THE AMERICAN TWENTIES

Soon the mists of distance would soften the outlines of the nineteen-twenties, and men and women, looking over the pages of a book such as this, would smile at the memory of those charming, crazy days when the radio was a thrilling novelty, and girls wore bobbed hair and knee-length skirts, and a trans-Atlantic flyer became a god overnight, and common stocks were about to bring us all to a lavish Utopia. They would forget, perhaps, the frustrated hopes that followed the war, the aching disillusionment of the hard-boiled era, its oily scandals, its spiritual paralysis, the harshness of its gaiety; they would talk about the good old days.

—Frederick Lewis Allen in *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the Twenties* (1931)

The American Twenties was the time of the automobile and the radio, Freud and Lenin, prohibition and the emancipation of women, Lindbergh’s trans-Atlantic flight and the kidnapping of his baby; of Leopold and Loeb, Sears and Roebuck, Main Street and Metropolis. In the decade’s struggle to define the future of America, a plethora of issues were fought out in poetry, novels, political tracts, music, and the movies. Race, religion, and revolution were paramount, and love, sex, and gender of equal importance. The roles of labor and capital were on everyone’s mind and the benefits of socialism, communism, anarchism, and capitalism were openly debated. Fundamentalists and experimentalists clashed in many areas of human endeavor.

Profound cultural and social change occurred during the decade, including the rise of big business and the consumer economy, new roles for women in the public sphere, and the opportunity for Black Americans to seek the American dream, a concept that was itself arguably invented during the decade. It was a decade of ambiguities, contradictions, contrasts, and conflicts—one in which many ideas and ideologies were born or came to fruition. Out of the tumult, the “Modern” crystallized and what Henry Luce called “The American Century” was born. This exhibition is an exploration of that decade through the art and literature that was to become quintessentially American and quintessentially modern.

REMEMBERING THE WAR

*Every one was on the alert, keyed up with apprehension. But nothing happened. . . Only about midnight, from far up on the hillside, a diabolical cry came down, more like an animal’s than a man’s, a blood-curdling yell of mockery and exultation. . . In that cry all the*
evolution of centuries was leveled. I seemed to hear the yell of the warrior of the stone age over his fallen enemy. It was one of those antidotes to civilization of which this war can offer so many to the searcher after extraordinary sensations.

—Alan Seeger in “Letter to the New York Sun,” 12 February 1915

God, I can’t make up my mind to put the damn thing on again,” said Andrews in a low voice, almost as if he were talking to himself; “I feel so clean and free. It’s like voluntarily taking up filth and slavery again . . . . I think I’ll just walk off naked across the fields.

—John Dos Passos in Three Soldiers (1920)

The most significant event of the first part of the twentieth century was the Great War. The United States Congress declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917. Troops began engaging in battle in the summer of 1918 in Cantigny, Chateau-Thierry, and Belleau Wood. Over 4,000,000 American soldiers were mobilized in the War and at the end of the hostilities the casualties numbered over 120,000 (with a total of 10,000,000 deaths on all sides).

The Armistice ending the war was signed on 11 November 1918, with American participation being the signal event in the defeat of Germany. The United States became a financial superpower and the modern model of international warfare was born. Military infrastructure and weapons development were to expand almost without control and the structures of democracy came under severe strain and stress. The country had never been totally united in support of the War and in the years following it, poems, novels and memoirs were published, most of which centered on the experience of the individual soldier and most of which were severely critical of the administration and the war machine. In these works the old “civilized” world went up in flames and the modern was born.

Floor case #1
1, 2

A first edition of John Dos Passos’s One Man’s Initiation (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922)

A first edition of John Dos Passos’s Three Soldiers (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921)

In 1917, the twenty-one-year-old Harvard student John Dos Passos began his service as a driver for the private ambulance service Norton-Harjes. In doing so, he joined other writers and artists such as Dashiell Hammett, E. E. Cummings, Malcolm Cowley,
and Harry Crosby. Dos Passos was shocked, embittered, and incensed by what he saw of the reality of war: mounds of dead bodies, screaming shell-shocked soldiers, horses dying from poison gas, and other atrocities. He was, unlike many of his compatriot writers, also enraged at the nationalist fervor of the press, the government, and other official bodies.

This rage fairly jumps off the page of his novel/memoir, *One Man’s Initiation*. First published in London in 1920, it was less fiery than originally written (the printers required considerable changes in the language), sold poorly, and was largely ignored. In contrast, *Three Soldiers* met with an angry reception when it was published. The impressionistic, experimental style of *One Man’s Initiation* was to be further developed in Dos Passos’s masterpiece, *U. S. A.* (1930-1936), a trenchant critique of the nation’s triumphant materialism and hypocrisy born in the Twenties.

3

A letter from John Dos Passos to E. E. Cummings, ca. 1918

John Dos Passos (ca. 1896-1970) and E. E. Cummings met at Harvard and became close friends. Here Dos Passos writes a comic and fanciful letter in French from a Medical Corps training camp about Mother Liberty’s marriage to Mr. Military, and Dos Passos’s new family—his wife, Madame Boredom; her sister, Laziness; and “a bastard child named Dream of Overseas.” “As for me,” Dos Passos continues, “I don’t have any more will of my own. I only have one idea: to return to France and lose myself in the ridiculous circus of the war.”

Dos Passos wrote outside the traditions of naturalistic social fiction, drawing instead upon experimental poetic techniques pioneered by Blaise Cendrars (whom he met in Paris in 1924) and Guillaume Apollinaire. These techniques enabled him to capture the sights and sounds of modern city life.

4

A first edition of E. E. Cummings’s *The Enormous Room* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922)

Like other writers, the cubist, futurist, iconoclastic poet E. E. Cummings “avoided the American Army” by volunteering for the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Service in France. Cummings was a committed pacifist (“No artist surely is a mankiller”) and his service
was a series of misadventures. Cumming’s memoir, *The Enormous Room* tells of Cummings’s incarceration in a French prison with his compatriot, William Slater Brown. It is a fierce and passionate defense of the rights of the individual and has as its forbearers John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrims Progress* and James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Cummings was jailed because of his refusal to condemn Germans as a people, causing the authorities to view his anti-authoritarian stance with suspicion. The book is most obviously an anti-war tract, but it also presents a vivid portrait of the War, including portraits of Cummings’s fellow prisoners. Cummings was later drafted into the U. S. Army and according to his own testimony was the “most un-at-home” man in the service.

A first edition of Upton Sinclair’s *Jimmie Higgins* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919)

Best known for his muckraking novel *The Jungle* (1906), Upton Sinclair wrote like a demon, was a committed socialist and activist, and was called by *Time* magazine “as American as pumpkin pie.” He joined the United Auto Workers and the United Mine Workers to solidify his commitment to the American working man. Unlike most of his Socialist friends, Sinclair supported the entry of the United States into the War. Nevertheless, he became disillusioned over the increasingly intense anti-radical activity in the U. S., most notably the incarceration of Eugene Debs and other pacifists, as well as the Palmer “raids,” the “red scare” of 1919, and the “Soviet Ark” a ship in which over two hundred radicals were deported to Russia without trial. In response Sinclair wrote *Jimmie Higgins*, a novel about a working class socialist and conscientious objector who eventually fights in the War. Higgins is sent to Russia to fight the Bolsheviks but resists and is punished. It is a fierce book from a determined man.

A first edition of Willa Cather’s *One of Ours* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922)

Willa Cather’s war book, *One of Ours*, disgruntled many male novelists of the time, including John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway, differing from their novels in its more patriotic stance. H. L. Mencken, writing in the *Smart Set* (October 1922), praised the
American scenes but was very critical of the book, comparing it unfairly—and blindly—to Dos Passos’s work:

What spoils the story is simply that a year or so ago a young soldier named John Dos Passos printed a novel called *Three Soldiers* . . . . At one blast it disposed of oceans of romance and blather. It changed the whole tone of American opinion about the war . . . . Unluckily for Miss Cather . . . . the war she depicts has its thrills and even its touches of plausibility, but at bottom it is fought out not in France but on a Hollywood movie lot. Its American soldiers are idealists engaged upon a crusade to put down sin; its Germans are imbeciles.

Even so, this book was the average American’s war novel, selling over 30,000 copies in the first months of publication and winning Cather a Pulitzer Prize.

7

William Faulkner’s line drawing of a Canadian air force flying officer, 1918

The novelist William Faulkner (ca.1897-1962) enlisted in the Canadian Royal Air Force in June 1918 and was accepted for pilot training. In 1918, while training in Toronto, he illustrated his letters to his parents back in Mississippi with sophisticated line drawings of himself in uniform. This image accompanies an 11 August 1918 letter to his mother. Faulkner notes: “My new uniform will be like this.” However, Faulkner never wore the uniform in service. He was one week short of completing ground school when Armistice was declared.

