainties. The act by which man turns the world inside-out into his mind leads to nihilism. This can be escaped only by a counterrevolution in which man turns himself inside-out and steps, as Wallace Stevens puts it, "barefoot into reality."<sup>7</sup> This leap into the world characterizes the reversal enacted in one way or another by the five poets studied here.

To walk barefoot into reality means abandoning the independence of the ego. Instead of making everything an object for the self, the mind must efface itself before reality, or plunge into the density of an exterior world, dispersing itself in a milieu which exceeds it and which it has not made. The effacement of the ego before reality means abandoning the will to power over things. This is the most difficult of acts for a modern man to perform. It goes counter to all the penchants of our culture. To abandon its project of dominion the will must will not to will. Only through an abnegation of the will can objects begin to manifest themselves as they are, in the integrity of their presence. When man is willing to let things be then they appear in a space which is no longer that of an objective world opposed to the mind. In this new space the mind is dispersed everywhere in things and forms one with them.

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<sup>6</sup>Quotations from "Heart of Darkness" are cited from *Youth and Two Other Stories* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, 1925), pp. 118, 131, 144, 148.

<sup>7</sup>"Large Red Man Reading," *The Collected Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), p. 423.

This new space is the realm of the twentieth-century poem. It is a space in which things, the mind, and words coincide in closest intimacy. In this space flower the chicory and Queen Anne's lace of William Carlos Williams' poems. In this space his wheelbarrow and his broken bits of green bottle glass appear. In a similar poetic space appear "the pans above the stove, the pots on the table, the tulips among them" of Stevens' "poem of life." The "ghosts" who "return to earth" in Stevens' poems are those who have been alienated in the false angelism of subjectivity. They return from the emptiness of "the wilderness of stars" to step into a tangible reality of things as they are. There they can "run fingers over leaves/And against the most coiled thorn."<sup>8</sup>

The return to earth making twentieth-century poetry possible is accompanied by the abandonment of still another quality of the old world. This is the dimension of depth. In a number of ways the world of nineteenth-century poetry is often characterized by extension and exclusion. The mind is separated from its objects, and those objects are placed in a predominantly visual space. In this space each object is detached from the others. To be in one place is to be excluded from other places, and space stretches out infinitely in all directions. Beyond those infinite distances is the God who has absented himself from his creation. The pathos of the disappearance of God is the pathos of infinite space.

Along with spatial and theological depth go other distances: the distance of mind from mind, the distance within each self separating the self from itself. If each subject is separated from all objects, it is no less divided from other subjects and can encounter them only across a gap generated by its tendency to turn everything into an image. From the assumption of the isolation of the ego develops that conflict of subjectivities which is a central theme of fiction. For Matthew Arnold and other inheritors of romanticism the self is also separated from its own depths, the gulf within the mind which hides the deep buried self. To reach that self is as difficult as to reach God beyond the silence of infinite spaces.

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<sup>8</sup> "Large Red Man Reading," pp. 423, 424.

In the new art these depths tend to disappear. The space of separation is turned inside-out, so that elements once dispersed are gathered together in a new region of copresence. This space is often more auditory, tactile, or kinesthetic than visual. To be within it is to possess all of it, and there is no longer a sense of endless distances extending in all directions. The mind, its objects, other minds, and the ground of both mind and things are present in a single realm of proximity.

The disappearance of dimensions of depth in twentieth-century art provides special difficulties for someone trained in the habits of romanticism. An abstract expressionist painting does not "mean" anything in the sense of referring beyond itself in any version of traditional symbolism. It is what it is, paint on canvas, just as Williams' wheelbarrow is what it is. In the space of the new poetry the world is contracted to a point—the wheelbarrow, the chicory flower, the bits of green glass. The poem is "not ideas about the thing but the thing itself,"<sup>9</sup> part of the world and not about it. In the same way the characters of Williams' fiction, like those of the French "new novel," have little psychological depth. They exist as their thoughts, their gestures, their speech, and these have the same objective existence as the wheelbarrow or the flower. In such a world "anywhere is everywhere,"<sup>10</sup> and the romantic dialectic of movement through stages to attain a goal disappears. In place of advance in steps toward an end there is the continuous present of a poetry which matches in its speed the constant flight of time. Each moment appears out of nothing in the words of the poem and in that instant things emerge anew and move and are dissolved.<sup>11</sup>

If any spiritual power can exist for the new poetry it must be an immanent presence. There can be for many writers no return to the traditional conception of God as the highest existence, creator of all other existences, transcending his creation as well as dwelling within it. If there is to be a God in the new world it

<sup>9</sup> Stevens, *The Collected Poems*, p. 534.

<sup>10</sup> William Carlos Williams, *Paterson* (New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 273.

<sup>11</sup> See Wallace Stevens, *Opus Posthumous* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), p. 110.

must be a presence within things and not beyond them. The new poets have at the farthest limit of their experience caught a glimpse of a fugitive presence, something shared by all things in the fact that they are. This presence flows everywhere, like the light which makes things visible, and yet can never be seen as a thing in itself. It is the presence of things present, what Stevens calls "the swarthy water/That flows round the earth and through the skies,/Twisting among the universal spaces."<sup>12</sup> In the same poem he gives this power its simplest name: "It is being." The most familiar object, in coming into the light, reveals being, and poetry brings being into the open by naming things as they are, in their glistening immediacy, the wheelbarrow glazed with rain water, the steeple at Farmington shining and swaying. The new poetry is therefore "the outlines of being and its expressings, the syllables of its law."<sup>13</sup> These outlines are glimpsed as the words of the poem vanish with the moment which brought them into existence. The space of such a poem is the space of the present in its evanescence. This present holds men closely with discovery as, "in the instant of speech,/The breadth of an accelerando moves,/Captives the being, widens—and was there."<sup>14</sup> The instant's motion is a space grown wide, and within that brief space of time all existence is named, captured, and revealed.

