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THE TRANSATLANTIC REVIEW

THE ROLE PLAYED IN LITERARY MOVEMENTS by magazines and reviews is often overlooked, and literary historians tend to forget that without their existence, literary movements could hardly exist at all. Journals specialising in criticism are generally of less importance since their contributors are normally not artists; but those magazines and reviews that devote most of their space to imaginative literature not only provide an outlet for artistic production but in a real way create the sort of atmosphere in which new ideas and new methods can best flourish. Literary magazines of this type are often short lived, but even those that exist only for a year or so provide, if they are edited intelligently, a forum in which writers can express themselves with freedom and honesty, released from the pressures of altering their work for commercial tastes.

Certainly one of the liveliest literary movements of this century was the one centring on Paris during the 1920's which gave to the world some of the best work of men such as Joyce, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, and E. E. Cummings. Many magazines and reviews contributed to this movement, amongst them *The Little Review* and *transition*, but perhaps the most interesting of all was one called *The Transatlantic Review*, which was edited by the English novelist and poet, Ford Madox Ford. Just turned fifty by the time he moved to Paris, Ford had already made a considerable reputation for himself as the man who collaborated with Joseph Conrad, as the author of *The Good Soldier* and as the editor of *The English Review*, a magazine published under his aegis in London from 1908 to 1910. This review may be said without exaggeration to have been one of the greatest literary periodicals ever published. Month after month it issued the best work of men like James, Bennett, Conrad, and Wells, while also introducing such new writers as D. H. Lawrence, Norman Douglas, and Wyndham Lewis. The reputation Ford had gained as editor of this magazine made him seem to many readers to be the most suitable person to start a new review in Paris during the 1920's.

When Ford moved to Paris in late 1923 he had, however, no intention of becoming an editor. He was simply eager, after a winter of relative isolation in the South of France where he had finished the first of the Tietjens novels, to enjoy for a spell the atmosphere of a metropolis. But he soon found that his plans were to be changed for him.

One of the first people Ford met upon his arrival was his brother, Oliver Hueffer, who was also a writer but who often published his novels under the curious pseudonym of "Jane Wardle". The Hueffers had a large flat in the Boulevard Arago and, at the time of his brother's arrival, Oliver had just started a new literary magazine called *The Paris Review*, which was being supported by a group of French businessmen. Shortly afterwards Ford encountered his old friend, Ezra Pound, who, when he heard of Oliver's review, expressed interest in it and suggested that Ford, as editor of the old *English Review*, should himself start a magazine. He even produced a White Russian colonel to act as business manager in hopes that a Czarist press that existed on Montmartre would be made available to the review.

At this juncture, Oliver Hueffer decided to return to London. Before leaving, however, he sublet his apartment to Ford and proposed to the French backers of his magazine that Ford succeed him as editor. At a meeting subsequently called between the French guarantors and Ford, Pound, and the White Russian colonel, Ford unfortunately used the somewhat haughty manner he often reserved for commercial people, and the colonel suddenly accused the businessmen of being communist inspired. After that, the French abruptly closed the meeting.

With the withdrawal of financial support, it now appeared that there would be no new literary magazine in Paris, but Ezra Pound continued his agitation for it and claimed to have a whole supply of talent simply waiting for the opening of the venture. By this time, Ford himself was attracted by the idea:

It seemed to me that it would be a good thing if some one would start a centre for the more modern and youthful of the art movements, with which, in 1923, the city, like an immense seething cauldron, bubbled and overflowed. I hadn't thought the task was meant for me. But a dozen times I was stopped on the boulevards and told that what was needed was another *English Review*.¹

At this point, John Quinn, a well-to-do American lawyer and bibliophile, who was a friend of Pound's, offered to put up half of the money if Ford would raise the rest. This action turned the balance of the review, and a limited company was formed of which Ford, Quinn, and Pound were to be directors, with Stella Bowen, Gertrude Stein, Natalie Barney and others as shareholders.

