little known writers who were later designed to become leaders of their generation. Further, the magazine was the first to give us an adequate cross-section view of European and American experimentalism, for it explored, at one time or another in its turbulent life, about every experimental highway and byway. Though much of this experimentalism was freakish, especially after the move to France, the periodical did, despite attitudinizing, erratic editorial whims, and a frequent lack of literary taste, present a great volume of significant work, some of it the most significant of our time. And, as Miss Anderson says, even when the magazine was at a low level it was still suggestive, suggestive especially for the young men of literary inclinations who were first beginning to think of writing between 1915 and 1922. The Little Review was a potent charmer; its glamour and strangeness fired the imaginations of many a young Hart Crane and Ernest Hemingway, often suggesting the roads they were to travel. Nor must we forget the spell cast on still other young men, persons who were soon to establish little magazines of their own. Broom, Seccion, and This Quarter were in many respects patterned after the rebel, combative Little Review.

There are many reasons for writers, now between forty and fifty years old, to remember gratefully The Little Review, and for their insistence that it was the best magazine of their youth.

Writing for the opening number of Decision (January 1941), Stephen Vincent Benét remarks upon the great difference between “A Review of Free Culture” and the magazines of 1921. “There were plenty of new magazines in the America of 1921—but they took freedom for granted, except where John S. Sumner and the Watch and Ward Society were concerned. The fight then was against a particular and rather limited form of censorship; a censorship that tried to keep the writer from handling all sections of life. It seemed an important fight at that time, and I think it was one. . . .”

From the point of view of the forties, the magazines of the twenties might well have appeared unimportant. But that opinion was by no means held by those who edited them and wrote for them. It was an exciting time. The war was over. It had left a great number of “unemployables”—both those of the type of John Dos Passos’ Charley Anderson, back from Europe with gunshot nerves, and the other sort, the “aesthetically unemployable.” The times were ripe for change; they were years of mockery, open defiance of the Babbitts of Zenith, state of Winement, and of Cambridge, Massachusetts, alike. Harriet Monroe’s magazine seemed tame, “The nervous guardian of the corn-fed poetic cliché.” The heritage of which the twenties took advantage was near by, a matter of a few years past, or of the actual living present. James Joyce had been heard from in the London Egoist. Wyndham Lewis was writing, and waiting for an opportunity to launch another magazine. D. H. Lawrence, having survived the war, was carrying on his own

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1 “America—1941,” Decision, 1, 9 (January 1941).

private quarrel with the world. Greenwich Village had seen The Masses go and The Liberator arrive, much the same magazine, with the same editors, the cartoons of Art Young, and discourses on marriage by Floyd Dell. In 1917 The Little Review had been taken in hand by Ezra Pound (though Margaret Anderson remained the editor), expressing "no respect for mankind save in respect for detached individuals." In 1920 Margaret Anderson was fighting the good fight over the printing of Joyce’s Ulysses and making italicized faces at Mr. Sumner: the "fundamental principles" for which her magazine lived were

"First, that to a work of art you must bring aesthetic judgment, not moral, personal, nor even technical judgment.  .  .  .

"Second, that only certain kinds of people are capable of art emotion (aesthetic emotion). They are the artist himself and the critic whose capacity for appreciation proves itself by an equal capacity to create."

In November 1920 Pierre Lévy, writing in Bobby Edwards’ Greenwich Village magazine, The Quill, praised Andé Tridon for his proselytizing in behalf of psychoanalysis: “Like Herbert Spencer, who played a similar part with regard to Darwinism, Tridon is the talented magician whose wand converts the tangled jargon of the various schools into simplicity.” In January 1921 The Double Dealer appeared in New Orleans, with its slogan, “We shall ‘remain only ourselves who can deceive them both—by speaking the truth.’” The Dial, brought out in 1920 by Scofield Thayer and Dr. Watson, became an active sponsor of modern letters, fulfilling its editorial claim: “If a magazine isn’t to be simply a waste of good white paper it ought to print, with some regularity, either such work as would otherwise have to wait years for publication, or such as would not be acceptable elsewhere.” And in 1923 The Playboy called upon a curious assortment of “sponsors” for its first issue: “D. H. Lawrence, Arthur Schopenhauer, Walt Whitman, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jesus Christ, Robert Hillyer, Elie Faure, William Blake, John Peale Bishop, and Edmund Wilson, Jr., Lord Dunsany, Clive Bell, King Solomon, and Carl Sandburg, Playboys all; let them speak for us!”

