29

Transnational Circuits and Homemade Machines

US Modernism in Europe

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Jean Toomer's December 1922 appearance in the transatlantic journal *Broom* represents an intersection of US modernisms. Written by a mixed-race poet in an aggressively experimental mode, Toomer's poem "Seventh Street" was a strident claxon from the crowded byways of the modernist *annus mirabilis*. It described a Black neighborhood in America's capital city as "a bastard of Prohibition and the War" where "bootleggers in silken shirts" drive "zooming Cadillacs," which go "whizzing down the street-car tracks." Set in the aftermath of the "Red Summer" of 1919, Toomer's poem identifies this specific area as a synecdoche for a nation beset by white supremacist terror and interracial violence. The bloody energies of that conflict spill over from "shanties, brick office buildings, theaters, drug stores, restaurants, and cabarets" into the "Stale soggy wood of Washington," which seems increasingly remote from the "jazz songs" and technologically driven "rhythms" of "Seventh Street" – or, indeed, from the austere pages of *Broom*.[1] Nevertheless, pitched literary battles and even momentous historical upheavals occasionally flickered across *Broom*'s pages, if only as intrusions on its production schedules: massive fascist demonstrations in Rome (*Broom*'s original base) had resulted in "the death of two Communists," triggered a general strike, and "paralyzed" the city, "and *Broom* along with it." Editor Harold Loeb reported these events with the same breezy tone as his notice of "the daily Zeppelin which passes over our heads en route to Naples."[2] This detached editorial policy would not last: a far more partisan version of the magazine would head back across the Atlantic in 1923 for its final numbers in New York. For US modernists in postwar Europe, this circuit was a well-worn route, geographically, aesthetically, and often politically. For

[1] Jean Toomer, "Seventh street," *Broom* 4.1 (December 1922): 3.
[2] Harold Loeb, "Broomides," *Broom* 1.3 (January 1922): 285–8, p. 288.

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Loeb, the nuts and bolts of the American Machine Age, rather than the "daily Zeppelin" with its cache of European correspondence, became the major conceptual driver of his country's cultural renewal; for Toomer, transit and technology remained ambivalent forces, which could both liberate and delimit Americans. And for the transatlantic circuits that both of these writers operated in, technology became a cipher for American industrial modernity and the modernist formations it produced.

From the dawn of the twentieth century to the calamities of World War II, the individuals that criss-crossed the Atlantic from the US to Europe have occupied a privileged space in literary histories. This chapter is about US modernism in Europe; rather than charting a one-way flow of Americans to continental Europe, however, I explore how US vanguardists engaged with a range of European contexts and represented them to a transatlantic audience, both on the continent and back home. And rather than reaffirming or supplanting any particular canons, I emphasize the co-construction and mutual dependence of particular modernist formations. To do so, I pin down a few crucial nodes of cultural activity that operated at the center and on the margins of modernist discourse networks: the Black Atlantic of the Harlem Renaissance; transatlantic 'little magazines'; and expatriate writers who were also publishers, editors, and s*alonnières*. But I also consider the technologies, expressions of popular culture, and indeterminacies of race, ethnicity, gender, and class that emerged as particularly "American" tropes of industrial modernity in these exchanges. Transatlantic networks challenge us to ask precisely what we mean by "US modernism in Europe" – and engaging with any of them produces complicated, sometimes counterintuitive responses. For those I discuss in this chapter, it meant embracing, slightly anxiously, the indeterminacies of the Machine Age and constructing a new mode of "being American" in Europe.

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Four months into her funded sabbatical from Howard University to study art in Paris, Gwendolyn Bennett, a rising star of the Harlem Renaissance, spent a rare free moment switching her attention between the novels of Carl Van Vechten and the countryside on the outskirts of Paris. She pondered her return to America, and the prospect of meeting the novelist, like so many of her friends had done. Writing in her diary on 27 September 1925, she concluded that she would meet Van Vechten, "if his enthusiasm for colored folks lasts," but she wondered if his infatuation would be short lived. She was intensely ambivalent about "rules of attraction" that railroaded Black culture

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into a primitivist binary, with "colored folk" and white folk swapping roles as "man" and "beast," depending on what side of the color line the observer/observed happened to be on – and what, precisely, was at stake.[3] As an influential reviewer and illustrator as well as poet and fiction writer, Bennett operated on both sides of the Atlantic, and was acutely aware of the indeterminacies negotiated by fellow writers of the Harlem Renaissance, including Alain Locke, Claude McKay, and, as I discuss shortly, Langston Hughes. Writers, artists, and critics alike had slotted the angular, mechanized forms of jazz alongside African sculpture and Cubism into the jigsaw framework of modernism. With it, dialectics of race, class, gender, and sexuality accentuated political narratives of self-determination latent in modernist expression, and urgent in Black diasporic culture, as an important component of Black Atlantic modernity.

