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INTRODUCTION: MODERNISM'S COMINGS AND GOINGS

JENNIFER BIRKETT AND STAN SMITH

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock".

Within these breakwaters English is spoken; without
Is the immense improbable atlas.

W. H. Auden, "Dover".

1. TRANSLATING MODERNITY

Situating themselves in that space T. S. Eliot designated "Tradition", the "mind of Europe" —in the first half of the twentieth century still the darkening heart of "the immense improbable atlas"— the individual talents of Anglophone modernism constituted the first self-consciously transnational, intercontinental literary movement. To be sure, that massive transformation of sensibility retrospectively known as "romanticism" was an international, if largely European, phenomenon, but each of its manifestations was rootedly national. In any discrimination of modernisms like that which A. O. Lovejoy (1926; 1948) proposed for romanticism, one common feature at least will be discernible in all its manifestations. What distinguishes Anglophone modernism from earlier movements is its self-consciously cosmopolitan orientation *ab initio*.[1]

Modernism's founding figures encapsulate this cosmopolitanism in their lives. Eliot himself, born in St Louis Missouri, became in 1927 a naturalised Englishman, describing himself a year later, in a letter to Herbert Read, as "an American who wasn't an American, because he was born in the

South and went to school in New England [...] but who [...] felt himself to be more a Frenchman than an American and more an Englishman than a Frenchman" (Read, in Tate 1967: 15). Ezra Pound, born in Idaho, found himself in the 1940s broadcasting anti-American propaganda from Rome Radio on behalf of Mussolini and Italian fascism, and almost went to his death for this *trahison*. James Joyce began writing his foundational modernist epic, set in Dublin in 1904, as a British subject, but finished it the citizen of the newly emergent Irish Free State. As the last words of *Ulysses* inform us, the novel was composed in "Trieste-Zurich-Paris, 1914-1921", while a European civil war waged all around, and it drew for analogic structure on that originary European narrative of war, displacement and exile, Homer's *Odyssey*. W. B. Yeats, similarly translated in mid-life from British to Irish nationality, repeatedly proclaimed his wider allegiance to European artistic values epitomised by the Italian city states of the Renaissance, and to political ideals of hierarchy and order embodied in his fantasy of Byzantium. Dying in France, his body was interred there for the duration of that second European civil war which broke out in 1939.

D. H. Lawrence, in so many ways the archetypally English writer, nevertheless left his native Britain in 1919 to wander the globe, displacing his English characters to narratives which could find their resolutions only in the exotic locales of Italy, Australia, Mexico. Lawrence's turbulent marriage to the bohemian German aristocrat Frieda von Richthofen finds an echo in W. H. Auden's marriage of convenience to Erika Mann, the lesbian daughter of the great German modernist Thomas Mann, to provide her with egress from Nazi Germany. Auden himself, together with his friend, collaborator and sometime lover Christopher Isherwood, reversed the pattern established by Eliot, leaving Europe for the United States in 1939, and becoming an American citizen in 1946. That multiply displaced person, Joseph Conrad, born in the Ukraine as a Polish subject of the Russian Czar, for many years wandered the waters of the immense improbable atlas where English, *pace* Auden, was still the hegemonic *lingua franca*, to write, as a British subject, naturalised in 1884, those polyphonic novels of defection and disillusion which exposed the dark heart of all imperial systems, whether Russian, British, Belgian or, implicitly, in *Nostromo*, Anglo-American. The last great Anglophone modernist, Samuel Beckett, not only underwent the involuntary translation from English to Irishman, but engineered an even more fundamental translation, moving to France permanently in 1936 and, after his first two novels, writing all his works in French, thereafter translating them into English (and later, German).[2] Even Virginia Woolf, in a sense the most rootedly English, indeed parochially metropolitan, of writers, puts the provisionality of the uncompleted voyage, the process of transit between two worlds, at the core of her writings.

Similar stories could be told of many of the second and third ranks of the modernist movement. Hemingway, for instance, follows Jamesian and Eliotic precedent by making a Europe in tumult the place where his American anti-heroes find themselves in defeat, the improbable progeny of Eliot's impotent Prufrock and bisexual Tiresias. Jean Rhys, the Caribbean-born daughter of a Welsh father and a Creole mother, came to Europe in 1910, married a Dutch poet, moved in modernist circles in Paris in the company of Hemingway, Joyce and Ford Madox Ford, and set her fictions either there or in the West Indies, deconstructing, in her late masterpiece, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), the imperial narratives of gender and power. As Craig Monk's essay reveals, such leading writers of modernism's dying generations were underwritten, sometimes pre-written —circumscribed and prescribed— by the wider culture of expatriation spawned in the short-lived little magazines that sprang up and disappeared all across the cultural battlefield of Europe. Pointedly, the most influential and long-lived of these, which fostered the work of Joyce, Beckett and Gertrude Stein, another American abroad, was called (in aggressive lower case) *transition*. Transition, the crossing of frontiers, a trope which Auden was to universalise in the 1930s, was indeed the condition of all the modernist writers. And transition is reflected in the texts of modernism by a foregrounding of the idea —and practice— of *translation*, in its original etymology, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, "Transference; removal or conveyance from one person, place or condition to another [...]. Transference of a body, or form of energy, from one point of space to another" (*COED* vol. II, 1971: 3081-3082).