8


Faulkner’s first novel, the tale of two months in the life of a wounded war veteran in his small southern hometown, chronicles the restlessness and despair of returning soldiers. Donald Davie in the *Nashville Tennessean* cited Faulkner’s work as equal to or surpassing that of Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, and John Dos Passos. Like the novels of Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott
Fitzgerald, *Soldier’s Pay* is a novel of the lost generation, of despair and alienation:

As I grow older Mr. Jones, I become more firmly convinced that we learn scarcely anything as we go through this world, and that we learn nothing whatever which can ever help us or be of any particular benefit to us, even.

A first edition of Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1929)

Inscribed: “To Frank J. Hogan/wishing him a long happy life and a healthy liver/Ernest Hemingway/wrote this in Paris, Key West, Piggott, Arkansas, Kansas City and Sheridan and Big Horn Wyo—started in December 1927 finished in August 1928. In 1927 wrote 45,000 words [of] a novel I never published. E.H.”

Malcolm Cowley, reviewing Hemingway’s novel in *New York Herald Tribune Books* (6 October 1929), wrote:

Most of the characters in Hemingway’s stories belong to this category of the under mobilized. Their standards are the very simple standards of men at war. The virtues they admire are generosity, courage, a certain resignation and also the ability to hold one’s liquor. The vices they ridicule are vices only to men who have been soldiers: I mean thrift, caution and sobriety. Their simple enjoyments are food, drink, love and perhaps fishing, their tragedies are love, parting, death; and they discuss these topics with the frankness of the barracks—beneath which is not too carefully hidden a martial sentimentality.


Signed by Langston Hughes and inscribed by the illustrator, Prentiss Taylor

Too young to have served in the War, Langston Hughes wrote poems about the sacrifices of Black youths and the shabby treatment
of Black soldiers upon their return home. Hughes (1902-1967) read his poetry on extensive reading tours in the South throughout the late twenties and early thirties. He often sold copies of pamphlets like this one and boasted to Carl Van Vechten that in Birmingham, Alabama, copies of *The Negro Mother* “sold like reefers on 131st Street” in Harlem.

**East perimeter wall**

17

James Montgomery Flagg (American, 1877-1960)
First in the Fight/Always Faithful/Be A U.S. Marine!, not dated
Lithograph

19

I. B. Hazleton
Men Wanted for the Army, 1914
Lithograph

18

Babcock
Join the Navy/The Service for Fighting Men, not dated
Lithograph

46

Adolf Treidler (American, 1886-1981)
For Every Fighter a Woman Worker/Care for Her through the YWCA/United War Work Campaign,
Lithograph

16

Alfred Everitt Orr (American, 1883-1949)
For Home and Country/Victory Liberty Loan, [19]18
Lithograph

**Portable wall #31**
391

Sheet music for “Over There” (NY: Leo. Feist Co., 1918)
Words and music by George M. Cohan. Cover art by Norman Rockwell.

390

Sheet music for “How ‘Ya Gonna Keep ‘Em Down on the Farm (After They’ve Seen Paree?)” (NY: Waterson, Berline & Snyder Co., 1919)
Words by Joe Young & Sam M. Lewis. Music by Walter Donaldson. Cover art by Barbelle.

372, 73

Unidentified photographer
Edward Steichen and his mother, 1919
Gelatin silver print

Unidentified photographer
Edward Steichen, Janet Sandburg, and Lillian Steichen (Mrs. Carl) Sandburg, 1919
Gelatin silver print

In his late thirties when these images were taken, Steichen (1879-1973) had already produced some of his most memorable photographs, including a series of the Flatiron Building in New York, several portraits of sculptor Auguste Rodin, and a famous portrait of the financial titan Pierpont Morgan. After fleeing war torn France in 1914, Steichen directed aerial reconnaissance for the Allied Forces in France. Working in a small department of the U. S. Army Signal Corps, Steichen organized the first aerial photography operations in United States history. According to his mother he said, “I wanted to be a photographic reporter, as Mathew Brady had been in the Civil War.”

In 1917, a newly ordained Lieutenant, Steichen visited his mother, sister, and brother-in-law, the poet Carl Sandburg, in Maywood, Illinois, a Chicago suburb. Sandburg had married Lillian Steichen the year before and the poet and the photographer were to become life-long friends. Sandburg characteristically commented on his brother-in-law’s service to his country and his art, “As the war rumbled on, Steichen . . . developed the art of reading lines, shadows, blurs, camouflage.”
Portable wall #28
11

White Studio
The Road to Victory, Ziegfeld Midnight Frolics, 1918
Gelatin silver print

In 1915 Florenz Ziefield instigated the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic*, a revue commencing at midnight and featuring dance music between the acts. This appropriately patriotic number was titled “The Road to Victory.” By 1922, Prohibition killed the *Frolics* which had depended on the refreshments as much as the entertainment for their success.

379

Gordon Conway (U.S., 1894-1956)
Red Cross Girl, 1918
Ink and gouache on board

During her prolific twenty-two-year career (1915-1937), Texas-born Gordon Conway (1894-1956) won international acclaim as an image-maker in the fields of commercial graphic art and costume design for stage and film in New York, London, and Paris. This sketch is a cover design for *Vanity Fair* magazine. As her biographer, Raye Virginia Allen has noted, “her images portrayed tall, sleek, svelte, agile, sophisticated, independent, and self-assured women like Conway herself. . . [They] both reflected and shaped the aspirations of millions of women yearning for economic, political, physical, sexual, social, and cultural freedom before and after legislation awarding suffrage and property rights to women in the United States and Great Britain.”

12

White Studio
The Road to Victory, Ziegfeld Midnight Frolics, 1918
Gelatin silver print

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Portable Wall #29
21
Eugene O. Goldbeck (U.S., 1892-1986)
Military Cemetery, France, 1927
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

Born in San Antonio, Goldbeck began his photographic career taking so-called “kidnapped” photographs, photographing passing subjects and then offering to sell the subjects copies of the image. Attracted to the panoramic group photograph because it offered a larger prospective market, he is best known for his work in this medium.

22
Eugene O. Goldbeck (U.S., 1892-1986)
Living Air Service Insignia, San Antonio, Texas, 1926
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

Born in San Antonio, Goldbeck began his photographic career taking so-called “kidnapped” photographs, photographing passing subjects and then offering to sell the subjects copies of the image. Attracted to the panoramic group photograph because it offered a larger prospective market, he is best known for his work in this medium.

Portable wall #30
13
Letter from Grace Hall Hemingway to Ernest Hemingway, 24 July 1920; “handed to him on 27 July 1920”

Hemingway (1899-1961) was twenty-one years old when his mother wrote him this letter (one page of her hand-written copy and a typed transcription of the complete letter are shown) telling him that he was overdrawn in the bank account of his mother’s love. He had returned the year before from the war in Europe after having been wounded and decorated for valor by Italy. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954.
The National Council for Prevention of War (NCPW), a clearinghouse of national peace organizations, founded in 1921 and incorporated in 1931, pursued a three-fold program: progressive world organization; worldwide reduction of armaments by international agreement; and, worldwide education for peace. Among its many other activities, the NCPW urged the ratification of the Kellogg-Briand pact in 1928, to which this medal for a speech contest on the subject of Outlaw-War treaties makes reference. Also known as the Pact of Paris, the Kellogg-Briand pact was an international treaty calling for the renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy. Proposed in 1927 by Aristide Briand, the French foreign minister and a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Frank B. Kellogg, U.S. Secretary of State, expanded the scope of the proposed pact and it was signed in 1928. The pact ultimately failed in its purpose but was significant for later developments in international law.

BABBITTS AND BOHEMIANS

*It was an age of miracle, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was a age of satire.*

—F. Scott Fitzgerald in “Echoes of the Jazz Age” (1945)

*the age of dollars and no sense*

—E. E. Cummings

The Twenties was a decade of stereotypes. Characters such as the rumrunner, the flapper, the red, and the radical, and phrases like “The Roaring Twenties” and “The Jazz Age” were invoked to make sense of the time. Two of the most lasting Twenties types, the Babbitt and the Bohemian, were curiously opposed to one another: the small-town, well-meaning booster and the glib and glitzy modern icon. Both Babbitt and Bohemian would flourish, one as the American businessmen and the other as the American artist.
Even as the small town was beginning to disappear and cities were growing larger in population and acreage, those with a love for the disappearing American landscape nevertheless began a flurry of attacks on the dullness and uniformity of the small town. Those who fled what they viewed as the limitations and repressions of Main Street inhabited the bohemian areas of the larger cities, primarily New York and its Greenwich Village neighborhood. The Village emulated the bohemian lifestyle of Paris at the turn of the century: free, wild, and colorful. As with many stereotypes the Babbitt and the Bohemian each had some measure of truth to them, throwing an exaggerated light on the quickly changing mores and manners of American society. At one end of the spectrum was the stifling solidity of the small town and at the other end the wild and loose life of quite another Village. Both, though exaggerated, were equally influential on American literature and culture for decades to come.

