

Transatlantic Transfer: Little Magazines and Euro-American Modernism

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At the end of its first year in existence, the little magazine *Broom* noted rather plaintively that it was “published in Rome, 3266 miles from New York, 4269 miles from Chicago and 6227 miles from San Francisco” (I. 385). Complaining in this way about the “distances which separate us from the Great Majority of our readers” made it sound a little as if the editors had been involuntarily exiled to Rome or that they had only recently discovered that Rome is not actually in the United States. At the very least, the masthead description of *Broom* as “An International Magazine of the Arts Published by Americans in Italy” makes it seem as if an existing American expatriate community has banded together to start an English-language magazine. But, as it happens, *Broom* was conceived in the United States by an editor who seemed implicitly to associate expatriation with the very idea of starting a literary magazine. In fact, it is hard to tell at this distance in space and time whether Harold Loeb decided to leave the United States so that he could start a little magazine, or whether he came up with the idea of starting a little magazine as an excuse to leave the United States. In any case, the two ideas were so inextricably associated in his mind that the obvious difficulties of editing and distributing a magazine so far from the vast majority of its readers apparently did not occur to him until it was too late.

Of course, Loeb was not the only editor of this time to take the counter-intuitive step of starting an Anglophone magazine in a non-English-speaking country. During the 1920s, *Broom* was joined by *Secession*, *Tambour*, *Gargoyle*, *This Quarter*, and *transition*, all published in Europe by expatriate Americans, by the *Little Review*, which moved from New York to Paris in 1922, and by the *Transatlantic Review*, started by Ford Madox Ford but managed at various

times by Americans, including Ernest Hemingway. At least two of these magazines, *Secession* and *transition*, were headed by editors who moved to Europe, as Loeb did, for the purpose of starting the magazine. In all three of these cases, the initial step of moving away from the English-language audience seemed not only sensible but necessary. As Eugene Jolas, editor of *transition*, put it in his autobiography, a magazine of the kind he proposed “could only be issued from the vantage point of Paris” (Jolas, pp. 85-86).

There were a number of immediate, practical reasons for these decisions, the most commonly cited of which was the lower cost of printing in Europe. According to Alfred Kreymborg, who was to be Loeb’s first co-editor, *Broom* ended up in Rome because “Italy was famous for its paper and typography and for the much greater inexpensiveness of production in general” (Kreymborg, p. 363). And it is certainly the case that *Broom* made much of its initial impact because of its rather grand and luxurious appearance. As it happened, however, operating in Rome, Vienna, Berlin, or Paris didn’t always turn out to be especially inexpensive. Kreymborg later claimed that publishing in Paris, at least, turned out to be just as costly as doing so in the US (p. 372). And *Broom* was never to solve the problem of distribution, which involved shipping large numbers of issues across the Atlantic, where they were frequently delayed and were sometimes damaged or lost (Loeb, *WIW*, p. 139). In the end, then, moving to Rome to start an English-language magazine didn’t turn out to be terribly practical after all.

For Loeb at least, certain impractical reasons had always been paramount in any case. When Loeb left for Europe he was in a very real sense running away from home, most especially from his relatives the Guggenheims and the American plutocracy they represented. Rejection of what he called “my mother’s family and its industrial achievements” had naturally turned into a kind of tertiary Ruskinism, which blamed “the ugliness of our cities and suburbs largely on

modern industry” (Loeb, *WIW*, p. 44). Such opposition to industrialism was a central article of faith in the arts and crafts crowd among which Loeb had been living, in a kind of rural commune outside New York City, and working, at the Sunwise Turn Bookshop. It was also, of course, a central plank in the platform of little magazines of the time such as *Seven Arts*, which had steadily editorialized against America’s spiritual and material ugliness (Hoffman, p. 89). To take one’s magazine away from the US altogether was simply an extension of this argument, an extension exemplified even more clearly by the case of Jolas, who was reportedly so discouraged by a convention of Shriners (or in another account of the Rotary Club) that he decided no magazine of the kind he wanted to edit could be published in the United States (Hoffman, p. 173; Jolas, p. 84).

For these editors, then, going to Europe was much the same as going back in time, away from the ugliness and sterility of modern American life. In literary terms, this meant escaping from the raw, undeveloped art world of the US, cramped by American Puritanism, to a world in which art had grown and prospered because it had always been respected. Matthew Josephson, who was to serve at one point as co-editor of *Broom*, later testified that “Many of us also felt the urge to travel abroad in order to continue our studies and learn what we could of the perfection the great contemporary Europeans had achieved in the arts” (p. 66). As Josephson admitted, this made the expatriate generation of the 1920s look a lot like earlier generations going back as far as Sargent and Whistler, who had come to Europe as a necessary step in learning to be artists (p. 6). The purpose of the expatriate little magazine in this context was to generalize this experience by transmitting European wisdom back to a hungry readership in the United States. As Loeb put it, he wanted to “make available to an American audience the creative work being done in other parts of the world” (Loeb, *CR*, p. 5). Even the magazines that conceived of this international

exchange in slightly more balanced terms tended to give the American side short shrift, as did the *Little Review* when it rather unboldly declared itself “the first magazine to reassure Europe as to America, and the first to give America the tang of Europe” (Morrisson in Kalaidjian, p. 24).