Since Ford had always believed in the existence of an international "Republic

of Letters", he decided to call the magazine *The Transatlantic Review*, and in a prospectus sent round to possible contributors, he outlined its purpose:

The Transatlantic Review . . . will have only two purposes, the major one, the purely literary, conducing to the minor, the distinterestedly social. The first is that of widening the field in which the younger writers of the day can find publication, the second that of introducing into international politics a note more genial than that which almost universally prevails. The first conduces to the second in that the best ambassadors, the only non-secret diplomatists between nations are the books and the arts of nations

The Conductors and Proprietors of the Review selected Paris as its home because there is no other home possible for a periodical which desires to spread comprehension between the three nations [England, France and America] They are, besides, out principally after young literature: there is no young man, be his convictions what they may, who, if he have saved up his railway fare and sixty centimes, will not fly to Paris and cry: "*Garçon, un bock!*" The point is that . . . you don't from here have to write to Oklahoma for contributions: from all the other proud cities you must²

Like *The English Review*, the new *Transatlantic* was to be devoted almost entirely to imaginative literature. Ford was not interested in what he called "solemnised and portentous journalism" on such subjects as "political economy, philology, industrial finance, housing questions, municipal trading, fiscal policy, bibliography or the illegitimate birth-rate, psychotherapeutics or even international football, the cursory persusal of semi-official utterances on such subjects passing for an intellectual occupation. . . ." Instead, his purpose was to "put before the world a picture of the world's real mental activities which are centred in the world's imaginative arts."³

Despite such high-sounding pronouncements, the physical establishment of the review was not easily accomplished. As Stella Bowen put it, "The whole thing was run in conditions of the utmost confusion. Everything that could possibly go wrong with regard to the printing, paper, packing, forwarding and distribution, did go wrong."⁴ The arrangements made by the White Russian colonel also fell through, and the review soon had to be re-established in a loft of William Bird's Three Mountains Press on the Ile St. Louis. It was Bird who dropped the capitals from the magazine's name so that the long title would fit on one line, and it was at his press that Ford began to give his tea-parties, turning the place into one of the centres of expatriate literary Paris.

You should have seen those Thursday tea-parties at the uncapitalised *transatlantic review* offices! The French speak of "la semaine à deux jeudis" . . . the week with two Thursdays in it. Mine seemed to contain sixty, judging from the noise, lung-power,

crashing in and denunciation. They sat on forms—school benches—cramped round Bird's great hand press.

They all shouted at me: I did not know how to write, or knew too much to be able to write, or did not know how to edit, or keep accounts, or sing 'Franky and Johnny', or order a dinner. The ceiling was vaulted, the plane-leaves drifted down on the quay outside; the grey Seine flowed softly. . . .⁵

Despite these vicissitudes, the first issue was duly published in December of 1923. It was destined, however, to be the first of only twelve numbers, because the review soon encountered financial difficulties. The first six months were guaranteed, but when, in the summer of 1924, John Quinn died, it appeared as though the venture would collapse. Strenuous efforts were then made by Ford, Natalie Barney, and Gertrude Stein to save the review, and in the end Ernest Hemingway produced a wealthy acquaintance, Krebs Friend, who agreed to back it. Unfortunately this new arrangement lasted only another six months because the division of authority between Ford and Friend was never made clear, and a certain amount of ill-feeling therefore arose between them. In December of 1924, Friend withdrew his support and the review ceased publication.

Much of the financial mismanagement of the magazine must be blamed on Ford, who admitted that he was "worse than hopeless" in business matters.⁶ Beyond employing an exceptionally able secretary and several not-so-able part-time assistants, he neglected the financial side of the enterprise. Since in the course of the year he also made two trips away from Paris, one of them for over a month, it was probably inevitable that the review should fail.