Flat Case 2

23, 25

Pages 51 and 52 of the extensively corrected typescript of Sinclair Lewis’s Main Street, ca. 1918

A first edition of Sinclair Lewis’s Main Street (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920)

In the realm of fiction, the Twenties were the decade of Sinclair Lewis, who published five critically successful and best selling novels, culminating in his receipt of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1930. Lewis was the first American to win the award and it is significant that the award went to a body of work that was largely critical and satiric of the American scene. His classic Main Street was an attack on the values of the small towns dotting the American landscape. It is a novel written in the tradition of the “revolt from the village” which characterized other literary works of the period, including Hamlin Garland’s Main Travelled Roads (1891), Edgar Lee Masters’s Spoon River Anthology (1915), and Sherwood Anderson’s Winesburg, Ohio (1919).

Main Street was read by thousands of Americans, including those whom it satirized, selling nearly 200,000 copies in the first six months after publication. Its very title became a commonplace and a signpost of social criticism. A dynasty of novels addressing the same theme continues to this day.
The novel is dedicated to James Branch Cabell and Joseph Hergesheimer (two other prominent novelists of the Twenties who feature in this exhibition but are largely forgotten now) and begins with a prologue that settles the reader firmly into the place and mind set of Main Street America, as you can read here.

26

A first edition of Sinclair Lewis’s *Babbitt* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922)

*Babbitt* contributed to the mythology of a new America by creating a character whose name was to become symbolically attached to whole generations of Americans—the business man whose conformism imprisons him unhappily in a comfortable but unfulfilling life. In a letter to his publisher Alfred Harcourt, Lewis described his character as a “*typical T. B. M.*” [tired businessman] but also a human figure who would represent “all of us Americans at 46, prosperous but worried, wanting—passionately—to seize something more than motor cars and a house before *it’s too late.*” The critic H. L Mencken, who exerted considerable influence on Lewis, coined the term “boobus Americanus” and later “the Booboiseie” to describe this type.

In researching the novel, Lewis prepared a huge and detailed set of notes, a sociological analysis of the emerging cities of the time (“the Baltimores and Omahas and Buffaloes and Birminghams”) based on his travels throughout Middle-America. The novel remains a searingly realistic portrait, on the level of Honoré de Balzac or Émile Zola, of American life during the Twenties.

28, 29


Drafts of the poems “Chalkley Cameron” and “Erastus Wilson” in the original manuscript of Edgar Lee Masters’s “The New Spoon River,” 1923

*The New Spoon River*, an annex to Masters’s highly acclaimed *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), was less successful than its predecessor, but as much a portrait of the vast small town Midwest as the original. Educated and trained as a lawyer, and a partner of the magisterial Clarence Darrow, Masters (1868-1950) used history
and biography as the grist for his poetry, giving voice to the voiceless in the populist tradition of Carl Sandburg and Vachel Lindsay.

Benjamin De Casseres, American journalist and author, wrote of Masters in *The American Mercury* (December 1926),

*The Spoon River Anthology* is one of the most original pieces of imaginative literature that I know of. . . . I do not know of any poetic fiction that gives me such an odor or reality, such a raw, rank taste of broken hearts and battered brains, such a sense of inexorable fatality. Masters does not describe, he creates, and his only ethic is the ethic of all great creators, pathos and irony, which are implicit in the picture he evokes like overtones between his lines.

30, 31a-b

Polly Masters
Wilbur and Homer Leaverett, Galena, Missouri, 1932
Gelatin silver print

Polly Masters (?)
Edgar Lee Masters with Homer Leaverett, Galena, Missouri, 1932
Gelatin silver print
Annotated: “Galena, Mo./Lee playing violin/Homer Leaverett &/Mrs. Leaverett in their/house down by railroad/track”

In September of 1932 Masters visited Galena, Illinois, neighbor to his hometowns of Petersburg and Lewiston, in order to gather materials for further books after *The New Spoon River*. He spent fruitful time with the Leaverett family of Galena, where the Leaverett sons played country tunes like “Turkey in the Straw” for the famous poet. The two boys were memorialized in Masters’s poem “Fiddling by the Moon.”

32

Edgar Lee Masters’s diary of a lecture tour, 1925

From January through March of 1925 Masters toured the U. S. reading and lecturing on the topic “America and American Poetry” in twenty-three different cities to crowds averaging from five to six hundred people. Over a thousand attended his appearances in Waco, Texas; Des Moines, Iowa; and Syracuse, New York. Among
the places he visited was Austin, Texas, where he met Leonidas Warren Payne, a member of the University’s English faculty whose library and papers are now part of the Center’s collections.

Flat case three
39

A first edition of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1925)

The publisher Alfred A. Knopf’s copy that he read “at sea 7 June 1925”

When The Great Gatsby was published, T.S. Eliot declared it “the first step American fiction has taken since Henry James.” As Bryant Mangum, professor of English, points out, Fitzgerald, who was reading and studying Joseph Conrad during the novel’s composition, was interested in exploring subtle uses of narrative viewpoint. The simple love story, told through Nick Carraway’s first-person viewpoint, was “the foundation for a narrative structure that would accommodate Fitzgerald’s ideas about irreconcilable contradictions within the American Dream and ultimately about the ideal quest itself.”

The British novelist Anthony Burgess (1896-1940) noted that Fitzgerald’s “skill lay in applying a romantic technique to unromantic subjects.” Unlike much nineteenth-century fiction, Burgess continues, the novel is “profoundly ambiguous; its unity is not a matter of a central moral conviction but of artistic form. . . . The Great Gatsby may be, as some have claimed, the only perfect novel.”

146, 171

A letter from F. Scott Fitzgerald to Blanche W. Knopf, rec’d 19 January 1928

A letter from Blanche W. Knopf to F. Scott Fitzgerald, 28 July 1928

F. Scott Fitzgerald gave the Jazz Age its name. His fame was for many years based less on his work than his personality—the society playboy, the speakeasy alcoholic whose career had ended in “crack-up,” the brilliant young writer whose early literary success seemed to make his life something of a romantic idyll. In this letter to Blanche Knopf, the wife and publishing partner of Alfred A. Knopf, Fitzgerald, offering a taste of Roaring Twenties excess, conjugates
the verb “to cocktail.” In her reply, Knopf greets Fitzgerald as “Dear Scotch.”

40

A first edition of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Tales of the Jazz Age* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1922)

H. L. Mencken wrote in 1925 of Fitzgerald’s work:

The thing that chiefly interests the basic Fitzgerald is still the florid show of modern American Life—especially the Devil’s dance that goes on at the top. He is unconcerned about the sweatings and sufferings of the nether herd; what engrosses him is the high carnival of those who have too much money to spend, and too much time for the spending of it. Their idiotic pursuit of sensation, their almost incredible stupidity and triviality, their glittering swinishness—these are the things that go into his notebook.

41

A first edition of Anita Loos’s *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1925)

Inscribed: “To Norman [Bel Geddes] hoping he is no gentleman, with love, Anita Loos”

Written by an intelligent, sophisticated brunette about a ditzy blonde, Lorelei Lee, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* was originally conceived and begun on a train from New York to Hollywood. It was written in an attempt to seduce the critic H. L. Mencken, who later paired it with *The Great Gatsby*, calling the one comic and the other tragic.

Loos’s novel was phenomenally successful when it first appeared in six installments, beginning in March 1925, in the fashion magazine *Harper’s Bazaar*. There, it nestled among the glamorous ads it partially aped. It was published in book form in 1926 and was the second best-selling novel of the year. James Joyce read the book “reclining on a sofa...for three whole days” and fan letters flooded in from William Faulkner and others. The story has had a long life including stage plays and the classic 1953 film starring Marilyn Monroe. The book is still in print.
Assessing Edna St. Vincent Millay’s work at two decades’ distance, the poet and critic Delmore Schwartz wrote in *The Nation* (December 1943),

Miss Millay belongs to an age as well as to the ages. She is dated in a good sense. Like Scott Fitzgerald, H. L Mencken, Sinclair Lewis, prohibition, and midget golf, she belongs to a particular period. No one interested in that period will fail to be interested in Miss Millay’s poems . . . . Her lyrics were used by the period, and she was made famous by their usefulness; but now they are inseparable from the period, and they will always illuminated the liberated Vassar girl, the jazz age, bohemianism, and the halcyon days of Greenwich Village.