The texts of modernism repeatedly internalise the translation, and thereby the transvaluation, of diverse national cultures. Pound's early lyric poetry "translates" (and in the process travesties to explosive effect) the literatures of classical Greece, imperial Rome, imperial China, dynastic Egypt, the Provence of the *troubadours*[3] and the Italy of Dante, Cavalcanti and innumerable other writers and artists. Eliot's *Waste Land* is traversed by Sanskrit scriptures as well as the "universal" and "classic" texts of most of Europe's literatures.[4] Yeats's "singing masters" emanate from medieval Italy, ancient China and imperial Byzantium as well as from the Celtic Twilight and the "fabulous darkness" ("Two Songs from a Play") of the supernatural and otherworldly (Yeats 1977: 437). His Irish poets, in a last valedictory address, almost a will ("Under Ben Bulben"), are urged to learn their trade not only from their own native culture but also from "stark Egyptian thought" and "[f]orms that gentler Phidias wrought", indeed even from such

quintessentially English artists as Calvert, Wilson and Blake as well as Claude and Michelangelo (Yeats 1977: 636). Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are masterworks of panglossia. Beckett, who had been the purblind Joyce's amanuensis for a time in the 1930s, finds his dual citizenship of (or double subjection to) English and French transporting him to deconstruct and relativise all discourse, language defecting by way of pun and paronomasia into the interstices of a transcendent otherness which can never finally be uttered. Even when they celebrate national identity and ostensibly reject modernity in the name of tradition —Yeats, writing angrily of "We Irish, born into that ancient sect/ But thrown upon this filthy modern tide", wrecked by the "formless spawning fury" of modernity (Yeats 1977: 610), Eliot in *Four Quartets* affirming, at the burning heart of the Blitz, that history is "Now and in England" (1963: 215), Pound in the *Cantos* lamenting the defeat of Mussolini's fascist *aggiornamento*, "wrecked for an error" (Pound 1975: 795) —the modernist writers retain at the heart of their project the idea of translation, the bearing of discourse, and of bodies, from one place to another. And, by definition, translation deconstructs "identity" even as it affirms modernity.

It is this very plurality, this protean elusiveness, that is central to the "identity" of modernism. Not for nothing does Joyce in *Ulysses* have his questers after an authentic, truthful narrative wrestle with Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea. For this volatile and unpredictable element is the very embodiment of a revolutionary modernity, as Auden implied in his polyphonic masque, "The Sea and the Mirror" (1944), and as he proposed explicitly in the lectures collected as *The Enchafèd Flood*, linking origins and apocalyptic ends in a single figure, as "that state of barbaric vagueness and disorder out of which civilization has emerged and into which [...] it is always liable to relapse" (1951: 18-19). Stephen Spender's seminal 1930s study of modernist literature, *The Destructive Element*, had spelt out the implications of this ubiquitous trope by reference to I. A. Richards's deployment, in an account of *The Waste Land*, of Conrad's vatic injunction to the modern soul in *Lord Jim* (1900): "In the destructive element immerse. That is the way". Spender commented that "T. S. Eliot, he implies, has thus immersed himself", and linked this immersion in turn to Pound's expatriate castaway Mauberley and Yeats's "blood-dimmed tide" (Spender 1935: 12). But while Spender, Auden and their leftist peers, in the 1930s, could take troubled delight in the idea of surrendering to the blood-dimmed tide of anarchy and social disintegration, Eliot's stance is openly reactionary, setting against the sea's dissolute wilderness the urge, Canute-like, to "at least set my lands in order".

"*Oed und leer das Meer*", declares an anonymous voice in *The Waste Land*, citing directly Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. This waste and desolate sea, which sunders individuals and divides nations, also flows around and links all the disparate states and subjects of the modern world. It can be transfigured into the redemptive element which Auden finally finds in *The Enchafèd Flood*, reflecting on Shakespeare's emblematic use of the trope in his last plays. Virginia Woolf in *The Waves* (1931) likewise moderates and transforms into the very figure of human history the image of an estranging sea which, in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), had threatened to render nugatory all human endeavour and aspiration. At once dividing and connecting, this is the same ambivalent element that Joyce's Stephen Dedalus has to cross to find himself translated elsewhere —to a Europe which, whether in a literal Paris (or Trieste, or Zurich), or in the literary reaches of Ibsen's Norwegian fjords, lives out the crisis of modernity in terms of a perpetual displacement— down the chain of signifiers, certainly, but also through all the anterooms of national and cultural identity. Joyce's three great novels all equate the sea, language and the modern condition. It is this same sea that Yeats's old man must traverse in "Sailing to Byzantium" before he can engage with the artifice of eternity, which may be no more than the gold mosaic of a wall (in Ravenna, or a Byzantium which is no longer Constantinople but already Istanbul) (Yeats 1977: 407). And in all these comings and goings, the one element that persists is the caducity, volatility and translatability of the self across frontiers and languages, as a various music floats by upon the waters.

2. MAKING IT (NEW)

Making it new —negotiating the formal break with history— is without doubt one of the principal unifying rhetorics of modernism, in all its many forms. John Middleton Murry offered his definition of the relation of artist and cultural heritage in the first issue of the short-lived little magazine *Rhythm*, in 1911:

> The artist must take up the quest where his fathers left it. He must identify himself with the continuity that has worked in the generations before him. His individuality consists in consciously thrusting from the vantage ground that he inherits; for consciousness of effort is individuality. Art is movement, ferocity, tearing at what lies before. [...]