These are the characteristics of the domain which twentieth-century literature has come to inhabit. The entry into the new world is not easy to make and has not everywhere been made. Our culture still moves along the track laid out for it by science and dualistic thinking, and many writers remain enclosed within the old world. Moreover, every artist who crosses the frontier does so in his own way, a way to some degree unlike any other. I do not wish to minimize the differences between twentieth-century writers, but to suggest a context in which those differences may be fruitfully explored.

Examples of the new immediacy may be found in widely divergent areas of contemporary thought and art: in the flatness of the paintings of Mark Rothko and Franz Kline, as opposed to

<sup>12</sup> "Metaphor as Degeneration," *The Collected Poems*, p. 444.

<sup>13</sup> "Large Red Man Reading," p. 424.

<sup>14</sup> Wallace Stevens, "A Primitive Like an Orb," *The Collected Poems*, p. 440.

the romantic depth in the work of Paul Klee; in the "superficiality," as of a mystery which is all on the surface, of the novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett or Alain Robbe-Grillet; in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger or the German and French phenomenologists; in the descriptive linguistic analysis of Ludwig Wittgenstein and the British common language philosophers; in the poetry of Jorge Guillén, René Char, or Charles Olson; in the literary criticism of Gaston Bachelard, Jean-Pierre Richard, or Marcel Raymond. All these writers and artists have in one way or another entered a new realm, and, for all of them, if there is a fugitive spiritual power it will be within things and people, not altogether beyond them.

Yeats, Eliot, Thomas, Stevens, and Williams have played important roles in this twentieth-century revolution in man's experience of existence. Each begins with an experience of nihilism or its concomitants, and each in his own way enters the new reality: Yeats by his affirmation of the infinite richness of the finite moment; Eliot by his discovery that the Incarnation is here and now; Thomas by an acceptance of death which makes the poet an ark rescuing all things; Stevens by his identification of imagination and reality in the poetry of being; Williams by his plunge into the "filthy Passaic." This book traces the itineraries leading these writers to goals which are different and yet have a family resemblance. The unity of twentieth-century poetry is suggested by the fact that these authors are in the end poets not of absence but of proximity. In their work reality comes to be present to the senses, present to the mind which possesses it through the senses, and present in the words of the poems which ratify this possession. Such poetry is often open-ended in form. It follows in its motion the flowing of time and reveals, through this mobility, the reality of things as they are. Wallace Stevens speaks for all these poets when he affirms the union of inner and outer, natural and supernatural, in the transience and nearness of the real:

We seek

Nothing beyond reality. Within it,

Everything, the spirit's alchemicana

Included, the spirit that goes roundabout

And through included, not merely the visible,



The solid, but the movable, the moment,  
The coming on of feasts and the habits of saints,  
The pattern of the heavens and high, night air.<sup>15</sup>

Before following my five poets in their journeys of homecoming toward reality it will be necessary to investigate the spiritual adventure which takes Conrad to the limit of nihilism, and so opens the way beyond it.

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<sup>15</sup> "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," *The Collected Poems*, pp. 471, 472.

# IV

## A Modern Chronology, 1900-1941





**A MODERN CHRONOLOGY, 1900-1941**  
**A Selection of Interesting Events in Cultural and Intellectual History**

<i>Political Events; Births and Deaths</i>	<i>Literature and the Arts</i>	<i>Philosophy, Science, Technology, Criticism; Miscellaneous Events</i>
<p>Conservative Party dominant since 1874</p>	<p>At work: Cézanne, Degas, Gauguin, Matisse, Monet, Munch, Picasso, Sargent, Toulouse-Lautrec in painting; Debussy, Dvořák, Elgar, Lehar, Puccini, Ravel, Schönberg, Sibelius, R. Strauss in music; Chekhov, D'Annunzio, Gorki, Ibsen, Mann, Rilke, Strindberg, Tolstoy in continental literature.</p>	<p>At work: Sir Arthur Evans, G. Mach, Pavlov, M. Planck, Poincaré; Dewey; W. James; Bradley, Moore; Husserl; Bergson, Croce; Veblen.</p>
<p><b>1900</b>                      Workers Party established (renamed Labour Party, 1906)                      Boxer Rebellion and Open Door Policy  <i>d.</i> S. Crane (1871-)  <i>d.</i> F. Nietzsche (1844-)  <i>b.</i> S. O'Faolain  <i>d.</i> Ruskin (1819-)  <i>d.</i> Wilde (1856-)  <i>b.</i> Th. Wolfe (-1938)</p>	<p>Conrad: <i>Lord Jim</i>                      Dunne: <i>Mr. Dooley's Philosophy</i>                      Dreiser: <i>Sister Carrie</i>                      Howells: <i>Literary Friends and Acquaintances</i></p>	<p>First Zeppelin flight                      Bergson: <i>On Comedy</i>                      Freud: <i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i>                      Symons: <i>The Symbolist Movement in Literature</i></p>
<p><b>1901</b>  <i>d.</i> Victoria (1819-; r. 1837-)  <i>r.</i> Edward VII (-1910)                      McKinley assassinated, T. Roosevelt President (-1909)</p>	<p>Butler: <i>Erewhon Revisited</i>                      James: <i>The Sacred Fount</i>                      Kipling: <i>Kim</i>                      Norris: <i>The Octopus</i></p>	<p>Marconi: transatlantic wireless                      J. P. Morgan: U.S. Steel Corp.                      Weber: <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i></p>