The poet and anthologist Louis Untermeyer wrote of this work by Millay in *Modern American Poetry* (1930),

[It] wears its author’s heart on its sleeve; often, in fact, that responsive organ is displayed as a shining bauble, a decoration tricked with frayed ribbons. But here Miss Millay begins to wear her heart with a difference. Rarely now is she narcissistic or consciously arch; she speaks with a disillusion that contains more than a tinge of bitterness. . . . the twenty-two sonnets which comprise Part Four of this book are not only representatives of Miss Millay’s best, but are among the finest modern examples of the form. . . . “at its height, her poetry reflects the paradox of its being: it is immediate and it is immutable.
George T. Hartmann (American, 1911-1989)
Sinclair Lewis, 1927
Oil on canvas

410

Unidentified photographer
Willard Louis and Mary Alden in the 1924 silent film version of Sinclair Lewis’s *Babbitt*
Gelatin silver print

100 [mat and frame for wall]

Eugene O. Goldbeck (U.S., 1892-1986)
Businessmen, 1925
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

Born in San Antonio, Eugene O. Goldbeck began his photographic career taking so-called “kidnapped” photographs, photographing passing subjects and then offering to sell the subjects copies of the image. Attracted to the panoramic group photograph because it offered a larger prospective market, he is best known for his work in this medium.

#?

Postcard images of various U.S. towns in the 1920s

**East Perimeter wall, Wall Case 1**

33

A limited edition (no. 10 of 795 copies) of Theodore Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1925), volume 1 of 2
Inscribed: “Dear Mr. Devlin/A small return for your very beautiful letter about this book/Theodore Dreiser/N.Y. May-1926”

Dreiser’s great novel of contemporary life in the Twenties has become a classic of American literature. H. L. Mencken, always an incisive critic, though initially irritated by the novel, was eventually won over:
An American Tragedy, as a work of art, is a colossal botch, but as a human document is searching and full of a solemn dignity, and at times it rises to the level of genuine tragedy. Especially the second volume. Once Roberta is killed and Clyde faces his fate, the thing begins to move, and thereafter it roars on, with ever increasing impetus, to the terrific smash. . . .The thing ceases to be a story, and becomes a harrowing reality. . . .So much for An American Tragedy. Hire your pastor to read the first volume for you. But don’t miss the second.

The novel was adapted into the 1951 hit film, A Place in the Sun, starring Elizabeth Taylor, Montgomery Clift, and Shelley Winters.

37

Lotte Jacobi (U.S., b. Germany, 1896-1990)
Theodore Dreiser, ca. 1931
Gelatin silver print

East Perimeter wall, Wall Case 2
34, 38

First editions of H. L. Mencken’s Americana (New York: Knopf, 1925 and 1926), the second volume open to an entry about Professor Sims of UT.

Alfred A. Knopf (U.S., 1892-1984)
H. L. Mencken at Purchase, New York, (The Hovel), ca. 1929

During the Twenties, journalist and social critic, H. L. Mencken (1880-1956) edited two of the most influential literary magazines, the stylishly clever Smart Set and the trenchantly critical American Mercury. Through his journalistic articles and book reviews, he became the scourge of the American middle class, “debunking” a wide variety of practices and mores. Mencken became the model of the irreverent, intelligent, and wise cracking critic, still found today in the pages of The New Yorker and other magazines.

Vitrine 1
44

Agnes Yarnell (U.S., b. 1904)
Edna St. Vincent Millay, ca. 1931
Bronze

Edna St. Vincent Millay was the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, and was a poet of great interest to many people who never read poetry. She was published in the elegant *Vanity Fair* and the popular *Reedy’s Mirror*. Thomas Hardy was rumored to have classed her with the Empire State Building as icon of modern New York. Her years in Greenwich Village (her house on Bedford Street was the skinniest one in town) were years of celebrity. She was the national symbol for the liberated woman, the modern Sappho, her name a household word. Literary notables, Floyd Dell, Edmund Wilson, Arthur Davison Ficke, Witter Bynner, and John Reed were among her friends and lovers.

**South Perimeter wall (left to right)**

94
Unidentified photographer
“Buddha with Confucious” [Edgar Lee Masters with 6-month-old Hilary Masters], Kansas City, Missouri, 1926
Gelatin silver print

49
Unidentified photographer
Edgar Lee Masters and Jim Arnold, 14 July 1926
Gelatin silver print

Inscribed: “Poet with Jim Arnold, who saved his life when former fell into mill stream, as a child.”

373
Carl Van Vechten (U.S., 1880-1964)
Portrait of F. Scott Fitzgerald, 4 June 1937
Gelatin silver print

As a journalist and novelist, Carl Van Vechten was part of the international modernist movement. Beginning in 1932 he created a singular photographic chronicle of the preeminent creative talents of his time.
Unidentified photographer
Joseph Hergesheimer in Hollywood, ca. 1924
Gelatin silver print

The naturalist novelist Hergesheimer is seated behind the wedding cake in the center of the group, with H. L. Mencken standing behind him peering into his hair. On Mencken’s right stands the filmmaker Walter Wanger, and on his left the actor John Hemphill. Holding the bottle is Aileen Pringle, the star of *Three Weeks*, who became a special friend of Mencken and Hergesheimer. In the “buggy” is Anita Loos, author of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.

Nicolas Náz
George Gershwin, not dated
Gelatin silver print

Sheet music for George Gershwin’s “The Man I Love” from the musical *Strike Up The Band* (New York: Harms Inc., 1926)

The name George Gershwin (1898-1937) was synonymous with glamour and sophistication in the Twenties; it is redolent of the fast, furious, and colorful, of elegant style. Gershwin was a pianist of genius and a composer of the first magnitude. Along with his brother Ira, he composed the music for *Strike up the Band*, conceived as a political satire and written with playwrights George S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind. His other creations before his untimely death from a brain tumor at the age of 38 included *Porgy and Bess*, *Lady Be Good*, *Funny Face*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *Rhapsody in Blue*, *An American in Paris*, and *Concerto in F*, all of which keep alive the spirit of the Twenties and early Thirties.

Unidentified photographer
George Gershwin at the piano, not dated
Gelatin silver print
Restaurant card with George Gershwin self-portrait caricature on verso Inscribed to Gloria Swanson with the opening bars of *Rhapsody in Blue*

*Rhapsody in Blue* premiered in New York City’s Aeolian Hall on 12 February 1924 in a concert billed as “An Experiment in Modern Music.” In composing and performing the piece, Gershwin drew on both classical and vernacular traditions, improvising the difficult piano part using skills he gained during his stint as a song-plugger in Tin Pan Alley. Of *Rhapsody in Blue* Gershwin later said: “I succeeded in showing that jazz is not merely a dance, it comprises bigger themes and purposes.” His work epitomizes the modernist drive to move beyond perceived limits and expand what was possible in art.

The almost frenzied applause after the premier signaled the huge popularity *Rhapsody in Blue* would soon acquire. Gershwin eventually began using the opening bars of the piece as a “signature,” as he has done in this note to the actress Gloria Swanson. Gershwin’s self-portrait was modeled after his favorite caricature by William Auerbach-Levy.

**MODERNIST MONUMENTS**

‘What is that noise?’

The wind under the door.

‘What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?’

Nothing again nothing.

‘Do’

‘You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember

‘Nothing?’

— T. S. Eliot in *The Waste Land* (1922)

. . . .and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.

—James Joyce in *Ulysses* (1922)
After the War, international literary movements joined the vital stream of home-grown American experimentations, resulting in the triumph of high literary modernism. Modernism in art and literature is too diverse a phenomenon to summarize easily. But certain characteristics may be found throughout the work: experimentation with new forms; investigations into the nature and integrity of “Art;” the breakdown of the lines between genres such as visual art and literature; narrators and speaker whose language is fragmentary or ambiguous; and a tone that shifts between exhilaration, anxiety, and despair in the face of the new realities of the modern era. Julian Barnes describes modernism as: “light, energy, power, fragmentation, iconoclasm, rule breaking, the subconscious—in summary, true reality, modern reality…. ” Modernist writers used a wide variety of techniques in their art, and in some sense it was the primacy of technique itself that most interested them. Form and content were identical and the work of art an object of the highest value, physically and mystically.

The apotheosis of modernism occurred in 1922 when two of the most influential literary works of the twentieth century, T. S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* were published. The imagist aesthetics and often manipulative genius of Ezra Pound was found at the beginning or bottom of almost everything, best seen in his own *Cantos*. The American genius of William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, Hart Crane, and E. E. Cummings flourished in their own particular versions of the modernist poem.