> The present is the all-in-all of art. Derive its very elements, the matter of its being, from the past if you will; it remains the creation of a new thing, and by these unending creations alone Life proceeds and Art exists. The search for individuality of expression may become bizarre; yet the search is of the essence of art, for art is self-conscious and works in travail and tears. To say that art is revolutionary is to say that it is art. In truth, no art breaks with the past. It forces a path into the future. The flesh and the bones of the new creation may come from the past, but the form is new; and the form and not the flesh is art. The attempt to compel the present to submission to the past is but the puny fiat that Life shall cease and the universe perish. (in Pondrom 1974: 57)

Murry is probably the first to use the word "modernism" of the transformation of sensibility that forged modern literature, though his usage, in context, is too generalised to refer to any specific literary movement. The new world that was "worlded"[5] by Eliot, Joyce and Pound extended back into, and broke away from, a past that was already dislocated and disfigured in the texts of French symbolist poetry.[6] Both Eliot and Yeats acknowledge the formative influence of Arthur Symons's collection of lectures, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), in construing modernity for them, while Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1915), goes one better by writing symbolist poems which are parodic for his author but sincere and heartfelt pastiches for Stephen himself. But the originating moment of modernism was the entry of America into the cenacles and salons of London, Paris, and the other European metropoles. This cultural movement constructed in hybridity, re-enacting the earlier engagement of Greece and Rome, married Europe's perception of its own decay —the decay of a culture that had founded empires— with America's perception of its own imperial future. The vision of the fragmented culture cast into new forms, in *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, is embodied in the Fisher King's wish to "set my lands in order", or in Earwicker's dream, in a night as long as history, which struggles to form a new universal discourse out of the incoherent babble of the world's languages. These texts offer fragments shored against the ruin of civilisation, perhaps, but also the rearticulation and transvaluation of discourses that might make possible the emergence of a common culture on a global scale.

Eliot early and famously argued, in 1919, that the European inheritance was under threat, and in need of reclamation by a more robust (implicitly, American) sensibility:

> The poet [...] must be aware that the mind of Europe —the mind of his own country— a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind, is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing *en route*, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen. (Eliot 1951: 16)

That reclamation involved hard work:

> Tradition [...] cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense [...] and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. (Eliot 1951: 14)

For Eliot and Pound, Henry James's translation to Europe in 1876, and his British naturalisation in 1915, became the model for their rejection of what Walt Whitman celebrated as the "barbaric yawp" of a democratic, technologically advanced but intellectually retarded America. When Pound speaks autobiographically in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, in 1920, of being born "In a half savage country, out of date" (1973: 205) he sums up the attitude of this first generation of American modernists to their native culture.

In 1956, in the depths of that Cold War which followed the second "war to end all wars", W. H. Auden cast a cold eye on the moment when its American progenitors came to situate Anglophone modernism within a European imaginary. For Auden there is a continuity between Whitman, who had first contrasted the themes afforded by the New World with those of the Old, and Eliot himself:

> What [Whitman] does not say, and perhaps did not realize, is that, in a democracy, the status of the poet himself is changed. However fantastic, in the light of present-day realities, his notion may be, every European poet, I believe, still instinctively thinks of himself as a "clerk", a member of a professional brotherhood, with a certain social status irrespective of the number of his readers (in his heart of hearts the audience he desires and expects are those

who govern the country), and taking his place in an unbroken historical succession. In the States poets have never had or imagined they had such a status, and it is up to each individual poet to justify his existence by offering a unique product. [...] "Tradition", wrote Mr T. S. Eliot in a famous essay, "cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour". I do not think that any European critic would have said just this. He would not, of course, deny that every poet must work hard but the suggestion in the first half of the sentence that no sense of tradition is acquired except by conscious effort would seem strange to him. (Auden 1956: 17-18)

For the poet whose aim is to relativise history —make the break with his own past— being American is a great advantage. Some identification with a culture is important, but it is distance that brings clear sight:

> When a revolutionary break with the past is necessary it is an advantage not to be too closely identified with any one particular literature or any particular cultural group. Americans like Eliot and Pound, for example, could be as curious about French or Italian poetry as about English and could hear poetry of the past, like the verse of Webster, freshly in a way that for an Englishman, trammelled by traditional notions of Elizabethan blank verse, would have been difficult.
>
> Further, as Americans, they were already familiar with the dehumanized nature and the social levelling which a technological civilization was about to make universal and with which the European mentality was unprepared to deal. After his visit to America De Tocqueville made a remarkable prophecy about the kind of poetry which a democratic society would produce.
>
> > "I am persuaded that in the end democracy diverts the imagination from all that is external to man and fixes it on man alone. [...] The destinies of mankind, man himself taken aloof from his country and his age, and standing in the presence of Nature and of God, with his passions, his doubts, his rare prosperities and inconceivable wretchedness, will become the chief, if not the sole, theme of poetry".
>
> If this be an accurate description of the poetry we call modern, then one might say that America has never known any other kind. (Auden 1956: 19-20)

There is more than some irony here. The Englishman who has assumed American identity invokes the Frenchman translated abroad to fix the image of America's devotion to its manifest destiny, by writing of an American who has become an Englishman in order to enshrine that destiny in modern poetic form.

In October 1944, a month after American forces first crossed the German frontier near Trier, T. S. Eliot gave a talk to the Virgil Society in London called "What is a Classic". For all its cool, lightly-worn scholarship, the paper was alert to the momentous significance of current military and political developments, tangentially figured in a discussion of the cultural inheritance of the Roman Imperium. In August 1944, the Warsaw rising had begun, the Eighth Army had taken Florence, the Russians had launched their offensive in Bessarabia and Rumania, and de Gaulle's Free French forces had marched into Paris in the wake of American troops. Eliot's mind was already on the post-war reconstruction of Europe. He spoke with the same voice that, in *The Waste Land*, addressing "the current decay of Eastern Europe" figured in the Russian revolution, and the fall of cities as diverse as Vienna, Munich, Athens and London that might follow, had translated from the Sanskrit to set forth a solution: "Give, sympathize, control". In defining the classic text, and explaining what it is to say the classic has "maturity", Eliot also made it clear that in order to reinvent your history you have to relativise it, as Virgil did by appropriating the destruction of Troy as the foundation myth of Roman origins. The Romans, he suggested, expropriated Greek culture to invent themselves:

