LINEAGES OF "MODERNISM", OR, HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM NASHVILLE TO OXFORD.

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1. A PACKAGE DEAL

Literary modernism was a cosmopolitan, stateless hybrid, shuttling backwards and forwards across the Atlantic as its progenitors and carriers shifted between Old and New Worlds, endlessly repacking their intellectual baggage. The trade in modernism was as diverse as the freight carried by the word "modernism" itself. The history of that word, as it sneaked across frontiers and through cultural customs barriers, is symptomatic of the twentieth-century dilemmas to which Anglophone modernism, spawned in sundry estaminets of Europe by an odd assortment of expatriate Americans, Irish and Britons, was a series of inadequate attempts at an answer. To trace the lineages of that history, viewed through a sequence of retrospective frames, is to see how closely modernism itself was bound up with the great historic catastrophes that punctuated the twentieth century. A century of diasporas and displacements, the construction, reconstitution and dissolution of states, and the kaleidoscopic recycling of alliance and counter-alliance, produced a literature to match in its polymorphous and polysemic perversity. As a new, "postmodern" millennium begins, the burden of that modernist past remains: unfinished business, a package deal we have all bought.

"A Package Deal" is the title of a review of Robert Graves's *Steps* by an up-and-coming young critic in *The Observer* shortly after the book was published in 1958. "The title of this review", writes John Wain, "is an Americanism: I use it as a code signal of solidarity with Mr. Graves, whose

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English vocabulary and sentence-construction are becoming daily more Americanised":

> Looking through this book at random, one finds the pages peppered with such words as "rangy" (meaning tall and loose-limbed), cable "collect" (i.e. with charges reversed), "around" (for English "round," e.g. "around the corner"), "jibe" (meaning "fit in" —this last in a poem), etc., etc.

Wain's donnish indignation seems quaintly mock-antique now, an index of how far the Americanisation of English usage has proceeded since the 1950s. His explanation of the phenomenon in Graves is patronising equally of the English poet and of Americans, with its knowing hints about the transatlantic groupies currently congregating in Deyá, Majorca:

> The reason is clear: Mr. Graves, in his Balearic fastness, talks Spanish with the neighbours and English only with the visitors; many of these same visitors, and especially the young, literary ones who make up Mr. Graves's entourage, are American; as a result, his ear is losing the power to distinguish between the two languages.

For Wain, the erosion of *English* English figures also the failing of cultural and political powers. Not for nothing does he deploy the idiom "losing the power", with its implicit sense of a decline in both sexual and geopolitical potency.

Americanisation means the loss of everything at the level of cultural register that has made Britain great, from Jane Austen's regulated hatred, the reflex of an imperial stiff upper lip, through the Anglicised mandarin subtlety of James and Eliot, those masters of nuance and scruple, to the intrinsically English discriminations of an F. R. Leavis and —no doubt— the columns of *The Observer* in January 1959.

Wain suggests a more than metaphorical connection between loss of linguistic hegemony and commercial decline. The British once traded around (or round?) the world. Now they have been sold a "package deal" by former colonials:

> So, as a token of our respect for him, let us speak of this book, even in these English pages, as a package deal. As business men are well aware, a package deal is a way of unloading on to the customer a certain amount of stuff he doesn't want. The buyer has to take all or nothing; since the package contains certain items he really needs, he takes all [...]. The nauseating blurb gives an arch description of the treat in store for the fortunate child who gets this lovely stocking ("He continues to wear his variegated learning — as lightly as his customary crownless straw hat") and winds up the catalogue with, "Twenty-two new Poems complete the jaunt."

Graves has become a court jester in the service of his American entourage, a vaudeville entertainer in a straw hat, putting on an act of eccentric stage Englishness to gratify his American patrons. But Britain itself has bought the package which runs from Lend Lease through Marshall Aid to the Cold War and Coca-colonial penetration of its economy and culture alike. We inhabit a client state, a subaltern culture, which has sold its heritage for a mess of bubblegum.

Wain has one qualification: "If this book is worth thirty shillings of anybody's money", he says, maintaining the snooty tone of a nation of shopkeepers confronting shoddy foreign imports, "it is the poems that tip the scale". In Wain's world, Graves's poetry remains an island of English purity in the midst of a commercialised —which is to say Americanised— culture.[1] The package, that "day-to-day stuff that Mr. Graves writes to make a living —all of it more or less pointless and trivial", is, like newspaper around British fish and chips, "wrapped round twenty-three wonderful pages of poetry". The offence justifies vandalism: "Probably most discerning readers will tear out the pages of verse and throw the rest away in the interests of conserving shelf-space, and I don't blame them":

> But really it is intolerable when one of the finest poets alive in the English-speaking world, a man whose poetry gets better and better, continually purging away its dross and refining itself by the sheer heat of its own imaginative strength and virtue — when such a writer offers us twenty-two poems, nearly all of them up to his own highest standard, we should be asked to accept them as a makeweight in a volume of barrel-scrapings.

That "English-speaking world" gives the game away. This new post-war locution, familiarised by Winston Churchill's contemporaneously published *A History of the English-speaking Peoples* (1956-58), reveals the shift in the balance of power effected by Britain's wartime reliance on US aid and military support, for which we are now paying the price. The Americans are over here, overpaid, and over-voluble, seducing our poets with the literary equivalent of nylons and chewing-gum: Graves, in Wain's perception, is a poetic GI Bride. And yet "English-speaking" makes another claim, one implied in Churchill's

appropriative title. This language was ours before it was theirs: if America speaks English now it is because we gave it to them. Churchill's formula was an attempt at recruitment: his quixotic post-war ambition had been the political reunion of United Kingdom and United States.

Graves as poet, however, Wain insists, continues to produce something that in its purity and its refinement is quintessentially English: "Where the prose is unbalanced, opinionated, aggressive, perverse, the poetry brings order and harmony, resolving conflict in the discipline of its strict and yet generous art". Wain used, he says,

> to find it a mystery that Graves's poetry criticism should be so ludicrous, when his poetry is so superb; but as I live longer I begin to understand that there are some artists who, loving their art too much to blemish it with their own private grudges, envies, hatreds and irritable obsessions, must find an outlet for them elsewhere.
>
> Mr. Graves's literary criticism is just steam-blowing.