Still, for as long as it lasted, the *Transatlantic* made a lively contribution to postwar letters and was intelligently edited. For this literary achievement Ford deserves most of the credit. From the beginning he was enthusiastic, and he devoted many hours of work to the venture. One of his first tasks was to write round to prospective contributors, and amongst those he approached were some of his young friends in London. The letter he wrote to A. E. Coppard provides insights into his methods and ideals as an editor:

Have you a short story—or two, or three—that you could let me have for a Review that I myself am going to edit from this city and to publish in New York and London: as there won't be any doubt as to publication and payment, the latter fairly miserable to begin with, though getting better if the Review paid? So that the real advantage to you—as to others of a struggling world—is simply that there is going to be a periodical in which you can print work that the more popular periodicals won't print and mop up a very little money that you otherwise wouldn't get.

It isn't an exaggeration to say that I've started this review with you in mind as I

started the *English Review* to publish stuff of Hardy's that other periodicals wouldn't publish. I've a great admiration for your work and though I hope you can serialise all you write I imagine, this old world being what it is, that you may have some that you can't.

I may say that I *prefer* not to have sexually esoteric, psychoanalytic, mystic or officially ethical matter but don't bar any of them obstinately—and if you hadn't short stories available I'd be just as glad of "essays" or any other form.⁷

Other letters were sent to such writers as Yeats and Eliot who were not residents of Paris, and many of these sent contributions or greetings. One of the early "conspirators" of the *English Review* days, H. G. Wells, sent this message: "Good luck to the *Transatlantic Review*. I have always considered you one of the greatest poets and one of the greatest editors alive and it gladdens my heart to think that you are creating a successor to the wonderful *English Review*."⁸

The first number—dated January, 1924—opened with four poems by E. E. Cummings, one by Coppard, and two of Ezra Pound's "Cantos". These were followed by the first instalment of *The Nature of a Crime*, a book Ford had written some years before in collaboration with Conrad but which only now received official recognition. Luke Ionides' "Memories"—an interesting series of reminiscences of Whistler, Wilde, and numerous Pre-Raphaelites which ran through the life of the *Transatlantic*—took the place in the table of contents that Conrad's memoirs had occupied in *The English Review*. To conclude the opening section of the review, there was a sketch in French on the Place de la Concorde by Jean Cassou; a short story, "Elsie", by Robert McAlmon; and "Stocktaking" by "Daniel Chaucer", the pseudonym adopted by Ford for his literary observations.

In the second section of the magazine came the "Chroniques", whose purpose was to provide a survey of artistic and literary achievement in Paris, London, and New York. After a section containing "Communications" from well-wishers such as T. S. Eliot and Joseph Conrad, the 120-page number closed with the first instalment of Ford's own novel, *Some Do Not*.

In many ways the first issue was untypical. In later numbers the format underwent certain changes and Ford wrote considerably fewer of the pages. After the second number it also became a monthly custom to publish as a regular feature a supplement on painting, literature, or music. A special supplement was occasioned by the death of Conrad.

Thus a representative number would contain poetry, fiction, and *belles lettres* by such writers as A. E. Coppard, Gertrude Stein, and Djuna Barnes, the usual communications and reports from abroad, and a literary supplement with contributions by men like Hemingway, Tristan Tzara, and James Joyce. Typical of the art supple-

ments is one containing reproductions of new paintings by Picasso, Nina Hamnett, and Brancusi along with articles by Juan Gris and Bernard Fay.

In the course of the year, *The Transatlantic Review* managed to survey most of the important developments in the various arts and provided space for new writers and artists. Beyond those already named, the artists included Braque and Man Ray, the musicians Eric Satie and George Antheil, and the writers William Carlos Williams, Lincoln Steffens, H.D., Harold Stearns, Paul Valéry, Ivan Beede, Glenway Wescott, Dorothy Richardson, John Dos Passos, Havelock Ellis, and Natalie Barney.

Three writers—Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, and Ernest Hemingway—had an especially close relationship with the review and were to the *Transatlantic* what Wyndham Lewis, Norman Douglas, and D. H. Lawrence had been to *The English Review*. In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Gertrude Stein has recorded her first encounter with the review:

We had heard that Ford was in Paris, but we had not happened to meet. Gertrude Stein has however seen copies of the *Transatlantic* and found it interesting but had thought nothing further about it.