As it happened, however, reassuring Europe as to America didn’t turn out to be nearly as difficult as it might have been in the days of Henry James. In fact, Loeb was disconcerted and Josephson somewhat pleasantly surprised to find that most of the European intellectuals they contacted were full of enthusiasm for the very culture the Americans had just escaped. For example, Loeb describes a meeting with Marinetti in Milan: “I told him how much Americans looked up to Europe, to England, Russia, and France for literature, to Germany for music and to France and Italy for the plastic arts. In return, he burst into rhetoric extolling America. To his mind, nearly everything important in our day came out of the United States. He cited our skyscrapers, movies, jazz, even machinery and the comics” (Loeb, *CR*, p. 7). Later, in Rome, Loeb had the same experience with Blaise Cendrars: “I had to listen again to praise of things American: machines and jazz, comics and the cinema. It was odd sitting on a terrace in the ancient city hearing praise of a land so disparaged by its intellectuals” (Loeb, *CR*, p. 8).

Considering the fact that American popular culture had been a fad among European intellectuals for some time before Loeb’s arrival, it is actually his surprise that seems odd. After all, Francis Picabia had been gushing to New Yorkers about their skyscrapers and subways since his first visit to that city in 1913. Two years later, Marcel Duchamp arrived and declared America the “country of the future,” a pronouncement that was widely covered in the New York papers (Corn, pp. 52-53). Both men frequented some of the same literary and artistic circles as Loeb and Josephson had before moving to Europe. Nonetheless, the ironic shock they suffered was a common enough experience to be featured in a number of journalistic accounts of the time.

The most famous of these is probably Edmund Wilson's 1922 essay in *Vanity Fair*: "Young Americans going lately to Paris in the hope of drinking culture at its source have been startled to find young Frenchmen looking longingly toward America. In France they 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" (Wilson, *VF*, p. 49). Burton Rascoe was saying the same thing in the *New York Tribune*, where he described "the generation of writers [who] went to Europe after the hostilities and . . . found that, whereas Americans were turning to Europe for inspiration and guidance, the younger writers of Europe were looking toward America . . ." (Josephson, p. 256).

For the editors of little magazines who had come to Europe under the impression that America was constitutionally inimical to the arts, who had hoped to find in Europe an alternative to the mercantile Puritanism of their own country, intellectual *Americanisme*, facile and romantic as it may have been, presented a particular challenge. Watching it meet this challenge by turning to embrace the very culture it had meant to escape is one of the chief rewards of reading *Broom* today. But the difficulties thus faced by Loeb, Josephson, and others of their generation are also of some interest at this point because they are simply special, localized versions of difficulties always faced by little magazines publishing under the banner of literary modernism. For the little magazine is, by definition, in opposition to the culture of its time. As Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich put it in their foundational study of the institution, little magazines "usually come into being for the purpose of attacking conventional modes of expression" and are therefore "rebellious against the doctrines of popular taste" (p. 4). In a sense, the most perfect instance of the type is the "one-man magazine" such as Pound's *Exile* or Lewis's *The Enemy*, both of which announce an implacable opposition in their very titles (Hoffman, p. 27).

Recent scholarship has done much to show how frequently and variously modernist little magazines deviated from this classic type, and we are now much more familiar than before with publications such as Robert Coady's *The Soil*, a one-man magazine that differs in almost every way from the imperious isolationism of Lewis's *The Enemy*. Mark Morrisson has suggested that many little magazines of the early twentieth century resemble *The Soil* much more than they do *The Enemy*, embracing not only the products of mass culture but also the tactics and techniques of mass publication. However much this may be true, though, Loeb and Josephson clearly started out with the intention of producing a classic little magazine, one for which the adjective would indicate a difference from if not an outright opposition to the mass. The fact that they came to alter this intention on arriving in Europe provides an opportunity to see a very real tension, not just in modernist little magazines but also in modernism itself, between rejection and acceptance of mass culture, and to see how expatriation figured in American modernist attempts to manage that tension.