This is a familiar antithesis. There is Graves's pot-boiling work, mundane, quirky and bogged down in personality. And then there is the impersonal, transcendent purity of art. But why does he engage in such polemic flights of rhetoric in the first place? Wain's answer is clear, though implicit: Robert Graves does it for money:

> Surely everyone admits that Wordsworth wrote many clumsy poems; was it really necessary for Mr. Graves, when an audience had turned out on a February night in Chicago to hear him speak on "Pulling a Poem Apart", to treat them to a demolition of the sonnet "Great men have been among us"?

Yet, in the fidelity of his commitment to his Muse, Graves stands proud and solitary on an island of the self —an island not unlike that which stood alone in 1940, without American assistance, against the dark tides of unreason. More than a decade after that war ended, but only two years after American intervention brought an end to Britain's nostalgic imperial kickback over Suez, Wain's embattled language speaks with the tones of some Dunkirk-spirit film from Elstree Studios:

> It is in his poetry that the quarrel with himself, the long war to impose order and significance on the shifting atoms of thought and feeling, has been fought, bravely and honourably, in the silence of his own mind [...]. For anyone who loves language, it is easy to become so engrossed in its variety of effects that the thing he is supposed to be celebrating can be smothered under technique. But the defence against this is not, as our latest breed of moon-baying yard-dogs would have it, to abandon technique; it is to follow the example of such as Graves, who can love the shape and texture of a poem just because it fits so snugly to what it is conveying.

And who precisely, in 1958-59, are these "moon-baying yard-dogs" who have abandoned technique? Could they, perhaps, be Americans? "Beat Poets" such as Allen Ginsberg, whose *Howl and Other Poems* was published in 1956; or Lawrence Ferlinghetti, whose *A Coney Island of the Mind* was published in the same year as Graves's book?

Among those already following Graves's example, whose technique fits so snugly —and possibly smugly— what it is conveying, Wain himself is a prime candidate, his 1956 volume *A Word Carved on a Sill* actually taking its title from one of Graves's poems. So too are the other contributors to Robert Conquest's *New Lines* anthology in 1956, which set itself up in antithesis to Anglo-American modernism and its successors, positing instead a return to a pre-modernist, native tradition, represented by Hardy, Edward Thomas *et al.,* of strict metrical forms and domestic scenarios, to which Graves, without consultation, had been recruited.

Wain's own anti-Americanism, combining Left and Right attitudes in a characteristic post-war blend, is revealed in his long poem, "A Song about Major Eatherly" in his 1961 volume *Weep Before God*, which blends the anti-nuclear rhetoric of CND, founded in 1958 and then at the height of its influence, with a more traditional anti-Americanism, contemptuous of the commercialised mass culture for which conservative thinkers had maligned the United States from de Tocqueville onwards. Major Eatherly is the American pilot who dropped the atom bomb on Nagasaki. His subsequent remorse, the poem suggests, did not affect his cash-flow:

> Good news. It seems he loved them after all.
> His orders were to fry their bones to ash.
> He carried up the bomb and let it fall.
> And then his orders were to take the cash.

"Taking the cash", while nurturing a sense of virtuous purity, is precisely what Graves's journalism is indicted for; whereas his poetry represents a disinterested, one might say characteristically English, resistance to such meretriciousness. Wain's review, then, sets up an English/ American antithesis for which Graves is the stalking horse. Wain's rhetoric proclaims retrenchment, Little Englandism, the anti-modernist stance of *New Lines*. If

English is on the wane, Wain is on the up. Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti are the heirs of Whitman's barbaric yawp, but Whitman is not "one of us". Odd, then, that in the introduction to one of his first post-war volumes, *Poems and Satires* (1951), Graves should cite Whitman as if with approval, as the justifier of a deep contradiction in the self which is the birthright of the poet, just that "quarrel with himself" of which (quoting the Irish Yeats) Wain speaks. Odd, too, that Wain should so ignore that seminal work of literary criticism, *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*, with its deep admiration for and understanding of Anglo-American modernism, from Eliot to Hart Crane and e. e. cummings, that a youthful Graves had written in 1927 in collaboration with Laura Riding, a young American poet whose influence effected the transplant to his etiolated Georgian idiom of a tougher, more acerbic transatlantic register.

Far from polluting Graves's poetry, in fact, it could be argued that the shock of American modernism gave it a kick-start. When Graves in the 1950s evinces an "English vocabulary and sentence-construction [...] becoming daily more Americanised" ("in a poem" even), this is something right at the supposedly English heart of a poet who, going into exile with an old cloak in 1929, kicked the English dust off his feet, declaring *Good-bye To All That*, to live in a Spanish island fastness.

We need to look a little more closely at this particular package. After all those other questions, "What was modernism?", "When was modernism?", "Is modernism gendered?", etc., I want to ask another one:

2. WHICH SIDE OF THE POND WAS MODERNISM?

In 1932 Ezra Pound wrote of the literary revolution he and Eliot initiated as "a movement to which no name has ever been given" (1932; rpt. 1937). He was not quite correct. Graves and Riding, in their 1927 study *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*, published in England, had first given currency to the epithet by which the movement was to be generally known, in the second half of this century.[2]

Curiously, though, the term "modernism" did not become general usage until the later 1960s, when it emerged holding incestuous hands with its sibling/ progeny "postmodernism" (blind Oedipus led by an attentive Antigone). It has been suggested that it was not until Harry Levin's essay "What was Modernism?" in 1960 that, in the words of Morton P. Levitt, "The term first appeared in a literary context", and not until the essay's republication in the book *Refractions: Essays in Comparative Literature* in 1966 that it achieved wide circulation (Levitt 1992).[3]

Superficial support for this might be provided by Stephen Spender's *The Struggle of the Modern*, published in 1963, but based on lectures given in the United States in 1959 and 1961. Spender's introduction attempts to distinguish between traditional writing about "modern subject matter" and the specific object of his study, in which "I am only discussing obvious examples of modernism or anti-modernism", while his chapter on "Moderns and Contemporaries" distinguishes "art which is modern [...] from several movements grouped approximately under the heading "modernism"" (1963: xi-xii, 71ff.).