<i>Political Events; Births and Deaths</i>	<i>Literature and the Arts</i>	<i>Philosophy, Science, Technology, Criticism; Miscellaneous Events</i>
<p>1901 (continued) d. Verdi (1813-)</p>	<p>Shaw: <i>Caesar and Cleopatra</i> Wells: <i>The First Men in the Moon</i></p>	
<p>1902 Anglo-Japanese Pact against Russia End of Boer War Elementary Education Act (British) d. S. Butler (1835-) d. B. Harte (1836-) d. E. Zola (1840-)</p>	<p>Bennett: <i>Anna of the Five Towns</i> Gide: <i>The Immoralist</i> Glasgow: <i>The Battleground</i> Hardy: <i>Poems of Past and Present</i> James: <i>The Wings of the Dove</i> Masfield: <i>Salt-Water Ballads</i> Yeats: <i>Cathleen ni Houlihan</i></p>	<p>Croce: <i>Aesthetics</i> W. James: <i>The Varieties of Religious Experience</i></p>
<p>1903 d. Gauguin (1848-) d. Gissing (1857-) b. Orwell (-1950) d. Spencer (1820-) d. Whistler (1834-)</p>	<p>Butler: <i>The Way of All Flesh</i> James: <i>The Ambassadors</i> London: <i>The Call of the Wild</i> Norris: <i>The Pit</i> Syngue: <i>In the Shadow of the Glen</i></p>	<p>Ford Motors founded Wright brothers' flight G. E. Moore: <i>Principia Ethica</i> Yeats: <i>Ideas of Good and Evil</i></p>
<p>1904 Russo-Japanese War d. Chekhov (1860-) b. C. Day-Lewis b. G. Greene</p>	<p>Isadora Duncan in Berlin Adams: <i>Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres</i> Barrie: <i>Peter Pan</i> Conrad: <i>Notstromo</i> O. Henry: <i>Cabbages and Kings</i> Hudson: <i>Green Mansions</i> James: <i>The Golden Bowl</i> London: <i>The Sea-Wolf</i></p>	<p>Marie Curie: radioactivity World Olympics, St. Louis Bradley: <i>Shakespearean Tragedy</i> Freud: <i>Psychopathology of Everyday Life</i> Saintsbury: <i>History of Criticism</i> (1900-) Veblen: <i>The Theory of Business Enterprise</i></p>



<p>1905</p> <p>Liberal Party wins (-1922)</p> <p>Sinn Fein party established</p> <p>Women's suffrage activity</p> <p>b. Empson</p> <p>b. H. Green</p> <p>b. Sartre</p>	<p>Cézanne, Matisse shown in Paris</p> <p>Marinetti manifesto in Italy (Futurism)</p> <p>Forster: <i>Where Angels Fear to Tread</i></p> <p>Masefield: <i>Mainsail Haul</i></p> <p>Syngé: <i>Riders to the Sea</i></p> <p>Wells: <i>Kipps</i></p> <p>Wharton: <i>The House of Mirth</i></p>	<p>Einstein: Special Relativity theory</p> <p>Unamuno: <i>Don Quixote and Sancho Panza</i></p>
<p>1906</p> <p>Dreyfus released</p> <p>Cuban uprising against U.S. protectorate</p> <p>b. Beckett</p> <p>d. Cézanne (1839-)</p> <p>d. Ibsen (1828-)</p>	<p>Matisse and Fauvism</p> <p>Reinhardt: Berlin theater</p> <p>Adams: <i>The Education of Henry Adams</i></p> <p>De la Mare: <i>Poems</i></p> <p>Galworthy: <i>The Man of Property</i></p> <p>Sinclair: <i>The Jungle</i></p>	<p>San Francisco earthquake and fire</p> <p>Santayana: <i>Reason and Human Progress</i></p>
<p>1907</p> <p>Second Hague Peace Conference</p> <p>Worldwide business crisis</p> <p>Rasputin's influence begins</p> <p>b. Auden</p> <p>b. C. Fry</p> <p>d. Grieg (1843-)</p>	<p>Bennett: <i>The Grim Smile of the Five Towns</i></p> <p>Conrad: <i>The Secret Agent</i></p> <p>Gosse: <i>Father and Son</i></p> <p>Joyce: <i>Chamber Music</i></p> <p>Syngé: <i>The Playboy of the Western World</i></p>	<p>Montessori: kindergarten</p> <p>Bergson: <i>The Creative Evolution</i></p> <p>W. James: <i>Pragmatism</i></p> <p>Maeterlinck: <i>The Intelligence of Flowers</i></p>
<p>1908</p> <p>Asquith ministry (-1916)</p> <p>Lloyd George's reforms: Old age pensions, Children's and Miners' Acts</p> <p>d. Sardou (1831-)</p>	<p>Braque, Picasso; Cubism</p> <p>Bennett: <i>The Old Wives' Tale</i></p> <p>Chesterton: <i>The Man Who Was Thursday</i></p>	<p>Baden-Powell: Boy Scouts in Britain</p> <p>G. Simmel: <i>Sociology</i></p>

Political Events; Births and Deaths	Literature and the Arts	Philosophy, Science, Technology, Criticism; Miscellaneous Events
<p>1908 (continued)</p>	<p>France: <i>Penguin Island</i> Hardy: <i>The Dynasts</i> (1900-) O. Henry: <i>The Voice of the City</i> Stein: <i>Three Lives</i></p>	
<p>1909</p> <p>Lloyd George's budget fight with the Lords</p> <p>Taft President (-1913)</p> <p>d. Meredith (1828-)</p> <p>b. Spender</p> <p>d. Swinburne (1837-)</p> <p>d. Synge (1871-)</p>	<p>Diaghilev in Paris</p> <p>Mary Pickford directed by D. W. Griffith</p> <p>Futurist manifestos</p> <p>Hardy: <i>Time's Laughingstocks</i></p> <p>Maeterlinck: <i>The Bluebird</i></p> <p>Meredith: <i>Last Poems</i></p> <p>Pound: <i>Personae</i></p>	<p>Peary at North Pole</p> <p>Ford: Model T</p>
<p>1910</p> <p>d. Edward VII (1841-; r. 1901-)</p> <p>r. George V (-1936)</p> <p>Pan American Union</p> <p>China abolishes slavery</p> <p>d. W. Homer (1836-)</p> <p>d. H. Hunt (1827-)</p> <p>d. W. James (1842-)</p> <p>d. Tolstoy (1828-)</p> <p>d. Twain (1835-)</p>	<p>First Post-Impressionist art exhibit in London</p> <p>In music: Bartok, Berg, Schönberg, Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams flourishing</p> <p>F. L. Wright recognized in Europe</p> <p>Aldington: <i>Images</i></p> <p>Claudel: <i>Five Great Odes</i></p> <p>Forster: <i>Howard's End</i></p> <p>Noyes: <i>Collected Poems</i></p> <p>Robinson: <i>The Town Down the River</i></p> <p>Yeats: <i>The Green Helmet</i></p>	<p>Coué: autosuggestion</p> <p>Halley's comet</p> <p>Manhattan Bridge</p> <p>Ellis: <i>Studies in the Psychology of Sex</i> (1897-)</p> <p>Frazer: <i>Totemism and Exogamy</i></p> <p>Saintsbury: <i>A History of English Prosody</i> (1906-)</p>