In its first year, *Broom* followed what was standard practice for little magazines of its type by recruiting as many European authors as it could. Kreymborg later blamed all this on Loeb's bias "toward Europe and established reputations," (p. 380), but even Loeb was disappointed with the results. Perhaps the most embarrassing of these contributions was an interminable and smugly self-serving series by Gordon Craig revealingly titled "Dedicated to the Enemy." In a specific sense, the title was meant to designate nearly everyone Craig had ever come in contact with, but in a more general sense it described the eternal war between art and the public. As Craig put it himself, "All the *artists* are in the Opposition all over the Earth" (I. 372). But this was not, in the pages of *Broom* at least, a minority opinion or one held only by European

writers of Craig's generation. Conrad Aiken made the same point in the very first issue of *Broom*, when he announced that art must be "opinionated and individual," and he seemed to give the new magazine its marching orders when he finished by declaring "Every artist, every critic, for himself, and oblivion take the hindmost!" (I. 38).

This uncompromising belief in the inevitable isolation of the true artist from everything and everyone else also expressed itself in the magazine's early hostility toward mass culture. Though the first issue led off with a reproduction of Joseph Stella's *Brooklyn Bridge*, it finished with what Loeb later called "the nearest thing to an editorial viewpoint" that *Broom* had in its early days. This viewpoint was contained in Emmy Veronica Sanders' essay "America Invades Europe," the very title of which puts it in an odd relation to the expatriate project. For Sanders is deeply concerned that just as America is beginning to show itself worthy of European regard, the tide is being turned in the wrong direction by an unholy alliance between French intellectuals and America's "left wing." Instead of countering American materialism by submitting to European models, these artists are dangerously glorifying a "panting, tonguelolling, movie-movie, electrically lighted braininess; true offspring of its parent, the Machine" (I. 91). Sanders finds these offensive tendencies in the *Little Review* and *Contact* and, astonishingly, in Marianne Moore, whom she singles out for special attack. The essay concludes with the pious hope that *Broom*, at least, will be strong enough to stand against the tide, to open wider avenues of contact between Europe and America, and dare "to run the terrible risk of being branded with that non-plus-ultra of modern stigmas: the adjective 'Georgian'" (I. 93).

Broom begins its publishing life, in other words, with a stern warning against the very alliance, that between French intellectuals and America's "left wing," that was to become its chief source of contributions. But Sanders' was not an isolated or eccentric viewpoint at this

time. Kreymborg published a letter from “one of the most distinguished of present-day American poets and critics” applauding her essay (I. 284), and though Loeb later took issue with both the essay and the letter, he admitted that at the time he was more or less in accord with the opinions of both (Loeb, *WIW*, pp. 77, 81). Well into its second volume, *Broom* was still publishing Sanders’ essays, including one entitled “Fourth of July Fire Crackers,” which is an extended complaint against the American mass audience: “The American world—which is the crowd world—has no sense of detail, no interest in detail, no love for it. Detail is the artist’s affair; not the crowd’s. . . . But the American spectacle is no longer bounded geographically. . . . it is everywhere—in Europe—in Japan—and soon among the South Pole penguins. Call it America, Democracy, the Crowd Mind, Rule and Worship of the Average, the Lower Middle Class Condition—names do not matter. It is the Spirit of *Numbers* as over against the Spirit” (II. 291-292).

One of the strangest aspects of *Broom* in its middle years is the way that contributions like this one, originating in America and yet full of bile against American popular culture, consort with contributions originating in Europe that take precisely the opposite point of view. The earliest of these is Jean Epstein’s essay “The New Conditions of Literary Phenomena,” published in April 1922, at the head of *Broom*’s second volume. In this essay, Epstein directs a special interest at the same social changes that cause Sanders so much pain. Speed in all its forms— in travel, in the rapidity of American films, in the pace of change in general— has, according to Epstein, transformed the world, making it more cosmopolitan and thus reducing the authority of traditional European culture: “the legendary geography of the old books is dead” (II. 4). A continuation of this essay was published in the same issue that contained Sanders’ “Fourth of July Fire Crackers,” so that the magazine was simultaneously lamenting the creeping

influence of the crowd mind on traditional European culture and claiming that the best representatives of European literature were those who had been influenced by the new world culture. Of course, it is not odd for a magazine to print opposing points of view. What is worthy of some remark, however, especially given the motives that brought *Broom* into being in the first place, is that the first of these viewpoints should have been promoted primarily by American authors and the second by Europeans.

For it was an especially notable feature of *Broom* in its middle years that modern civilization in general and American popular culture in particular were reintroduced into the magazine by European intellectuals. Perhaps the first hint of this tendency came in January of 1922 when the third issue of the magazine included a reproduction of Fernand Leger's famous prints of Charlie Chaplin. The same issue included Loeb's translation of Cendrars' "Profound Today," which declares "The capitals of Europe are in the trajectory of their inertia." Cendrars' prose-poem works itself up into a self description that includes, among other things, the lines "Zephyr Beef; Eureka Coffee. . . . In my rocking chair, I am like a negro fetich, angular, under the heraldic electricity. The orchestra plays Louise" (I. 266). Machine culture in general was represented in the magazine by the Futurist Enrico Prampolini. And even as late as the fifth volume, published when Loeb had resigned and new editors had moved the magazine back to New York, American cinema was introduced to *Broom's* reader by Philippe Soupault (5. 65-69).