In the early years of the decade Harold Stearns, Hart Crane, Malcolm Cowley, and Mortimer Adler were all in the Village, some of them writing for Joseph Kling’s magazine Pagan, “A Magazine for Eudaimonists.” And Contact, which appeared for four issues, carried the appeal of William Carlos Williams for a vigorous and precise native art.

These appearances and statements are merely a sampling of the immense activity which those years witnessed. There is no co-ordination, no directive, among them, but they are intensely alive. The truth is that the artist of the twenties was immensely serious about himself, and a little bewildered. He had ceased long before to be concerned with the Beautiful, the True, and the Good, as abstractions or things in themselves. There was some self-conscious attention in the Village to the artist as artist, but much of that was parading before tourists, deliberately to mislead them into thinking that The Saturday Evening Post had been right after all. And one found most of all a consideration of newly discovered ideologies and doctrines—not one, but many, and especially those which could be made to fit the lives and personalities of the artist. For a philosophy or psychology does not “influence” a writer; rather, a writer takes what he finds and molds it to his taste or comprehension.

The Freudian “contagion,” which Bobby Edwards maintains was picked up at the Boni’s Washington Square Bookshop, had spread throughout the Village. Freud was disturbed at the American habit of suitting his researches to momentary opportunity, and regarded the Americans with some suspicion for the remainder of his life. Indeed, he had good reason, for psychoanalysis was much abused and misunderstood. “Now the principal motivation of sex,” said Bobby Edwards, for example, “is the dreadful ructions of the subconscious mind, which apparently dwells on nothing else . . . And if you don’t let your subconscious do as it wishes you get complexes which do everything from spoiling your digestion to making you a faddist.” Doctor Freud, “Satan’s little brother,” had filled the Village air with discussions of free love, neurosis, and “dream talk,” until this “plausible pseudo science” had spread its theories throughout the country, “in spite of the Methodist Church.” Floyd Dell was one of a few Villagers whose reception seemed both enthusiastic and intelligent; in fact, Freudianism was for him the companion of Marxism in the fight against bourgeois economic and moral convention. Joseph Freeman also regarded it as a way of liberalizing our attitudes toward sex. He recalls the advice Dell gave him when he visited the Village:

* “Bobby’s Stuff,” The Quill, viii, 25-26 (May 1921).
the dreams of Harry Crosby and others in transition are typical attempts to bring the artist’s unconscious to the surface, where it might be examined for clues to the creative process.

And this applies not exclusively to poetry, by any means. The novelist was also intensely interested. Floyd Dell’s explanation of the genesis of his novels Moon Calf and The Briary Bush underlines this interest. “Fiction, like art of any sort,” he said in an essay published in The Modern Quarterly, “is generated in the unconscious mind, and represents an attempt to work out unsolved psychological conflicts. The conflict within this writer’s unconscious mind between the narcissistic impulses and the sexual-social impulses is evidently very strong, since nearly all his work has dealt with it.”

Though Freud’s work had been translated into English as early as 1913, and had been debated at some length in the second decade, the real emergence of Freud as a popular figure, maligned as often as respected, waited for the twenties. The enthusiastic reception of psychoanalysis on each of several levels of comprehension and misapprehension remains one of the marvels of the twenties. He was no longer a source only of psychological curiosity or of medical pique; he became a subject for discussion in both the subway and the drawing room. He was as often condemned as the bête noire of the century as he was unthinkingly accepted as an angel of deliverance. For several reasons, the interest in the controversy over Freud fixed upon two of his books: The Interpretation of Dreams and Three Contributions to a Theory of Sex. Among his other works, The Psychopathology of Everyday Life and Witt and Its Relation to the Unconscious caused only a mild disturbance; and his latter-day speculations on myth and the racial unconscious have attracted scarcely more than a few of the writers of our day. Writers of the twenties were drawn to Freud’s theories in three ways: 1) they were interested in the dream, its language and its habits; 2) they were attracted by the Freudian explanation of the artist—and, though some of them dismissed the notion of an “aesthetic neurosis” as nonsense, others thought they saw something important in it; 3) and, finally, they welcomed Freud’s reinterpretation of sexual and familial themes, believing that some new suggestions for the analysis of character might be borrowed from it. On such individual novelists as James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Sherwood Anderson, Waldo Frank, Ludwig

Lewisohn, and Conrad Aiken, the influence appears to have been great—in some cases avowed, in others perhaps evident though disclaimed.