**Flat case 4**


Perhaps the most influential poem of the twentieth century, *The Waste Land*, was originally published in Great Britain in *The Criterion* in October 1922 and in the U.S. in the November 1922 issue of *The Dial*. In its form, attitudes, and tone, *The Waste Land* brilliantly captured the disillusionment and despair of post war Europe and America, and its disjunction and appropriation are peculiarly modern. Every poet who has come after it must struggle with it. It is quintessentially of its time, and timeless. About the poem’s reception, Edmund Wilson quipped sardonically, “It is sure to be objected that Mr. Eliot has written a puzzle rather than a poem and that his work can possess no higher interest than a full-rigged ship in a bottle. . . . Mr. Eliot’s trivialities are more valuable than other people’s epics.”
The American poet Ezra Pound (1885-1972), to whom this copy is dedicated, was most famously a facilitator of the modernist movement in the Twenties and beyond. He would carefully revise and reshape the poems of his contemporaries, arrange for their publication, and engage in lengthy correspondence on art, poetry, and poetics. Most famously, Pound exercised his sharp eye and sharper pen on *The Waste Land*, making extensive deletions and emendations, including excising the first page of the poem as Eliot had originally written it. Pound is responsible for “April is the cruellest month,” appearing as the oft-quoted beginning of Eliot’s masterpiece.

Soon after his arrival in Paris, Samuel Beckett was introduced to James Joyce by Thomas MacGreevy, a fellow instructor at the École Normale Supérieure. Joyce’s eyesight was failing and he called on Beckett to assist him in a variety of literary tasks including taking part in the translation of Joyce’s “Anna Livia Plurabelle”—a beautiful but difficult passage of “Work in Progress,” the project that was eventually to become *Finnegans Wake*. The twenty-three-year-old Beckett joined a circle of more mature artists in this first compilation of critical commentary of Joyce’s work. Beckett’s contribution “Dante, Bruno, Vico Joyce” was an analysis of literary borrowing. The book was, in fact, edited by Joyce, who saw value in critical work’s ability to explain his work and help establish his reputation.

Begun shortly after *Ulysses* was published in 1922, *Finnegans Wake* was James Joyce’s final work. Pieces of it, “works-in-progress,” as he called them, were first published in Paris, London, and New York and entitled variously “Tales Told of Shem and Shaun,” “Haveth Childers Everywhere,” “The Mime of Mick, Nick and the Maggies,” and “Storiella as she is syung.” *Anna Livia Plurabelle* is the most famous of these previews of the larger work.
Crosby Gaige published over twenty books of European writing and, along with Boni & Liveright and Alfred A. Knopf Inc., was largely responsible for the American reading public’s knowledge of British and Continental modernism.

On a visit to the Ransom Center in 1960, the British writer Cyril Connolly annotated this book with a note about its provenance: “Copy given to Cyril Connolly by Sylvia Beach—names of rivers supplied by J. J. while C.C. was preparing his essay ‘The Position of Joyce’ [for] Life and Letters, 1925.” The book was subsequently published by the American art and book collector, T.E. Hanley, whose library the Ransom Center acquired in 1958.

56, 57

Opening poem from Ezra Pound’s corrected typescript of “Hugh Selwyn Mauberly,” not dated


Pound was a literary juggernaut. In 1920 he published one of his masterpieces, the poetic sequence Hugh Selwyn Mauberly. Like other modernist works the poem is both satiric and lyrical in its criticism of the tawdry commercialism and militaristic ethos of the age. Pound suggests that writers “resuscitate the dead art/ of poetry; to maintain ‘the sublime’/In the old sense.” T. S. Eliot commended the poem: “A great poem. . . It is compact of the experience of a certain man, in a certain place and at a certain time, and it is also the document of an epoch; it is genuine tragedy and comedy; and it is in the best sense of [Matthew] Arnold’s worn phrase, ‘a criticism of life.’”

Pound left an indelible mark upon modernism, in both the brilliant innovations in his own work and his support of fellow writers. The critic Hugh Kenner captured the extent of Pound’s influence when he coined the term “The Pound Era” as the title for his landmark volume on modernist literature and culture.

72

Gertrude Stein’s “Tender Buttons” in transition (Fall, 1928)

Stein’s experimental tour de force, Tender Buttons, was first published in 1914 in Paris by Claire Marie. Sections of it appeared
from time to time in *transition*, a journal published in Paris by the American expatriate Eugene Jolas. Although Jolas published a great deal of Stein’s work in addition to *Tender Buttons*, they later fell out. The 1935 issue of *transition* was accompanied by a supplement entitled “Testimony against Gertrude Stein,” written in angry response to her account of *transition* in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*.


The meeting of William Carlos Williams and Gertrude Stein in Paris in 1924 was somewhat unpleasant: Stein told Williams, “Writing is not your métier Doctor”, but Williams, notably a non-expatriate American writer, remained a supporter of Stein:

Stein’s theme is writing. But in such a way as to be writing envisioned as the first concern of the moment, dragging behind it a dead weight of logical burdens, among them a dead criticism which broken through might be a gap by which endless other enterprises of the understanding should issue—for refreshment.

Williams sees in Stein’s work a “fresh” approach to words and sentences that mirrors his own search for linguistic rebirth through experimentation. His essay in *Pagany* follows Stein’s own work, “Five Words in a Line.” *Pagany* was an American little magazine directly inspired by Williams; he was a frequent contributor, and the magazine’s name was taken from his 1928 novel *A Voyage to Pagany*.

A first edition of Gertrude Stein’s *How to Write* (Paris: Plain Editions, 1931)

“Dogs get tired and want to sleep. This is a sentence not to be abused.”

Gertrude Stein, like many American writers in the Twenties, was an expatriate in Paris. There, she pursued a life dedicated to writing and collecting art. An early admirer of Cezanne, Braque, Picasso, and others, she wrote in a cubist style all her own.
Perhaps her most difficult book, *How to Write*, is a collection of essays written in the late Twenties, three of them in 1928. They are based, in part, on her lectures at Cambridge and treat of “Saving the Sentence,” “Sentences and Paragraphs,” “Arthur A Grammar,” “A Grammarian, Sentences,” “Regular Regularly in Narrative,” and “Finally George a Vocabulary of Thinking and Forensics.” Plain Editions was Stein’s own press.

Table case 5


In the prologue to *Kora in Hell*, Williams writes: “There is nothing sacred about literature, it is damned from one end to the other. There is nothing in literature but change and change is mockery. I’ll write whatever I damn please, whenever I damn please and as I damn please and it’ll be good if the authentic spirit of change is on it.”

Made up of prose poems, improvisations and commentary; discontinuous, paratactic, fragmentary, *Kora in Hell* is a truly unique and exemplary experimental poem. Both the structure and the structuring myth of Kora (Persephone) “the legend of springtime captured” and the return of spring, rose from Williams’ conversations with Ezra Pound, but the governing metaphor is one referring to Williams himself and his new poetic spring: “it is the woman in us/That makes us write:/Let us acknowledge it,/Men would be silent.”

Looking back on the Twenties decades later, Williams spoke often about the impact of Eliot’s *The Waste Land* on the poetic landscape, writing in 1958,

I had a violent feeling that Eliot had betrayed what I believe in. He was looking backward; I was looking forward. He was a conformist with wit, learning which I did not possess. . . .But I felt that he had rejected American and I refused to be rejected. . . .
Williams, like his fellow modernists, wrote in reaction to what he viewed as a listless and oppressive verse culture in Britain and America. His own reaction to this tradition was most evident in *Kora in Hell* and *Spring and All*, both formally inventive and startlingly original works. Williams’ famous poem “The Red Wheelbarrow” originally appeared in *Spring and All* between blocks of prose assuming, as a result, a more experimental guise. Ezra Pound wrote to Williams: “The thing that saves your work is opacity. And don’t forget it.” He admonished in a letter from London, “OPACITY is not an American quality. Fizz, swish, gabble and verbiage, these are *echt Americanisch*."

*Spring and All* appeared the year after Eliot published *The Waste Land*. Both works are discontinuous, difficult, virtuoso performances. But where Eliot immerses the reader in tradition and history, Williams strips language down to a plain idiom, producing a work intended as distinctly “American.” Like Pound’s desire to “make it new,” Williams emphasized fresh strats with the language of rebirth, filling his poem with images of New Jersey farmlands awakening after winter.

*Harmonium* is regarded as one of the central texts of poetry in the twentieth century. Like William Carlos Williams, Stevens circulated among the bohemians in New York while living a traditional professional life. A Hartford, Connecticut insurance executive, Stevens composed poems in his head while walking to work, bobbing back and forth with the rhythm of the poems. The poems in *Harmonium* bob back and forth too, from long lines to short lines, from dark to light, and from happy to sad. Stevens’ linguistic flamboyance and imagistic finery is balanced by his serious philosophical themes. This mixture of high seriousness with dandified comedy reflects the contrasts of its time.