When she returned to America in the summer of 1926, Bennett drew on her sabbatical in Paris to energize the print cultures of the Harlem Renaissance. For instance, her short story "Tokens" was published in Charles Johnson's 1927 anthology *Ebony and Topaz*. It was a Jazz Age paean to the "Negro entertainer's heyday" in "Paris after the World War," which was falling out of vogue with tragic consequences for the performers.[4] Written toward the end of her stay in Paris, the story pulses with the legato cadence and elegiac tones typical of her Parisian poems, and embedded the "endlessly flowing" Seine in its elliptical prose structures. Less formally experimental than "Tokens," but in subject matter far more daring, "Wedding Day" was Bennett's contribution to Wallace Thurman's iconic 1926 *Fire!!* magazine. The story details the experience of the expatriate African American boxer, trainer, and jazz musician Paul Watson. Jailed for shooting two white Americans who racially abuse him, he laid "siege against the American white person who [brought their] native prejudices into the life of Paris."[5] The advent of World War I occasions his release, and after serving he becomes engaged to Mary, a white American prostitute who stands him up on their wedding day. Class, of course, is important to Bennett's narrative, because Mary's lower social status makes her betrayal of Paul almost entirely about race. Neither Paul's violence nor his love could erase the color line that he too had imported from the US. Rather than zones of liberation,

[3] Gwendolyn Bennett, *Heroine of the Harlem Renaissance and Beyond: Gwendolyn Bennett's Selected Writings*, ed. Belinda Wheeler and Louis J. Parascandola (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2018), 182–3.
[4] Bennett, "Tokens," in *Heroine of the Harlem Renaissance*, 53–7, p. 53.
[5] Bennett, "Wedding Day," in *Heroine of the Harlem Renaissance*, 46–52, p. 47.

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technology and "jazzbandism" (the cultural mélange of contemporary energies expressed by jazz music) are inescapable articulations of racial difference for Paul: in his imagination the Metro he rides home from his failed wedding becomes a shrieking Jim Crow rail car, turning the liberating rhythms of his profession into an oppressive din.[6] Bennett's deft negotiation of the Black Atlantic offsets, rather than cloaks, her lyrical accounts of Paris with her polemical social critique.

Like Bennett, Hughes had glimpsed the waning energies of transatlantic "jazzbandism" long before they were spent. And like Toomer, he kept his eyes trained closely on the ensembles of American industrial modernity, not just its attention-grabbing soloists. For Hughes, synecdoches of US culture such as jazz, automobiles, and skyscrapers articulated its social hierarchies through deeply entrenched socio-technical infrastructure – but, in some cases, also suggested that they were open to revision. In poems like "Railroad Avenue" or his 1926 essay "The Fascination of Cities," the repetitive, jarring motions of the mass-transit system resonate with the daily articulations of racial hierarchies in America's working-class neighborhoods – uncomfortable and unrelenting, but absorbed into the daily routine until something goes wrong, or some boundary is transgressed. Conspicuously, European cities do not exert this hold on Hughes, and, unlike Bennett's character Paul, he can escape, however briefly, "into the living streets" of Paris, despite the hardships he experienced there.[7] The American cities grant him no such escape, but rather a compulsive desire to measure their claustrophobic intensities against the more liberating zones he experienced abroad in the 1920s.

Hughes traveled extensively through Africa, Europe, and Russia in the 1920s and 1930s, and tourism became a powerful motif in his social critiques. In his 1925 poem "Jazz Band in a Parisian Cabaret," the city's night life epitomizes the social "leveling" Bennett mentioned in "Wedding Day." Hughes describes "dukes and counts" interacting with "whores and gigolos," alongside "the American millionaires" and "school teachers / Out for a spree," where regional accents are no barrier to sexual liaisons. However, for Hughes, the music "laughs and cries at the same time."[8] In this sense, the social mixing Hughes observed in France is analogous to the permissive

[6] See Jed Rasula, *Acrobatic Modernism from the Avant-Garde to Prehistory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 256–7.

[7] Langston Hughes, "The fascination of cities," *Crisis* 31.3 (January 1926): 138–40, pp. 138–9.

[8] Langston Hughes, "Jazz band in a Parisian cabaret," in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, ed. Arnold Rampersad (New York: Vintage Classics, 1995), 60.

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contact zones that sprang up in Harlem around the same time; and, indeed, African Americans themselves often served as ciphers for those zones. As Ch. Didier Gondola has argued, "[i]n this schema, racial characteristics are obliterated while their cultural and social features are overemphasized."[9] The tangible reprieve from racial prejudice that African Americans experienced in France was purchased at the cost of tacitly endorsing the primitivist tropes and essentialism that their otherness made desirable. It also ignored the colonial racism meted out by French authorities to Black people who existed outside the cultural bubble that many African American artists describe in France (to say nothing of Black experiences in France's extensive colonial territories).[10] The "spree" Hughes describes in "Jazz Band in a Parisian Cabaret" is therefore a self-consciously delimited, tenuous and temporary – and, as he would explore in other works, ultimately corrosive – phenomenon.

