imagist school, which Pound confessed was established to give H.D.'s poems a hearing, was one of the first sources of controversy between the conservatives and the experimentalists. Imagist poetry strives for precision of statement and a comparative isolation of an image from its affective, sentimental, or sociological context; in Pound's words, the work of the imagists demonstrates their "opposition to the numerous and unassembled writers who busy themselves with dull and interminable effusions, and who seem to think that a man can write a good long poem before he learns to write a good short one or even before he learns to produce a good single line."

The verbal economy of the imagists, their striving for poetic purity, is essentially a negative contribution to experiment; it served to revalue the poetic task, and to reinforce the poets of the necessities and peculiarities of their craft. The credo of the imagists required a direct treatment of the object or subject of the poem, avoidance of abstractions, romantic or didactic, and a strict and careful attention to metaphoric refinements. What is missing from imagist poems (if it is possible to isolate poems as "imagistic") is the provocative challenge of complex metaphor which so often characterizes later poetry and the intellectual content of that poetry. Imagist poetry is a form of poetic understatement which has the virtue of being limited to the minima of objective reality or subjective appearance. So far as there is any more than superficial or imposed relationship among the arts, the imagistic "color" resembles a fragmentary musical theme. Imagism is admirably suited to the poetic habits of H.D., and may also be said to have tutored the verse of Aldington, but it could not do more than temporarily check the Whitmanism of much American poetry of our second decade. Carl Sandburg's poems occasionally show the effect of the interest in imagism, though he preferred the cadences of Lincoln's speech as he imagined it or the roughly cut catalogic imagery which Whitman's line forced upon his poetic consciousness.  

Companion to Poetry for a brief time, and in a sense a rival, was Others (1915-19), the magazine of Alfred Kreymborg who had earlier helped to edit the interesting little chapbook magazine, Clebe. Kreymborg's Others was designed to point out that "there were others" writing verse and not being published regularly by Harriet Monroe. The verse of Others seems often deliberately clever and shocking, the metaphors strained and the lines arranged like cards in a verbal solitaire.

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2 Letter to Harriet Monroe, ibid., p. 259.
3 Ezra Pound, Letter to Poetry, i, 126 (January 1913).
4 See Chapter iii, pp. 34-44, for a more complete history of Poetry.
Mina Loy’s “Love Songs,” which appeared in the first issue, were among those which aroused mockery and resentment among the reading public:

Spawn of fantasies
Sitting the appraisable
Fig Cupid his rosy snout
Rooting erotic garbage

Others is to be remembered for its publication of excellent verse by Wallace Stevens (“Peter Quince at the Clavier”), T. S. Eliot (“Portrait of a Lady”), Marianne Moore (“To a Statecraft Embalmed”), and William Carlos Williams. Its editorial incentive, the inclusion of “others” in the American literary scene, was soon dissipated by the accommodation which these “others” received in Poetry and similar magazines. There was little enough quarrel with Harriet Monroe, except on the grounds that her editorial scrutiny had been at times a bit austere and that she sometimes interfered with the poet’s given right to “absolute freedom” of expression.

Miss Monroe’s Chicago contemporary, The Little Review, reflects the utter freedom and irresponsibility which marks much of the history of our literary teens. Ruthven Todd calls the issue of December 1914 “a scrappy repository for anything that happened to appeal to Margaret Anderson, showing neither editorial standards nor a balanced point of view.” Todd’s close examination of one issue is unfair to the one quality in Margaret Anderson’s personality which made The Little Review an important magazine—her volatility, which gave her venture the appearance of a rapidly shifting panorama of the literature of its time, or a literary montage with Miss Anderson performing with the scissors. Margaret Anderson was always in control of the magazine; indeed, it would have died at any time she had wished it to. “Life is a glorious performance,” she says in her first appearance, and adds, “And close to Life—so close, from our point of view, that it keeps treading on Life’s heels—is this eager, panting Art, who shows us the wonder of the way as we rush along.” The impression given is of breathless racing with life, so that we may imitate it, but may not dare to correct it. Margaret Anderson opposed the intellectualism of her time with an editorial philosophy of “feeling,” which reaches its finest development, of course, in the artist. She was interested primarily in the “inner life.”

and claimed that man must be socially free in order to realize his inner being. A little magazine, in her estimation, “should suggest, not conclude . . . should stimulate to thinking rather than dictate thought. . . . I have none of the qualifications of the editor; that’s why I think The Little Review is in good hands.”