In one respect, psychoanalysis came very close to the proud, fervent but confused beliefs of the intellectuals: it was, after all, a psychology of the “inner life of the soul”—a psychology which could best explain the reasons for man’s valiant but vain struggle to find himself in a world too complex for easy, overt explanations. Elseo Vivas, discussing D. H. Lawrence’s The Rainbow in the April 1925 issue of the Philadelphia Guardian, put it this way: “They are modern who have thrown overboard the faith of yesterday with all its subtle implications, who have no spiritual rudder or compass, who search in the welter of contemporary tendencies for a guiding light which cannot be found because it has not defined itself and probably never will.”

Freudian psychology helped to explain their confusion, but did not explain it away. Moreover, it gave them some terms which could be used against the things they disliked. The attack on the Puritan, whose appearance changed curiously from the historical figure by which he had been known, was aided and abetted by such Freudian explanations as that of repression, projection, and sublimation. It is interesting to watch the figure of the American middle class change as it is subjected to various theoretical interpretations. The fat, bloated capitalist of Art Young’s cartoons in The Masses became a thin, spare, repressed Vermonter in Waldo Frank’s portrait of Calvin Coolidge; after he had been thoroughly explained and his sins examined in public by the writers of the twenties, he was to sit for a new portrait in the thirties. In the twenties the trouble with the ruling classes was psychological; in the thirties it was economic. Repression gave way to oppression as the critical war cry.

Nietzsche fared only less badly. He had been early pointed out as the archdevil opponent of conventional society; and, through the agencies of Henry Mencken, Huntington Wright, and George Burman Foster, his criticism of civilization had been equated with the wave of scorn which swept against American conventions and institutions. It was as though he had had America specifically in mind when he wrote Thus Spake Zarathustra. Both Freud and Nietzsche were therefore handy ideological weapons against “the great American boor.”

The influence of Nietzsche had, of course, an earlier start than that of Freud. It was an important accompaniment to the criticism of society advanced by the men of the nineties. Nietzsche was essentially a spokesman for the artist, who saw in his work justification for the artist’s taking a stand against the errors and stupidities of his civilization. Hence we find Zarathustra quoted in the magazines of the 1890’s. In 1896 an essay on Nietzsche by Havelock Ellis appeared in The Savoy, a British magazine. Another of these magazines, The Eagle and the Serpent, began in 1898, and its title page was decorated with a quotation from Zarathustra.

Perhaps the chief significance of Nietzsche for young intellectuals was that he had (unwittingly, of course) given his blessing to the artist and explained his eccentricities by emphasizing the unusual role of the artist in society. In this respect, the two books, Thus Spake Zarathustra and The Birth of Tragedy, exercised a major influence, and suited the aesthetes perfectly. The fact that Nietzsche had all but repudiated the artist—or at least was disposed to scorn the poetaster and despise the compromise which artists often made with society—did not seem to interfere with his “use” of Nietzsche as a spokesman. The superb lyricism of passages in The Birth of Tragedy thrilled the artist and led him to believe in himself as the superman’s right-hand man. Such remarks as the following underlined, in the artist’s opinion, his essential difference from the ordinary run of human beings, and glorified his separation from them: “He who approaches these Olympians with another religion in his heart, seeking among them for moral elevation, even for sanctity, for disincarnate spirituality, for charity and benevolence, will soon be forced to turn his back on them, discouraged and disappointed. For there is nothing here that suggests asceticism, spirituality, or duty. We hear nothing but the accents of an exuberant, triumphant life, in which all things, whether good or bad, are deified.”

One of Nietzsche’s interpreters in our century was James Huneker, music critic, a contributing editor of Mlle New York, and a novelist of the twentieth century aesthete. Huneker published a long essay on Nietzsche in 1909, in his book Egoists: A Book of Supermen. “Nietzsche is the most dynamically emotional writer of his time,” Huneker wrote. “He sums up an epoch. He is the expiring voice of the old nineteenth-century romanticism in philosophy. His message to unborn generations we may easily leave to those unborn, and enjoy the wit, the profound criticisms of life, the bewildering gamut of his ideas; above all, the tragic blotting out of such a vivid intellectual life.”