In poems such as "Park Benching," Hughes reveals the desperate circumstances of some workers who navigated the boom-and-bust Jazz Age economy. "I've sat on the park benches in Paris / Hungry," the speaker intones, just as Hughes did between stints as a dishwasher in Le Grand Duc cabaret in 1924, when he had "been told: / There are no jobs."[11] Published in *Workers Monthly* in 1925, "Park Benching" is typical of his radical folk poetry, related to but distinct from the sophisticated iteration of modernism Hughes was developing. The latter mobilized critiques of modernist primitivist and colonialist tropes from the inside, as it were – and often combined formal experimentation and overtly revolutionary poetics. For example, his 1927 poem "I Thought It Was Tangiers I Wanted" articulates the delimited, caricatured relationships that result from travel motivated by economics and/or tourist desire. In later poems such as "Cubes," Hughes drew especially on his 1932 residence in Moscow, and his growing commitment to communism and anti-colonialism. Published in 1934, it invokes "the days of the broken cubes of Picasso," when the speaker "met on the boulevards of Paris / An African from Senegal." Hughes equates France with a brothel owner rolling "cubes of black and white" die in a colonial enterprise – a project that Hughes likens to a sexually transmitted disease spread violently

[9] Ch. Didier Gondola, "'But I ain't African, I'm American!': Black American exiles and the construction of racial identities in twentieth-century France," in *Blackening Europe: The African American Presence*, ed. Heike Raphael-Hernandez (London: Routledge, 2003), 201–15, p. 202.

[10] See Didier Gondola, "But I ain't African," 206–9.

[11] Hughes, "Park benching," in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, 49.

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from "the boss to the bossed."[12] By doing so, he dismantles the primitivist hierarchies of modernist aesthetics and reconstitutes its disjunctive forms into a new vanguardist poetics. The result, as James Ryan Kernan argues, is a "revolutionary dialectic with a commitment to a pan-African collective that is anything but homogeneous."[13] But it is also a major revisioning of Hughes' own modernist project, which sets the capacious structures of avant-garde versification against the strictures of agitprop activism. In the process, he fashions a multivalent poetics capable of expressing his complex subject position.

Hughes' and Bennett's experiences as Black modernists in Europe reinforce the historically and personally contingent particulars of transatlantic encounters: their stories cannot be contained by straightforward narrative tropes of "hybridity," "translation," and "transnationality," yet these concepts are, nevertheless, central to their role in defining US modernist projects in Europe. Harlem's Black Atlantic lays bare the transactional crises of representation of "American" "Modernism," only to mask them again via ciphers of race, primitivism, and cultural imperialism. However, African American experimental poets were among the first modernists to affirm indeterminate and multiple subject positions while generating a remarkably unified program – in their case, for racial uplift and justice.

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The cosmopolitan "exiles" are something of a modernist cliché: they appear in a variety of cultural narratives as globe-trotting eccentrics on the run from their homelands, tilting centers of artistic gravity from one city to another, and leaving a blizzard of periodicals and ephemera in their wake. Yet most American artists and writers in Europe experienced translocation as a temporary rather than permanent state, and even *émigrés* tended to view expatriation (whether consciously or otherwise) as an extension of their American identities, rather than (or not only as) a "rejection" of them.[14] The "little magazines" that they launched in Europe attempted to resuscitate that nascent identity by infusing it with more ancient cultural energies – and, alternately, using the European context and audience as a foil for inchoate American nationalisms. However, their transatlantic exchanges worked both

[12] Hughes, "Cubes," in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, 175–6.

[13] James Ryan Kernan, "The *Coup* of Langston Hughes's Picasso period: Excavating Mayakovsky in Langston Hughes's verse," *Comparative Literature* 66.2 (June 2014): 227–46, p. 234.

[14] Daniel Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene: The Labour of Translation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 3.

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ways. *Poetry*, *The Little Review*, and many other periodicals adapted the journalistic tradition of the "foreign correspondent" to exploit the appetite for news about "isms" that proliferated on both sides of the Atlantic, much to some critics' amusement. For example, Edmund Wilson wrote that "[i]n France [the expatriates] discover that the very things they have come abroad to get away from – the machines, the advertisements, the elevators and the jazz – have begun to fascinate the French at the expense of their own amenities."[15] The spectacle of modernists grappling with "American-ness" in Europe became a venerable theme of international modernism, and in some cases a metaphor for "being modern" in general.

In the summer of 1912, Ezra Pound wrote to Harriet Monroe, the editor of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, in advance of its first issue to ask, "[a]re you for American Poetry or for Poetry?"[16] Their correspondence landed Pound his first job as *Poetry*'s "foreign editor." His paradoxical stance in poems such as "To Whistler, American" typified the combination of self-effacement and adversarial bravado circulating in US expatriate modernist formations at the time, which pitted a nascent US culture against established European ones. He extolled the painter's example to those "Who bear the brunt of our America / And try to wrench her impulse into art" (and who, rather more disparagingly, "from that mass of dolts / Show us there's chance at least of winning through").[17] Prior to World War I, Pound served as America's major relay point for European and global (though mostly British and Irish) modernist poetry, and his contacts included F. S. Flint, Ford Madox Ford, Rabindranath Tagore, and W. B. Yeats. He sent their work to Monroe in Chicago along with new discoveries Richard Aldington and Hilda Doolittle, a fellow American expatriate better known as H. D., the premier *Imagiste*. The London "Vortex" may have spiraled around the high-modernist "Men of 1914," who included T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Wyndham Lewis, but in her imagist phase, H. D. epitomized its uniquely diachronic – or even classical – approach to vanguardism.