Nevertheless, Levitt's 1960 is far too late, even though the first instance of "modernism" used in its current sense cited in the *Complete Oxford English Dictionary* is an editorial comment in *The Listener* on 23 November 1961 (848/1) which speaks of "The American Modernism introduced by Mr. T. S. Eliot, following Mr. Ezra Pound". That "American" is a moot point, given not only the expatriation of these two authors, but also the cis-Atlantic status of other key modernists, and the history of the word's usage.[4]

"Modernism" in our current restricted sense has in fact surfaced and disappeared with equal rapidity in every decade of this century. Graves and Riding did not invent the concept. Though there is an early use by John Middleton Murry in the short-lived little magazine *Rhythm* in the 1910s,[5] its genealogy, applied to the revolution of the word effected by Eliot, Pound and Joyce, can be traced to the slightly longer-lived little magazine *The Fugitive*, edited from Nashville by John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson and Allen Tate between 1922 and 1925. It was here that Graves and Riding found the word and took it home for adoption. That etiology is of some interest, in that it mimics the larger global reconfiguration of Anglo-American political and cultural relations in this century.

In a letter of 21 July 1922, Allen Tate wrote to his fellow editor Donald Davidson, of the new, "revolutionary" poetry: "perhaps we shall have to get a new term by which to designate this latest genre of literature". A couple of days later Davidson's reply spoke of "the Cubists, the Futurists, the Imagists, etc." and "even these Dadaists to some extent"; but none of these epithets seemed quite right. Shortly thereafter Tate wrote of "the master of the genre, T. S. Eliot", who "goes straight to the real thing; this is of course his "modernity"" (Fain and Young 1974: 20-26 *passim*).[6] But the *mot juste* was first stumbled over publicly in an editorial by John Crowe Ransom, "The Future of Poetry", in *The Fugitive* in February 1924. There Ransom reflected that "The arts generally have had to recognize Modernism —how should poetry escape?", before adding "And yet what is Modernism? It is undefined". Ransom alluded to imagism and free verse, before qualifying the assertion that "The future of poetry is immense" with the remark: "One is not so sure

in these days, since it has felt the fatal irritant of Modernism". In a subsequent issue, Allen Tate continued the discussion of "the Modern poet of this generation", speaking of his [sic] intellectualism and complexity, and invoking Carl Sandburg, Marianne Moore, e. e. cummings and Hart Crane —all names which will appear in *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* and thereafter in Graves's criticism.

"Modernism" in these discussions is still more a state of mind, "modernity", than a precise literary movement, but the formula is beginning to congeal. What I want to pick out, though, is what looks at first like a purely fortuitous conjunction. Immediately following Ransom's essay, an editorial announcement welcomes a new contributor to the journal:

> Laura Riding Gottschalk, who was one of the contestants qualifying last year for the Nashville Prize [...]. We count it as a special privilege to present, in this and our succeeding issue, a number of poems by a young writer of such distinguished promise.

Laura Riding has arrived, right on cue, at the very same moment that the new poetic movement gets its christening —a wicked or benign witch at the font according to how you rate her poetry and/ or personality. It is not a coincidence *she* would have missed. Henceforth, Riding casts herself as the avatar of modernism, carrying its gospel everywhere, and specifically across the Atlantic. And Robert Graves will soon be recruited as her apostle.

"Robert Graves, the English poet" had already been lauded in the pages of *The Fugitive* in 1922, for his critical study *On English Poetry*, with its Freudian account of poets as "men of repressions and inner conflicts", who "contain within themselves the conflicting emotions of different classes of society", its exploration of "the social function of poets" and its "absorbing" "study of the psychological origins of poetry". Graves himself is praised as "the first man to handle it who compounds in his own person a genuine poetic talent with modern psychological learning". In the final issue that year, an essay on "Modern Art" argued that "perhaps T. S. Eliot has already pointed the way for this and the next generation", but added, confidently: "However, the Moderns have adequately arrived", while an editorial announcement welcomed Graves as one of the "visitors come among us in this issue".

By 1924, the next generation was not only knocking at the door, but had talked its way into the drawing room, with the announcement that the Nashville Prize of $100 had been awarded to Laura Riding. She was, according to the judges, "the discovery of the year, and they deem it a privilege to be first in calling attention to the work of a young writer who is

coming forward as a new figure in American poetry".[7] By the first issue of 1925 Riding's advent needs an editorial annunciation:

> We expect general felicitations upon the recent acquisition of Mrs. Laura Riding Gottschalk of Louisville, as a regular participating member of the Fugitive group. It will be unnecessary in future to introduce her as a foreign contributor to these pages.

Meanwhile, Graves was making his own mark. The same issue which announced Riding's Nashville Prize also advertised Ransom's collection *Grace after Meat*, selected by Robert Graves. *Pace* Wain, Graves was already, in 1924, engaged in transatlantic hustling on behalf of his American "entourage", for he had in fact arranged the book's publication by Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press in London. Graves's own *Poetic Unreason* was reviewed in volume 4, no. 3, along with Hart Crane and cummings, and Graves reviewed Ransom's *Chills and a Fever* in the *Saturday Review of Literature* in late December 1924. There is, in the infancy of modernism, much taking in of each other's washing —including some rather dirty linen— on the analogy of the Scilly Islanders Graves used in his preface to *Poems 1938-1945* and reused in *The Crowning Privilege*.

The *Fugitive's* lauding of Graves's modernity, together with the clear evidence of his promotional talents, could only fire the imagination of a young poet eager to establish her own modern credentials, and to make influential contacts. Not entirely disinterestedly, Tate worked hard to kindle the flame. Having introduced each to the other's verse, he wrote to Davidson in March 1924 that "she will be thrilled over Graves' liking for her work; I pass on the news. I feel almost paternal" (Fain and Young 1974: 98).

With some reason, perhaps, since there is a rumour, of mysterious provenance, about an affair with Tate culminating in an abortion.[8] Whatever the case, Tate vigorously encouraged the literary trysting with Graves, and in particular Riding's growing resolution to take on literary England. Of her stay in the Tate *ménage*, he wrote, a little disingenuously:

> It is great to have Laura here. I've been informed, to my exceeding pleasure, of her coming success in England. I saw Graves' letter; it was the highest praise. I'm betting on the young lady, and when she gets over thinking every poem she writes is great because it's hers, I'll bet everything on her. Laura is great company, and we've had a fine time since she arrived [...]. She would put life into —well, into anything [...]. Carolyn [his wife] finds her very charming, if strenuous! (Fain and Young 1974: 145)

In July 1925, Graves's essay "Contemporary Techniques of Poetry" had enthused about Riding's verse. A match was being prepared in modernist heaven. By mid October 1925, Tate was writing that Laura was "destined to great fame before two years are out. She'll be the most famous of us all" (Fain and Young 1974: 146). This less than disinterested praise is also tinged with relief. Laura is off his hands, crossing the Atlantic to mess up some other couple —taking the love-child of modernism with her as a dowry.