Critic Mark Van Doren highlighted the originality of *Harmonium* as “tentative, perverse and superfine,” mirroring the ambiguous reaction from most people. Marianne Moore accused Stevens of
being “deliberately bearish,” and described one of the poems as “a microcosm of cannibalism.” Harriet Monroe, publisher of *Poetry* magazine, described the book as “a brilliant country with tropic splendor, beside which the real tropics seem faded and meager.” The New York Times reviewer stated flat out, and quite wrongly: “Hence, unpleasant as it is to record such a conclusion, the very remarkable work of Wallace Stevens cannot endure” and noted that “Mr. Stevens is a martyr to a lost cause.”

Alice Corbin Henderson’s copy of the second, revised edition of Marianne Moore’s *Observations* (New York: The Dial Press, 1925)

*Observations*, Marianne Moore’s first major book, contained 53 poems; thirty-two new poems added to 21 published previously in *Poems* (1921). The compilation was to form the core of her work. Critic Yvor Winters praised her “extraordinary magnificence of phraseology” and William Carlos Williams was to describe Moore in his *Autobiography* (1951) as being “like a rafter holding up the superstructure of our uncompleted building, a caryatid . . . Marianne was our Saint—if we had one—in whom we all instinctively felt our purpose come together to form a stream. Everyone loved her.” In his review in the *Dial*, Moore’s friend Glenway Wescott was more colorful yet:

. . . . in Miss Moore’s work there are abundant beauties which stimulate one’s mind to the formation of their counterparts: ‘Black butterflies with blue half circles on their wings. . . lizards glittering and without thickness . . . the acacia-like lady shivering at the touch of a hand;’ ‘hounds with waists diminishing like the waist of the hourglass;’ . . . This exact magnificence, achieved entirely by a mode of scholarship and a way of seeing, is a visionary’s reply to the recommenders of wealth.

This copy is open to Moore’s most famous poem, “Poetry,” in one of its many incarnations. Revision was central to Moore’s poetic method, and just a year earlier, in the first edition of Observations, this poem was six stanzas long. She continued to alter the poem throughout her lifetime.
Harry Crosby’s copy of a first edition of H.D.’s *Collected Poems* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1925)

One of Ezra Pound’s earliest literary friends (and lovers), Hilda Doolittle (1886-1961) is perhaps best known for the small, crystalline poems she wrote in the early Nineteen-teens, miniature masterpieces of description that called upon Classical imagery and myth in an entirely new way. As the story goes, Pound and Doolittle were sitting in the British Museum tearoom in 1912 editing her poems when Pound scrawled the words, “H.D., Imagiste” at the bottom of a page. Both names stuck, and the founding movement in Anglo-American modernism was born.

H.D.’s heterodox strangeness recommended her to the other poets of her time, most significantly William Carlos Williams, Amy Lowell, and Marianne Moore. Her early work, collected in this volume, presents poetry as fear, as coldness, and as revulsion; H.D. was fascinated by the mind’s workings and underwent psychoanalysis with Sigmund Freud. But many of her poems may be read politically as well, their austere simplicity an antidote to the anguish of war and the glittering materialism and scientific “progress” that dominated the age. Pound named her “Nymph, Dryad, Priestess, Goddess” and “tree born spirit of the wood.”

82, 83, 84, 85

E. E. Cummings’ own copy of his *Tulips and Chimneys* (New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1923)

A first American edition of E. E. Cummings’ & (New York: Privately Printed, 1925); copy number 31 of 111 copies on Vidalon hand-made paper out of a total edition of 333 copies; signed by E. E. Cummings


For the masses, the poet of the decade was neither T. S. Eliot nor Ezra Pound, but the Greenwich Village poetic entrepreneur, E. E. Cummings. The very icon of the poet, his reputation as a gadabout, busybody, fly-by-night, operator, lover, and madman always preceded him. Nevertheless, Cummings’ four books of poetry from the 1920s display the thoughts and feelings of a serious
writer and a serious man. Everything Cummings wrote was innovative, experimental, different, new, and visual. He combined words, cut them in half, and cavalierly played with line breaks, disrupting cadence and thought. He was also often funny.

Cummings was first recognized for the candor and clarity of his “war memoir” *The Enormous Room*, an anti-war book of disillusionment published in 1922. But his poetic reputation rests largely on his outpouring of verse in the 1920s and 1930s. As he wrote in the foreword to *Is 5*, above: “If a poet is anybody, he is somebody to whom things made matter very little—somebody who is obsessed by Making.”

**Table Case 6**

75, 76

The original manuscript of Louis Zukofsky’s “American Poetry, 1920-1930,” 20pp., completed 2 June 1930

Louis Zukofsky’s “American Poetry, 1920-1930” in *Symposium* (January 1931) with penciled corrections

Louis Zukofsky was a central figure in the second wave of modernism, an inheritor of the experimental poetics of William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound. The child of Lithuanian immigrants, Zukofsky grew up on the Lower East Side of New York in a Yiddish-speaking household, and did not learn English until he began school. This experience appears in his writing’s themes and forms. His poetry is linguistically innovative, emphasizing the meanings inherent in the sounds of words. He first gained the notice of Ezra Pound with the 1926 poem “Poem Beginning ‘The’,” a heavily annotated poem written as a mocking response to Eliot’s “The Waste Land.”

Louis Zukofsky’s essay on American poetry of the Twenties (written as a sequel to the French critic René Taupin’s 1929 work describing the influence of French Symbolism on American poetry of the Nineteen-teens) is prescient in its analysis of contemporary figures. His review treats the American poets of the decade whose work and reputation has survived: William Carlos Williams, E. E. Cummings, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, and Hart Crane. Yet Zukofsky does not view this body of work through a purely national lens; he insists on the primacy of Joyce as an avatar of modernist poetry: “The brain and conscience of Joyce are that of his literary generation.”
Louis Zukofsky’s notes and earliest outline for A, 1927-1928

Like many of the great poets of the century, Zukofsky labored long and hard on an epic-length poem. “A” was a poem of great erudition written between 1928 and 1974. It was partly composed, like Pound’s *Cantos*, by the appropriation, translation, or transliteration of other texts. These notes and drafts are among the earliest surviving manuscripts of the poem and show Zukofsky’s elaborate palimpsestic approach to composition and his painstaking revision process. Throughout his long poem, Zukofsky struggles to incorporate the everyday into its texture, bringing a sense of the pure, the serene, and the childlike to his experimental language.

Neil Baldwin, a William Carlos Williams biographer, describes Louis Zukofsky as a “reed-thin, shy young man with jet black hair, thick glasses, and slightly stooped shoulders, [who] became over three decades, the hidden, unsung editor of almost all of Williams’ substantial prose and poetry.”

A letter from William Carlos Williams to Louis Zukofsky, 23 March 1928

Encouraged by Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams and Louis Zukofsky first met on April 1, 1928. Both men were in the flush of their poetic flowerings, though Williams was forty-five and Zukofsky only twenty-four. Despite the twenty years difference in their ages, they developed a life-long friendship, as evidenced in their correspondence. Both poets had similar poetic concerns and styles including a minimalist and documentary aesthetic. Williams, who often complained he could not understand his friend’s work, dedicated his book *The Wedge* (1944) to Zukofsky.
A letter from William Carlos Williams to Louis Zukofsky, 7 May 1929

Zukofsky and Williams both felt a fierce responsibility to renew language through experimentation; in this letter, Williams commends the work of Charles Reznikoff. In 1931, Zukofsky included Reznikoff in a landmark special issue of the little magazine “Poetry” on “Objectivist” poetry. Characteristically, Williams writes passionately here of “the new” and more specifically about the importance of innovative meter in poetry:

There is a stale successful conception of writing practiced and lauded and backed by the dull wits in the ‘great academic tradition’ and their pimps like [H. L.] Mencken. Then there is the so called ‘modernist’ tendency which always goes on draggin its tradition of failure and inability to ‘put itself across’. . . . But goddamit why must the new always be considered an outcast measure? . . . Must new work always be considered a failure if it does not measure up to the ‘Perfection’ of a few exquisite (dead) somnets or hexameter lines? There should be a new measure.

Nancy Cunard (Great Britain, 1896-1965)
Florence Williams and William Carlos Williams, March 1924
Gelatin silver print

This snapshot, taken on Williams’s first trip to Europe, is pasted into a scrapbook compiled by the British socialite, poet, journalist, and publisher Nancy Cunard between 1919 and 1929.