Indeed, the Hellenic orientation of much of H. D.'s early verse emblematized the imagists' riposte to the Italian futurists' utopianism, creating a modern world through sharp juxtapositions of classical themes and modern versification rather than by rejecting the historical altogether, as the futurists had done. Personae and classical allusion accentuated these strategies and

[15] Edmund Wilson, "The aesthetic upheaval in France," *Vanity Fair* (February 1922): 49–50.
[16] Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe, 18 August 1912, in Ezra Pound, *Selected Letters, 1907–1941*, ed. D. D. Paige (New York: New Directions, 1971), 9–10.
[17] Ezra Pound, "To Whistler, American," *Poetry* 1.1 (October 1912): 7.

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became integral parts of the imagists' polemic. H. D.'s "Hermes of the Ways" epitomized the "triple pathways" of Imagism: the angular geometries of Futurism and Cubism; the combination of unrhymed radical minimalism and an emphasis on visual culture inflected by French Symbolism; and an engagement with ancient versification, ranging widely (though selectively) across classical, medieval, early modern, and select nineteenth-century traditions.[18] Like its subject Hermes, H. D.'s poem acts like a messenger, using a classical subject to relay a psycho-sexual encounter between the "tangles" of the natural world and the rhythms of modernity to a specialized readership.[19] H. D.'s focus on gender and sexuality in imagist works such as "Sea Garden" and "Oread" foregrounded her queer and feminist poetics, but also articulated a central concern of literary modernism, particularly in World War I and its aftermath. H. D.'s imagist poetics simultaneously masked and highlighted her "otherness" – a position of cultural marginality that many modernists came to associate, in vexed and complex ways, with a sense of "American" difference.

As foreign correspondents for Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap's iconic journal *The Little Review*, Pound and John Rodker, like other critics, often selected writers with comparatively marginal subject positions to pin down a specifically "American" form of modernist writing – sometimes in chauvinistic terms. In his 1917 review of the second *Others Anthology of the New Verse*, Pound identified *"le temperament de l'Américaine"* with Marianne Moore and Mina Loy. Alongside his famous formulations of melopoeia ("poetry which moves by its music") and phanopoeia ("imagism, or poetry wherein the feelings of painting and sculpture are predominant"), Pound identified "logopoeia," or poetry that "is a dance of the intelligence among words and ideas," with "the arid clarity" of their American verse (the fact that Loy was British was perhaps his accidental allusion to the transatlantic foundations of American modernist projects).[20] Moore's "To a Steam Roller," first published in Harriet Weaver's London-based journal *The Egoist* in 1915, captured exquisitely the delicate irony, poised empiricism, and raw industrial power that Pound associated with US logopoeitics. With his tongue slightly in cheek, he cited the poem as a readymade "counterblast" to his reservations about her work, which he worried contained only "traces of emotion."[21] With a sly masculine end rhyme, Moore anticipates such reductive interpretations of

[18] H. D., "Hermes of the ways," *Poetry* 1.4 (January 1913): 118–20, p. 118.
[19] H. D., "Hermes of the ways," 120.
[20] Pound, "A list of books," *The Little Review* 5.11 (March 1918): 54–8, pp. 56–7.
[21] Pound, "A list of books."

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her poetics, and drily observes how "Sparkling chips of rock / are crushed down to the level of / the parent block" before quoting the American music critic Lawrence Gilman:

> Were not "impersonal judgment in aesthetic
> matters, a metaphysical impossibility," you
>
> might fairly achieve
> It.[22]

At a stroke, Moore extends a metaphor for the transatlantic industrial revolution to the American culture industry. The homogenizing force that Moore identifies with the steamroller correlates closely with the forms of aesthetic nationalism, linguistic standardization, and cultural nativism that impelled many American critics such as Royal Cortissoz to condemn "modernism" in the same terms as the immigrant "aliens" that they believed threatened the US.[23] Moore and the literary experimentalists of *Others: A Magazine of the New Verse* rejected both the exilic cosmopolitanism proposed by Pound in *The Little Review* and the regionalist modernisms of the Chicago Renaissance, which were often dogged by the nativist nationalism practiced by critics such as Cortissoz and Emmy Veronica Sanders. As *Contact*'s editors Robert McAlmon and William Carlos Williams later argue in their indirect riposte to Pound, "the delicate mechanisms" of Moore's poetry exemplified the "complex, refined and proven emotion" they identified with the American Machine Age, not the technocratic absence of emotion, as Pound complained.[24]

Yet the nativist critics were unconvinced. In a blistering review of Moore's work, Sanders, a New York-based Dutch lawyer and critic, mounted a stinging attack on US modernism in *Broom* – particularly "the extreme left wing of literary America – as represented e.g. by the *Little Review* and *Contact*." Sanders especially targeted "trans-Atlantic" poets such as Moore "whose own strength (and weakness) lies along city-bred, machine-made, sophisticated electric lines."[25] In such works, cities became showcases of racial and ethnic difference, on the one hand, and platforms for cultural leveling, on the other, which Sanders and other nativists feared intensely.