Miss Anderson’s magazine had a varied and exciting history. As in the case of Poetry, it aroused the interest of Pound, who for some years introduced to it the work of his British friends; and Joyce sent over the manuscript of Ulysses, which was to be The Little Review’s most exciting contribution. The trial of the magazine for its violation of postal regulations against obscenity is told with great animation and some indignation in Miss Anderson’s autobiography, My Thirty Years’ War.

I

Throughout the early years of America’s new freedom, the figure of Ezra Pound looms large. A native of Idaho, for some time a student at the University of Pennsylvania and a teacher at Wabash College in Indiana, Pound ultimately became a confirmed and recalcitrant expatriate. The arrogant and defensive personality which aroused the indignation of anti-Nazis during World War II, in the earlier years endeared him with his most engaging qualities. His was truly the “personality as poet”; so seriously interested was he in the cause of the new poetry that he eagerly grasped every opportunity for placing the work of his friends in the many magazines with which he had influence. His critical remarks are characterized by spasmodic penetration, an arbitrary and cocksure forthrightness, and an obstinate refusal to brook what he considered untimely or petty opposition. His lifelong battle has been with the sentimental abstraction of American and British gentility and manner. At no time has he compromised with “the people,” though he gave Whitman a begetting compliment in one of the poems published in Poetry. In politics this point of view was inevitably to land him, for a variety of reasons, with the Fascists; in literature for a long time it was to act as a candid dissolver of some of the most stubborn remnants of post-Victorian sweetness and light. Historically Pound must be considered one of the most effective sponsors of experimental literature in our century.

* See Chapter III, pp. 44-51, for a discussion of Glebe and Others; Chapter IV, pp. 52-66, for a more complete history of The Little Review.
John Gould Fletcher first met Ezra Pound in Paris, in 1913; according to Fletcher, Pound was “a pioneer in the last great wave of American expatriates who, like myself, had turned from the West to the East and had come abroad before the European war, bent on submitting their own rude and untaught native impulses to the task of assimilating, and if possible, surpassing the traditional achievements of Europe.” This was, in Fletcher’s opinion, the true expatriate group, compared with which the exiles of the twenties were ineffectual and truly “lost”: “[They] learned nothing much from Europe or America, but largely discovered their own petty and neurotic selves.”

Pound and Fletcher planned an “open move” against the localism and feminism of Dora Marsden’s The Freewoman. From this move came The New Freewoman, “An Individualist Review,” a curious compound of philosophic editorials, essays on the “new woman,” and samplings from modern letters. In January 1914 the magazine changed its title to The Egoist, kept its subtitle, and added Richard Aldington as assistant editor. The motto stated in the subtitle is explained in the editorial for December 1913: “If we could get into the habit of describing a man as he feels himself instead of in the terms of the physical image under which he presents himself to sight, we should break through this deadening concept of unity.”

In this magazine imagism was to be advanced as the poetic expression of the poetic ego. H.D., Amy Lowell, and William Carlos Williams contributed poems to a collection called “The Newer School.” Rebecca West defended these poems as an antidote against the poetry of those who are “unaccustomed to being sacked for talking too much.” The Egoist, insofar as it reflected Pound’s influence, became a review of advanced writing, striking a critical pose and evaluating the prewar tendencies in the political and cultural worlds. In this capacity, it cleared a path for experimentalists and gave them much to think about. The lengthy essays by Dora Marsden on Bergson, Hegel, Nietzsche, and others, though they may be condemned as tedious, pointed to the intellectual preoccupations of an age. A portion of Bergson’s Creative Evolution was published in the issue of December 15, 1913; and Fletcher, in an essay of April 1917, commenting upon the destructive influence of the war, said, “In order to bear the suffering it has caused we have to effect what Nietzsche would have called a transvaluation of

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values.”13 Publication of original writing was not always discriminating; but Pound’s influence secured a first hearing for Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, and later for a part of Ulysses.