> Maturity of mind: this needs history, and the consciousness of history. Consciousness of history cannot be fully awake, except where there is other history than the history of the poet's own people: we need this in order to see our own place in history. There must be the knowledge of the history of at least one other highly civilised people, and of a people whose civilisation is sufficiently cognate to have influenced and entered into our own. [...] From the beginning, Virgil, like his contemporaries and immediate predecessors, was constantly adapting and using the discoveries, traditions and inventions of Greek poetry: to make use of a foreign literature in this way marks a further stage of civilisation beyond making use only of the earlier stages of one's own [...]. (Eliot 1945: 19)

The rallying-point of the classic in European culture, said Eliot, was the Latin tradition (Virgil handing on cultural leadership to Dante). This was the

ground on which "provincialism" could be challenged. As the Germans retreated, Eliot made a place in the continuum for Goethe, too provincial, limited, marked by "the germanism of the sensibility" to be a classic author (Eliot 1945: 27), but indisputably a "universal" one, whom everyone should read. The reconciliatory gesture nevertheless required that one principal European tradition, the "Germanic", be absorbed into the other, in the process of creating a global culture:

> We need to remind ourselves that, as Europe is a whole (and still, in its progressive mutilation and disfigurement, the organism out of which any greater world harmony must develop), so European literature is a whole, the several members of which cannot flourish, if the same blood-stream does not circulate throughout the whole body. The blood-stream of European literature is Latin and Greek —not as two systems of circulation, but one, for it is through Rome that our parentage in Greece must be traced. What common measure of excellence have we in literature, among our several languages, which is not the classical measure? What mutual intelligibility can we hope to preserve, except in our common heritage of thought and feeling in those two languages, for the understanding of which, no European people is in any position of advantage over any other? (Eliot 1945: 31)

Seven months earlier, writing in the little magazine *Horizon*, Cyril Connolly also called for a rescue mission for the European tradition, deploying a figure of Asiatic conquest which, in its covert allusion to the military advances of Soviet armies, had more urgent contemporary relevance than the Persian Wars of the fifth century B.C.:

> The bombing of Monte Cassino is a terrible warning of what we may expect to happen in Rome and Northern Italy. Two facts must be recognized. The Germans will let military considerations override any feeling for art and culture and so will we. [...] Even more serious is the general public's indifference to the glories of our civilization. [...] We should all try to realize (1) that we are the trustees of European Culture for Posterity; (2) that culturally, all Europe is one, there is a common ownership of its civilization; and (3) that Europe is its civilization, and that if we strip it of its monuments and antiques, as we are stripping it of its political and economic power, then we will have utterly destroyed its magic, its prestige in the world and therefore our own, and so it will go back into being that miserable appendage of Asia which it was till the Greeks defeated the Persians. (Connolly 1944: 149-150)

Eliot's friend and colleague, John Lehmann, in a Foreword to the Autumn 1944 issue of his influential little magazine, *New Writing and Daylight*, took a wider perspective than Eliot himself, in announcing that "one of our objects in coming numbers will be to develop the European side of *New Writing and Daylight* as intensively as possible, not merely in the sense of publishing the work of new European authors, but of attempting the rediscovery of the European tradition and our own place in it. Needless to say, we hope that renewed contacts with Russia will play an important part in this" (Lehmann 1944: 6). The selection in that issue was a wide-ranging one, including theatre and film in Nazi Germany as well as Greek poetry, prose by Gide and Saint-Exupéry, Polish and Chinese theatre, and poems such as Alun Lewis's "The Jungle", bringing back from the Indian front, as Lehmann wrote in his own closing essay, "The Armoured Writer", a sense of change, and the glimpse of a new (if actually ancient) continent. In a number of emerging English poets, he noted a tendency to "classicism", against which he issued his own caveat:

> Classicism, if it is to be a reality in our future, surely implies not merely a respect for the experience of the past and for the delicate evolution of meaning in words and symbols, but also a new integration, an attempt to map some system of thought and feeling wide enough and deep enough for our culture to exist in. The rejection of political or semi-political formulas as spiritual habitations, which has been so decided a tendency of poetry for the past five years —a rejection which was implicit in the work of the poets of the thirties as it was developing already before the war started— must be the first condition for the growth of such a classicism; and nothing [...] is more striking in the work of [the new writers] Tiller, Yates and Fuller than the suggestion of deeper and often terrifying truths of our historic existence that have begun to emerge from the clash of nations and beliefs we have been forced to take part in; the sense of being about to discover a master-key to the riddle. (Lehmann 1944: 171-172)

Europe, Lehmann implied, had learned the hard way the dangers and limits of cultural nationalism. Discreetly negotiating fresh alliances and orientations, he saluted in both Eliot's *Four Quartets* and Edith Sitwell's *Green Song* work which took on the task of reintegrating past, present and future; and he joined to them a new generation of poets who looked beyond the Latin Imperium to include Europe's Germanic inheritance:

> With such a work English poetry again becomes one with all that is finest in the European tradition. And when, at the same time, one sees how deeply many of the younger poets have been influenced by the major contemporary writers and philosophers of Europe, by Rilke, Lorca and Kierkegaard to name only three, and how prevalent the impulse is —for instance in the work of Henry Reed and Lawrence Durrell— to search for the illumination of modern spiritual problems in the legends of Europe's earliest civilization, one can indeed hope that English poetry will regain in the new post-war epoch that pre-eminence in a revived European culture which it has more than once achieved in the past. (Lehmann 1944: 175)

3. IMAGINARY MUSEUMS

Franco Moretti has stressed the resistance of many modernist writers to conscription to the dark imperial heart of the European enterprise, invoking Conrad's famous critique of colonial duplicities in *Heart of Darkness*:

> Truth is, for the great generation of exiles Europe is no longer enough; they perceive it as a limit, an obstacle to the intelligence of reality. "All of Europe had contributed to the making of Kurtz"; yes, but Kurtz's truth, and with him Europe's, is down in the jungle, not in Brussels or London. Marlow's audience is still a European one, but the material of his stories belongs to the East, to Africa; and their formal pathos lies in the difficulty of saying in a European language experiences which are European no longer. Pound's poetics, and quite a few of the *Cantos*, are obsessed by the (frustrated) ambition of finding a Western equivalent for ideogrammatic writing. The last word of *The Waste Land* is a Sanskrit term, hieratically repeated three times, but declared untranslatable by Eliot himself; and the poem emphasises more than once the Eastern roots of European symbols and myths, just as Joyce had accepted, a few years earlier, Victor Bérard's thesis on the Phoenician basis of the *Odyssey*. (1994: 108-109)

Moretti sees only pathos in this struggle to speak of other cultures in the tainted discourses of the European *mentalité*. Anglophone modernism is the child of an imperialism rooted in what Winston Churchill in the post-war world grandiosely designated "the English-speaking peoples". Auden's 1937 poem "Dover" speaks of the damaged subjects of empire returning home to

retirement after a lifetime spent serving an imperial illusion. "The eyes of the returning", "filled with the tears of the beaten or calm with fame", may "thank the historical cliffs" for the promise that now "The heart has at last ceased to lie, and the clock to accuse", fondly believing that, in some primal English scene, "Everything will be explained". But the poem clearly casts this as a self-serving delusion. After three hundred years of imperialism, bringing it all back home (even if, like Conrad's Marlow, one decides that a wise and taciturn discretion is the better part of valour) is the primary European experience. The bitterness of disillusion and personal defeat, powerfully rendered in the second- and third-generation colonial novels of Graham Greene and Joyce Cary, is the subjective obverse of that parade of trophies and trumpery with which the "subaltern" consciousness demonstrates the triumph of empire.

The imperial display of the spoils of Africa and the Orient on the walls of European museums is something the modernist painters emulated in their very canvases and collages. The writers, likewise, created what Donald Davie, adapting a phrase of André Malraux's, called an "imaginary museum" (Davie 1976), juxtaposing polyglot fragments of innumerable discourses, ripped out of context, and reconfigured within the taxonomies of an hegemonic cultural will-to-power. Modernist writing recuperated what Eliot spoke of as the "disturbance" of the new, the previously unknown and unformulable, to reconfirm its own discursive control. Eliot's own Sanskrit mantra, "Shantih shantih shantih", of which he offered a "feeble translation", in the mock-scholarly Notes to *The Waste Land*, as the Christian "Peace that passeth understanding", like his forays into the European classical past, is not so much a gesture of despair as a reassertion of the authority of a cultural elite. Within all this, however, the profound melancholy of the modernist sensibility continues to fester.

If we are to speak of modernisms, as Peter Nicholls has rightly proposed, then we must also speak of Europes, in the plural. Individual modernist writers engaged in active dialogue with a differentiated Europe which was neither a monolithic unity nor a mere disparate congeries of autonomous nation states. Erin G. Carlston suggests that modernism is best defined

> not in terms of period or a group of canonized authors, but in terms of a set of textual tropes [... it represents] a close engagement with questions emerging from nineteenth-century discourses about individual and social bodies: questions not only about sexuality but also about the definition of the nation, the significance of racial difference, and the meaning of individuality and subjectivity in an age of mass culture. (1998: 7-8)

Some of the most important of these conversations were with the innovatory writers and artists of 1880s and 1890s France, who supplied the stimulus and the matter for the first great flowering of Anglo-American modernism. Ezra Pound's introduction to his anthology "French Poets", first published in the *Little Review* in February 1918, was categorical: "The time when the intellectual affairs of America could be conducted on a monolingual basis is over. It has been irksome for long. The intellectual life of London is dependent on people who understand the French language about as well as their own" (Pound 1934: 159). Cyrena Pondrom's 1975 anthology remains a major source-book for the influence of French poetry on the modernists of the 1910s and 1920s.[7] Pondrom gathers together the key mediators in that seminal moment, along with Eliot and Pound, such figures as F. S. Flint, Richard Aldington, T. E. Hulme, the principal magazines through which the new material flowed (*The Egoist*, *Criterion*, Orage's *New Age*), and the main suppliers of information on the Paris scene, of whom the best known is now Remy de Gourmont, co-founder with Alfred Vallette of the great *Mercure de France*. According to Aldington:

> From its foundation in 1890 until the war, the *Mercure de France* was one of the best, if not the best, of the independent literary periodicals in France. Nothing like it has existed in England and America, though the *English Review* under Ford, the *Dial* under Scofield Thayer, and T. S. Eliot's *Criterion* did succeed in reproducing some of the *Mercure*'s features. But for years the *Mercure* introduced many of the best European writers, so that one bought practically any book with the familiar caduceus and wings on it. Moreover, its notes on French and international literature, art, and thought, were unrivalled. (1968: 159)

The selective expropriation by first-generation Anglophone modernists of end-of-century French culture produced some deformed versions of that culture and its key figures. Jeremy Tambling refers to Eliot's widely remarked interest in Charles Maurras, the monarchist founder of the right-wing *Action Française*, whose cult of Latin civilization and the classical ideal appealed deeply to the poet of order. It was an interest that never —deliberately or otherwise— probed much below the surface. The slightest scratch, and Maurrasian traditionalism reveals the disorderly, disreputable bundle of mystifications and complexes which was *fin-de-siècle* French mysticism. When the figures of the pre-Maurrasian moment did appear in the work of Eliot's generation, they commanded, bizarrely, a certain respect. The Sâr Joséphin Péladan, novelist, dramatist (admired by Strindberg), art critic, fanatic of Wagner, was a figure of fun to his French contemporaries. To Ezra Pound, who shared his fascination with Dante and the *troubadours*, he was a writer of some intellectual standing. In 1906, Pound reviewed with interest Péladan's thesis on the mystic cult of love, *Le Secret des troubadours* (1905), along with *Origine et esthétique de la tragédie*, which Péladan wrote in the same year.[8]