One major exception to this trend, and a significant phenomenon in its own right, is the conscious mimicry of *The Soil* that helped *Broom's* editors manage their about-face in regard to American popular culture. In his later years, Loeb would claim that he was not acquainted with Coady's magazine (Loeb, *CR*, p. 9), but Josephson maintained that he and Loeb had thought of Coady as "an important precursor" and that *The Soil* was in fact the strongest influence besides

“the new men of France and Germany” on what he called “the new ideology” of *Broom* in its middle years (Josephson, p. 190). The result is a couple of issues in the third volume of *Broom* that look like *The Soil* resurrected, spruced up, and made a little more conventional. The debt to Coady is confessed at the beginning of the October 1922 issue in an extended eulogy by Robert Alden Sanborn. The various enthusiasms that made up Coady’s aesthetic—industrial machinery, movie serials, Nick Carter novels—are identified in this essay and then followed up in the next two issues of *Broom* almost as if they were a recipe. Industrial machinery, as photographed by Prampolini, features on the cover of the October issue and in the photographs by Paul Strand that are reproduced throughout the November issue. The same issue included Strand’s essay, “Photography and the New God,” an important statement of the machine aesthetic, which identified it particularly with American culture. The notion that industrial machines are “moving sculpture,” a favorite idea of Coady’s and one that inspired many pictorial layouts in *The Soil*, reappears not just in Sanborn’s eulogy but also in Loeb’s essay, “The Mysticism of Money,” which had appeared in the previous issue. Loeb explicitly credits Coady in the same essay when he cites the Nick Carter serials as signal examples of a “new narrative technique” (III. 125). A couple of years later, in its fifth volume, *Broom* would come to look a lot more like *The Soil*, when a whole series of movie stills were included with Sanborn’s article on “Motion Picture Dynamics,” but in its middle years there was a distinct conflict between the aesthetic imported from *The Soil* and the staid, even conservative appearance of *Broom*. The very desire for rich-looking but inexpensive printing that brought Loeb to Europe in the first place conflicted with Coady’s aesthetic, which expressed itself in *The Soil* as a scrappy, lively, but rather sloppy magazine layout.

Reliance on Coady's example was obviously crucial in helping Loeb and Josephson figure out how to present modern American materials in their magazine. At the same time, this dependence on another editor's quite particular and individual style exposed how thin and belated was their enthusiasm for these materials. Though an approach to modern culture mediated through Coady may have seemed a little more genuine to these American editors than one mediated through Marinetti or Cendrars, it was not in fact any more original. When the editors came to explain their "new direction" in essays of their own, then, the thinness of their commitment and the mixture of motives behind it began to appear.

To some extent, *Broom* has come to be known for these course-correcting essays, written by Loeb and Josephson as the magazine struggled to enunciate what Josephson called their "new ideology" (Josephson, p. 190), partly because they seem important statements of a generational attitude toward modern industry and its culture. But these essays—"Foreign Exchange" and "The Mysticism of Money" by Loeb, "Made in America" and "The Great American Billposter" by Josephson—are actually more memorable for their confusion and conflict than for the clarity of their ideology. This is true even of the first of them, "Foreign Exchange," which Loeb wrote in order to announce and explain the magazine's rather dramatic shift in focus. In an indirect and impersonal way, the essay tells the story of Loeb's own awakening to American popular culture under the influence of Europe. The essay begins by indicting America for the "economic oppression and spiritual coercion" of its artists, for a despotism that explains why so many artists have had to perform a reverse pilgrimage to Europe (II. 176). But, as Loeb tells it, the "America regarded from France is not the same America that bustles one from subway to elevator" (II. 178). Actually, what has changed is not the bustle and rush, which are merely Loeb's metaphors for economic oppression and spiritual coercion, but the significance of these things, transfigured

by European enthusiasm: “Frenchmen who have never smiled at the statue of liberty still share this enthusiasm for the land of hustle . . . The ambitious American writer who wishes to hear the new literary revival acknowledged, will be told that American advertising, moving pictures, and architecture lead the world” (II. 178).