The Egoist affirms the vigorous independence of man as poet, and seeks to encourage him to cast off all intellectual inhibitions, to lose his respect for outworn institutions. We find Wyndham Lewis’ Tarr published serially, beginning with April 1, 1916. Lewis is the high point of the “aesthetic revolt” against the constraints of vox populi; he is the Timon of London. Pound was to say, in defending him, that if the man in the street cannot understand him, “Damn the man in the street, once and for all . . .”14 Lewis’ Blast, which began in June of 1914 and published two issues, was designed as a “death warrant” for the guardians of the past. In place of them it offered “the Vortex,” a sort of typographical vacuum sweeper. “Long live the Vortex.” “We need the Unconsciousness of Humanity—their stupidity, animalism and dreams.” The task of vorticism in Blast was “to make the rich of the community shed their education skin, to destroy politeness, standardization and academic, that is civilized, vision . . .”15 Blast appeared at the beginning of the First World War. It approved of its rival blasts and opposed the Germans on the grounds that they were sentimentally attached to the intellectual society of the French! “Of the two figures—our Genial and Realistic Barbarians on the one side, and the Champions of melodramatic philosophy, on the other, we dispassionately prefer our own side!”16

The predecessors of the twenties were conscious of the need for ridding themselves of the “rotten timber” of civilization. Along with the futurism of Marinetti, they offered nothing much more than a destructive cure. Why the violence in their attitude? It seemed a tremendous reaction to the stimulus of irritation. Their apparently indiscriminate iconoclasm has its source in their recognition of themselves as distinct personalities, endowed with an intellect which set them quite apart from the convention-infested world of polite letters on the one hand and the unlettered, unwashed, unthinking masses on the other. Nietzsche seemed a romantic figure to them; his Dionysian scorn for the pale dialectics of Socrates and Plato, his belief that art is above all vigorous and unmeasured—a working agreement between blood and

13 “The Death of the Machines,” The Egoist, iv, 45 (April 1917).
14 “Wyndham Lewis,” The Egoist, i, 233 (June 15, 1914).
15 “Manifesto,” Blast, i, 4 (June 20, 1914).
16 Editorial, Blast, i, 6 (July 1915).
brain—appealed to them. Above all, their rantings were not founded upon any distinct theory of composition; that was to come later. In her explanation of one of the vorticists, Babette Deutsch analyzed the entire group with a fair degree of perception: “It is Pound’s too engrossing sense of intelligence crushed by overwhelming mediocrity which wrenches him from the contemplation of beauty to vituperative attack upon vulgar modesty, perverts his worship of perfection to an esoteric artificiality, and stings him to humor that tastes of gall...” 18

In other words, the “blasting” was essentially a destructive, negative, and (perhaps strangely) an intensely personal matter. It did not lay the foundation of any one aesthetic theory or prescribe any mode of action. It was the intellectual turned anti-intellectual by virtue of an intolerable irritation; other than the upsetting of aesthetic plans, it did not disturb the personalities themselves. Perhaps all of this explains why there were no lasting, workable, or consistent plans or theories to replace the institutions and principles which they were partly successful in demolishing. Above all, these men—and especially Pound and Lewis—were individualists, brought together temporarily by the lure of verbal violence, but destined to go their own separate ways in the twenties.

Futurism, however, was well planned. It had been perhaps mistakenly identified as a sort of predecessor to dada. Its entire structure was developed from the fascination which technology and its visible evidences of speed had for its leaders. (It was this preoccupation with speed which caused Wyndham Lewis to dub futurism “automobilism.”) Harold Munro, who for a time was attracted by it, printed translations of futurist poems in the September 1913 issue of Poetry and Drama: “However deficient in beauty, these poems cannot be said to lack in energy and eloquence,” he says. “We find them constantly invoking all the furies of Nature and of the madman: they are always standing on tiptoe. Their poetry is composed recklessly for immediate and wide circulation and declamation in large assemblies, frequently for purposes of propaganda.” 19 The program of futurism is based upon the changed sensibility afforded by the advance of technology: the influence of the telegraph, telephone, and gramophone on the human psyche. The notable results, listed by Marinetti in Poetry and Drama were an “acceleration of life,” distaste for the traditional and “love of the new and the unforeseen,” preference for a life of danger, disappearance of sentimentality (“produced by the greater

17 “Varia,” Poetry and Drama, 1, 264 (September 1913).

erotic facility and liberty of women”), a union of the psyche with horsepower, and a love for speed as opposed to tedious analysis.