The hero of Huneker’s Painted Veils (written in 1919) is conversant with all of the pundit’s of his day. His arguments with the priest brother of

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Mona Milton are chiefly defenses of the advance guard ideas of his time. They support, he says, the artist's genuine belief that he is a man "set apart" from the masses. But Milton's attack does not accept such a premise; and he condemns the artist for taking such a stand: "Great artists? Yes. But guides to damnation. Moral anarchists, their teaching will lead to the anarchy of physical violence. Mark my words. All Europe will suffer sometime from their doctrines." 17

The great attraction of Nietzsche's style, his aphoristic manner of condensing his thoughts and of foregoing obvious order and pattern in his exposition, is at least in part responsible for the misinterpretation from which he has suffered in modern times. But this was not the only reason for his popularity. Nietzsche emphasized the weaknesses of his civilization. His attack upon the life and manners of his contemporaries was thoroughgoing and relentless; his appeal for a revival of pre-Christian pagan morality was enthusiastically received by the artists of the fin de siècle and by their successors in several Bohemian centers of the twenties. Egmont Arens hailed him as a "Playboy" and asked that he be respected and his word heeded. The editorial manifesto of The London Aphrodite echoes the phrases of Nietzsche and proclaims the artist's independence on Nietzschean grounds:

"We stand for a point of view which equally outrages the modernist and the reactionary. . . . We declare war against all academicians, whether modernistically disguised or smugly official—against all prophets from the gutters of resentment, whether the noise proceeds from the mere press or exacerbated theories of intellectualizing impotence—against all sentimentalists who degrade the emotional theme by trivially pretty modes—against all debauchers of the distracted nerves or ascetics of the intellect who abstract the fluid geometries from their true action.

"We affirm Life, and for definition quote Nietzsche: Spirit is that life which itself cuts into life. We affirm Beauty, and by that term understand a sensual harmony, a homogeneous ecstasy, which, constructing intellectually, yet hates nothing so much as the dry cogs of the objectified and objectifying intellect." 18

The Aphrodite seemed committed, in part at least, to the advertisement of its editors' version of Nietzschean thought; and the Fanfrolico Press offered new translations of Nietzsche to the magazine's subscribers. In one essay, Jack Lindsay called the German philosopher

18 The London Aphrodite, 1, 2 (August 1928).
chiefly—for a variety of reasons, but principally because living was cheap and one could drink quite openly and quite freely. As Malcolm Cowley expressed it in his poem “Valuta,” these men learned soon enough the value of the American dollar on foreign exchanges:

Following the dollar O following the dollar I learned three fashions of eating with the knife and ordered beer in four languages from a Hungarian waiter while following the dollar around the 48th degree of north latitude where it buys most there is the Fatherland.12

Was the movement to Paris entirely escapist or opportunistic? Certainly many young Americans simply stayed there after the war, finding it impossible to return to a dry and dull America. The brave, reckless, “lost generation,” pictured in Hemingway’s The Sun Also Rises and given the status of knighthood by Gertrude Stein, found in Paris a stimulus compounded of dada, Bohemianism, and liquor. But most of all it was the freedom of action and thought which held the Americans in Paris. This attitude is presented satirically by Cowley in Broom: “Young Mr. Elkins places an evident value on his facts and yet he collates them around a simple, almost a childish thesis; one thesis concerning America and Puritanism: Puritanism is bad; America is Puritan; therefore America is bad. . . .”13

America was in Paris for more than a holiday. The native land seemed inhospitable to experiment, and the Village seemed a drab place—good enough quarters for freshmen, but not suitable for all-out antipuritanism. The arts are so hedged in by conventional barriers in the “Anglo-Saxon countries” that one cannot see them at all, said the transatlantic review: “An ever present strain of puritanism obscures aspects of life that are plain enough to almost all the races.”14 Ernest Hemingway found America hounded by critics, “the enuchs of literature.” Its brightly polished machinery and its paved Main Street had been too little affected by the war. Its morality was comparatively untouched, except for the isolated centers of Bohemianism. In this atmosphere one could not breathe freely enough. One either made money or made Marxist faces at those who did. Why not stay in Europe and “follow the dollar”?15