Hemingway came in then very excited and said that Ford wanted something of Gertrude Stein's for the next number and he, Hemingway, wanted the *Making of Americans* to be run in it as a serial and he had to have the first fifty pages at once. Gertrude Stein was of course quite overcome with her excitement at this idea, but there was no copy of the manuscript except the one that we had had bound. That makes no difference, said Hemingway, I will copy it. And he and I between us did copy it and it was printed in the next number of the *Transatlantic*. So for the first time a piece of the monumental work which was the beginning, really the beginning of modern writing, was printed, and we were very happy.⁹

Hemingway has claimed that it was only due to his "obtaining genius"⁹ that the *Transatlantic* published Miss Stein's writing, but Ford was also immensely impressed with it, especially since it had been written some eighteen years earlier. Publication started in the April number, but by mid-summer the magazine had begun to experience such financial difficulty that payment for contributions had ceased and it seemed likely that the review would collapse. At this point Hemingway again entered the scene and wrote to Gertrude Stein that unless the review continued to publish her work he would "make such a row and blackmail it that it will blow up the show."¹⁰

This rough treatment was happily forestalled through the more gentlemanly conduct of the editor, who apologized for the *Transatlantic's* financial vagaries and told Miss Stein that although he had heard from Hemingway that Eliot's *Criterion* was offering "real money" for her work, he still hoped to be able to publish it:

I should be very sorry to lose you, but I was never the one to stand in a contributor's way: indeed I really exist as a sort of half-way house between the non-publishable youth and real money—a sort of green baize swingdoor that everyone kicks on entering and leaving.¹¹

Miss Stein replied briefly: "I like the magazine and I like your editing. I am sincerely attached to both so suppose we go on as we are going."¹² Thus *The Making of Americans* continued to appear until the demise of the magazine, and its appearance there helped to secure its publication in book form some years later.

The *Transatlantic* is also important in literary history for having been the first periodical to publish a portion of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. A section of this work appeared in the April number under the title "Work in Progress", an appellation given it by Ford which was widely used by later editors.

According to Ezra Pound, Ford was not anxious to print serials but was forced to do so because he "was absoLOOTly up a tree and cdnt. get decent stuff enough to fill his space except for nuvelists who wdnt. write anything else."¹³ Nor was Ford especially anxious to publish Joyce for, despite his admiration for his work, he was afraid of jeopardising the magazine as a whole by having an issue of it seized by the British customs officials on the grounds that it contained pornography. The trouble *The Little Review* had undergone when it published *Ulysses* was still fresh in his mind, and Ford knew that the *Transatlantic* could not afford a legal battle.

He had therefore determined not to publish Joyce's new work when he was told that Joyce felt insulted by this decision. Ford then arranged to have the manuscript shown to the "most official Englishman that he could find",¹⁴ leaving it to him to decide whether the magazine would be impounded if it contained Joyce's contribution. Sisley Huddleston, the Paris correspondent of the *Times* of London, was then chosen as judge, a meeting was called, and Joyce read the manuscript. Here is Huddleston's own report of the occasion:

Joyce read as only he can read: and I waited in vain for the obscenity and blasphemy which I was warned would be present. They were not apparent to me. If they were they were carefully concealed. I reported to Ford that whatever impropriety there might be would not be visible to the naked eye of a British or American policeman. So, in due course, the pages appeared, and helped to make the *transatlantic review* a success.¹⁵

Because of the appearance in the review of this piece, Joyce looked upon Ford as godfather of *Finnegans Wake*, and reciprocated four years later by becoming the godfather of Ford's daughter, Julie.