All of these attitudes had been fostered by the quickened perception made possible by technological advances and inventive science. The effect of this point of view upon syntax and style is Marinetti’s next problem. Obviously traditional syntax had been based upon a slow and calculated, a logical, use of sensory organs. Degrees of variation in sense perception had always been designated by adjectives, which measured qualities in the external world and in man’s response to it. As for punctuation, it was man’s way of indicating logical and perceptive pauses—so that a subordinate clause or phrase attached itself to its noun or verb after a definite allowance had been made for its cargo of meaning. The futurist was all for “chucking adjectives and punctuation overboard...” The “Wireless Imagination” demanded absolute freedom of style, “... expressed by disjointed words and without the connecting wires of syntax.” Adjectives were mere indicators of the “pace and race of analogies.” The affirmative form of the verb, “round and true as a wheel,” was indispensable to futurist expression. Thus, the futurist grasp of reality was external and geometric. Its appreciation of syntactic disintegration came essentially from observing the acceleration of sense perceptions. Futurism is therefore distinct from the experiments and theories based upon psychoanalysis which characterize much of the experimental literature of the twenties and thirties. 20

The First World War has perhaps been overemphasized as a primary cause and determinant of the culture of our day. But it did affect many people in a variety of ways. Aldington left the editorial staff of The Egoist to join the forces: Fletcher contemplated enlisting, but was dissuaded. The movement of events was so swift that no one person was able to evaluate them sanely; carnage immediate and intimate deadens the intellect, paralyzes purpose, and acts as a stimulant to anger and fear. For D.H. Lawrence especially, the war was a horrible thing. In some respects he was shaped by it; at least it might be said that much of his sauve qui peut philosophy stemmed from his gloomy experiences in the midst of a hostile world. Both foes were essentially at war with him, with his soul, and with what he regarded as precious in man.

Lawrence was above all adversely affected by the economic drives in

20 F. T. Marinetti, “Wireless Imagination and Words at Liberty,” tr. Arundel del Re, Poetry and Drama, 1, 319-26 (September 1913). For a summary of the history of Poetry and Drama, see below, p. 244.
Western culture which in his estimation had made it impossible for man to be true to himself. John Middleton Murry, a companion of these years (the relationship between the two men was to blow hot and cold by turns throughout Lawrence’s life), suggested to Lawrence that they “do something about this war.” As writers they could scarcely be expected to do anything other than write about it—or, rather, write against it. The three issues of The Signature were the result. Throughout them appeared a long essay by Lawrence, “The Crown,” and one by Murry, “There Was a Little Man.” Fiction written by Katherine Mansfield (under the pen name of “Matilda Berry”) was the only other contribution. The two essays are a reaction to the war: Lawrence’s a more vigorous denunciation of society, Murry’s more introspective. For Lawrence the war existed as a monstrous birth, the result of a long-term, illicit misalliance between society and evil. Murry preferred to deny its existence altogether: “Passionately and from the depths of my heart I say ‘This monstrous thing does not exist’; there is no real relation between it and me.” Murry demanded of society that “it leave [him] alone to work out [his] own justification.” Death for him in the accidental or military sense is tragic because it denies the full consummation of the self. Throughout Murry’s life as an editor of and contributor to literary reviews, the aesthetic and the moral attitudes warred with each other. This was because he had never made up his mind about the exact complexion of either—and was able to withdraw from one into the security of the other, because indecision allows for much spiritual haven from decision. This was the ground upon which Murry and Lawrence ultimately and profoundly differed; and it is, moreover, the reason why, though Lawrence had followers, Murry’s work has for the most part aroused little but adverse criticism.