Exile, then, whether actual or merely spiritual, was a gesture of protest against the automatic censorship which American morality exercised over minds which wished to be free. Much of the writing in the exile magazines sought to justify this move away from America on other than hedonistic grounds. But more material was of and about American things. The expatriation was not necessarily an uprooting. Beyond youthful reasons for moving across the Atlantic, there were no deeply rooted convictions which held the Americans in Europe; and most of them came back again—when the money ran out, or the pleasures were no longer pleasant, or, simply, when the native felt the need of returning to be reoriented to his original points of view. The genuine expatriates—Eliot and Pound especially—had never really thought of returning; Eliot because he was too much in love with things British, Pound because he hated too much the central democratic philosophy of American life and thought it uncongenial to the artist.

Mr. Albert Parry suggests that the principal difference “between the pre-war and the post-war Americans in Paris was the drinking. Before the war, the Americans drank light wines and tried to remain gay gentlemen even when their feet were like pretzels. But after the war, absinthe and cognacs became the fashion; the heavy, dull, leaden drinking was the thing, with liquids indiscriminately mixed. Not the indolent sitting in front of a café, not a philosophic soirée in a studio, but a marathon of reeling from bar to bar over a wide territory—this was the post-war mode.”16 Along with this freedom from the Volstead Act, there was the more riotous freedom of dada; and dadaists were not only members of a “literary movement”; they were master craftsmen in the matter of nihilistic showmanship. The postwar attitude of disrespect showed itself in deliberate displays of riotous and complex flaunting of sense and logic.

Just how good (or how bad) this indiscriminate Bohemianism was for the exiles of the twenties it is hard to say. Certain it is that a large number of writers were in Paris at one time or another—and the few who had preceded them (Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, for example) had something to do with their coming. Robert McAlmon is inclined to think that exilism (if life in Paris may be called that) did no harm, but that failures in Bohemian centers are given more publicity simply because they are generally in the public eye and can’t escape public censure.

13 “Young Mr. Elkins,” Broom, iv, 54-55 (December 1922).
15 Parry, Carrets and Pretenders, p. 331.
"It may be that artists who are surest of what they are about, admit fallow periods, or that they do drink, perhaps to boisterous drunkenness, and they don't lack sound-citizen companions. Some realize that Bohemian centers present in concentrated form their share of human types and manifestations. Failures on Main Street seldom get so severely criticized as the same failures loitering about art-centers, because such centers permit extra relaxation, and no producing artist worries about the salvation of other beings whose best mode of living is to remain unproductive. Purposefulness on the part of incompetent people wastes much valuable material. That Montparnasse furnishes a resident and transient background of beings futile to themselves, and destructive in their false contempt of production, does not mean that The Quarter is a disintegrating force for such people as find it a convenient rendezvous for interesting encounters, or for dissipation that appears often excessive and ridiculous."

By 1922 or 1923, McAlmon tells us in his autobiography, Being Geniuses Together, there were "quantities" of Americans in Paris. Some of these came escorted by their wives, "who saw to it that they did not over-drink or indulge in companionship with people who could not be of definite service to them." Others, however, spent more leisurely lives, working in an atmosphere of freedom and casualness. But the American magazines and newspapers emphasized the dissoluteness of Paris Bohemian life and pointed out that many Americans were simply wasting away their lives there.

To check up on these accusations, McAlmon and some others toured the Quarter: "We noted down a list of two hundred and fifty names, English and American, and among them the names of persons responsible for the American articles against so-called exiles in Paris. In that list were the names of none but working writers or painters; one of the writers has since gained the Nobel prize; several others have been Book-of-the-Month Club selections, or bestsellers, or acclaimed great writers." One wonders, says McAlmon, by what strange circumstance of the mind these critics of the exiles could have come to their conclusions, "and what obsession persisted in the writers who returned to America, which caused them to find it necessary to throw off on Paris, a city which gave them material and stimulus, and which helped them to grow up mentally, if they did."