[22] Marianne Moore, "To a steam roller," *The Egoist* 10.2 (1 October 1915): 158.
[23] Royal Cortissoz, *American Artists* (New York: Scribner's, 1923), 18.
[24] Robert McAlmon and William Carlos Williams, [untitled introduction], *Contact* 2 (January 1921): 1.
[25] Emmy Veronica Sanders, "America invades Europe," *Broom* 1.1 (November 1921): 89–93, p. 89.

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In a telling (but probably accidental) appropriation of Moore's "Steam Roller" metaphor, Sanders later complained that in urban America, "[h]ybrid mixtures of a score of tongues" formed a "verbal patchwork" where "heterogeneous," "fluctuating," and "promiscuous" people become "flattened" "under the huge American steam roller."[26] Sanders directs her critique of oppressive homogenization at the masses instead of the cultural elites that Moore targets; yet for both writers, the "American steam roller," as a metaphor for nationalist standardization, is marked out as a threat. For Moore, it represented a concerted drive to destroy difference, but for Sanders, it signposted a technophilic mass culture that threatened to *incorporate* these alien cultures into (and to the detriment of) the dominant one, not remove them.

By invoking the raw industrial power of the steamroller, Moore and Sanders both tapped into a specific cultural narrative that connected technology to national identity. The "American technological sublime" linked experiences of transcendent inspiration, reverence, or dread directly to technological objects and ensembles.[27] However, these sublime narratives also relied on "techno-bathetic" discourses – countervailing scenarios that foreground the banality, fragility, and contingency of technology, and its implementation in culture.[28] In Sanders' critique of Moore's poem "Those Various Scalpels," for example, Sanders offsets the abstract dread that she associates with mass production by critiquing Moore's poem in techno-bathetic terms, condemning it as an "ingeniously constructed, intricate little piece of machinery, a dainty little thing with cogs and wheels and flashes of iron and steel." Yet to the localist modernists, that review would have been at least partially a compliment, because their logo-poetics thrived in the shadow of the technological sublime. In "To a Steam Roller," Moore deflates the pretentions of a sublime cultural juggernaut by identifying the wider ensembles it ignores. In the face of its homogenizing power, she sets up the complexity, diversity, and interconnection in the natural world (which she invokes with the "butterflies" that flit through the end of the poem) as a creative bulwark, which she withholds from the critical position associated with the steamroller. Moore does not reject technology but includes it as merely one part of a broader social ensemble, not its dominant element.

[26] Sanders, "Fourth of July firecrackers," *Broom* 2.4 (July 1922): 287–92, p. 288.

[27] David Nye, *The American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994), xvi.

[28] See Eric B. White, *Reading Machines in the Modernist Transatlantic: Avant-Gardes, Technology and the Everyday* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 5–22.

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Other poets, including the *Contact* group of Kay Boyle, Kenneth Burke, McAlmon and Williams, developed this approach in their 1920s projects. Unsurprisingly, however, Sanders' predilection for organicist aesthetics and a more straightforward cultural nationalism led her to praise another group: the "American minds" of "Randolph Bourne, Sherwood Anderson, Carl Sandburg," and Waldo Frank.[29]

Emerging as a prominent literary critic for *The Seven Arts*, Frank combined the technological sublime of Alfred Stieglitz with the nationalist sublime and Progressive cultural pluralism of Anderson, Bourne, and Sandburg. In his famous 1919 prose work *Our America*, Frank articulated this group's struggle to transcend what they perceived as the "unending chaos" of American landscapes by bringing them "clarity" and "form."[30] Like the localist vanguards of the *Others* and *Contact* groups, the Young Americans embraced "the luminosity of American materials"; the difference was that they often configured technology as a malevolent, "primeval" force that resulted in "American chaos."[31] Their brand of "mystical nationalism" attempted to surmount these divisions either by a phallogocentric union between the creative artist and the generative soil or a spiritual architecture built from "soaring curves" and steel girders.[32] However, this supposedly all-American product had important European components. In 1917, Frank had identified the *unanimisme* of the French writer Jules Romains as a way of transforming urban geography and technology into a conduit, rather than an inhibitor, of social harmony, resulting in a mystical experience and benevolent technological sublime. Hart Crane drew on this matrix of ideas in his major work, *The Bridge* (1930), to impart a coherent form on America's convulsive cultural history. From dirty streets and crowded transportation networks to the suburban and rural hinterlands beyond them, Crane and the Young Americans leaned more heavily on spiritual doctrine (and, in some cases, on an increasingly shrill nativism) to impose unity on their fragmented worlds. Yet like other modernists, they were also perversely dependent upon that fragmentation. The high modernist expatriates would carry that tension to new heights in the 1920s, while the late modernist formations that emerged in their wake would seek to transmute that nervous energy into something more affirmative.

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[29] Sanders, "America invades Europe," 92.
[30] Waldo Frank, *Our America* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 140.
[31] Frank, *Our America*, 146–7.
[32] Waldo Frank, "A prophet in France," *The Seven Arts* 1.6 (April 1917): 638–48, pp. 638–9; Frank, *Our America*, 192.