As an ambitious American writer who had come to Europe more or less to escape “the land of hustle,” Loeb feels this rebuke almost viscerally. In a revealing metaphor, he describes the visionary and idealistic writer of the time as a “maimed pedestrian gazing up at the intestines of the auto truck which is crushing his leg” (II. 180). But it is really another metaphor, the title metaphor of the essay, that exposes the actual cost to Loeb. The metaphor of “foreign exchange” identifies the original impetus for American expatriation to Europe, the low exchange rate. As Loeb says in his first paragraph, this economic imbalance has severely limited American exports to Europe, because they are too costly. But writers and artists, as he says, are the “one commodity” that has been “reversely affected” (II. 176). That is to say, the value of American writing has actually fallen in Europe, while the value of its industrially generated exports has risen. The “exchange” that has taken place on foreign soil is the reversal of value and prestige that has placed a movie serial above the writings of, say, Sherwood Anderson. Of course, it is the metaphor itself that confesses the most fundamental reversal, which is signified by Loeb’s ironic willingness to consider artists as a “commodity.” What has been lost on foreign soil is a whole value system separate from commercialism.

What comes to the surface in the essay, then, is one of the contradictions behind the American expatriate avant-garde, which had ridden its way to Europe on the crest of American economic power, using a more or less unearned economic independence, which it tried to figure as if it were the traditional independence of art from economics. When European intellectuals

extol America's industrial products, they are not just challenging the taste of American expatriates but also forcibly reminding them of their own dependence on the system they had disdained. The difficult task that Loeb tries to accomplish in *Broom*, then, is not just to reverse his earlier negative attitude toward American popular culture, but also to determine a system of value in which the economic power of that culture might be re-appropriated for art.

This is the purpose of Loeb's most extensive and most intriguingly confused essay, "The Mysticism of Money," which was published in September 1922. The essay begins by attacking the very point of view that had brought Loeb to Europe in the first place: "The criticism of America by American intellectuals which has been growing in geometrical progression since the early years of the century, has become, I believe, a serious menace to American artistic expression" (III. 115). The danger, as Loeb identifies it, is that in paying homage to Europe and disdaining their own popular culture, American intellectuals will miss the more vital and vigorous art growing up under their very noses. In fact, Loeb argues, tying himself in a tight logical knot, American intellectuals have been so blind to their own culture that "America had to wait for Europe to extend this aesthetic discovery" (III. 121). So that, as it turns out, only those Americans who had fled American culture for Europe in the first place were in a position to appreciate what they had left behind.

Loeb ends his essay by pushing this conundrum to its limits, arguing that the American people in general do not appreciate the great art they are in the process of creating: "The American people, as is true of all peoples, do not appreciate the expressions of their time for artistic reasons" (III. 130). Others were making the same point at about the same time in somewhat sharper terms. Wyndham Lewis, who wrote much of *The Enemy* while traveling in the United States, noted smugly in the second volume of his magazine that the American people

were quite indifferent to the “Babylon” that was causing such a stir among certain European artists (II. 26). Oddly enough, it is Lewis who calls on actual American experience in order to disparage American popular culture, while Loeb explicitly argues that proximity to America’s products blinds one to their aesthetic virtues. In other words, the distance provided by a European point-of-view is not only convenient but actually necessary to an aesthetic appreciation of American popular art. In one step, then, Loeb reinstates the European authority he is at such pains in this essay to disparage and derives a value for American popular culture which is dependent on its distance from the populace itself. It is an appreciation of American popular culture in which the meaning of both adjectives has been neatly reversed.

Loeb’s line of thinking was fairly common among the American expatriate writers for *Broom*, where general acceptance of his reversals made it oddly possible to merge Emmy Sanders’ disdain for the American crowd with European devotion to its products. As Gilbert Canan put it in his revealingly titled essay “Observations on Returning to the Remnants of Civilization”: “London, Paris and Berlin make us hope for something from the American eye, but the American, so far as I can make out, says: ‘Ah—it (Art)! Hell! Nothing!’ and leaves it to the camera . . .” (III. 219). In time, though, the tension between these contradictory attitudes emerged in the form of acute institutional disputes within the magazine, for Lola Ridge, who had been put in charge of its New York operations, resolutely resisted the growing glamorization of machine culture and commercial art. As Loeb put it in his autobiography, “To her, capitalism was corrosive, its products corrupt; I felt that capitalism was impersonal, its products magnificent” (Loeb *WIW*, p. 121). This disagreement apparently became a common feature of communications between the New York and European offices of *Broom*, the irony of which was heightened by the fact that the European office was dependent on New York for photos and other

fresh news to feed an enthusiasm that its American partners did not share. Finally, this disagreement became one of the factors leading to Ridge's resignation as New York editor (Loeb, *WIW*, p. 144).

In Loeb's later accounts, Ridge appears as some sort of crusty conservative, harboring within her a haughty resistance to the exciting trends in modern art. He seems quite innocently unaware of this, one of the major ironies of his magazine, that its expatriate contributors had to impose their enthusiasm for America onto a reluctant American office. And it is not at all clear in retrospect that Ridge's attitude was less progressive than Loeb's. When she argued with him that "the Machine Age of America should by all means be represented but *interpreted, not reported*" (Loeb, *WIW*, p. 124), she seems to have identified one of the real weaknesses of Loeb's approach. For Loeb goes so far in his appreciation of the products of American capitalism that he not only embraces capitalism itself but redefines it as an art form. The difference, he says in "The Mysticism of Money," between Europeans and Americans is that Americans see making money as an end in itself. Since it has no purpose beyond itself, making money is "one of the most idealistic faiths to which a grave people has ever been converted" (III. 119). Therefore, "creations whose sole purpose is to make money are far more satisfactory artistically than the hybrid combinations which share the old and new inspirations" (III. 123). At this point, Loeb has completely reversed the ideology that made him want to start *Broom* in the first place.