Whatever the reaction of their soberer and more domestic contemporaries, these young men and women in Paris were able to offer sufficient evidence of their having been at work. Indeed, over most of Europe, in the large cities especially, American and English writers carried on the little magazine tradition. At remarkably reasonable cost, they could issue their own reviews and magazines, and the presence of so many American and English writers insured them against a dearth of talent. These exile magazines differed from their American and British contemporaries in only a few particulars. There was no regional emphasis in them. Having freed themselves from the immediate surroundings of the home country, they were able to sponsor and to tolerate literary experiment freed from any provincial restraints or embarrassments. Yet these magazines were obviously published for "home consumption," and some of them did return to the States; one at least, Pound's Exile, was written and edited in Paris, but published in Chicago, as a means of evading the customs officer, against whom its "Ezra商品" editor railed with his customary vigor.

The list of exile magazines is long, and the motives for publishing them various. Many of them will be discussed in other chapters of this book. Broom (1921-24) began in Rome, and moved from there to Berlin, and finally died in New York. Secession (1922-24) was first published in Vienna, and traveled from there to Berlin, Reutte, and Brooklyn, New York. All four issues of Pound's Exile (1927-28) were edited in Paris. Ford Madox Ford's transatlantic review (1924-25) was edited and published in Paris—and lays claim to having been the first to sponsor the writings of Ernest Hemingway (Hemingway had first published in New Orleans' The Double Dealer). This magazine of the ubiquitous Ford appeared first and always in sedate format, not unlike that of many more conservative English reviews. But it was not unkind to the avant garde; and, though it "featured" Conrad and Ford, it also published the writings of E. E. Cummings, Gertrude Stein, Hemingway, and Pound. Its regular department, "Chroniques," discussed aspects of contemporary life; and, like Waldo Frank (who had "advised" the Paris exiles about their America in a book published in 1919), it commented upon the life of the American middle class, asking this question: "Has life in America been raised to such a high level of physical comfort for all that no sharp inequalities can ever come into being to break down the mechanistic equilibrium that is a moribund pull down to indifference and the death of the spirit?"

24 Ibid., pp. 105-6.
Arthur Moss, at one time editor of the Greenwich Village magazine, The Quill, moved to Paris in 1921, and from there directed the fortunes of the exile magazine Gargoyle. It was essentially a survey of Paris intellectual life and published reproductions of modern paintings, comments on the arts, and critical essays on the then reigning inhabitants of the colony. From the editorial sidelines Moss surveyed "these days of drab realism, freudian frightmares, cabellian subtleties, and general literary licence."\footnote{\textit{Entr'actes}, Gargoyle, iii, n.p. (October 1932).}

Other little magazines were also being published in Europe in the twenties and subscribed to by Americans. Ernest Walsh's This Quarter, and Harold Salenson's Tambour, for example. Then, of course, there was Eugene Jolas' transition, begun in 1927 in Paris, but published by old presses in villages near the city. But this most important of all exile magazines deserves and will get separate treatment in another chapter. As for Salenson's Tambour, it did not play favorites and objected strenuously to the esoteric exclusiveness of some of its contemporaries. To prove its charitable attitude toward the recent past, it published an issue devoted to the writings of Anatole France (the fifth issue, published in 1930). "We shall assemble all the species, all the tendencies. To our readers will be left the privilege of passing judgment," Salenson said in the issue of June 1930; and, he added, it is stupid to publish a magazine for the exclusive use of the postwar generation, "just as limited, nay, more limited, since those have not yet shown anything, than to publish a review ignoring those under a certain age or of insufficient fame."\footnote{Letter to Tambour, iii, 34 (1930?).}

The internationalism of the little magazine of the twenties should not surprise us, who know already that the preoccupation of all intellectuals in that decade was with ideas, theories, and experiments, scarcely if at all limited by national boundaries. And we ought not forget that another internationalism was growing in strength. The Red Revolution in Moscow, reported by John Reed for The Liberator, had piqued the curiosity of most young men and women of the time. But the real story of the Marxist critic, the proletarian writer, and of the pilgrimage to Moscov, is a story of the thirties. For the most part the men of the twenties enjoyed the congenial atmosphere of Paris (as much of it as their money could buy at the very reasonable exchange rates), and were pursuing ideas and experiments only indifferently related to specific political events and gospels.