<p><b>1911</b> Parliament Act R. MacDonald leads Labour Party (-1931) National Health and Unemployment Insurance in Britain U.S. Anti-trust Laws Manchus deposed in China by Sun Yat-sen d. Mahler (1860-)</p>	<p>Chagall, Kandinsky, Klee, and The Blue Rider Beerbohm: <i>Zuluika Dobson</i> R. Brooke: <i>Poems</i> Dreiser: <i>Jennie Gerhardt</i> Lawrence: <i>The White Peacock</i> Masefield: <i>The Everlasting Mercy</i> Saki: <i>The Chronicles of Clovis</i> Wharton: <i>Ethan Frome</i></p>	<p>Daleroze curhythms Piltown man (fraud uncovered in 1953) Boas: <i>Primitive Philosophy</i> Underhill: <i>Mysticism</i> Vaihinger: <i>The Philosophy of As-If</i> S. and B. Webb: <i>Poverty</i></p>
<p><b>1912</b> Third Home Rule Bill Balkan wars against the Turks Chinese Republic named d. Strindberg (1849-)</p>	<p>Futurist art exhibit in Paris <i>Poetry</i> (Chicago magazine) <i>Georgian Poetry</i> (-1923) Bridges: <i>Poetical Works</i> Kafka: <i>The Metamorphosis</i> Rolland: <i>Jean-Christophe</i> Shaw: <i>Pygmalion</i> Stephens: <i>The Crock of Gold</i></p>	<p><i>Titanic</i> sinks F. W. Woolworth Co. established in U.S. Murray: <i>Four Stages of Greek Religion</i></p>
<p><b>1913</b> More Balkan wars Trades Union Act Suffragette activity in Britain (-1914) Wilson President (-1921) d. Austin, poet laureate (1835-)</p>	<p>Bridges, poet laureate Stravinsky ballet riot in Paris New York Armory show of Cézanne and others Apollinaire: <i>Alcools</i> Cather: <i>O Pioneers!</i> Lindsay: <i>General William Booth Enters Heaven</i> Lawrence: <i>Sons and Lovers</i> Masefield: <i>Daffodil Fields</i></p>	<p>Husserl: <i>Phenomenology</i> Jaspers: <i>General Psychopathology</i> Köhler: <i>Gestalt Theory</i> Freud: <i>Totem and Tabu</i> Russell and Whitehead: <i>Principia Mathematica</i> Unamuno: <i>The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and in Peoples</i></p>

Political Events; Births and Deaths	Literature and the Arts	Philosophy, Science, Technology, Criticism; Miscellaneous Events
1913 (continued)	Mackenzie: <i>Sinister Street</i> Proust: <i>Swann's Way (Remembrance of Things Past, -1927)</i>	
1914 The Great War (-1918) Opening of Panama Canal d. C. Peirce (1839-) b. D. Thomas (-1953)	Chaplin movies Jazz and Dixieland develop Vorticist manifesto in <i>Blast</i> Frost: <i>North of Boston</i> Hardy: <i>Satires of Circumstance</i> Joyce: <i>Dubliners</i> Lindsay: <i>The Congo</i> A. Lowell: <i>Sword-Blades and Poppy Seed</i> Pound (ed.), <i>Des Imagistes</i> Yeats, <i>Responsibilities</i>	C. Bell: <i>Art</i>
1915 Dardanelles disaster <i>Lusitania</i> sunk by U-boats Gas attacks on the Western Front Asquith coalition d. R. Brooke (1887-)	Conrad: <i>Victory</i> Ford: <i>The Good Soldier</i> Frost: <i>A Boy's Will</i> Lawrence: <i>The Rainbow</i> Masters: <i>Spoon River Anthology</i> Maugham: <i>Of Human Bondage</i> Rosenberg: <i>Youth</i> E. Sitwell: <i>Mother</i> Woolf: <i>The Voyage Out</i>	Brooks: <i>America's Coming of Age</i> Dewey: <i>Democracy and Education</i> Frazer: <i>The Golden Bough</i> , rev. (1890-) Wölfflin: <i>Foundations of Art History</i>

<p><b>1916</b></p> <p>Battles of Verdun, Somme, Jutland  Lloyd George ministry (-1922)  Irish Easter uprising  <i>d.</i> H. James (1843-)  <i>d.</i> London (1876-)</p>	<p>Dadaism begins (fl.-1922)  Joyce: <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i>  A. Lowell: <i>Men, Women and Ghosts</i>  Maschfeld: <i>Sonnets and Poems</i>  Robinson: <i>Man Against the Sky</i>  Sandburg: <i>Chicago Poems</i>  Tarkington: <i>Seventeen</i></p>	<p>Buber: <i>Der Jude</i> (-1924)  Jung: <i>Psychology of the Unconscious</i></p>
<p><b>1917</b></p> <p>U.S. enters war  Kerensky revolution  Bolshevik revolution  <i>d.</i> Degas (1834-)  <i>d.</i> Hulme (1883-)  <i>b.</i> R. Lowell  <i>d.</i> Rodin (1840-)</p>	<p>At work in painting: Beckmann, di Chirico, Gris, Grosz, Kokoschka, Léger  Chicago jazz develops  A. Bloch: <i>The Twelve</i>  Eliot: <i>Prufrock and Other Observations</i>  Garland: <i>A Son of the Middle Border</i>  Millay: <i>Renaissance and Other Poems</i>  Pound: <i>1st Canto</i>  W. C. Williams: <i>Al Que Quiere!</i></p>	<p>Great flu epidemic  Mata Hari shot as spy</p>
<p><b>1918</b></p> <p>Armistice; Wilson's 14 Points for peace  Education and Women's Suffrage Act  British reforms in India  <i>d.</i> H. Adams (1838-)  <i>d.</i> Debussy (1862-)  <i>d.</i> Owen (1893-)  <i>d.</i> Rosenberg (1890-)</p>	<p>Aiken: <i>The Charnel Rose</i>  Cather: <i>My Antonia</i>  Hopkins, G. M.: <i>Poems</i> (1st published)  W. Lewis: <i>Tarr</i>  Sandburg: <i>Cornhuskers</i>  Sassoon: <i>Counter-Attack and other Poems</i>  Tzara: Dada manifesto</p>	<p>Spengler: <i>The Decline of the West</i> (-1922)  Strachey: <i>Eminent Victorians</i></p>