One odd manifestation of this reversal is that Loeb found himself temperamentally closer to his uncles, Solomon and Simon Guggenheim, than he did to radicals like Lola Ridge, and he was deeply disappointed when the Guggenheim's cost-benefit analysis of *Broom* came out decidedly negative. If products that are meant to make money are intrinsically more beautiful than those that are not, then a little magazine that cannot support itself, one that Uncle Simon

loftily dismissed as “a magazine for a rich man with a hobby” (Loeb, *WIW*, p. 155), must be accounted an aesthetic failure as well. Not only does the cultural capital earned by removing the magazine to Europe not convert to actual capital, but the failure of the magazine to equal the commercial products it glorified also robbed it of aesthetic value as well. As is confessed earlier in “Foreign Exchange,” writers and intellectuals are the only American products that fall in value when exported to Europe. Furthermore, it seems that when a little magazine sets out to celebrate more commercial products, its own stock can only fall. Awareness of this was ruefully represented when *Secession*, one of *Broom*’s competitors in Europe, printed a mock market report comparing little magazines and traditional industrial issues. American Brake and Tidewater Oil were up, but *Secession* itself was down 5 points (V. 29).

The tactic that *Secession* uses here, wielding irony in an attempt to get around the paradoxes of the little magazine’s condition at this time, was also used in *Broom* itself by writers who were also associated with or sympathetic to the other magazine. For example, Josephson’s essay “Made in America,” which appeared one issue after Loeb’s “Foreign Exchange,” actually takes the earlier essay as its satirical target. Josephson mocks Loeb’s conversion experience on arriving in Europe: “Good Heavens! America is now all the rage here: the American cinema, American shoes, skyscrapers, business methods, even American drinks. They hastily turn a somersault and proceed to reconstruct a United States experienced from a safe distance of three thousand miles through European spy-glasses . . .” (II. 266). Josephson extends his irony to expatriates who attempt to express their new attitudes by starting “a pretentious magazine” (II. 267). And though this would seem to suggest that Josephson himself is far too canny to be caught in these absurd poses, his essay does go on to propose something that looks pretty much like “a United States experienced from a safe distance of three thousand miles through European

spy-glasses.” Though he spends a fair amount of time disparaging contemporary French literature, he still takes from Apollinaire and Dada the motive to be “at least as daring as the mechanical geniuses of the age” (II. 269). And it is quite clearly the distance of the French example that allows him to argue on the one hand for work that “makes no bow to the public” and on the other for work that is sensitive to the “bewildering and astounding American panorama” (II. 270). Though Josephson was apparently attempting, by making fun of Loeb, to distance himself from the whole expatriate project, his essay was in fact an elaborately odd job application, and its contents were sufficiently in accord with the aims of the magazine that he soon became its associate editor.

With him, Josephson brought a tone of smart self-mockery that simultaneously identified and succumbed to the contradictions plaguing the American little magazine in Europe. In “The Great American Billposter,” the most notorious of his own essays, Josephson begins by disparaging the influence of European art on American writers and intellectuals and urges them to “plunge hardily into that effervescent revolving cacophonous milieu” (III. 305). At the same time, though, he admits rather ruefully that what makes American culture alluring is not immersion in it but rather the opposite: “an American who loves these things is conscious in Europe of a painful nostalgia, whereby the material environment of his country becomes highly tangible and provocative through its very distance from him” (III. 305). In this way, Josephson confesses that American commercial products appear as art only from the vantage point of Europe, thus making his point of view just as dependent on European experience as the one he is ostensibly attacking. Consciousness of this dilemma does not stop Josephson from also claiming that “the American business man, in the short daily time at his disposal, reads the most daring and ingenious literature of the age” even though this seems also to mean that the best literature

appears only in “newspapers and magazines having over a hundred thousand circulation” (III. 309). Such statements so thoroughly undercut the rationale for the little magazine of which Josephson was now co-editor that one suspects a subtle irony, but later autobiographical writings suggest that in this at least Josephson was quite serious (Josephson, p. 189).