The twenties are marked by confusion and cross-purpose, by endless debate and by offended spirit. Above all, they were animated by intense literary activity. Emotions were qualified and induced by one's recent experience in the library or by what Shaw had said in Act Three. Living seemed a momentary pause between one book and the next. What amazes the student who looks back upon that period is its apparent lack of discrimination. Systems of thought ordinarily have a continuity and unity which sets them apart, each from the other. How, then, can one man draw from a dozen and hope to retain any reasonable consistency in his own scheme of things? The truth is that men of the twenties were able to manage it. What Freud had failed to make clear, Schopenhauer explained on Page 263; what Bergson neglected to mention was beautifully given in Chapter Three of Dewey's latest book. What a marvelous assemblage of mutually exclusive elements! The person of Mabel Dodge Luhan sets the absolute limits to which this eclecticism may reach. Each week a different speaker on a different subject. It is all very exciting and instructive. We may at one moment plan a program for re-educating the farmers of Kansas; at another we may send across "sympathetic vibrations" to Lawrence in Italy, making it imperative that he come to America immediately. Next Wednesday we shall visit the new center of euthanasia culture, whose major tenet is that "all is negation" and that a negation of negation furnishes an incentive for action.

The twenties were an age of individualists, who pieced together fragments of books, scraps of conversation, and new recipes, without regard for logical consistency. That is the characteristic of the period. Many men were seriously making up their minds and were confronted by many rather than single solutions to postwar bewilderment. The intellectual pace was too much for a host of minor minds, who gave in eventually to a single solution of their moral and aesthetic dilemmas. Economic event and doctrine acted as the agents of resolution for others. Today scores of the most reckless of individualists have subsided, become domestic, and look upon further novelty with a jaundiced eye. They regard the twenties as an unfortunate period in which "nothing of any consequence happened." They forget that "everything happened" and that they had helped it to happen. They have selected from the many dogmas which they explored then, the one by which they might live, and now stoutly vouchsafe and defend its truth. The
turmoil of the twenties was indispensable to the clarification of principles which these men now hold.

It is this merry confusion which makes the little magazines of the twenties stimulating to read. The strong purposefulness or truculent assertiveness of some of the stronger spirits stands out without qualification as representative of the period. The personalities of three men stood out from all others in an age of nervous individualism. Two of them were survivors of the original group of individualists, centered about The Egoist of London: Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound.

The third, Ernest J. Walsh, who piloted two issues of one of Europe's best American magazines, This Quarter, breathed the very air of freedom and accepted that freedom of the artist as the sine qua non of the age. It is characteristic of the individualists that they should fall out with each other. Walsh's first issue was dedicated to Ezra Pound, who "comes first to our mind as meriting the gratitude of this generation." The third issue, apparently with the posthumous consent of Walsh, withdraws the tribute. What sort of man was Walsh? The third issue gives abundant evidence of his vigor, his sincerity, and the decidedness of his opinions: "An irreverent man, without standards, without tracks ... A hard witted man. A fiery-hearted man ... A NEW MAN with great sounds." In Walsh's posthumously printed essay, "What Is Literature?" he delivers himself of a variety of judgments. Gertrude Stein is a "profound artist but a poor writer"; the influence of The Dial upon young writers is "insidious"; the life of The Dial and of The Criterion "is a tradition without individuality"; The Little Review is "too trivial to discuss." Walsh respected no tradition; he tolerated no incentive save that which led man to write without hindrance. In his magazine, editorial taste is always implicit; it does not deliver the knockout blow to literature, but allows contributions to appear unedited. This was a shock to the conservatives, whose prior convictions acted strongly to alter and remodel the contributions they were willing to publish.

Wyndham Lewis, on the other hand, preferred to be called "The Enemy." He would not sponsor any "movement," he said, or hide behind any doctrinal skirts. Here is "merely a person and not a gang!" Since he has thus separated himself from society, he can "resume his opinion" of it. Friendship and tolerance are for him soft and easy; further, they mark every opinion with hedging and compromise. There is no hesitation in The Enemy, no "impartiality." In his estimation, the most vicious characteristic of the age is its depersonalization. He will do his best to counteract it. In The Enemy many things are condemned—the latter-day primitivism of D. H. Lawrence and Sherwood Anderson; the "dadaism" of Jolas' transition; the automatic inanities of Gertrude Stein; the sad confusion of Joyce's "Work in Progress."