<i>Political Events; Births and Deaths</i>	<i>Literature and the Arts</i>	<i>Philosophy, Science, Technology, Criticism; Miscellaneous Events</i>
<p>1919 Treaty of Versailles Third Communist International Bombay riots U.S. Prohibition (-1933) d. Renoir (1841-)</p>	<p>Gropius: Bauhaus Jazz comes to London Nijinsky insane Anderson: <i>Winesburg, Ohio</i> Cabell: <i>Jurgen</i> O'Neill: <i>The Moon of the Caribbees</i> Shaw: <i>Heartbreak House</i> Yeats: <i>The Wild Swans at Coole</i></p>	<p>Babbitt: <i>Rousseau and Romanticism</i> Keynes: <i>The Economic Consequences of Peace</i> Mencken: <i>The American Language</i> (-1945) Watson: <i>Behaviorist Psychology</i></p>
<p>1920 International Court at Hague Gandhi and All-India Congress Civil War in Ireland Home Rule Act Women's Rights in U.S. d. Howells (1837-)</p>	<p>Anderson: <i>Poor White</i> Eliot: <i>Poems</i> Fitzgerald: <i>This Side of Paradise</i> Kaiser: <i>Gas</i> Lawrence: <i>Women in Love</i> Lewis: <i>Main Street</i> Mansfield: <i>Bliss</i> Pirandello: <i>Six Characters in Search of an Author</i> Pound: <i>Hugh Selwyn Mauberley</i> Robinson: <i>Lancelot</i> Sandburg: <i>Smoke and Steel</i> Valéry: <i>Le Cimetière Marin</i> Wharton: <i>The Age of Innocence</i></p>	<p>Eddington: <i>Space, Time, and Gravitation</i> Eliot: <i>The Sacred Wood</i> Fry: <i>Vision and Design</i> Wells: <i>Outline of History</i> Weston: <i>From Ritual to Romance</i></p>
<p>1921 Irish Independence First Indian Parliament</p>	<p>In music: Hindemith, Prokofiev flourish; Schönberg and twelve-tone method</p>	<p>Lubbock: <i>The Craft of Fiction</i> Tawney: <i>The Acquisitive Society</i></p>

<p>Harding, President (-1923)  U.S. makes separate peace with Ger-  many  Hitler's Storm Troopers active</p>	<p>Huxley, A.: <i>Crome Yellow</i>  M. Moore: <i>Poems</i>  Richardson: <i>Deadlock</i>  Shaw: <i>Back to Methuselah</i></p>	
<p>1922  Conservatives win British election  Naval disarmament talks  Mussolini comes to power  <i>d.</i> Proust (1871-)</p>	<p>Aiken: <i>Priapus and the Pool</i>  Cummings: <i>The Enormous Room</i>  Eliot: <i>The Waste Land</i>  Galsworthy: <i>The Forsyte Saga</i>  Hesse: <i>Siddhartha</i>  Housman: <i>Last Poems</i>  Joyce: <i>Ulysses</i>  S. Lewis: <i>Babbitt</i>  O'Neill: <i>Anna Christie</i>  E. Sitwell: <i>Façade</i>  Woolf: <i>Jacob's Room</i>  Yeats: <i>Later Poems</i></p>	<p>Evans: <i>The Palace of Minos</i>  Lawrence: <i>Fantasia of the Unconscious</i>  Murry: <i>The Problem of Style</i>  Spengler: <i>The Decline of the West</i>  (1918-)  Wittgenstein: <i>Tractatus Logico-philosophicus</i></p>
<p>1923  Baldwin ministry (first)  Coolidge President (-1929)  Hitler's Munich putsch  U.S.S.R. established  Kuomintang reorganized by Sun Yat-sen  <i>d.</i> S. Bernhardt (1844-)  <i>d.</i> K. Mansfield (1888-)</p>	<p>Cummings: <i>Tulips and Chimneys</i>  Frost: <i>New Hampshire</i>  Lawrence: <i>Birds, Beasts and Flowers</i>  Masefield: <i>Collected Poems</i>  Rice: <i>The Adding Machine</i>  Rilke: <i>Duino Elegies</i>  Shaw: <i>St. Joan</i>  Sitwell: <i>Bucolic Comedies</i>  Teasdale: <i>Poems</i>  W. C. Williams: <i>Spring and Fall</i></p>	<p>Buber: <i>I and Thou</i>  Eliot: "Ulysses, Order and Myth"  Hitler: <i>Mein Kampf</i> begun  Jung: <i>Psychological Types</i>  Ogden and Richards: <i>The Meaning of Meaning</i>  E. Post: <i>Etiquette</i></p>