3. A NEW STYLE OF HAIRPIN: OXFORD, CRADLE OF MODERNISM

The year after the publication of Graves's and Riding's *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*, Roy Campbell, writing on "Contemporary Poetry" in Edgell Rickword's collection *Scrutinies*, deployed their second-hand word as a term of abuse held at arms' length by scare quotes, indicting "The most formidable innovations with which the more conscious "modernists" have threatened poetry so far" (1928: 177-179).

Campbell, however, applies the term not to Eliot (whom he had just praised as the author of "the one outstanding poem of our time") but to "his most unconditional imitators of to-day". These imitators he refers to as "the younger university poets" —in 1928 a clear reference to the coteries around W. H. Auden in an Oxford abuzz with modern attitude. Auden's *Poems*, haunted by the cadences of Eliot, Graves and, most especially, Laura Riding, had been printed privately by Stephen Spender in the very year Campbell was writing, and Auden had co-edited the undergraduate magazine *Oxford Poetry* in 1926 and 1927. For these allegedly "modernist" poets Campbell has only contempt, observing that their "technical innovations, which are invested with such importance by contemporary critics, are about as likely to influence poetry as the invention of a new style of hairpin would be to revolutionise engineering".[9]

The linking of the Graves/ Riding epithet with Oxford is not coincidental. Graves, a recent Oxford graduate, had spent his first post-war years living on Boars Hill, outside the city, and was now encamped, with Riding, close by. In his autobiography *Ruling Passions*, Tom Driberg, Auden's intimate friend in those years, confides that: "one of my few talents has always been that of the madame; I like introducing or recommending suitable people to each other" (Driberg 1991: 62-65). One of the more salubrious introductions he effected was that between Oxford and modernism. Not only did he in 1926 introduce W. H. Auden to *The Waste Land*, but he also introduced Laura Riding to Oxford and, I suspect, an impressionable

Auden to her poetry. Certainly, Auden's earliest poems everywhere inscribe Riding's presence and, on several occasions, verbal and cadential echoes close enough to plagiarism to warrant a forceful rebuke from Graves, to which Graves was still alluding in the 1960s.

Driberg is, in a sense, modernism's "madame":

> When I first met him, Auden was unknown as a poet outside Oxford. With Cecil Day Lewis he edited the slim annual volume *Oxford Poetry*, in which a few of my poems were published. [Indeed, it's likely that Driberg is the Oxford poet who gave the macho Campbell gravest offence.] But I also made the acquaintance of several established writers. One of the most impressive of these was Robert Graves, who at that time shared a house at Islip, near Oxford, with the American poet Laura Riding. They received me hospitably, and it would seem that the hospitality was returned [...]. This [...] should have been an agreeable friendship. I liked what I had seen of both Graves and Laura Riding. He was already famous for his poetry but had not yet written his first world war memoir [...]. Graves was tall and burly, with a heavy, gipsy-like face that looked, in repose, sulky, and a sensual mouth: Riding was slight, pale, and fey, as spare and taut as her verse. As I say, my relations with them should have gone smoothly [...]. Alas, something went wrong —a misunderstanding mainly attributable to my own social ignorance and gaucherie, but also, I think, to unusually thin-skinned touchiness on the part of Graves and/ or Riding.

Driberg's *faux pas* was to enquire of a third party, the poet Norman Cameron, whether he should address Riding as "Mrs. Graves", which produced an intemperate letter from Graves:

> Look here, Tom Driberg,
> [...] I wish to God you'd cut it out. It is some months now since I heard from Norman Cameron about your attitude to Laura Riding but it made me feel pretty sick and the effects are still here. You asked him that entirely unpardonable question as to whether you should address her as Mrs. Graves, because etc. —I was so sick that I nearly asserted my Elemental, Virile, Sulky personality and came to beat you up.[10]

Graves sarcastically reproduces here the terms Driberg had used of him in a review of his book *Mrs. Fisher*. The letter continues:

> It is the same sort of attitude which ascribes the word-by-word collaboration of *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* to Mr. Robert Graves alone: and does not hesitate to see Mr. Graves' master-hand behind her individual writings, (the boot being as it happens on the other foot altogether — I contributed nothing to hers and L. R. did a good deal of the difficult work in *Mrs. Fisher*) and regard this flat as mine, not hers.

There are the hints here of a territorial dispute between trans- and cis-Atlantic foster parents to the ownership, not just of a Hammersmith flat, but of the adoptive lovechild of modernism itself. Riding certainly had strong claims on the brat. And, in inserting it into the English, Oxford context, Driberg has some claims to being its fairy godfather. According to Geoffrey Grigson, in June 1927 Driberg invited Edith Sitwell to speak in Oxford. Holding up a copy of Eliot's journal *The Criterion* (possibly the very one in which he had shown Auden the text of *The Waste Land*), he spoke "gracefully, at a small table, of the delights of intellectualism and modernism" (the same verbal link made by Tate in *The Fugitive*). Driberg introduced Sitwell with fulsome praise for "the synaesthetic poems of our distinguished guest", and "she returned the compliment handsomely". (Grigson 1950: 114-115; Wheen 1992: 55-56). Sitwell's performance, according to Grigson, was part of a series at the new English club involving several "eminent and curious ladies", including "Miss Laura Riding", who spoke on Poe at University (Spender's college), Sitwell herself, who spoke at Somerville on (of course) the Sitwells, "Mrs. V. Woolf", who spoke on *A Room of One's Own*, presumably in a room of her own, and "Miss Gertrude Stein", who spoke on "God knows what at Christ Church" (Auden's college). Significantly, Sitwell, Woolf and Stein were all at this time friends of the Graves/ Riding *ménage*. Grigson suggests a relation between this whole sequence of events and Driberg's involvement with the Auden circle:

> There were poets in the university who were to dominate letters before very long, W. H. Auden, for example, and Louis MacNeice [...]. But it was Thomas Driberg who now appeared to dominate the obvious and outer and smarter intellectuations of the university, who wrote poems in the blend of Eliotese and Edith-Sitwellese which appeared week by week in *Cherwell*.

(That's the student newspaper, not the river).

A little later, Grigson records of Stephen Spender, a later populariser of the term, that by the time he left Oxford he was "almost exclusively interested in [...] the "experimental" modernism of Eliot and Joyce and Ezra Pound and Virginia Woolf and Laura Riding", adding ""Modernism", then, was working like a mole in spring under the smooth beds of the garden", though "what was alive in this modernism was kicking hard with life" (1950: 121-122).