Ezra Pound continued from Paris; London had long since exasperated him, and he gave it up as beyond repair. The Exile published a few of his cantos, printed the prose of Robert McAlmon and others, and ranted editorially about the two American institutions which seemed most to upset him—the censorship and the national legislative branch. America's "horror" was caused by the inability of Americans to allow the lives of people to remain private: "... America is the most colossal monkey house and prize exhibit that the astonished world has yet seen." As for revolution, Pound thought it stupid for the artist to advocate it, for the artist is far ahead of any revolution, or counterrevolution.

In 1931 Pound joined Samuel Putnam on the editorial board of The New Review. Putnam later repudiated him: "The truth of the matter is," he said in an article published in Mosaic, "Pound's mind, such a mind as he has, is capable of expansion only with the greatest difficulty and with exceeding slowness. His is a tight little brain. He dwells in a murky Hinterland of his own into which only now and then a fancied ray of light flickers." Pound became notorious in 1943 and 1944, persona non grata for his broadcasts of Fascist propaganda from Italy. He had prepared himself for these by readings in economics; since he cannot brook opposition in any field, his statements in economics are marked by vehemence and dogmatism. They command no respect. Pound is not the "misunderstood" creature, condemned by society to suffer its displeasure. He has been all too easily understood; and our recent understanding of him might serve to dismiss him as charlatan and fool without any effort to evaluate objectively his contribution to modern literature. No one can doubt that this contribution is very important. We ought, therefore, not to let immediate events interfere with our estimate of his ultimate worth.

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* The Exile, 1, 32 (Spring 1927).
Our third decade will have to be judged with the tolerance perspective affords the critic. Measurement of its value cannot be made according to the standards it set up for itself. Intellectually it was a unity of disparate elements, a parade of mutually exclusive theories, an anthology of recalcitrance. It had all standards and no standards. It has been the most exclusively “literary” of all decades of the century; that is, its intellectual sponsors derived many of their judgments from books and magazines, and out of them compiled more books and established more magazines. It was a time of experiment, tolerant of contradictions and of indiscriminate effusions. The energies were not channelized, and efforts to synthesize were smashed by strong personal differences or editorial mismanagement.

Harold J. Salemson sums up the experimentalism of the twenties for us in Tambour’s seventh issue. For the moderns, whatever their persuasion, “art is but a projection of the artist’s personality into the world about him, or if we wish, an interpretation of the outside world as related to the artist. In this, modernism has been but a romanticism distinguished by its form.”

“Modernists” (that is to say, experimentalists) have been wholly preoccupied with form; this has led to an exhaustion of form, and some new aesthetic direction is necessary. It is necessary to add “matter” to the various “manners” with which the writers of the twenties have experimented. We need, above all, a new point of view, which goes beyond the artist himself: “We demand that the artist look at his day with the point-of-view of his day, as he understands it, and without making us feel his presence in it.”

The pressure of events was to furnish a new “matter” for writing in the thirties.

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At first glance the overwhelming variety and diffusion of enthusiastic but adolescent activity discourages any effort at giving it any order whatsoever. The difficulty of “presentness” in any age is its preoccupation with the immediate environment, physical or intellectual. If there is any difference between the confusion of our second decade and the disorder of the third, it must be sought in efforts which some of the magazines of the latter period made to fashion a synthesis from diverse materials. Beginning with the later years of the war, some men sought for an underlying meaning, of which the diversity of expressions was merely the surface appearance.

The Tendenz magazine is, therefore, an important clue to the literature of the twenties. Its aim was first to recognize, second to state, the forward direction of our thought and culture; and, finally, to predict or advocate the ultimate ends and aims of our literary aspiration. Men who piloted such magazines over rough seas were in a sense the “dictators of thought”; and, like most dictators, they were met with criticism civil and uncivil, and led troubled lives. It was a time of assessment of democratic values; and it was the poet’s task to state these values clearly, the critic’s to draw them together.

The Tendenz magazine is a peculiar result of the age. Its product was the critical philosophical essay, companion piece to the creative work found in its pages. Its purpose is primarily to sponsor thinking on a number of issues and to give original thinkers a place of publication. Hence it is editorially more vocal than other types of little magazines, though it may not have a policy any more consistent than, or even as consistent as, its fellows. It is by means of these magazines—the avant-garde magazines of criticism and philosophical discussion—that the