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Erudite, aloof, and anxiously attuned to the disjunctive forces of modernity, personae such as Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock and Pound's Hugh Selwyn Mauberly articulated a version of introspective cosmopolitanism that came to define the expatriate projects of US high modernists. Eliot's major work *The Waste Land* (1922) is an excellent example of these emphases, not least in the multiplicity of its published forms (which included tightly coordinated transatlantic publication in the periodicals *The Criterion* and *The Dial*, and annotated special editions by Boni and Liveright and the Hogarth Press). Such diverse print contexts echo the protracted and well-documented composition and editing process that Eliot undertook with Pound and Vivienne Haigh-Wood Eliot. The famous cuts made during that process take on an added significance in part because the poem itself addresses absence, loss, and metonymic fragmentation, in which the parts continually strain after an absent whole. Eliot's American difference similarly haunts the poem, and, though largely excised, references to US culture, and racial and ethnic difference, remain compound ghosts in its "human machine," haunting and shaping its structure and voices.[33]

The poem originally opened in Boston, with drunken revelers teetering between nightspots and brothels. They refer to "Irish blood" and being "treated" as "white" while vaudeville tunes and minstrel show songs course through the scene.[34] Eliot's preoccupation with racial, ethnic, and class difference takes on a peculiarly "American" inflection in this deleted section of *The Waste Land*. As Michael North has argued, for "exiles" such Eliot and Pound, US dialect and slang articulate a "natural and unaffected" language "by affronting English propriety," but they do so by denigrating the racial other. The effect was "to strike down . . . restrictive linguistic boundaries and social conditions and simultaneously to solidify boundaries whose loss [Eliot] deeply feared" (a process that mirrored the ways he tapped into, but also evaded, the Missouri drawl that marked out his own American difference in English society).[35] Yet for Eliot, racial difference became the primal modality of social difference, and so he used its strategies of representation to amplify gendered or class difference as well. In *The Waste Land* the product of this difference is alienation, which he extends to additional marginalized groups, from the British working classes to young professional women. The figure of

[33] T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1971), 140.

[34] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 4–5.

[35] Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 82–3.

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Tiresias, Eliot's prophetic "spectator," is an "Old Man with wrinkled female breasts" who inhabits these zones of alienation, and articulates the suppressed voices (present and absent) in the poem.[36] A composite persona manufactured from seemingly interchangeable parts, Tiresias is held together by a sublime ensemble of taxis, typewriters, and gramophones used by the "automatic hand[s]" in the poem.[37] If "[w]hat Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem," then what this figure does, and is, says a great deal about US expatriates' high modernism, and the ways it was shaped by their anxieties about expatriation.[38] "Throbbing between two lives," and between human and nonhuman worlds, Tiresias has unrestricted travel rights but no clearly defined identity of his own.[39] In 1920s expatriate circles, he might have carried a US passport.

The anxieties and indeterminacies of Machine Age America motivated some modernists to embrace the reactionary politics of the far right, and in the case of Pound and Lewis that included fascism. However, although not immune to these fears and the essentialist prejudices they often accompanied, the localist, Dadaist, and various late modernist formations that emerged in the second wave of American expatriation made these deep-rooted concerns and complexities central to their cultural projects. Williams' and McAlmon's journal *Contact* (1920–3), for example, seized upon the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey's claim that "the locality is the only universal" with which to foster an Americanist vanguard.[40] Following Moore's example, they eschewed the sublime rhetoric of standardization in favor of a bathetic focus on the contingent "contact zones" of US places. They also rejected nativist emphases on preserving ethnic and racial difference. Instead, they fostered an ethos of transactional international dialogue, which McAlmon took to a somewhat paradoxical extreme when he relocated to Paris in 1921. He and H. D.'s lover, the writer Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman), had recently entered a marriage of convenience to conceal their queer sexuality. As part of the arrangement, McAlmon received a regular income from the Ellermans' shipping fortune, making him an international literary magnate virtually overnight. In partnership with William Bird's Three Mountains Press, *Contact* became a synonym for deluxe editions central to several strands of American modernist writing. From 1922 to 1929 it published

[36] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 148, 140. [37] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 140–1.
[38] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 148. [39] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 140.
[40] John Dewey, quoted in William Carlos Williams, "A Matisse," *Contact* 2 (January 1921): 7. On localist modernism, see Eric B. White, *Transatlantic Avant-Gardes: Little Magazines and Localist Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

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works by Ernest Hemingway, Pound, Gertrude Stein, and Williams, as well as McAlmon's definitive transatlantic anthology *The Contact Collection of Contemporary Writers* (1925). Although largely forgotten today, McAlmon's own projects provide a useful gloss on the vanguardist work that emerged in the slipstream of high modernism.