Kicking with life the "idea" may have been, but, after its brief Oxford fling, the "word" seems to have been dropped into the Cherwell (that's the river, not the student newspaper), and to have sunk without trace. For the next decade, the term is applied hardly at all to those poetic revolutionaries identified in *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*.

There are one or two exceptions. R. D. Charques's extremely interesting study *Contemporary Literature and Social Revolution* (1933) uses the word to link Eliot and the new generation of socialist poets. And Percy Wyndham Lewis uses both "modernist" and "modernism" in *Men Without Art* (1934), a concerted assault on the "critical standpoint we associate today with the name of Mr. T. S. Eliot and his school". Significantly, though, his key chapter on "T. S. Eliot (Pseudoist)" moves beyond the men of 1914 to praise the modernity of Auden's *The Orators*, for finally having "really given the coup de grâce to Mr. Eliot's spell" over the younger generation: "at last the spell has been broken. And Mr. Auden has done it". The concept is clearly in flux in Wyndham Lewis's text, where scare quotes reflect its recent borrowing from other artistic discourses. He defines Hemingway's reportorial style, for example, as "an art [...] like the cinema, or like those "modernist" still-life pictures in which, in place of painting a match box upon the canvas, a piece of actual match box is stuck on [...] a poster-art [...] a cinema in words" (Lewis 1934: 200, 266, 251, 236-237).[11]

The word probably ran a long underground course in more informal contexts, but usually with a fine-arts rather than literary significance. Thus Dylan Thomas in a letter of November 1933 says of a thick black squiggle at the end of his letter: "This is not a modernist design but an afterthought on a particular glowing sentence". However, in a joky poem included in a letter about the same time, he refers to Eliot and Pound and, *inter alios*, Joyce, Cummings and "young Auden's chatter", all of which are above the "middle brow" on "modernist Parnassian heights" (Fitzgibbon 1966: 55, 69-70).[12]

Nevertheless, it is only at the end of the 1930s that Graves is dug up and Riding rides again in a more public critical use of the term "modernism". In 1935 Louis MacNeice had contributed an essay on "Poetry To-day" to Geoffrey Grigson's collection *The Arts To-day* in which the word is conspicuous by its absence. MacNeice refers instead to such well-established "isms" as imagism, futurism, surrealism and post-impressionism, and merely observes that "in 1922 appeared the classic English test-pieces of modern prose and verse —*Ulysses* by James Joyce and *The Waste Land* by T. S.

Eliot". He speaks of Graves and Riding as "very conscious moderns and purists" without using their own 1927 term for such self-conscious modernity. If Eliot provides "a bridge between the dominant poetry of the early nineteen-twenties and the dominant poetry of the early nineteen-thirties", it is primarily in his admiration for Dryden. "Eliot's influence has been towards classicism" and under it "Auden, who to start with was very difficult [the Riding influence], is grinding his verse into simplicity" (Grigson 1935: 32-62 *passim*).

MacNeice's study *Modern Poetry* in 1938, however, uses the Graves/ Riding term to make a key distinction. Much of the book, like its title, still speaks of "modern poetry". But it reserves the Graves/ Riding epithet for discussions which focus on the disjunctive lineage running from Eliot, through the 1920s, to MacNeice's own generation and the one that follows it. It is as a historical and changing dynamic that "modernism" *per se* is here constituted: "Modernist poetry, as introduced to England by Eliot, inherited its use of imagery both from recent French poets and, among English poets, from the late Elizabethans and the Metaphysicals". "The younger poets whom I admire, Auden and Spender", he says, now "write differently" from Eliot and Pound but also from their own successors Empson and Dylan Thomas. At Oxford, MacNeice had noted earlier, "I also read Wyndham Lewis's attacks on the leading modernist writers, subsequently published in *Time and Western Man*". It is not Eliot and Co, that is, but the generation *affected by* "the methods of The Waste Land", and, in particular its most distinctive poet, Auden, who spring to MacNeice's mind when he discusses modernism (1938: 103, 105, 169).

Like Wyndham Lewis, MacNeice in 1938 still gave the word a painterly inflection, recalling schooldays when, "misled by a theory about progress, I assumed that the modernist painters were in every sense an advance on their predecessors" (1938: 51). By the time, however, that he came to write *The Poetry of W. B. Yeats*, completed in September 1940, published in 1941, the formula "modernist art" had become a general designation for all avant-garde art forms. MacNeice nevertheless still reserves it, not for Eliot and Co, but for his own coevals. Discussing the impact on him of the German invasion of Poland (the subject, of course of one of Auden's first American poems), which had rendered most artistic concerns "unreal", "belong[ing] in a sense to a past order of things", he comments:

> The unreality which now overtook them was also overtaking in my mind modern London, modernist art, and left-wing politics. If the war made nonsense of Yeats's poetry and of all works that are called "escapist", it also made nonsense of the poetry that professes to be "realist". My friends had been writing for years about guns and frontiers and factories, about the "facts" of psychology, politics, science, economics, but the fact of war made their writing seem as remote as the pleasure dome in Xanadu. For war spares neither the poetry of Xanadu nor the poetry of pylons. (1941: 2)

Remarking, later, how Yeats's later work "made such an impression on the younger English poets of the time, who had been brought up on *The Waste Land*", MacNeice admits to "a certain snobbery in our new admiration, a snobbery paralleled in Yeats's own remark: "I too have tried to be modern"". "The word "modern"", he continues, "is always relative. What did Yeats's modernity —a quality which in his youth he had violently repudiated— consist in?" (1941: 178-179). However, having already discerned aspects of the later, modernising Yeats "paralleled in W. H. Auden" (1941: 163), he has no difficulty in repeating the claim here. Indeed, his penultimate chapter, "Some Comparisons", even attempts what he admits at once to be a "fallacious" distinction between a school of Eliot and a school of Yeats, among whom he numbers specifically Auden and Spender: "In England about 1930 a school of poets appeared who mark more or less of a reaction against the influence of Eliot. Curiously, in spite of their violently "modern" content, they were not so much in reaction against Yeats" (MacNeice 1941: 223-234).

Another, complicating dispute over the birthright of "modernism" is going on here, between Anglo-Irish and Anglo-American, with the English Auden, it would seem, the young pretender. Just, however, as MacNeice was formulating this last best claim for cisatlantic paternity, Auden himself resolved the conflict by departing for the United States, taking modernism's family silver with him. The "Oxford Poets", the contributors and editors of *Oxford Poetry* in 1926 and 1927, may have picked up the mantle trailed for them by Graves and Riding. But they now write themselves backwards, in elegiac mode, as the heirs of a movement which gets christened only, it would appear, on its gravestone.