Ernest Hemingway's role in the review was two-fold. As one of the younger writers first brought to Ford's attention by Pound, he was asked to help in the

reading of manuscripts submitted by prospective contributors. These he would take in batches down to the Quai outside of the review's office, and there he would sort out those to be rejected. Occasionally he rewrote one or two for his own amusement. During Ford's absence for a month in New York, he also edited one number of the magazine, filling it so full of the work of his compatriots, including Dos Passos, that Ford upon his return observed that the issue had provided "an unusually large sample of the work of that Young America whose claims we have so insistently—but not with such efficiency—forced upon our readers."¹⁶

In addition to his editorial work, Hemingway also contributed a number of stories and articles to the magazine. These were not his first appearance in print, for a book of his short stories had already been published in Paris by Robert McAlmon's Contact Press, but the appearance of his work in the distinguished company that contributed to the review helped to establish his reputation. As one of his biographers put it, "His year with the *transatlantic* . . . probably helped as much as any of his other serious literary activities to get Hemingway's name and fame into general circulation around Paris . . . It offered him a focus, a kind of responsibility, and a sounding board such as he had not had up to that time."¹⁷

Since the *Transatlantic* was, in Ford's own words, "a rag-time affair where a great many letters and things did go astray"¹⁸ the editor, perched in his narrow gallery above Bird's presses, was subjected to all sorts of pressures a more staid and respectable executive would not have countenanced. Yet the informality of the enterprise was one of its more charming features. The result of Hemingway's editing has already been mentioned; but he was not the only person who tried to force his personal predilections on the review. Chief amongst the others was Ezra Pound, who also favoured contributions by Americans. In May of 1924, he wrote a letter to Ford criticizing the contributions printed in preceding numbers. He praised Hemingway, Djuna Barnes, and McAlmon, but denounced various British contributors whose work he characterized as "village idyll stuff" or "Times Lit. Supp. rubbish." Concluding his letter, which he had humour enough to sign "Old Glory", he wrote: "Will come back and manage you at close range before you bring out any more numbers."¹⁹

Ford took his friend's strictures in good part but, as editor of an international magazine, adopted the only line he could. "Your criticism of the Review," he wrote, "is an admirable bit of personal friendship for selected friends, but you cannot run *anything* on concentrated juice of logs rolled . . . nor catch any bird with a net set in its sight."²⁰ On another occasion, however, 'the Village Explainer', as Gertrude Stein called Pound, won his point. Here is Ford's editorial note:

We have handed the editing of the Musical Supplement of this number of the review over to Mr. Pound. His devotion to that art and contempt for our management of such supplements of this review as have appeared have been so great and so vociferous that we have not been able to see what else to do.²¹

Thus, although the *Transatlantic* bore the imprint of Ford's general direction, it was by no means the smooth affair that *The English Review* had been. It was not so well organised, and even the paper and printing were inferior. Yet the review was typical of its time. It was lively and bumptious, irreverent in its attacks on literary propriety, and filled with new and unknown names.

The original plan had been to divide the pages of the review evenly between French, English, and American contributors but, partly because of the pressures exerted on him by Pound and Hemingway, Ford was not able to maintain an even balance between them. In the year's run there were therefore a total of some ninety American pieces, sixty British, and forty French. One reason for this discrepancy was, to be sure, that many more American pieces were submitted than French or English.

In the matter of "discoveries" the *Transatlantic* made no such name as Ford's earlier review had done, for the prior existence of *The Dial* and *The Little Review* and of Bird's and McAlmon's presses made discovery of new talent difficult. Even so, Ford was able to publish very early work by Hemingway, Djuna Barnes, William Carlos Williams, Cummings, and Dos Passos and actually the first work of such writers as Donald Ogden Stewart and Ivan Beede.