Why, then, did Murry and Lawrence collaborate in any sense at all? If we are to take Aldous Huxley’s portraits of Lawrence and Murry in Point Counterpoint literally (and it is obvious that we should be cautious in doing so), they had absolutely no grounds for agreement. Murry was fascinated by Lawrence’s vigor. Lawrence had always worn his heart upon his sleeve; Murry kept his securely under lock and key, and frequently left his lodgings without it. This fact should again underline the discrepancy in Murry between editorial promise and ultimate literary achievement. Murry’s editorials in Rhythm and The Blue Review are full of the promise of a vigorous attachment to the purpose of art. Such, for example, is the beautiful intent of the first statement in Rhythm: “To treat what is being done today as something vital in the progress of art, which cannot fix its eyes on yesterday and live; to see that the present is pregnant for the future rather than a revolt against the past; in creation to give expression to an art that seeks out the strong things of life; in criticism to seek out the strong things of that art—such is the aim of Rhythm.”

Murry possessed fine perception of the causes of unrest in his society. More than that, he was to be afflicted with this unrest throughout his life, having early given it the shape of his own ego and kept it within bounds. From that point of view he is able to make such interesting generalizations as this: “...the greater part of modern intellectual unrest centers in the middle classes.”

III

Among all of the varying notions one gets of the literary thought and expression of our second decade, one thing stands out: the fact that there were many individuals, each stimulated by some form of aesthetic incentive, all of them held together by a loose unity of aesthetic and moral points of view. The integrity and dignity of the self seemed important above all else. Little magazines, therefore, were often guided and directed by “man alone” rather than by a school of thought or by some doctrinal expression larger than the self. The characteristic little magazine of the teens may be called the “one-man magazine,” its editorial policy determining the quality and variety of its inclusions. Need we add that there were many exceptions to this rule?

One approaches the figure of Guido Bruno with no little skepticism and amusement. No other man has ever actually begun and edited so many little magazines, or done so with such wholesale disregard of the proprieties of the publishing world. In rapid though irregular succession appeared Bruno’s Weekly, Bruno’s Chapbook, Greenwich Village, Bruno’s, Bruno’s Bohemia, Bruno’s Review of Two Worlds, and Bruno’s Review of Life, Love, and Letters. These magazines varied

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20 It is impossible to give the Lawrence-Murry relationship its full measure of attention in an essay of this sort. The reader is referred to Murry’s autobiographies and to his biography of Lawrence, Son of Woman, London, 1931, for Murry’s interpretation, and to Lawrence’s Letters, edited by Aldous Huxley, New York, 1932, for Lawrence’s views.

21 "There Was a Little Man," The Signature, 1, 24 (October 4, 1915).

22 Editorial, Rhythm, 1, 36 (Summer 1911).

23 The Blue Review, 1, 3 (February 1913).
slightly in format, in ambition of enterprise, and in content; but essentially they follow a fairly regular pattern: the exclusiveness of the artist as a person, living in a relatively secure and confined environment, full of small irritations, endowed with an extravagant capacity for indiscipline about many matters.

The Bohemian, living on “the Happy Island,” exercised the prerogative of independence which low rent rates and sympathetic surroundings afforded him. No great literature resulted from such conditions. This is not to say that Greenwich Village was simply the home of congenital idlers who defended Oscar Wilde and complained about the noise of Fifth Avenue busses. There were many types, some of them quite well aware of what was going on in the world outside, quite ready to allow that world to temper and in some cases to shape their eventual position in the world of letters. In a sense the Village was just a stopping-off place. It afforded young writers the security of a community negligent about decorum; it gave them opportunity for airing their theories in numerous gatherings of loosely organized units, called vaguely “clubs.” It was an environment in which much might be begun, if the Village did not become so much a part of one that one simply became stamped as “a part of the Village.” Most of all, it was a clearinghouse for ideologies which were in some form or other to affect the thinking of the next two decades. Villagers fought the good fight against middle-class propriety; many of them, however, mistook it for a personal grudge fight, and adapted the weapons of Freud and Marx to close infighting. Others assumed that the struggle against puritanism was larger than themselves, but insisted upon the integrity and sanctity of their own persons, and developed a personal aesthetic and ethic which others might accept if they wished. A third group at some time in the course of their lives were absorbed by one or another of the doctrinal ideologies which have since emerged as the principal source of intellectual conflict. Of course, the Village was also “a business”; but that phase of its life need not detain us.