Wall items for Modernist Monuments
South Perimeter wall (left to right)

E. E. Cummings (U.S., 1894-1962)
Self portrait
Oil on canvas board

John Peale Bishop wrote about E. E. Cummings in *The Southern Review* in 1938:
The sensibility of the poet was singularly uncontaminated. He defied, indeed, every principle which Ezra Pound had taught us was right for poetry; and there was none of us then who had not listened with attention to Pound. Here was no effort for the one precise word; instead adjectives, which were Pound’s abhorrence, were piled one on another in a sort of luminous accumulation. If Cummings, in writing, had kept his eye on the object, it was of no avail, for the objects had their outlines disordered, or else they dissolved, leaving behind only an impression of their qualities. Here was poetry as shining and as elusive as quicksilver. If there was anything precise about it, it was, as Cummings was to note later, that precision which aims at creating movement. Yet none but a poet could have been so preoccupied with words; nor could anyone not a poet have so enlivened them with his presence. . . .Here was no Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be; here was quite another figure, fine, impertinent, full of shocks and capers, in the midst of some absurd mockery suddenly turning surpassingly lyrical. Here was Mercutio.

88
Man Ray (U.S., 1890-1976)
H.D. [Hilda Doolittle], ca. 1926
Gelatin silver print

89
Wyndham Lewis (Great Britain, 1882-1957)
Ezra Pound, ca. 1925
Charcoal pencil on paper

90
Wyndham Lewis (Great Britain, 1882-1957)
T. S. Eliot, 1925
Pencil and watercolor on paper

91
Constantin Brancusi (France, b. Romania, 1876-1957)
James Joyce, 1929
Engraved frontispiece to *Tales Told of Shem and Shaun; Fragments from a Work in Progress* (Paris: The Black Sun Press, 1929)
Scanned reproduction

66

Marcel Duchamp (France, 1887-1968)
Five Way portrait, 1917
Gelatin silver

In this self portrait created by the use of mirrors, Duchamp is challenging the notion of the self as a single, unitary being. In his own life and artwork, he developed a number of alternative selves, including Rrose Selavy and R. Mutt.

65

Alfred Stieglitz (U.S., 1864-1946)
Image of “Fountain,” signed “R. Mutt 1917” in *Blind Man* (1917)

One of the most influential artists of the twentieth century, Marcel Duchamp challenged the concept of the “work of art” and the position of the artist in relation to that work. Duchamp spent considerable time in the U. S., most famously in 1916 and 1917, when he spurred the New York Dada movement. In 1955, he obtained U. S. citizenship.

During the second two decades of the twentieth century, Duchamp created his famous “readymades,” choosing and displaying ordinary objects outside their expected environments. The simple act of locating them in museums and galleries transformed the objects into art-works. The most famous of these readymades was “Fountain,” a urinal turned on its side and signed with one of Duchamp’s pseudonyms, R. Mutt. It was created for the landmark April 1917 exhibition of the Society of Independent Artsits in New York. The original “Fountain” has been lost, but Stieglitz’s image of it remains as an artwork in and of itself; soon after the show he photographed in his gallery with Marsden Hartley’s “The Warriors” (1913) in the background, at Duchamp’s request.

**West Perimeter wall (left to right)**

52

Edward Weston (U.S., 1886-1958)
Edward Weston was the prototypical Twenties photographer, combining in his work a concern for modernist values of form and structure with a deep love of things in and of themselves, in particular the human body. Weston produced much of his most vibrant work during this decade, creating both portraits and formal studies of unorthodox subjects such as peppers and shells. The remarkable honesty and clarity of his photographs are a tribute to both art and nature.

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Weston’s famous “Nude” is the author Anita Brenner whose papers are part of the Center’s collections and who, like Weston, was a devotee of the Southwest and Mexico. Of Weston’s work the great Mexican painter Diego Rivera wrote, “Weston is the culmination of THE AMERICAN ARTIST; that is, one whose sensitivity contains the extreme modernism of the PLASTIC ARTS OF THE NORTH and the LIVING TRADITION BORN FROM THE LAND OF THE SOUTH.”

Edward Weston (U.S., 1886-1958)
*Neil, 1925*
Gelatin silver print
Image Dimensions: 23.7 x 18.5 cm

Edward Weston was the prototypical Twenties photographer, combining in his work a concern for modernist values of form and structure with a deep love of things in and of themselves, in particular the human body. Weston produced much of his most vibrant work during this decade, creating both portraits and formal studies of unorthodox subjects such as peppers and shells. The remarkable honesty and clarity of his photographs are a tribute to both art and nature.

Weston’s famous “Nude” is the author Anita Brenner whose papers are part of the Center’s collections and who, like Weston, was a devotee of the Southwest and Mexico. Of Weston’s work the great Mexican painter Diego Rivera wrote, “Weston is the culmination of THE AMERICAN ARTIST; that is, one whose sensitivity contains the extreme modernism of the PLASTIC ARTS OF THE NORTH and the LIVING TRADITION BORN FROM THE LAND OF THE SOUTH.”

**Portable wall #32**
407 [Loan from the Blanton]

Arshile Gorky (U.S., b. Armenia, 1904-1948)
*Composition with Vegetables, ca. 1928*
Oil on canvas, 28 1/16 x 36 1/16 in.
Armenian born painter Arshile Gorky came to the U. S. as an exile from the genocide of the Armenian peoples. His work in the Twenties is characteristic of the art of the decade: it is varied and experimental, at once showing the influence of impressionism, post-impressionism, surrealism, and the beginnings of abstract expressionism.

NEW YORK

There, millions of men and women live in a constant bout of jostling one another’s souls. And among them, hundreds with sharp eyes and reaching minds paw over the mental and vocal products of each other . . . purr or snarl, nestle or claw in an agitation which they are sure sums up the cultural activity of the country . . . . One must recognize by all its sounds and odors the cultural Capitol: the Metropolis: the sort of over nervous human complex which doubtless once was Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Rome—-and which today is Paris and Berlin. Add to your list: New York.

—Waldo Frank in The American Year

(1921)

In many ways, New York City epitomized American life in the Twentieth Century. Its growth in the Twenties was uncontrolled, uncontrollable and magical. The gleaming art-deco Chrysler Building and the taller Empire State Building became signs of both the Capitol and of capital. Writers, musicians, actors, playwrights, and geniuses of all sorts came to the City in increasing numbers. Jazz and the blues flourished. The elegant personal style and soulful music of George Gershwin personified the new urban lifestyle. The New York decade was soaring as well as roaring, from the passionately lyrical apostrophes of Vincent Millay to the jazz melodies of Langston Hughes, from the Village to Harlem, all backed up by Wall Street. The Algonquin Round Table held court in midtown and Babe Ruth in Yankee Stadium. The Age of Innocence was left behind, and the city could be both inspiring and alienating. The rule of commerce, industrialism, and the machine could turn the dream to a nightmare as in Fritz Lang’s 1927 futuristic film Metropolis. The intensity of change and development all across America was magnified in New York City.

Flat case #7

338 [open to Walker Evans photo/"To Brooklyn Bridge" spread]
A first, limited edition of Hart Crane’s *The Bridge* (Paris: The Black Sun Press, 1930) From the library of E. E. Cummings

Publication of *The Bridge* by Hart Crane (1899-1932) was a major event in the history of American literature. The work belongs in company with other important long poems of modernism—T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, Ezra Pound’s *The Cantos*, William Carlos Williams’ *Paterson*, and Louis Zukofsky’s “A.” Like Eliot, Crane believed in the “superior logic” of metaphor rather than in discursive narration. Unlike Eliot, however, Crane argued that poetry needed to embrace, rather than stand remote from, contemporary life: “unless poetry can absorb the machine...as naturally and casually as trees, cattle, galleons, castles and all other human associations of the past, then poetry has failed of its full contemporary function.”

339 [open to pp. 22-23]


Hart Crane (1899-1932) was both a visionary and a mythmaker; he embraced both the confusions of modernity and the rhythmic embrace of Walt Whitman, an important influence on his poetry. To those who charge Crane with willful obscurity, Crane might reply (as he did to one critic), “There is only one way of saying what comes to one in ecstasy. One works over it to finish and organize it perfectly—but fundamentally that doesn’t affect one’s way of saying it.”

340 [cover]

A first edition of John Dos Passos’s *Manhattan Transfer* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925), from the library of Christopher Morley

*Manhattan Transfer* is a cinematic novel whose hero is New York City in all its mass confusion, variety, and motion. Although some reviewers criticized what journalist Paul Elmer More called “an explosion in a cess-pool,” the novel received raves from the likes of D. H. Lawrence, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Allen Tate, and Sinclair Lewis, who wrote in *The Saturday Review* of December, 1925,
I regard *Manhattan Transfer* as more important in every way than anything by Gertrude Stein or Marcel Proust or even the great white boar, Mr. Joyce’s *Ulysses*. For Mr. Dos Passos can use, and deftly does use, all their experimental psychology and style, all their revolt against the molds of classic fiction. But the difference! Dos Passos is interesting! Their novels are treatises on harmony, very scholarly, and confoundedly dull; *Manhattan Transfer* is the moving symphony itself.