In his 1926 extended poem "The Revolving Mirror," McAlmon creates a dazzling parade of "reckless American" figures reflecting (and reflecting on) expatriate life. "Not in Europe or America are we at home," his speaker complains, while also insisting that although deracinated, his expatriate community uniquely expresses the character of their provisional culture – a country of "Space / without tradition / or direction" that is "Swirled in the dynamic maelstrom." With their "Lithe voiced electricity," these cosmopolites function like "humansteeldust" – transatlantic conductors that relay new methods of understanding their American culture back home.[41] In *North America: Continent of Conjecture* (1929), McAlmon further explores how industrial modernity has changed not only the character but also the fundamental nature of US culture. He concludes that Americans *reorder* "Time as simultaneity of action" rather than *record* it as sequences of events (as Eliot did with his objective correlative).[42] In this configuration, American culture forms laterally, through rhizomatic activity and constant hybridization, rather than vertically, through accretion and arbitration. His point, in a way, anticipates Stein's claim that "[t]he United States is just now the oldest country in the world," because "it is she who is the mother of the twentieth century civilization."[43]

Although anxious, the results of the "Contact" experiments tended to produce generative rather than pejorative formulations of American industrial modernity. For McAlmon, that socioeconomic backdrop endorsed an aesthetic deployment of "a kind of perception, a directness of observation, a clear thinking, rather than a manner or a way of putting words, phrases, and ideas down."[44] For his friend and occasional collaborator Djuna Barnes, however, it meant just the opposite: for her, "[t]he truth is how you say it."[45] Barnes' use of pastiche, bricolage, and distortion helped define the late modernist techniques

[41] Robert McAlmon, "The revolving mirror," in *The Portrait of a Generation* (Paris: Contact Editions, 1926), 1–51, pp. 5–6.
[42] Robert McAlmon, *North America: Continent of Conjecture* (Paris: Contact Editions, 1929), 14, p. 29.
[43] Gertrude Stein, *How Writing Is Written*, ed. Robert Bartlett Haas (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1974), 51.
[44] Robert McAlmon, "The new American literature," *Outlook* 58 (1926): 191–2, p. 191.
[45] Djuna Barnes, [notebook entry], quoted in *Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes*, ed. Mary Lynn Broe (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), front jacket flap.

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that McAlmon had begun to explore. In works such as *Ladies Almanack* (1928), which McAlmon financed, Barnes probed the failures and omissions of both high modernism and American standardization by deliberately exaggerating their features (e.g., by including self-consciously faked "reproductions" of early modern woodcuts). She also shared a particular frame of reference; that is, the bisexual expatriate subject negotiating and contesting a world of essentialist, heteronormative binaries, with McAlmon and her literary network. *Ladies Almanack* was both a tribute to and satire of the primarily lesbian coterie of Natalie Clifford Barney, a prominent expatriate writer, *salonnière*, and feminist thinker who formed fruitful collaborations with numerous writers and artists. The text chronicles an insular, largely expatriate world, yet Barnes articulates her "truth" using textual and electronic technologies as a point of contact with her broader readership. When she complains that expressions of love between women can result in "twittering so / loud upon the Wire that one cannot / hear the Message," she concludes with an arabesque "And yet!"[46] Here, the signal is not necessarily lost in the noise: rather, the noise is part of the signal – a crucial component of her "how" – and she makes this argument hyperbolically literal with her flamboyant exclamation point. Breaking free of her contemporaries' penchant for cultural mourning, Barnes reclaims technologically mediated communication as a means of affirming the ambiguities emerging in her hyper-networked world.

As the 1920s drew to a close, the American expatriate Eugene Jolas and his magazine *transition* had shot to prominence as *the* major forum of modernist transatlantic debate. Based in Paris, and then in Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises, Jolas used the journal to foment a "Revolution of the Word." This utopian project attempted to surmount barriers of language and nation with an "esperanto of the subconscious" attuned to Machine Age technology as well as to ancient mythos from a wide range of cultures.[47] The Parisian expat scene remained central to this revolution, but it had many other tributaries, including what Jolas identified as the "sordid midwestern objectivism" of Hemingway and other Contact Editions authors.[48] Hemingway had traveled to Madrid, Seville, Ronda, and Granada to witness bullfighting, and his telegraphic, hyperrealist prose rendered this ancient ritual with Machine Age technicities.

[46] Djuna Barnes, *Ladies Almanack*, ed. Daniela Caselli (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 2006 [1928]), 46.

[47] Robert McAlmon, "Mr. Joyce directs an Irish prose ballet," *transition* 15 (February 1929): 126–34, p. 130.

[48] Eugene Jolas, quoted in Hugh Ford, "Foreword" to Charles L. P. Silet, *transition: An Author Index* (Troy: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1980), vii–x, p. x.