The editors of and contributors to The Masses formed an interesting and curious group in themselves. For them revolt was essentially a personal matter; and, though Marxism and other forms of socialism did form the background for much of their thinking, they looked upon the constraints of bourgeois society for the most part as personal inconveniences or as objects of ridicule and satire. Yet there was an inevitable and a strong socialist leaven which was eventually, when conditions were “right,” to convince the editors of The Liberator that it had best

A Divine Gesture
By ERNEST M. HEMINGWAY

A ND then when all was come and gone, the Great Lord God strode out of the house and into the garden, for in the garden he found the deep peace of Rome. Bathtubs stood all around in heavy earnestness. Boot jacks littered the Garden. A thousand broken flower pots were piled into one corner.

"Where is Adam?" asked the Lord God.

No one answered for all the flower pots were tired and none of the bathtubs remembered it was Sunday.

"Where is Eve?" asked the Lord God, pulling at his beard and looking remarkably like Tolstoi.

At once all the boot jacks began to leap and chatter and a flight of blackbirds swept down into the garden and commenced to strut around, exploring into the flower pots with their beautiful shining bills.

"She is gone out, God," said the largest and weakest bathtub in a heavily earnest manner, "and no man can prophesy the hour of her returning. But I would say that she would return around four o'clock."

The Great Lord God made a divine motion with his hand and the angel Gabriel came swiftly forward from where he had been sitting and let all the water out of the largest and weakest of the bathtubs.

"That would teach him a valuable lesson," remarked the angel Gabriel, and God nodded to him in an absent-minded and approving manner.

"It should," meditated the great Lord God, "and more valuable lessons is what we need in this day and age."

As there seemed nothing more for the angel Gabriel to say and as the water was quite run out of the largest and weakest of the bathtubs, he smiled quietly at God and walked carefully back to his corner, treading cautiously as he went in order not to step on any of the boot jacks which were curdling and uncurling in an alarming manner.

"Stop it!" shouted the great Lord God, and at once every boot jack was still. "How often have I told you not to continue that loathsome habit?"

One boot jack nudged another and soon they were all nudging one another and whispering, "We mustn't squirm today. We mustn't squirm to-day. Hy ya ta did say. We musta squirm to-day!"

"Stop it!" shouted the great Lord God in a terrible voice.

Ernest Hemingway’s first published work, in The Double Dealer, May 1922
be turned over to the communists. Socialism of this early period—that is, before the revolution in Russia had given Marxism a bargaining power with intellectuals and artists—was a mixture of social realism and poetic romanticism. This accounts for the lyricism of much of The Masses verse, for the serious and lengthy discussions on the sexual problem by Floyd Dell. The Masses was, after all, a Village magazine. And, somehow, in art conflicts can be resolved in the imagination; or they may be clarified by a visit to a psychoanalyst. Contrast, in the light of what has been said, the editorial statement in the February 1911 issue of The Masses with much of leftwing principle of a later date: “Socialism has more to gain from a free, artistic literature reflecting life as it actually is, than from an attempt to stretch points in order to make facts fit the Socialist theory.”

The first year of the magazine (1911-12), under the guidance of the noisy and humorless restaurant manager, Piet Vlag, was commonplace enough. Vlag rather pompously announced that his magazine, financed by a wealthy insurance tycoon, was to campaign for the rights of the workingman, rights which evidently were never very clear in Vlag’s mind, though he ponderously attacked the high costs of living, war, child labor, and came out in favor of co-operative stores. Vlag also promised that new writers and artists were to be sponsored. Not many were: Art Young was the one noteworthy talent to appear during this first year. By September 1911 The Masses was on the rocks; three months passed before the magazine was rescued. During these three months Art Young and a small group of Greenwich Village artists and writers had decided that the magazine must continue. They elected as editor Max Eastman, a former professor of philosophy at Columbia University. Eastman selected Floyd Dell as managing editor and The Masses was off on its devil’s advocate career of chief biter of the capitalistic bourgeoisie.

Unlike most of its latter-day descendants, the Eastman-Dell Masses radiated sparkle and humor along with its biting criticism. Its circulation, which according to Eastman rose to an average monthly 14,000, was garnered largely from the socialist and liberal intelligentsia rather than from the working people that the monthly professed to serve.