There was irony enough in the contributions of Malcolm Cowley, one of the American expatriate writers who was closely associated with Josephson’s point of view. The most famous of his contributions is probably the short poem “Valuta,” which appeared in November 1922, when the magazine had moved to Berlin. The title of the poem is essentially synonymous with that of Loeb’s “Foreign Exchange,” and the situation depicted in it is fairly close to that of the essay. But Cowley clearly wants to exploit for irony’s sake the various meanings of his opening phrase, “Following the dollar.” At the outset it means merely that the protagonist of the poem has been going where the dollar is strong, following it to Germany as the magazine has just done as a whole. But following the dollar also means worshipping it, succumbing to it in a harshly ironic way, given that the original purpose of expatriation was precisely to achieve economic independence. More ironically yet, obeisance to the dollar estranges the protagonist from the vigorous, vital culture of his own country, “my land of cowboys of businessmen of peddlers peddling machinery to boil eggs three minutes exactly” (III. 250). This culture, back in the US, seems vital and independent, but the protagonist is permanently exiled from it: “I shall return to it never.” The ultimate irony is to be found in the sadness of this remark, which confesses that pursuit of cheapness has cut the protagonist off from all that is truly valuable in American culture. In other words, it is the expatriate intellectual who is simultaneously commercialized and rendered valueless, while true American culture reigns vibrantly at home, a place where commercial value is immediately and magically transformed into vital art.

Cowley was also to publish in *Broom* a number of other pieces that implicitly satirized the very enterprise that promoted them. “Young Mr. Elkins,” a short story of sorts that was published in December 1922 almost seems a slap at Harold Loeb. The protagonist grows up in the bosom of America, with all of its material advantages, and then mysteriously turns against the land of his birth, “declaiming against American grossness and American puritanism in one breath and as if they were the same thing” (IV. 53). Young Mr. Elkins starts magazines and foments literary movements, all based on criticism of America. “He dreams of Paris where he should like to be at home. A walled river with its bridges gilded and millions devoted to Art . . . He dreams of an America which has imitated the best of Paris and Berlin and London” (IV. 55). All along, young Mr. Elkins is deaf to the great American cacophony burgeoning up around him, and the story ends with him rising from his desk, “nervously,” to close the window (IV. 56). The differences between Mr. Elkins and Cowley himself are tiny but apparently crucial: though Cowley had also turned to Paris he had done so only to be returned to the very American culture that his character rejects. If the story is a satire on Loeb and even on *Broom* itself, it must be one written in favor of the later turn of that magazine toward a more positive view of America’s industrial civilization.

“Young Man with Spectacles,” however, is a very similar short story that seems to be satirical even about the later *Broom*. The young man in this piece is a slightly more savvy Mr. Elkins, with a slightly more complex set of reasons for coming to Paris. “If a poet wants to express American life,” he says, “he has got to live it first. He should live it, preferably, in Paris, where he can have some perspective on his own actions.” (III. 199). As part of this program, the young man also starts a literary movement with a French name. He is too smart, however, to start a little magazine, proposing instead to scratch or paint his poems on various different surfaces of

the urban landscape (III.200). Still, this additional sophistication does not save the young man with spectacles from an ultimate ennui or from Cowley's irony. He dithers to an end as isolated and pointless as that of Mr. Elkins before him.

The logical conclusion of all this elaborately indirect self-criticism was reached when the magazine returned to New York under the direction of Josephson and Cowley. Their contributions in Europe can thus be seen as part of a defensive attempt to manage the various different contradictions of their situation and that of the magazine itself. Criticizing their own presence in Europe, mocking their own dependence on European translations of American culture, Josephson and Cowley attempt to retrieve some of the independence they had originally hoped to achieve by moving to Europe in the first place. Though they may overtly embrace American popular culture, the ironic self awareness with which they do so helps to reassert some of the traditional superiority of the intellectual and to redeem some of the value lost in the exchange of goods with Europe.

The ultimate irony of their situation emerges, however, only in retrospect. Once they returned to New York, with *Broom* under their control and thus free to turn decidedly in the direction of American popular culture and machine art, Cowley and Josephson found themselves both harnessed to the industrial system in a very immediate way. To make ends meet, Cowley actually worked editing what Josephson described as "a vast catalogue which advertised machinery of all sorts" (Josephson, p. 262). Josephson himself ended up as a data analyst on Wall Street (Josephson, p. 274). And though Cowley maintained later that there was some freedom in being thus "stripped of their ambitions" (Cowley, p. 204), the lives they led within the maw of American business bore little resemblance to the lively and vigorous fantasy they had

promulgated for the European issues of *Broom*. Loeb spent the rest of his life as a government administrator.

In retrospect, the contribution made by the magazine also looks quite different. Its most considerable single achievement was probably the publication of Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, which means that it succeeded best at its very first and most conservative ambition, to introduce significant European masters to the American audience. According to Hoffman's rather cruel summary, *Broom* can be credited with introducing no new American writers, for all the now famous names that appeared on its table of contents—Stein, Cummings, Stevens, Moore—had long since appeared in other magazines. In its layout and overall style, it succeeded best when it looked most like *The Soil*, so that even at its most outrageous it was not particularly original.