<i>Political Events; Births and Deaths</i>	<i>Literature and the Arts</i>	<i>Philosophy, Science, Technology, Criticism; Miscellaneous Events</i>
<p>1924</p> <p>First brief Labour ministry under Macdonald</p> <p>Baldwin's second ministry</p> <p>Chinese civil war (-1949)</p> <p>Gandhi's hunger strike</p> <p>d. F. H. Bradley (1846-)</p> <p>d. Conrad (1857-)</p> <p>d. E. Duse (1859-)</p> <p>d. A. France (1844-)</p> <p>d. Kafka (1883-)</p> <p>d. Lenin (1870-)</p> <p>d. Puccini (1858-)</p>	<p>Surrealist manifesto</p> <p>Ford: <i>Parade's End</i> (1st v.)</p> <p>Forster: <i>A Passage to India</i></p> <p>Hemingway: <i>In Our Time</i></p> <p>Jeffers: <i>Roan Stallion, Tamar, and Other Poems</i></p> <p>Kafka: <i>The Trial</i></p> <p>Mann: <i>The Magic Mountain</i></p> <p>M. A. Moore: <i>Observations</i></p> <p>Ransom: <i>Chills and Fever</i></p> <p>Webb: <i>Precious Bane</i></p>	<p>Hubble: first galaxy beyond Milky Way</p> <p>Hulme: <i>Speculations</i> (published)</p> <p>Richards: <i>Principles of Literary Criticism</i></p>
<p>1925</p> <p>Hindenburg President (-1934)</p> <p>Scopes Trial</p> <p>d. A. Lowell (1874-)</p> <p>d. Sargent (1856-)</p> <p>d. Sun Yat-sen (1866-)</p>	<p>Cather: <i>The Professor's House</i></p> <p>Cummings: <i>XLI Poems</i></p> <p>Dos Passos: <i>Manhattan Transfer</i></p> <p>Dreiser: <i>An American Tragedy</i></p> <p>Fitzgerald: <i>The Great Gatsby</i></p> <p>Gide: <i>The Counterfeiters</i></p> <p>Hardy: <i>Collected Poems</i></p> <p>H. D.: <i>Collected Poems</i></p> <p>Pound: <i>XVI Cantos</i></p> <p>Woolf: <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i></p>	<p>Cassirer: <i>Language and Myth</i></p> <p>Dewey: <i>Experience and Nature</i></p> <p>Whitehead: <i>Science and the Modern World</i></p> <p>Yeats: <i>A Vision</i></p>
<p>1926</p> <p>General Strike (Br.)</p> <p>Hirohito Emperor of Japan</p>	<p>Gropius: Bauhaus Dessau</p> <p>H. Crane: <i>White Buildings</i></p>	<p>Keynes: <i>The End of Laissez-Faire</i></p> <p>T. E. Lawrence: <i>Seven Pillars of Wisdom</i></p>

<p>Chiang Kai-shek campaign begins  33 lynchings in U.S.  <i>d.</i> Monet (1840-)  <i>d.</i> Rilke (1875-)  <i>d.</i> R. Valentino (1895-)</p>	<p>Faulkner: <i>Soldier's Pay</i>  Hemingway: <i>The Sun Also Rises</i>  Kafka: <i>The Castle</i>  Lawrence: <i>The Plumed Serpent</i>  O'Casey: <i>The Plough and the Stars</i>  O'Neill: <i>The Great God Brown</i>  Wilder: <i>The Cabala</i></p>	<p>Malinowski: <i>Myth in Primitive Psychology</i>  Read: <i>Reason and Romanticism</i>  Richards: <i>Science and Poetry</i>  Tawney: <i>Religion and the Rise of Capitalism</i></p>
<p>1927  British national radio  U.S.S.R. Five Year plan  Chiang Kai-shek takes over; Mao Tse-tung takes to the hills  Sacco-Vanzetti case</p>	<p><i>Jazz Singer</i> (talkie)  Cather: <i>Death Comes for the Archbishop</i>  Graves: <i>Poems 1914-1926</i>  Jefferis: <i>The Women at Point Sur</i>  Robinson: <i>Tristram</i>  Wilder: <i>The Bridge of San Luis Rey</i>  Woolf: <i>To the Lighthouse</i>  <i>transition magazine</i> (-1938)</p>	<p>Lindbergh flight; first ticker-tape parade  Forster: <i>Aspects of the Novel</i>  Heidegger: <i>Being and Time</i>  W. Lewis: <i>Time and Western Man</i></p>
<p>1928  Extension of Women's Suffrage (Br.)  Kellogg-Briand Pact  <i>d.</i> Hardy (1840-)</p>	<p>In music: Brecht-Weill: <i>The Threepenny Opera</i>; Gershwin: <i>An American in Paris</i>; Ravel: <i>Bolero</i>  Benét: <i>John Brown's Body</i>  Huxley: <i>Point Counter Point</i>  Lawrence: <i>Lady Chatterley's Lover</i>  Lorca: poems  Pound: <i>Cantos 17-27</i>  Tate: <i>Mr. Pope and Other Poems</i>  E. Waugh: <i>Decline and Fall</i>  Yeats: <i>The Tower</i></p>	<p>Pope Pius XI: ecumenicism rebuffed  Barfield: <i>Poetic Diction</i>  Buber: <i>The Faith of Judaism</i>  Eddington: <i>The Nature of the Physical World</i>  Vandervelde: sex manual</p>

<i>Political Events; Births and Deaths</i>	<i>Literature and the Arts</i>	<i>Philosophy, Science, Technology, Criticism; Miscellaneous Events</i>
<p>1929 Hoover President (-1933) Trotzky exiled Stock-market collapse d. Clemenceau (1841-) d. Diaghilev (1872-) d. Veblen (1857-)</p>	<p>Le Corbusier active The Museum of Modern Art (N.Y.) founded Bridges: <i>The Testament of Beauty</i> Cocteau: <i>Les Enfants terribles</i> Compton-Burnett: <i>Brothers and Sisters</i> Connelly: <i>The Green Pastures</i> Day-Lewis: <i>Transitional Poem</i> Faulkner: <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> Galsworthy: <i>Modern Comedy</i> Hemingway: <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> Lewis: <i>Dodsworth</i> Wolfe: <i>Look Homeward, Angel</i></p>	<p>Vienna Circle: Carnap, Frank, Hahn, Neurath, Schlick Richards: <i>Practical Criticism</i></p>
<p>1930 Nazi gains in elections Maginot Line built Widespread unemployment d. Bridges (1844-) d. A. C. Doyle (1859-) d. D. H. Lawrence (1885-)</p>	<p>Auden: <i>Poems</i> Coward: <i>Private Lives</i> H. Crane: <i>The Bridge</i> Eliot: <i>Ash Wednesday</i> Giradoux: <i>Ampytrion</i> 38 Joyce: <i>Anna Livia Plurabelle</i> Maugham: <i>Cakes and Ale</i> Musil: <i>The Man without Qualities</i> Porter: <i>Flowering Judas</i> Spender: <i>Twenty Poems</i></p>	<p>33 Hearst-chain papers Burgum, ed., <i>The New Criticism</i> Empson: <i>Seven Types of Ambiguity</i> Freud: <i>Civilization and Its Discontents</i> Fugitives: <i>Pill Take My Stand</i> Keynes: <i>A Treatise on Money</i> G. W. Knight: <i>The Wheel of Fire</i> Ortega: <i>The Revolt of the Masses</i> Parrington: <i>Main Currents in American Thought</i></p>
<p>1931 Japanese occupy Manchuria King Alfonso of Spain abdicates</p>	<p>Buck: <i>The Good Earth</i> Day-Lewis: <i>From Feathers to Iron</i></p>	<p>Eliot: <i>Thoughts After Lambeth</i> Wilson: <i>Axel's Castle</i></p>