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The inter-chapters of *In Our Time* (1924) describe a matador's death by goring in cinematic distortions, with perspectives zooming in and out, and events running "faster and faster as when they speed up a cinematograph film."[49] Cinema technology uniquely captured the accelerating pace of modern life, and its capacity for violence and atrocity. However, the publisher and avant-garde visual poet Bob Brown subsequently proposed that this technological Revolution of the Word could also capture the subtle distentions of perception that were the special province of poetry. In fact, he invented a micrographic "reading machine" that would bolt avant-garde visual prosody onto telegraphic prose – an electro-mechanical, scrolling medium he called "the Readies," after the "talkies" in cinema, which he and his wife Rose continued to develop into the late 1930s.[50] *Readies for Bob Brown's Machine* (1931), his extraordinary self-published anthology of "sample" readies, was a "who's who" of the dwindling expatriate colonies dotted around France, Italy, and Spain, as well as an emergent group of American superrealists (a literal translation of "Surrealism" proposed by Nathanael West to distinguish US modernists' socially engaged experimental fiction from other global variants).[51] Inspired by the streams of texts that Brown imagined would flow in his motorized reading machine, James T. Farrell began experimenting with a free indirect discourse technique that caged the modernist stream of consciousness in the deterministic strata of naturalism and social realism. In the *Readies* anthology, it became a daring study of working-class Chicago neighborhoods; back in Chicago, it became the classic *Studs Lonigan* trilogy (1932–5), in which working-class subject positions became the central rather than a marginal issue of an emergent late modernist project.

Rather than eschewing political commitments, American superrealists, as well as objectivists, localists, and other leftwing writers, some from ethnic avant-gardes, combined them with experimental poetics. In his advocacy work for the Scottsboro Nine, Hughes had identified the power of revolutionary politics to connect modernist writers with other public figures to create genuinely cross-formational political pressure.[52] Such was the force of his

[49] Ernest Hemingway, *In Our Time* (Paris: Three Mountains Press, 1924), n.p.

[50] Bob Brown, "Appendix," in *Readies for Bob Brown's Machine: A Critical Facsimile Edition*, ed. Craig Saper and Eric White (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 153–208, p. 177.

[51] Nathanael West to William Carlos Williams, October 1931, quoted in Jonathan Veitch, *American Superrealism: Nathanael West and the Politics of Representation in the 1930s* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 50.

[52] See, for example, Hughes' collaboration with Nancy Cunard on *Negro Anthology*, ed. Nancy Cunard (London: Nancy Cunard at Wishart & Co., 1934).

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campaign that he also elicited a response from Toomer, who had largely withdrawn from his modernist project as he explored the mysticism of Georges I. Gurdjieff. Invoking technology as an oppressive force rather than a liberating energy, Toomer reminded his readership that "[m]ost of us at one time or another have been caught in a machine," and entreated them to "help liberate these boys who are caught."[53] Yet Hughes persisted in developing a partisan modernism when covering the Spanish Civil War for African American newspapers in 1937, which Bennett also advanced. In her unpublished manuscripts from the Depression to the start of World War II, Bennett joined Hughes in creating a powerful connection between Black working-class vernacular and socio-technical infrastructure, "[a]t work at machines .... Building America."[54] As the US modernists were forced back home by the Depression in the 1930s, their focus remained transatlantic, and global, as a means of identifying the unique components of their own Machine Age.

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One of the modernists who retreated from Europe in the early 1930s was Samuel Putnam. A translator, writer, and editor of the influential journal *The New Review* in France, he described the local infrastructures that supported his expatriate project in his memoirs:

> The absurd contradiction of things came home to me one day as I sat at my desk working on a number of [*The New Review*]. . . . From my window I could see in a field not far distant a peasant ploughing with oxen, and looking up, I caught sight of the dirigible. . . . The Communists in Germany had just polled six million votes. Hitler and his Storm Troopers were on the march, and in France there was uneasy talk of the possibility of a seizure of power by the Nazis. Did that peasant realize the distance of the Graf Zeppelin from his oxen – the distance and the nearness? If he did not, *I* ought to realize it. My semi-medieval retreat, my "isolation," was as false as the man-made "ruins" about me.[55]

Putnam explained that the "ruins" he described were the result of the municipal roof tax in the newly minted expatriate colony of Mirmande in France. As they moved from agricultural jobs to the city, families in the area began removing the roofs of their ancestral houses to avoid paying taxes on them, which in turn attracted artists who could live there cheaply and earn

[53] Jean Toomer, "The Scottsboro boys," in *A Jean Toomer Reader: Selected Unpublished Writings*, ed. Frederik L. Rusch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 137–8, p. 138.
[54] Bennett, "I build America," in *Heroine of the Harlem Renaissance and Beyond*, 115.
[55] Samuel Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress* (London: Plantin Publishers, 1947), 250.

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a living by depicting these "authentic" medievalist ruins for tourists. The conditions that sustained *The New Review* proved every bit as precarious as those in Mirmande, as the relationships among its internationalist editorial board (which had fallen out over Putnam's decision to remove Hemingway from a literary prize panel sponsored by the Italian fascist government in a gesture of appeasement) fell prey to national as well as local publishing concerns. Compared to the "daily Zeppelin" that Loeb associated with the frictionless transnationalism *Broom* sought to foster, the airship Putnam witnessed powerfully reasserted the reactionary nationalism the Axis powers harnessed in their imperialist aggression. The transatlantic circuits of the Machine Age often pitted discourses of standardization against those of increasing individuation – with steamrollers and delicate schematics proliferating to form a noisy ensemble, from which the experiments of literary modernism emerged. Rather than resolving such contradictions, transatlantic debates generated by US modernists in Europe added nuance and flair to them, unsettling expectations about where the margins and centers of culture lay in the interwar period.

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