It is, then, the very last years of the 1930s which witness the emergence of a concept of a "modernist" as opposed to a merely "modern" poetry, a concept associated primarily with the Auden generation, but always, it would seem, in terms of the retrospective configuration that generation makes with the founding fathers Eliot, Yeats and Pound. Geoffrey Grigson's 1939 Preface to his *New Verse* anthology is tantalisingly ambivalent in its use of the concept. Claiming that, in editing the journal *New Verse* "my virtue, or at least my intention, has been to reject mannerism, esotericism, eclecticism, and fraud", Grigson adds a footnote which leaves unresolved whether the

contrast is between Auden's generation and a generally bogus modernism, or between an authentic British variant and a bogus American one:

> I don't say there is no mannerism, eclecticism, etc. in any of these poems. Something genuine embedded in a stew of literature (e.g. Prokosch) is better than the pure bogus modernism, e.g. of so much American poetry. (1939: 23)

A year later, the newly revised edition of a literary history which had wielded considerable influence throughout the preceding decade uses the word unequivocally to define a specific literary lineage with a restricted membership, which a talent such as Auden's is able to turn to full and fruitful account. A. C. Ward's *Twentieth-Century Literature* first appeared in 1928 and went through six editions before being revised and enlarged in September 1940. It saw another three editions by 1946. The moment of revision, coincident with MacNeice's study, marks a watershed in the evolution and understanding of modernism. The last two sections of Ward's chapter on recent poetry, "Innovators and Others" and "The New Metaphysicals", address contemporary writers, but while they speak of Eliot's "use in poetry of modern imagery and modern idiom" and of "re-establishing the "conceits" of the metaphysicals in modern dress", it is to "the young poets of the new generation", whose "cant phrase" is "Poetry for the Workers", that the accolade of true modernity falls, and it is of them that the word "modernism" is used. Once again, however, it is deployed only in the context of discussing the configuration this new generation makes with that of its immediate predecessors. If, "as more than one critic has noticed, their voices lack individuality", Ward observes, "differences of quality can nevertheless be detected and, more especially, differences in the degree of ease with which they accommodate themselves to the modernist manner". A footnote added to the revised 1940 edition refers to Grigson's Introduction to the *New Verse* anthology, and Ward's conclusion draws conspicuously on Grigson's usage:

> Of the leading poets in this group, W. H. Auden alone appears to have found a natural personal language in the modern idiom and to be capable of accepting its restrictive conventions without sacrifice of poetic stature. While MacNeice is a good poet when he escapes from the limitations of modernism, Auden is as often a good poet while within its confines. (Ward 1940: 198-201)

"Modernism", it seems, consummates a paradigmatic marriage of true minds: American eclecticism (for which, read omnivorous tasteless cultural imperialism) and Oxford cleverness; and it is chaperoned to its bridal bed by that matchless mid-Atlantic couple, joining Oxford and New York through the mediation of the Nashville publicity machine, Graves and Riding.

4. CHANGING PLACES, OR: MODERNISM'S COMING HOME

There is one last mid-Atlantic irony in all this. In 1939 Auden departed to live in the United States. In 1946, he assumed American citizenship. This was generally seen in Britain as the spiritual kiss of death of his poetry, and critics such as John Wain and Philip Larkin were keen to distinguish the early English Auden from the etiolated, flaccid conservative who had sold out his birthright, and his idiom, to America (the same anxiety revealed in Wain's review of *Steps*). Ironically, though, it is an American admirer and acolyte of both Auden and Graves who pronounced the funeral rites both of Auden and of the modernist impulse. He is also, on my incomplete assay, the first transatlantic critic to reintroduce Allen Tate's word "modernist" to describe this tradition, and he introduces it precisely to announce an obituary.

Randall Jarrell, reviewing Auden's first volume written in the United States, *The Double Man*, in *The Nation* in 1941, confers the newfound title on Auden at the very moment that he ceases to warrant it, a lost leader who has forfeited his right to the authority of modernism. As Jarrell sees it, the transit from "modern" to "modernist" has taken a decade, and in using the term he writes both the birth certificate and the obituary notice of a movement to which, previously, no name had stuck. In 1931, he says, when Auden first burst onto the scene, "the decline and fall of modernist poetry [...] were nearer than anyone could have believed":

> The poetry which came to seem during the twenties the norm of all poetic performance —experimental, lyric, obscure, violent, irregular, determinedly antagonistic to didacticism, general statement, science, the public— has lost for the young its once obsessive attraction; has evolved, in Auden's latest poem, into something that is almost its opposite [...]. How fast the world changes! And poetry with it! (Jarrell 1941: 440-441)

Modernism is dead, long live postmodernism.

There are one or two last twists to the story. When Stephen Spender wrote in *The Struggle of the Modern* that "the confrontation of the past with 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" (1963: 80), he also identified, unconsciously, the key element in the transition of "modern" into "modernist". Modernism emerged as, centrally, a genealogical concept, and it emerged out of a tug-of-war, on the site of the modern, between the past and the present, conducted by a generation that sought, in Oedipal terms, both to perpetuate and to dispossess its adoptive founding fathers. But, as Spender makes clear in *Love-Hate Relations: A Study of Anglo-American Sensibilities*, published in 1974 but drawing on his Clark Lectures in 1966, a decade after Graves's own, it was also a negotiation between English and American cultures in which the rising son, in true Gravesian fashion, slays the waning father, to bed the man-eating goddess of poetry.

In the 1930s, T. S. Eliot in his plays and such works as *The Rock*, can be seen pastiching the work of his young admirer Auden. But what of Graves, that indefatigable opponent of all that Auden stood for? Auden's literary debt to Graves and Riding is a matter of public record, on both sides of the transaction, from Auden's own admissions of influence to Graves's story of his ultimatum to Auden, chivalrously standing up for Laura Riding as the injured party in a poetic theft. Auden always admired Graves. Less remarked on is Graves's grudging acknowledgement of Auden both at the latter's birthday party in New York in 1958, and when he came to succeed him, with Auden's keen backing, as Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1961. I think, however, there are many instances of Graves surreptitiously engaging in tit-for-tat larceny —not so much taking in the other poet's laundry as stealing it from the tumble-drier in the mid-Atlantic laundromat, or snatching it off the poetic line. I can only, here, produce a few examples, but they are telling ones, addressing as they do that very ratio of exile, expatriation and desire to belong that links both poets in the lineage of modernism.