Remy de Gourmont was a favourite of the early Eliot, who took over some of his innovatory ideas on style and form. Eliot's concept of the dissociation of sensibility comes from Gourmont, together with some of his most important insights into the physical basis of language and the operations of metaphor.[9] Gourmont's "A French Poet on Tradition" (Gourmont 1914), published more or less simultaneously in 1914 in two little magazines close to the heart of the Eliot-Pound coterie, *The Egoist* and *Poetry*, is a source of Eliot's essay on "Tradition and the Individual Talent".[10] Pound admired and propagated Gourmont, and invited him to be the French collaborator for his projected periodical linking New York, London and Paris (Pound 1960: 356). His essay of 1920, "Remy de Gourmont: A Distinction", acknowledged that "Gourmont prepared our era" (Pound 1960: 339). Pound recognised the strength of Gourmont's unique blend of symbolist imagination with Enlightenment rationalism, and praised the modern, materialist sensibility deployed in writing which showed in operation "the senses of the imagination" (Pound 1960: 345). But even Pound failed to grasp the full materialist dimension of works such as *Le Problème du style*, with its ground-breaking references to the work of the psychologists Théodule Ribot and Paul Chabaneix, and its linking of personal form to historical moment.[11] Pound played up the sensualist, the anti-democrat, the anti-feminist. He closed his eyes —if he ever saw him— to the radical Gourmont, the self-designated anachronism, the satyr in the city park, flirting with the New Woman, conceding the supersession of his own caste.

Much of the conservative misrepresentation of Gourmont, and the obscurity into which he has fallen for present-day English-speaking readers, must be attributed to his main propagator, Richard Aldington. As editor of *The Egoist*, Aldington began promulgating Gourmont in 1914. He saw in him the last representative of European individualism, the Egoist (Gourmont's own term) *par excellence,* defending civilisation under siege (Aldington 1968: 21), who could stand emblematically for the aesthetic unity of European culture, beyond petty nationalisms (157). He gave Gourmont his chief currency in the English-speaking world, in the volumes of oddly-chosen, strangely-excerpted selections published in the UK and US (Gourmont 1929; 1932). Gourmont, consigned at the end of his life to

relative poverty, welcomed the money the Aldington/ Pound/ Eliot connection brought. Whether he would have appreciated the strange, deradicalized half-life of anti-democratic dreamer into which it eventually cast him is another matter. No-one, certainly, reading Aldington, would expect to find Gourmont's name in the folders of Walter Benjamin's Paris project (for his comments on the historical uses of cultural detritus), or see him classed with the radicals in Julia Kristeva's 1970s study of *fin-de-siècle* literature and society, *La Revolution du langage poétique*.

Eliot's lecture, "What Dante Means To Me", delivered at the Italian Institute in London in July 1950, is striking in giving almost as much attention to a French model as to the Italian mentor named in his title. The essay acknowledges complementary debts to Baudelaire and Dante. From Baudelaire, Eliot says, he learned how to confront the shock of modernity, how to see

> the poetical possibilities [...] of the more sordid aspects of the modern metropolis, of the possibility of fusion between the sordidly realistic and the phantasmagoric [...]. From him, as from Laforgue, I learned that the sort of material that I had, the sort of experience that an adolescent had had, in an industrial city in America, could be the material for poetry; and that the source of new poetry might be found in what had been regarded hitherto as the impossible, the sterile, the intractably unpoetic. (Eliot 1965: 126)

From Dante, however, he learned how to translate that particular experience and poetic practice into forms that could inspire others to take it for their own. Dante, he said, taught him how to show ordinary men how to feel, how to widen their emotional and perceptual range by giving them a new language to express themselves. Dante taught Eliot how to transform the "local" into the "European":

> What I have been saying just now is not irrelevant to the fact —for to me it appears an incontestable fact— that Dante is, beyond all other poets of our continent, the most *European*. He is the least provincial —and yet that statement must be immediately protected by saying that he did not become the "least provincial" by ceasing to be local. [...] The Italian of Dante is somehow *our* language from the moment we begin to try to read it; and the lessons of craft, of speech and of exploration of sensibility are lessons which any European can take to heart and try to apply in his own tongue. (134-135)

There was nothing in modern Italy to match the sensibility of Dante, or the Cavalcanti who provided the initial impulse for Eliot's 1930 poem "Ash Wednesday", and the options their language could be crafted to carry. Futurism put in an appearance, through the work and personality of Marinetti (writing in French). According to Olga Taxidou, Edward Gordon Craig did his best to ignore him, and so, it would seem, did everyone else among the first-generation modernists. Aldington, Pound and Sturge Moore took Marinetti along to see Yeats, but the visit was not a success. Mercifully, Aldington records, Marinetti could not understand Yeats's poems, since, if he had done, he would certainly have dismissed them as out of date. Marinetti bawled out his own work, and Yeats had to ask him to stop in deference to the neighbours banging in protest on all the walls (Aldington 1968: 98). Marinetti's lecture at the Doré Gallery (on the occasion of the second "Exhibition of the Works of the Italian Futurist Painters and Sculptors", April 1914) was broken up by concerted heckling from the *Blast* contingent, led by Wyndham Lewis.[12]