<p>d. A. Bennett (1867-) d. V. Lindsay (1879-)</p>	<p>Faulkner: <i>Sanctuary</i> Millay: <i>Fatal Interview</i> O'Neill: <i>Mourning Becomes Electra</i> Woolf: <i>The Waves</i></p>	<p>Eliot: <i>Selected Essays</i> Leavis: <i>New Bearings in English Poetry</i> R. Niebuhr: <i>Moral Man and Immoral Society</i></p>
<p>1932 World-wide unemployment De Valera, Premier, Eire d. L. Strachey (1880-)</p>	<p>Auden: <i>The Orators</i> Caldwell: <i>Tobacco Road</i> Cary: <i>Aissa Saved</i> Farrell: <i>Studs Lonigan</i> (-1935) Faulkner: <i>Light in August</i> Huxley: <i>Brave New World</i> Powell: <i>Venusberg</i> Stein: <i>The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas</i> E. Wylie: <i>Collected Poems</i></p>	<p>Orwell: <i>Down and Out in Paris and London</i> Starkie: <i>Baudelaire</i> Whitehead: <i>Adventures of Ideas</i></p>
<p>1933 F. D. Roosevelt President (-1945); New Deal Hitler Chancellor (-1945); Reichstag fire Germany, Japan leave League of Nations End of Prohibition (1919-) d. Galsworthy (1867-) d. G. Moore (1852-)</p>	<p>Balanchine: American Ballet School H. Crane: <i>Collected Poems</i> MacLeish: <i>Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City</i> Malraux: <i>Man's Fate</i> Mann: <i>Joseph and His Brothers</i> Spender: <i>Poems</i> N. West: <i>Miss Lonelyhearts</i> Yeats: <i>Collected Poems</i></p>	<p>Benedict: <i>Patterns of Culture</i> Bodkin: <i>Archetypal Patterns in Poetry</i> Breton: <i>What Is Surrealism?</i> Crowley: <i>Exile's Return</i></p>
<p>1934 U.S. recognizes U.S.S.R. Dollfuss assassinated d. Elgar (1857-) d. Pinero (1855-)</p>	<p>Bowen: <i>The Cat Jumps</i> Fitzgerald: <i>Tender Is the Night</i> Miller: <i>Tropic of Cancer</i> Muir: <i>Variations on a Time Theme</i></p>	

Political Events; Births and Deaths	Literature and the Arts	Philosophy, Science, Technology, Criticism; Miscellaneous Events
<p>1934 (continued)</p>	<p>Orwell: <i>Burmese Days</i> H. Roth: <i>Call It Sleep</i> Thomas: <i>18 Poems</i> E. Waugh: <i>A Handful of Dust</i></p>	<p>Korzybski: <i>Science and Sanity</i> Mumford: <i>Technics and Civilization</i> Toynbee: <i>A Study of History</i> (-1961)</p>
<p>1935</p> <p>Wagner labor act (U.S.) CIO founded Gallup polls Soviet purge and trials Gandhi hunger protests <i>d.</i> Æ (Russell; 1867-) <i>d.</i> A. Berg (1885-) <i>d.</i> E. A. Robinson (1869-)</p>	<p>M. Anderson: <i>Winterset</i> Auden and Isherwood: <i>The Dog Beneath the Skin</i> Barker: <i>Poems</i> Day-Lewis: <i>A Time to Dance</i> De la Mare: <i>Poems 1919-1934</i> Eliot: <i>Murder in the Cathedral</i> Empson: <i>Poems</i> MacNeice: <i>Poems</i> Odets: <i>Waiting for Lefty</i> Steinbeck: <i>Tortilla Flat</i> Stevens: <i>Ideas of Order</i> Wolfe: <i>Of Time and the River</i></p>	<p>Boulder Dam built Fermi: statistics on electrons Barth: <i>Credo</i> Jaspers: <i>Reason and Existenz</i> Ludendorff: <i>Total War</i> Spender: <i>The Destructive Element</i></p>
<p>1936</p> <p><i>d.</i> George V (1865-, r. 1910-) Edward VIII abdicates; r. George VI (-1952) Italian conquest of Ethiopia German-Italian Axis <i>d.</i> Gorki (1868-) <i>d.</i> Kipling (1865-) <i>d.</i> Lorca (1899-)</p>	<p>Auden: <i>Look, Stranger</i> Barnes: <i>Nightwood</i> Dos Passos: <i>The Big Money</i> (last of U.S.A., 1930-) Eliot: <i>Collected Poems</i> Faulkner: <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> Frost: <i>A Further Range</i> Huxley: <i>Eyeless in Giza</i></p>	<p>Berlin Olympics Queen Mary built Ayers: <i>Language, Truth and Logic</i> Croce: <i>On Poetry</i> Keynes: <i>The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money</i> Mannheim: <i>Ideology and Utopia</i></p>