Poems such as "Nocturne I", in *The Shield of Achilles* in 1955, reveal an Auden whimsically taking up and replying to, with parodic guile, Graves's cult of the White Goddess, summed up in *Steps* in Graves's Housmanish faith in the "poem which is moon-magical enough to walk off the page [...] and to keep on walking, and to get under people's skins and into their eyes and throats and heart and marrows". What strikes one most about "Nocturne I", though, is not the dialogue between Muse worshipper and sceptical modernist, who translates a Gravesian "Mother, Virgin, Muse" into "that bunch of barren craters", but Auden's description of the moon as "one who knows where she belongs". Auden refuses Graves's self-aggrandising conceit of being the Muse's darling. He is only —in a jovial Kafkaesque metamorphosis— "a small functionary" of poetry. But the tone and vocabulary with which the poem closes is close enough to Graves's hard-boiled cynicism in a poem such as "The Blue-Fly" to make one think twice. The moon, unlike Auden and Graves, is one who knows where she belongs.

Graves and Auden, different kinds of expatriate, share that characteristically modernist deracination Graves summarised so admirably in "The Cloak". This poem's aristocratic fugitive goes "Into exile with only a few shirts", only to be returned again and again to Sandwich, Deal or Rye by contrary winds, in the end getting no further than Dieppe —rather like Graves himself, who had to follow up his valedictory autobiography in 1929, *Good-bye To All That*, with the rueful admission of his 1930 play: *But It Still Goes On*. "This nobleman is at home anywhere,/ His castle being, the valet says, his title", the poem observes. But the obverse of this is that he is at home nowhere in particular, a condition which Auden explored in England in the 1930s and then, from the 1940s onwards, throughout his American residence. Indeed, ironically, almost as soon as he had become a US citizen, he came back to Europe, to live *à la* Graves and Riding on a Mediterranean island —amidst a large number of Americans— and then in Austria for the last quarter-century of his life.[13]

To examine Auden's poem "A Permanent Way", knowing his talents for plagiarism and pastiche, is to presume that it is obviously a rewriting of Graves's "Here live your life out!" The theme is roughly similar: both poems concern what looks like an ideal place to settle down, observed in passing from a non-stopping train. So too are the strategies adopted by each speaker in dealing with the imaginary tension between settling down and moving on, resolved by the good excuse for comfortably mixed emotions that a non-stopping train affords. In fact, Graves's poem cannot have influenced Auden, since Auden's was written in 1954 and collected in *The Shield of Achilles* in 1955, and Graves's appeared in *More Poems 1961*, with the information, in a prefatory note, that the volume was the supplement to *Collected Poems 1959*, and contained only four poems, none of them "Here live your life out!", which were revisions of earlier work. Clearly, there was a lot more surreptitious reading by Graves of his arch-enemy's poetry than he ever let on, particularly, perhaps, at the moment he was to succeed him as Professor of Poetry in that cradle of modernism where they had first crossed swords, and pens, over the honour of Laura Riding so many years before.

What links the two poets, in this convergence of themes? Their poems' separate endings suggest what this is, each of them in different ways confirming the client relationship both these quintessentially English poets

have, as Wain suggests in his 1959 review, to American modernism. What does Auden say but take the money and not so much run as lie back and think of England, with "at least a ten-dollar cheque" in your pocket (about what a poet might have been paid for a poem in a journal in those days, I suspect):

> And what could be greater fun,
> Once one has chosen and paid,
> Than the inexpensive delight
> Of a choice one might have made...

Possibly a dig at Graves's American friend Robert Frost as well, here.

Graves is ostensibly more intransigent. But he too eschews the heroism of the "simple-hearted", lacking the resolution, or perhaps the sincerity, to pull the train's emergency chain. It is, supposedly, the scene which withdraws from the would-be faithful traveller, and not vice versa. He could, however, return in a private car, and "sue for possession". Like Auden, though, he knows this would be pure romantic "folly". And why? Because the birthright has already been sold. The culture is in the hands of the colonials, those usurpers whose money and influence have bought up all our native estates, and who now own the language:

> Too far, too late:
> Already bolder tenants were at the gate.

And, one might add, in the yard, baying at the moon that was soon to wear a rakish American flag. The package deal, that is, has given way to the package tour. But the real (which is to say the imaginary) home of modernism is on that train, always in transit. For it is only in perpetual motion that modernism finds its truly "permanent way".

NOTES

[1] Commercial television had been introduced in the UK in 1955, to much brouhaha from intellectuals on the Left and traditionalists on the Right that it would lead straight to the brash Americanisation of British culture.

[2] I have discussed this particular genealogy more fully in Smith (1994: 1-14).

[3] On this, see Coyle 1996. Levin may have picked up the term from Wyndham Lewis. In *Rude Assignment* (1950), Lewis inveighs against Levin's *James Joyce* (1944), for misrepresenting —and possibly plagiarising— him on Joyce in *Time and Western Man* (1927). Lewis does not, however, use the word "modernism" in that book, though he does use it in *Men Without Art* (1934). See also n. 11 below.

[4] A year earlier, Philip Larkin, in his 1960 article "The Blending of Betjeman" in the *Spectator*, had observed that "it was Eliot who gave the modernist poetic movement its charter in the sentence, "Poets in our civilization [...] must be difficult"" (rpt. Larkin 1983: 129). Early instances of the word tend to use it as a blanket term for all the arts, but predominantly the plastic ones, only belatedly including poetry. Rene Wellek, for example in *Twentieth Century English* in 1946, speaks of an analogy between "the fine arts themselves and the art of literature", both of which, he says, "reacted against realism and naturalism in the direction of symbolism and other "modernism"" (W. S. Knickerbocker (ed.) 1946: 69, in *A Supplement to the OED*, vol. III: 581). The use of scare quotes, as with Spender, indicates that this is still an uncommon usage, alluding to a vaguely generalised concept rather than a particular movement, and frequently implies disapproval. Compare, for example, Christmas Humphreys, "Poetry, Ancient Versus Modern —Or is it?" in *The Poetry Review* in 1943: "I may be sentimentally senile, but are not most of the "moderns" painfully intellectual? [...] Are there none living who could revive that beauty [of Christina Rossetti's "Remember me"], or is love, in the modernist mind, a matter of sex and convenience?" (Humphreys 1943: 22).