The work of D. H. Lawrence has clear analogies with the writing produced by the German expressionists, and is marked by their guiding philosophies: anti-technologism, idealism, vitalism and irrationalist activism. But Lawrence's writing in the last analysis took a different path, enriched, Hans Ulrich Seeber argues, by the insights of Weberian anti-capitalism. Taxidou's analysis of Edward Gordon Craig's dramatic theory shows German influence pulling in the opposite direction. Craig's leanings towards Kleistian idealism helped justify the distance he sought to maintain between his work on dramatic representation (marionette theatre) and the attempts of other contemporary theorists to develop new acting techniques for living actors. One of the most important inspirations from Germany came through the commissions offered to the translators Edwin and Willa Muir, introducing the themes and forms of Hölderlin, Hoffmansthal, Rilke, Kafka, and Broch. Storm Jameson, welcoming the translation in 1932 of Herman Broch's trilogy, *Die Schlafwandler* (*The Sleepwalkers*), which traced "the gradual disintegration of values from the start of the process at the Renaissance to the present day", made a telling connection:

> At this final stage, [...] in this zero hour of our civilisation, men are oppressed by a sense of futility, our life, they say, has no meaning. Silence isolates each of us, "each in his prison Thinking of the key". (That is Mr. T. S. Eliot, and it is a very curious experience, and one which I suggest to you, to read *The Sleepwalkers* and *The Waste Land* side by side. In Herr Broch's

> language, Mr. Eliot has now become a romantic, the man who seeks safety in an outworn tradition). (Jameson 1939: 106)

Along with France and Italy, Spain was the theatre of discovery for the ambiguous, damaged selves that emerged from the First World War, in the texts of Hemingway considered by Geoffrey Harris. The Spanish Civil War provoked a major reconsideration of what Europe, and modernism, were really about. Michael Murphy tracks the political tergiversations of allegiance and defection which characterise Auden's simultaneous engagement with Spain, Yeats and fascism.

Modernism spoke from the margins, and on the move. If Auden was the poet of frontiers, Vassiliki Kolocotroni demonstrates that this was Joyce's location too, closely observing the movements of trains. In Craig Monk's account, the largely American editors of little magazines travelled between Paris, Rome, Berlin, London, Chicago. Capital cities, the metropoles, were nevertheless favourite places to be marginal, where modern artists could exchange ideas, and sign contracts.[13] Peter Brooker addresses the urban aetiology of modernism, through the familiar trope of the Baudelairean poet-*flâneur*, a sensibility forged by the city streets and shop displays of the1860s. But he also re-establishes the historical distance between the original and those multiple translations to which criticism post-Benjamin has subjected him.

Anglophone modernisms, unified within the diversities of English, are transformed and developed by the negotiation of Europe's many tongues. In the process of translating they are also translated. Of all the tropes of the movement, this is the one to which writers and critics regularly return. Translators, proposes Alasdair Macrae, "are crucial prompters in a mysterious process of fortuitousness, coincidence or synchronicity". In translation, modernism grasps the plurality of languages that is the European inheritance, and turns it to material purpose. Peter Marks quotes the Lawrentian hero rejoicing in the temporary relief afforded by heaping abuse in French, German, Italian on English authoritarian power in the form of "the military canaille. *Canaille*! *Canaglia*! *Schweinerei*! He loathed them in all the languages he could lay his tongue to". But the ends of translation change. The (auto-)translation of Samuel Beckett, arguably the Last Modernist,[14] poised on the threshold of postmodernism, marked something new in the European air. Leslie Hill's comments on Beckettian translation serve retrospectively and by antithesis to sum up the whole modernist project:

> For Benjamin, as for Beckett, the object of translation is not what Beckett, speaking of Joyce, once called the scant cream of sense. Its role is not to formulate ideas, but more nearly to dissolve them, to use them as pretexts for the silent motion of language itself [...]. Translation can be understood here as an endless movement across the multiplicity of languages, a constant matching, as Benjamin puts it, of fragments of language with each other in the attempt to fashion not an ideal whole (implying the reduction of all languages to one) but rather another piece in a larger puzzle, a puzzle which is the multiplicity of languages themselves. And this, as the object of translation, is what Benjamin, in messianic vein, calls pure language, "*die reine Sprache*". (in Birkett and Ince 1999: 106)

Where modernism rejoices in multiplying differences, Leslie Hill goes on to argue, Beckett's attention is focused otherwise, on "the movement of difference across and within languages [...] in the search for that something else, neither an experience nor an object, which lies between and beyond those differences, in the shape of the figure of indifference" (107-108).

The condition of "indifference", Eliot wrote in "Little Gidding", at the end of *Four Quartets*, lies "between two lives", for a culture as for the individual, and "This is the use of memory":

> For liberation [...]
> From the future as well as the past. Thus, love of a country
> Begins as attachment to our own field of action
> And comes to find that action of little importance
> Though never indifferent. History may be servitude,
> History may be freedom. See, now they vanish,
> The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,
> To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern. (1963: 219)

That other pattern was to emerge in the wake of the Second World War, to which this poem was the eloquent response. For, it could be said, to adapt an earlier poem of Eliot's, "The Hollow Men" (1963: 92), that between difference and indifference, "the essence/ And the descent", falls the shadow of the post-Modern.