During 1913 John Reed, Arturo Giovannitti, Lincoln Steffens, and Art Young helped Eastman and Dell carry the battle directly to the capitalist fortress, and in this year The Masses found itself involved in the first of its fiery legal battles. Having accused the Associated Press

"Who didn’t miss an hour of the trial"

by Art Young

Three sketches made at the Masses trial, 1915

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22 Editorial, The Masses, 1, 3 (February 1911).
of suppressing news because of an antilabor prejudice, the magazine found itself faced with a libel suit; the combatants sparred for two years before the Press, with haughty dignity, announced that it no longer cared to fight. The Masses was delighted and forever afterwards poked malicious satire at its defeated opponent. The year 1914 found the periodical busy sponsoring feminism, Negro rights, and pacifism. Some of the most frequently appearing names for this year were John Reed, Mabel Dodge, Robert Carlton Brown, James Oppenheim, and Floyd Dell. During 1915 and 1916 the magazine became more definitely literary. Fiction and poetry began to flow into the editorial offices from such writers as Ernest Poole, Wilbur Daniel Steele, Carl Sandburg, Helen Hoyt, Sherwood Anderson, and Amy Lowell.

After January 1916, The Masses no longer allowed on New York elevated and subway newstands, for the howling winds of war chauvinism were lashing ever more furiously at the magazine's socialist-pacifist point of view. Finally, in August 1917, the Post Office Department succeeded in barring the periodical from the mails. Undaunted, the editors published issues for September, October, and a final one for November-December. At last the Department of Justice brought a charge against Eastman, Dell, Young, and the business manager, Merrill Rogers, for "conspiracy against the government" and "interfering with enlistment." The trial began in April 1918, dragged on for days, and at last resulted in a jury disagreement. The government prosecution was outraged, insisted on another trial, to be held in September. Again the jury disagreed and The Masses considered itself vindicated. Though moral victory was obtained, much of the fight had been taken from the socialist editors and contributors. It was not until March 1918 that the weary forces could again be inspired for battle. In that month appeared the first number of The Liberator, edited by Eastman and Young. The pages of The Liberator continued the tradition of The Masses, but revolt and protest were eventually to be directed to the development of Marxist ideology in its American dress. In 1924 it was given to the communists and merged with The Labor Herald and Soviet Russia Pictorial to become The Worker's Monthly.44

The work of Marion Reedy in Saint Louis, though he stood in the vanguard of liberal protest, did not disturb its orthodox contemporaries as much. Reedy was a liberal in politics, not a radical. When the war finally came to the United States, he saw it through a Wilsonian haze, and wrote constantly about the opportunity for liberal reconstruction afforded by our entrance. Reedy's Mirror was also liberal in its attitude toward arts and letters. Though Marion Reedy came home from Chicago to scoff at the futurists and cubists, he welcomed the new poetry and praised Harriet Monroe for her efforts in its behalf. The Mirror printed the Spoon River Anthology, by "Webster Ford," who was revealed as Edgar Lee Masters in the issue of November 20, 1914. Orick Johns, commenting upon "the Masses crowd," indirectly pointed to the virtues of Reedy's magazine by suggesting that "the young men of The Masses have none of the social delusions that O. Henry tumbled into so often. They have a sound logic which does them honor, but they rarely show simple feeling. . . . I find The Masses, on the whole, vitiated by sentiment, but wrong in feeling. This is partly because that paper has 'a policy.'"45 Liberalism in politics and eclecticism in the arts gave The Mirror a reputation for considering all movements amiably. The magazine was therefore a source of information about the arts and a starting point for such men as Masters and Johns. As an intellectual amateur, Reedy delivered himself of opinions on a variety of subjects, from Nietzsche to the psychology of dreams.

Robert Coady's editorship of The Soil (1916-17) was marked by no aimless eclecticism. His selection of materials was motivated by a desire to find the most inclusive and the most genuine American art. He was impressed by the native vigor of American activity in many fields; and, like Whitman, he found poetry in all of them. The American art "is not a refined granulation or a delicate disease—it is not an ism . . . . It has grown out of the soil and through the race and will continue to grow. It will grow and mature and add a new unit to Art."46 The content of Whitman's poems influenced Coady's magazine, as the form had affected the manner of many American poets. The Soil thus is a Whitmanesque catalogue, minus the latter's references to Hegel and other philosophers:

The rhythm of the ocean cradles the transatlantics,
And while the heroic express arriving at Havre
Whistles into the air, where the gasses dance like tops,
The athletic sailors advance, like bears.
New York! New York! I should like to inhabit you!