[5] Murry, "Art and Philosophy", in *Rhythm*, I, I (Summer 1911: 12):

> The artist attains to the pure form, refining and intensifying his vision till all that is unessential dissolves away memories and that false knowledge which would bind him down to a mere existence, untrue because it is unlived. He must return to the moment of pure perception to see the essential forms, the essential harmonies of line and colour, the essential music of the world. Modernism is not the capricious outburst of intellectual dipsomania. It penetrates beneath the outward surface of the world, and disengages the rhythms that lie at the heart of things, rhythms strange to the eye, unaccustomed to the ear, primitive harmonies of the world that is and lives". (rpt. in Pondrom 1974)

Murry's phrasing here echoes *fin de siècle* Symbolism, as presented by Yeats, for example, as well as the Bergsonian/ Sorelian vitalism fashionable in the 1900s. (Murry was a friend of D. H. Lawrence). This occurrence of "Modernism" seems like a one-off usage referring largely to the plastic arts and music, when Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* and the post-impressionist Exhibition were making their first impact on London.

[6] On this early history of the word "modernism", see the important study by Langdon Hammer (1993), to which I am generally indebted.

[7] The somewhat jejune commendation indicates some of the characteristics associated with her modernity:

> With a diverse play of imagination she combines in her poetry a sound intellectuality and a keen irony which give her work a substance not often found in current American poetry. Her poetry is philosophical in trend, yet not divorced from life, but generally tense with emotion and concerned with profound issues. Furthermore, she has developed her own idiom of expression —an idiom which manifests itself in a variety of forms, conventional or unconventional, and which gives her poetry the stamp of an original personality.

[8] This is discounted by her biographer, Deborah Baker (1993: 75-77).

[9] W. H. Auden's *Poems* (1928) was privately printed in a numbered and limited edition by Stephen Spender. For Auden's contribution to *Oxford Poetry* (published annually by Basil Blackwell, Oxford) and other Oxford journals, see Carpenter 1981: 59-60.

[10] Driberg's protestations of innocence about what he calls "this confusing, and surely confused letter", affirming his "general, uncomplicated liking" for Riding, are somewhat disingenuous, given his notorious misogyny and his (tongue-in-cheek?) surprise, here, at Graves's "disrespectful reference to heterosexuality", which he retrospectively and ever-hopefully attributes, along with "the violence of Graves's reaction to my olive branch", to the repression of "an unconscious homosexual impulse" on Graves's part.

[11] For Wyndham Lewis, the word, as one might expect of one adept as artist as well as writer, usually has a plastic arts origin. For example, *Rude Assignment: An Intellectual Autobiography*, a retrospective written in 1947, speaks of contemporary ""modernist" circles in the art world", and observes:

> Now how much "modernist" art —in this term we can include the French Impressionist school— has battened upon what is silly and ugly, upon the commonplaces and vulgarities of modern everyday existence, is forgotten or not realised. And Picasso, who started as an impressionist [...] made a fetish almost of a box of matches, a bottle of beer, an ugly vase or kitchen chair". (1984: 170)

But he also uses the word in the more general sense, to refer to a state of mind, modernity, as in *Hitler* (1931: 37-41), speaking of "the great "aryan" inventors and technicians, who have been responsible for all the destructive "modernism" of the present Western World".

[12] Thomas is likely to have got the term from Victor Neuberg, the eccentric literary journalist who had adopted him as a *protégé*, and published his first poems. Neuberg wrote in September 1933, of Thomas's poem "That sanity be kept", that it was "perhaps the best modernist poem that as yet I've received" for his newspaper, *The Sunday Referee*. (See Ferris, 1978: 88.) The curious shadow existence the term leads in this decade is evidenced by another instance which also indicates its slow resurfacing as the decade progresses. Maurice Wollman's *Modern Poetry 1922-1934: An Anthology* (1935), has a substantial set of notes which makes plain its pedagogic function as a school anthology. It contains poems by most of the leading modernists from Eliot onwards, and discusses their work, not altogether approvingly, in an Introduction which reserves the epithet, peculiarly, for "Mr. Richard Church, half modernist and half "Georgian", with frequent affinities with John Donne" and for "Mr. Austin Clarke, Irish modernist technician" (1935: x). Interestingly, for once, the scare quotes are here reserved not for "modernist" but for "Georgian", as if this were the more problematic term. Research may well show that "modernist", like the recently coined "highbrow", was used more frequently during this period, with varying shades of disapprobation, by commentators on the margins rather than at the centre of the literary profession, like the provincial ex-schoolboy Dylan Thomas, son of a Swansea English teacher, and Wollman, described on his title page as "senior English Master at Barking Abbey School".

[13] In the 1930s, Auden wrote begrudgingly in *The Orators* of Robert and Laura "spooning in Spain". Again, getting their geography wrong, in *Letters from Iceland* (1937) he and MacNeice bequeathed in their mock "Last Will and Testament", "the Isle of Wight/ To Robert Graves and Laura Riding, because/ An Italian island is no good place to write". Who knows what part this faulty geography played in Auden's own post-war choice of an Italian island for his exile's return ? A Spanish island, however, was out of the question because of Auden's active and propaganda support for the Republic during the Civil War.

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MODERNISM IN TRANSITION: THE EXPATRIATE AMERICAN MAGAZINE IN EUROPE BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS

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The importance of the little magazine in the history of modern American art has long been acknowledged. In their landmark 1946 study of the subject, Frederick Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn Ulrich maintained that little magazines "introduced and sponsored every noteworthy literary movement or school" that appeared in the United States from the years immediately prior to the first world war (Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich 1946: 1-2). They argued convincingly that a developing modern American literature was both fostered by and helped revitalize a tradition of literary periodical publication in the United States that extended well back into the nineteenth century. Their claim also emphasized the importance for American art of the watershed years between 1900 and 1914. In this time, Americans abroad like T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Gertrude Stein confronted the developments of a modern European art; subsequent events in the United States like the Armory Show of 1913 foreshadowed the arrival of Francis Picaba and Marcel Duchamp in New York before the end of the decade. These happenings facilitated the cultural encounters frequently desired by the editors of little magazines, encounters that altered the course of American art forever.

The changes that ushered in a modern art in Europe had been discernable for more than fifty years, as European cities like Berlin, London, Paris, Prague, Vienna, and Zürich became important cultural centers for successive generations of artists interested in producing work that responded effectively to the modern world. European periodicals played a role in promoting movements and spreading ideas across the continent, but little of this

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