Finally and perhaps most ironically, the single most significant American work to appear in *Broom* was almost certainly the six chapters of William Carlos Williams' *In the American Grain* that were published between January 1923 and the final issue in January 1924. For the picture given of American-European relations in this work is quite different from that promulgated by any of *Broom*'s editors or essayists. Because of its rather quick demise early in 1924, *Broom* published only the first six segments of Williams' history of America, only those chapters, in other words, having to do with its exploration and conquest by Europe. The tone of these chapters, and to some extent of the whole work, is set in the first line of "The Destruction of Tenochtitlan," the first selection to appear in *Broom*: "Upon the orchidean beauty of the new world the old rushed inevitably to revenge itself after the Italian's return" (IV. 112). The general topic of these chapters, then, is Williams' favorite topic: the destruction of the beauty of the New World by cruel and powerful traditions of the old. The bulk of the Tenochtitlan chapter is taken

up with the great set piece on Cortez' demolition of that city: "Streets, public squares, markets, temples, palaces, the city spread its dark life upon the earth of a new world, rooted there, sensitive to its richest beauty, but so completely removed from those foreign contacts which harden and protect, that at the very breath of conquest it vanished" (IV. 115).

Williams' conception of transatlantic relations, it is easy to see, is quite different from that of Loeb or Josephson. In fact, he seems to make reference to his editors in the final section of *In the American Grain* to be published in *Broom*, "The Fountain of Eternal Youth." In parts of this chapter, Williams speaks in the voice of a Carib, about to be exterminated by the invading Spanish: "Fierce and implacable we kill them but their souls dominate us. Our men, our blood but their spirit is master. It enters us, it defeats us, it imposes itself. We are moderns—madmen at Paris—all lacking in a ground sense of cleanliness" (V. 74). That these madmen in Paris are American expatriates who have lost their originality and freshness in Europe is made clear in a later chapter of *In the American Grain* in which Williams quickly recounts his six week trip to Europe, made in 1924. Amid the expatriate crowd, Williams says, "I felt myself with ardors not released but beaten back, in this center of old-world culture where everyone was tearing his own meat . . ." (*IAG*, p. 105). When he comes to speak to Valery Larbaud, Williams becomes an Aztec himself, "The lump in my breast hardened and became like the Aztec calendar of stone which the priests buried because they couldn't smash it easily . . ." (*IAG*, p. 107). He feels Larbaud as a latter-day conquistador come to conquer his internal city, and he shrinks away in self-conscious resentment and fear.

Williams, in other words, offers a version of American culture unmediated by Europe, old or new, a version that explains the current vigor of American culture by reference to its own past, especially those episodes in which it most resisted "foreign contacts." At times, his

contributions seem a conscious rebuke to writers like Loeb or Josephson who were maintaining that American life could best be viewed from the vantage point of Paris, Rome, or Berlin. Whatever strengths or weaknesses it may have on its own, Williams' point of view does show up the way that *Broom* used its European distance to reimpose a conventional aesthetic disinterest virtually identical to the one they thought they were escaping.

Of course, Williams' chapters were chosen and published by these same editors, and this is why the study of little magazines is both difficult and useful. Even a little magazine like *Broom*, which was published over a fairly short period of time by a reasonably like-minded group of editors, is full of disparate voices and points of view. Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich include *Broom* in their chapter on the "*Tendenz* Magazine," a kind of publication begun to promote a particular literary, social or political program. As the chapter makes clear, most such magazines had a difficult time defining and then sticking to a single set of principles, no matter how loudly they might be stated at any particular time. But what to make of a *tendenz* magazine where the most considerable contributions—in *Broom*'s case, those by Pirandello, Stein, Stevens, Moore, and Williams—have almost no connection to the policies of the editors? Do we favor programmatic statements over literary works because they are easier to paraphrase and interpret, or do we concentrate on those literary contributions that have traditionally brought us to the magazines in the first place?

Such interpretive difficulties are, however, the real source of current interest in little magazines, because it is in their various, contradictory, communal messiness that they most resemble modernism itself. Reading a little magazine like *Broom* is much like reading a movement, where sorting out competing voices is one of the basic tasks of interpretation. In formal terms, a little magazine is a lot like a modernist work in itself, full of quick cuts and

inexplicable transitions, quotes from outside, even visual representations of other art forms. In the particular case of *Broom*, the magazine recapitulates the attempt of many modern works to incorporate in their mix influences from and instances of popular culture. Watching its editors tie themselves in knots while trying to do so, seeing in action the considerable tension between the almost foundational distance of the little magazine and a modern desire to be up-to-date and relevant, is to learn at least a little about the similar tensions within the modern movement at large.

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