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44 "Wanted—The Real Thing," Reedy's Mirror, xxii, 5 (December 12, 1913).
45 The Soil, l, 4 (December 1916).
I see there science married
To industry,
In an audacious modernity,
And in the palaces,
Globes,
Dazzling to the retina
By their ultra-violet rays;
The American telephone,
And the softness
Of elevators... . .

Coady recognizes the advantages of taste and aesthetic discipline, but insists that true American art “is as yet outside of our art world”; we cannot find it by running “to this ism and that ism.” We need art more than any other nation; but it must be an art which can account for Jack Johnson, Nick Carter, Charlie Chaplin, the East River, and the trip hammer. This preoccupation with the immediate in our environment is accompanied by an appealing respect for aesthetic discipline. Coady’s death prevented any synthesis of the materials he had thrown together in his magazine. Other artists, however, have been influenced by Coady’s vision and have been fascinated by the diversity of appearances in our American scene.

IV

In the total picture of our second decade one finds a puzzling complexity and diversity of motive and intention. Poetry is begun to give poetry “great audiences”; Others, simply to afford a place of publication for young poets, who most assuredly deserved it. Art is regarded variously as a guarantor of individualism, a handmaiden to prerevolutionary socialism, a bludgeon to be used against bourgeois dry rot, and an ivory citadel against the encroachments of civilian bootliness. There is no way of measuring such variety, save perhaps to find in variety itself a form of unity. The fact is that this was a period of doubt, confusion, and conflict. One truth is apparent throughout, however—the artist reserved for himself a certain inviolability of temperament. Thus concessions were made for him, and by him for himself. Further, it may be said that the artist was receiving the first shock of recognition; the world surrounded him with contradictory institutions and practi-

cies. The immediate past offered him a variety of ideologies, new to him and not yet assimilated by him. The sciences, metaphysics, psychology, and sociology offered strange and exciting jargons which somehow clashed with the jargon of aesthetics. The huge task of relating all of these disciplines with aesthetics had only begun. Revolt does not become experiment until it affects the language and craft of the artist.

Thus the little magazines of the teens must be considered in the light of their age. It was not an age of indecision; it was an age of predecision. What Joseph Freeman says of his generation demonstrates the transitional nature of the decade: “We were too young to become rigidly set in prewar attitudes, too old to benefit without anguish struggle from a younger generation’s conceptual world fashioned by Einstein, Freud and Lenin. Many an idea which was to become common-place a decade later came to us new, startling, incredible.”

The war had come before many had made up their minds about its justice or evil, or, for that matter, before they had come to any decision about their world, save that there was much in it that dissatisfied them. In poetry one gets mainly the Whitmanism of the Midwest and the aesthetic precision of the imagists—not, however, a precision encouraged by any larger confidence in poetry as a social expression. “The Wasteland” of T. S. Eliot had been discerned only vaguely. Eliot had already given us a freshman portrait of Prufrock; and suggestive remarks about the wasteland were just beginning to come from the pen of Aldous Huxley, whose point and counterpoint appeared in The Palatine Review, Coteries, and other English magazines:

Weary of its own turning,
Distressed with its own busy restlessness,
Yearning to draw the circumference of pain—
The rim that is dizzy with speed—
To the motionless center, there to rest... . .

Among the many magazines omitted from the discussion in this chapter, two ought to be mentioned, and the omissions explained: The Midland, begun in 1915, in Iowa City, and The Seven Arts, issued in 1916-17, from New York City. Since each represents ideally a type of magazine which we are discussing in a separate chapter, we have omitted them from the general survey of the second decade. See Chapter vi, pp. 86-92, for a study of The Seven Arts; Chapter viii, pp. 140-47, for a study of The Midland.


87 Arthur Craven, The Soil, i, 56 (December 1916).