<p>d. Pirandello (1867-) d. Unamuno (1864-)</p>	<p>Lehmann (ed.): <i>New Writing</i> (magazine) Mitchell: <i>Gone With the Wind</i> Sandburg: <i>The People, Yes</i> Silone: <i>Bread and Wine</i> D. Thomas: <i>25 Poems</i> R. West: <i>The Thinking Reed</i></p>	<p>Tate: <i>Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas</i></p>
<p>1937</p> <p>Chamberlain ministry (-1940) Social Security Act (U.S.) Sino-Japanese War (-1945) d. Barrie (1860-) d. McDonald (1866-) d. Ravel (1875-) d. J. D. Rockefeller (1839-)</p>	<p>M. Anderson: <i>High Tor</i> Grouin: <i>The Citadel</i> Hemingway: <i>To Have and Have Not</i> Marquand: <i>The Late George Apley</i> Millay: <i>Conversations at Midnight</i> Steinbeck: <i>Of Mice and Men</i> Stevens: <i>The Man with the Blue Guitar</i> Warner: <i>The Wild Goose Chase</i> Woolf: <i>The Years</i> Picasso: Guernica</p>	<p>Lorenz: work on instinct Lysenko: Soviet biology Cauldwell: <i>Illusion and Reality</i> Pound: <i>Polite Essays</i> Winters: <i>Primitivism and Decadence</i></p>
<p>1938</p> <p>Austrian anschluss Munich agreement d. Husserl (1859-) d. Stanislavski (1863-) d. Wolfe (1900-)</p>	<p>B. Goodman: Big band jazz Beckett: <i>Murphy</i> Bowen: <i>The Death of the Heart</i> Cummings: <i>Collected Poems</i> Graves: <i>Collected Poems</i> Greene: <i>Brighton Rock</i> Malraux: <i>Man's Hope</i> Richardson: <i>Pilgrimage</i> (1915-) Sartre: <i>Nausea</i> Sherwood: <i>Abe Lincoln in Illinois</i> Wilder: <i>Our Town</i> W. C. Williams: <i>Collected Poems</i></p>	<p>Louis-Schmeling fight O. Welles: Mars invasion radio panic Connolly: <i>Enemies of Promise</i> Eisenstein: <i>Film Sense</i> Mumford: <i>The Culture of Cities</i> Orwell: <i>Homage to Catalonia</i></p>

<i>Political Events; Births and Deaths</i>	<i>Literature and the Arts</i>	<i>Philosophy, Science, Technology, Criticism; Miscellaneous Events</i>
<p>1939</p> <p>Nazi-Soviet Pact</p> <p>World War II begins</p> <p>Fall of Poland</p> <p>d. F. M. Ford (1873-)</p> <p>d. Freud (1856-)</p> <p>d. Yeats (1865-)</p>	<p>Campbell: <i>Flowering Rifle</i></p> <p>Eliot: <i>The Family Reunion</i></p> <p>Frost: <i>Collected Poems</i></p> <p>Green: <i>Party Going</i></p> <p>Housman: <i>Collected Poems</i></p> <p>Isherwood: <i>Goodbye to Berlin</i></p> <p>Joyce: <i>Finnegans Wake</i></p> <p>MacNeice: <i>Autumn Journal</i></p> <p>Porter: <i>Pale Horse, Pale Rider</i></p> <p>Spender: <i>The Still Centre</i></p> <p>Steinbeck: <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i></p> <p>D. Thomas: <i>The Map of Love</i></p> <p>N. West: <i>Day of the Locust</i></p>	<p>Development of radar</p> <p>New York World's Fair</p> <p>Eliot: <i>The Idea of a Christian Society</i></p> <p>Namier: <i>In the Margin of History</i></p>
<p>1940</p> <p>Churchill coalition (-1945)</p> <p>Hitler overruns Western Europe</p> <p>Japan joins Axis</p> <p>d. Chamberlain (1869-)</p> <p>d. Fitzgerald (1896-)</p> <p>d. H. Garland (1860-)</p> <p>d. Trotsky (1879-)</p>	<p>Chaplin: <i>The Great Dictator</i> (movie)</p> <p>Auden: <i>Another Time</i></p> <p>Cary: <i>Charlie Is My Darling</i></p> <p>Eliot: <i>East Coker</i> (2nd of <i>Four Quartets</i>, -1943)</p> <p>Empson: <i>The Gathering Storm</i></p> <p>Faulkner: <i>The Hamlet</i></p> <p>G. Greene: <i>The Power and the Glory</i></p> <p>Hemingway: <i>For Whom the Bell Tolls</i></p> <p>Koestler: <i>Darkness at Noon</i></p> <p>Pound: <i>Cantos LII-LXXI</i></p> <p>E. Sitwell: <i>Poems New and Old</i></p> <p>Snow: <i>Strangers and Brothers</i></p>	<p>Orwell: <i>Inside the Whale</i></p>

<p>1941</p> <p>Hitler invades Russia  Atlantic Charter  Pearl Harbor attack brings U.S. into war  <i>d. S. Anderson</i> (1876-)  <i>d. Bergson</i> (1859-)  <i>d. Frazer</i> (1854-)  <i>d. Joyce</i> (1882-)  <i>d. Wilhelm II</i> (1859-; r. 1888-1918)  <i>d. V. Woolf</i> (1882-)</p>	<p>D. Thomas: <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog</i>  Wolfe: <i>You Can't Go Home Again</i>  Wright: <i>Native Son</i></p>	<p>Ransom: <i>The New Criticism</i>  E. Wilson: <i>The Wound and the Bow</i></p>
<p>II. Moore exhibits  Auden: <i>New Year Letter</i>  Brecht: <i>Mother Courage</i>  Cary: <i>Herself Surprised</i>  Coward: <i>Blithe Spirit</i>  Fitzgerald: <i>The Last Tycoon</i>  Glasgow: <i>In This Our Life</i>  Marquand: <i>H. M. Pulham, Esq.</i>  Welty: <i>A Curtain of Green</i>  Woolf: <i>Between the Acts</i></p>		





# V

## A Selected Bibliography



- I. The Cultural Context**
  - A. THE UNITED STATES
  - B. GREAT BRITAIN AND GENERAL ANGLO-AMERICAN CULTURE
- II. General English and American Literary History, Literary Criticism, and Relations in the Modern Age**



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