While it is certain that the *Transatlantic* was not in the class of *The English Review*, it was still the best known of the Paris reviews of the 1920's. That it never gained wide-spread fame was probably due to overspecialisation: it was too much a magazine of Paris, and it lacked the formula of success that strikes a balance between the work of unknown writers and the work of established writers. Yet there is no real need to cavil at it for, as Ford himself remarked, it fulfilled its purposes:

That then is the Movement . . . a Movement. And with a very definite complexion, so that, looking back, the record seems remarkably satisfactory. If the reader, being a man of good will, is questioned as to what good work is being done by, or what promise there is, in the young man of today he has only to cite the names above . . . [the names of the contributors to the review]. Astonishingly satisfactory! For this is evidence that all over the Anglo-Saxon world from the West Middle West of the United States to the West Middle West of the London suburbs there is in motion a very definite creative impulse that is pretty well akin to the larger world movements. We have tapped as it were substrata in a great many parts of the world to find very much the same tide in motion everywhere. And we have not—at any rate consciously—done anything to falsify the issue.²²

For the first number of the *Transatlantic*, T. S. Eliot, who was then an editor himself, had written a hortatory letter in which he claimed that a

review is not measured by the number of stars and scoops that it gets. Good literature is produced by a few queer people in odd corners; the use of a review is not to force talent, but to create a favourable atmosphere. And you will serve this purpose if you publish, as I hope you will find and publish, works of writers of whatever age who are too good and too independent to have found other publishers²³

If this statement is taken as a guide, then certainly *The Transatlantic Review* fulfilled Eliot's design. It contained much that was good and some that was not. "Still," as Sisley Huddleston said, "it was his idea, as he would have said, of a magazine, and it does not much matter if it is anybody else's idea."²⁴

NOTES

1. Ford Madox Ford, *It Was the Nightingale* (London, 1934), p. 248.
2. Quoted from Douglas Goldring, *South Lodge* (London, 1943), pp. 143-45.
3. *Transatlantic Review*, Vol I, No. 4, "Chroniques I", p. 196.
4. Stella Bowen, *Drawn from Life* (London, [1940]), p. 117.
5. Ford Madox Ford, "Introduction" to Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York [Modern Library], 1932), pp. xiii-xiv.
6. Ford Madox Ford, *It Was the Nightingale*, p. 269.
7. Ford Madox Ford to A. E. Coppard; Letter, September 28, 1923.
8. H. G. Wells to Ford Madox Ford; "Communications", *The Transatlantic Review*, Vol I, No. 1, p. 94.
9. Ernest Hemingway to Gertrude Stein; Letter, February 17, 1924. Quoted in Donald Gallup (ed.), *The Flowers of Friendship* (New York, 1953), p. 195.
10. Ernest Hemingway to Gertrude Stein; Letter, September 14, 1924. Quoted in Donald Gallup, "The Making of *The Making of Americans*", *The New Colophon* (New York, 1950), p. 62.
11. Ford Madox Ford to Gertrude Stein; Letter, September 14, 1924. Quoted in Donald Gallup, "The Making of *The Making of Americans*", p. 61.
12. Gertrude Stein to Ford Madox Ford; Letter, n.d., *ibid*, p. 62.
13. Ezra Pound to Sisley Huddleston; Letter, n.d., quoted in Sisley Huddleston, *Bohemian, Literary and Social Life in Paris* (London, 1928), p. 103.
14. *The Transatlantic Review*, Vol. I, No. 4, "Chroniques I", p. 201.
15. Sisley Huddleston, *op. cit.*, p. 264.
16. *The Transatlantic Review*, Vol. II, No. 2, "Chronique III", p. 213.
17. Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist* (Princeton, 1952), p. 264.

18. Ford Madox Ford to A. E. Coppard; Letter, February 17, 1927.
19. *The Transatlantic Review*, Vol I, No. 6, "Communications", p. 480.
20. Ford Madox Ford to Ezra Pound; Letter, n.d. Owned by the Yale University Library, American Literature Collection.
21. *The Transatlantic Review*, Vol II, No. 5, "Paris Letter", p. 551.
22. *The Transatlantic Review*, Vol II, No. 6, "Editorial", p. 683.
23. *The Transatlantic Review*, Vol I, No. 1, "Communications", p. 96.
24. Sisley Huddleston, *op. cit.*, p. 143.