NOTES

[1] See Bradbury and McFarlane (1991), Nicholls (1995), and the invaluable Italian collection edited by Cianci (1991) for overviews of the variants of modernism. The nationalist dimension of modernism is receiving increasing attention. Matei Calinescu has indicated the role French modernisms, in particular, were called on to play in intra- and international debates and conflicts, arguing that the word "modernism" was invented in 1888 by Ruben Darío, adapting French literary innovation in a Latin America seeking to declare its cultural independence from Spain (Calinescu 1987: 69). Attributions of the modern usage to Baudelaire actually translate the word "*modernité*", a rather different and all-embracing concept. The *Oxford English Dictionary* identifies the first instance of the word "modernist" in 1588, in a reference to "sundry other neotericall mathematicians and modernists". Jonathan Swift spoke of "modernists" in *The Tale of a Tub* (1704), and from Swift onwards, "modernism" has been used of various innovations, newfangled devices or inventions, usually disapprovingly (*COED* vol. I, 1971: 1828). From the start of the 20th century, and in particular after the Papal Encyclical of 1907, "modernism" was applied to the liberalising movement in the Roman Catholic Church, and some of the partisan connotations the concept generated may have been transferred to its earliest secular usages (*COED* vol. III, *Supplement* 1987: 581). The "modernist" writers never formally constituted themselves under this name. Indeed, Ezra Pound, in his 1932 obituary for Harold Monro in *The Criterion*, described them as "a movement to which no name has ever been given". (On this, see Smith 1994: 1-5.) As Stan Smith argues below, the words "modernism" and "modernist", in their contemporary application, emerged in every decade of the first half of this century, but only began to stick in the early 1960s, virtually coincident with the appearance of the usurping tanist, "postmodernism". Herbert Read, for example, in an Address to the National Poetry Festival, Washington DC, in October 1962, spoke of "American poets so essentially post- or anti- modernist (again I borrow a judgment from Mr. Jarrell) as Robert Lowell [...] John Berryman, Richard Wilbur, Delmore Schwartz and Randall Jarrell himself" (Read 1967: 155). The mediation of Jarrell is probably crucial here. John Crowe Ransom, the friend of Robert Graves and Laura Riding and a founder-editor of the *Fugitive*, in a series of articles for American literary/ academic journals collected as *The World's Body* in 1938, deployed the words variously of a general condition or state of mind or of this specific literary movement (1938: 55, 56, 62, 63, 64, 145, 166-167). He also seems to endorse Jarrell's identification of modernism with W. H. Auden, drawing, in an essay on *Murder in the Cathedral*, an analogy between Eliot and "Auden [...] that most witty and far-gone modern poet" (1938: 170-171).

[2] For translation in Beckett, see Hill (in Birkett and Ince 1999).

[3] For Pound's quality as a translator of Provençal, see Makin (1976), Ricketts (1992).

[4] Eliot makes the distinction between the two concepts in *What is a Classic?*, discussed below.

[5] The concept (Spivak 1990: 1) avoids the ambiguities of "mapping", which implies a relatively objective representation of a pre-existent reality. It draws attention to the partiality of the interests that move writers, and to the status of the writerly world, constituted in its maker's own image.

[6] The present collection contains various examples of the disruption of form from within, which Peter Marks characterises in his essay on Lawrence as "one of modernism's signature tactics". On Yeats's and Mallarmé's relationships to romantic symbolism, see Potolsky; for the negotiation with the picaresque, see Marks on Lawrentian journeys, in fiction and fact, and Kolocotroni, who draws the connections between Joyce's European wanderings, in exile on the frontiers, and the evolution of a new version of narrative based on digression and diversion, chance and happenstance. Jennifer Milligan sees in the writing of Jean Rhys an active deconstruction of the *Bildungsroman*, working on parody, pastiche and intertextual allusion. Geoffrey Harris traces the echoes of the search of second-generation modernism for new narrative strategies in the work of Malraux and Hemingway. The disruptions of form reflect the dissolving confidence of the virile hero in his self-image, generated by the experience of war and the perceived challenge of emancipated femininity. Teresa Brus shows how Auden's drama adapts the forms of light play (popular song, masque, cabaret) to produce intimations of tragedy, figuring the modern moment, a perpetual awakening to a sour taste in the mouth. Jazz, in John Lucas's essay, enacts a similar process in musical terms, ludic play with conventional musical form that reveals a serious edge. Brian Cosgrove's discussion of modernist irony points to the larger discursive and philosophical frame that supports all these formal experiments with disruption and contradiction. Irony, as Cosgrove presents it, is the primary mode of European modernism, a process of "form-giving" whose main purpose is to signal detachment, to imply that the speaking subject possesses objective, totalising knowledge while at the same time denying it. In the European tradition, irony is a way of surviving real knowledge of the present. Cosgrove's analysis identifies three different inflections of irony in that tradition, which represent different national relations with the real and, correspondingly, different routes to survival. The version favoured by the German romantics valorises the possession of total knowledge; Flaubert, the proto-modernist, emphasises detachment; Nietzschean irony proclaims the joyful possession of a pluralising knowledge, founded in the body, and proclaims a positive relation with the real. Joyce, in Cosgrove's reading, carries traces of all three. Heir to all Europe's ironies, we might argue, Joyce can serve as emblem of the double function of the Anglophone modernist in Europe: absolute synthesiser of the past, and absolute disrupter.

[7] See also Svarny (1988) and, casting a wider net, Kolocotroni *et al.* (1998).

[8] On Pound and Péladan, see Surette (1979, chs. 2 and 3; 1993: 128-130, 209-216). For Péladan, see Beaufils (1993), Birkett (1999).

[9] See Burne (1963); Doyle (1989).

[10] See for example Doyle 1989: 27-28, 331 nn 5, 6. Doyle notes that the two epigraphs to *The Sacred Wood* are from Gourmont.

[11] See Birkett (1999); Sieburth (1978).

[12] Wyndham Lewis, detaching himself from the "propagandist[s] for Action", lumped together Machiavelli, Sartre, and Marinetti ("the father of Italian fascism"): "action in this context means action of a material and mechanistic type. [...] [S]uch principles as these I have combated, since the first days of my public life, when I led a band of hecklers into the Doré Gallery in Bond Street where Marinetti was lecturing" (Lewis 1984: 178). See also Cianci (1991).

[13] Ch. 4, "The City", in Butler (1994) is a rich source of interdisciplinary references. See also Crunden (1993).

[14] Kenner (1986); Cronin (1996).

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