341 [cover]


Originally conceived as a history of Black theater, Johnson’s work developed into a larger, more inclusive descriptive history of Blacks in New York. Johnson begins with a description of slavery in Dutch New York and moves through history up to his own creative beginnings in the Harlem Renaissance. It deals with anti-black draft riots and violence, the role of Black soldiers in World War I, and of the rise of Marcus Garvey’s Back to Africa movement. Johnson’s study of the theatrical renaissance of the Twenties surveys such works as *All God’s Chillun Got Wings*, *The Emperor Jones*, *Porgy*, *The Green Pastures*, and traces the ascension of Paul Robeson and Ethel Waters to stardom.

342 [cover]

Charles Reznikoff’s *By the Waters of Manhattan* (New York: Charles Boni Paper Books, 1930)

A novel of Jewish immigrant life on the lower east-side, *By the Waters of Manhattan* is the first work of fiction by one of the outstanding poets American poets of the twentieth century. The critic Lionel Trilling called it “remarkable and original in American Literature.” The novel is also a tribute to Reznikoff’s Russian poet-grandfather and to the fragility and tenuous existence of literature in a world hostile to it:

She was afraid to ask an outsider what the writing was about. In those days it was enough to say of a family, “They are Nihilists,” to have them arrested at once; the police investigated at their leisure. There was too much to burn at one time, so she
burnt a few sheets every morning until all were gone. As she put the first into the fire she said, “Here’s a man’s life.”

343 [cover]

Don Marquis’ *Archy & Mehitabel* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company 1927)

A writer for the New York *The Evening Sun*, Don Marquis (1878-1937) introduced Archy the cockroach in his daily column “The Sun Dial” in 1916. At night, Archy dives furiously onto the keys of Marquis’ typewriter and spells out a cockroach’s view of the world with pointed cynicism and humor. All of Archy’s dispatches are written lowercase and without punctuation because he is unable to hit both shift and letter keys to produce a capital letter. “Expression is the need of my soul,” he declares, also explaining that he labored as a free-verse poet in an earlier life.

Archy’s appearance came at a time of great public interest in the supernatural: Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, had recently claimed to see fairies, and spiritualists held sway at elaborate séances. Mehitabel, Archy’s feline friend, claims to be a reincarnation of Cleopatra and other great ladies. Marquis uses Archy to poke fun at this latest fad, as well as at modernist experiments with poetic form, language, and punctuation.

344 [pp. 42-43, “Spring Comes to Murray Hill”]

Ogden Nash’s *Hard Lines* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1931)

Ogden Nash (1902-1971) worked in the Twenties as a bond salesman, advertising copywriter, and editor at Doubleday. His writing, at once quick, sharp, witty, sarcastic, and sentimental made him one of the most successful comic poets of the twentieth century. His first book, *Hard Lines*, was an instant success, selling out seven printings in its first year. “Spring Comes to Murray Hill,” his first published poem, originally appeared in the prestigious *New Yorker* in 1930.

384 [Cover]

A first edition of Dorothy Parker’s *Sunset Gun* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1928)
Witty and wisecracking Dorothy Parker (1893-1967) is famous as much for her socializing as her writing; as a member of the Algonquin Round Table, she joined other prominent newspaper and magazine columnists to lunch and, more importantly, talk at New York’s Algonquin Hotel throughout the Twenties. Parker’s witty poetry and barbed sense of humor has a truly modern, ironic edge, and the victim of her cutting humor is as often as not herself, as in the famous quip: “That would be a good thing for them to cut on my tombstone: Wherever she went, including here, it was against her better judgment.”

**Portable wall 25**

386 (1929)

*New York Journal American*

Crowds at Sub Treasury during Stock Slump, October 25, 1929

Gelatin silver print

From 1921 to 1929 the Dow Jones stock market rocketed from 60 to 400, making stock market trading a favorite past time for many Americans who, thinking the post War economic boom would continue, began buying stocks on margin, a risky practice that creates exponentially large returns if a stock price rises but also causes exponentially large losses if a stock price falls. Efforts by the Feds to cool the overheated stock market by raising interest rates failed to prevent a stock slump (or bear market) and on Thursday, October 24, 1929, panic selling began as investors realized the over inflated value of their holdings. This image was taken on the second day of panic selling. The stock market crashed on October 28 and 29. By November 1929 the Dow sank from 400 to 145; 10,000 banks failed, and the Great Depression was launched.

422 (1928)

Pacific and Atlantic Photos, Inc.

Gov. Roosevelt . . . at New York State Fair in Syracuse, 31 August 1928

Gelatin silver print


**Portable wall 26**

#TBD
Miguel Covarrubias (Mexico, 1904-1957)
Blanche Knopf, not dated
Watercolor on board

Blanche Knopf was a founding member, administrator, and Vice President of the Alfred A. Knopf Inc. publishing firm. She was not only a gifted editor, but also close friends with many of the leading authors she brought to the firm, including Miguel Covarrubias.

418 (1924)
First issue of *The American Mercury*, January 1924

A monthly review edited by H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan (who resigned after a year), *The American Mercury*, under the guise of outward respectability, provided “elegantly irreverent observations of America” and featured writing by some of the most important writers in the United States. The first issue sold more than 15,000 copies and the magazine enjoyed a peak circulation of over 84,000. Published by Alfred A. Knopf Inc. through 1933, the magazine survived under various names and editors through 1981, but in the last 30 years became increasingly racialist in content.

416 (1923)
Book-of-the-Month Club Inc.’s “Facts for Publishers,” 1926

Founded in 1923 as a mail order book distribution business in which subscribers could accept or decline recommended titles, the Book-of-the-Month Club was viewed by some publishers with suspicion. To allay fears about the company’s operations, especially in regard to book selection, this explanatory pamphlet was prepared. The selection committee was indeed an august one for the time—Henry Seidel Canby, Heywood Broun, Dorothy Canfield, Christopher Morley, and William Allen White—although few of these authors are household names today.

Portable wall 27
350

Nikolas Muray
Babe Ruth, 1927
Gelatin silver print

The legendary baseball player George Herman ("Babe") Ruth played for the Brooklyn Dodgers and became a symbol of Brooklyn to the rest of the world. In 1927 he set the record for season home runs, blasting sixty of them. The record was to stand for 34 years.

Between 1920 and 1940, Nickolas Muray made over 10,000 portraits of Hollywood celebrities and other cultural figures.

417a-b (1928)
Envelope that made the first direct air mail flight from the U.S. to Germany via Graf Zeppelin, October 1928
Return postcard, 1929
Loan courtesy of a private collector

The LZ 127 Graf Zeppelin had a long and celebrated career. Within weeks of its first flight in September 1928, the Graf Zeppelin carried the first airmail to go directly from Germany to the US and vice versa. Germany issued special 2-mark and 4-mark stamps for the occasion. On the return trip, the zeppelin carried almost 52,000 postcards and 50,000 letters.

#424
George M. Cohan’s The Yankee Doodle Boy (New York: Pioneer Music Publishing Company, not dated)

This special edition of sheet music for Cohan’s song, published originally in 1907, “is respectfully dedicated to Captain Charles A. Lindbergh.”

#423
The plaque reads: “This Pioneer Compass magnetic element was used by Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh on his New York-Paris flight, May 20-21, 1927. It was accidentally damaged during his subsequent tour of the U.S. and replaced by a new element.

Charles Lindbergh’s solo transatlantic flight captured the imagination of the American public like few historical events before it. When he landed at Le Bourget airfield in Paris less than thirty-four
hours after take-off, more than 100,000 people had gathered to greet him. His specially-designed aircraft, The Spirit of St. Louis, was so-named because of the financial support Lindbergh received from the citizens of that city.

South perimeter wall (left to right)
345
Shreve, Lamb and Harmon, Architects
Empire State Building souvenir model, not dated
Cast metal

Construction of the Empire State Building was completed in 1931. This instant New York City architectural icon has been called the eighth wonder of the world. Originally topping out at 1250 feet, the addition of a television tower in 1950 raised its height to 1472 feet, making it the tallest building in the world until the construction of the World Trade Center in 1972.

346

New York Journal American
Monroe Street on the East Side of New York, 1926
Gelatin silver print

THE RISE OF WOMEN

Woman must have her freedom, the fundamental freedom of choosing whether or not she will be a mother and how many children she will have. Regardless of what man's attitude may be, that problem is hers -- and before it can be his, it is hers alone. She goes through the vale of death alone, each time a babe is born. As it is the right neither of man nor the state to coerce her into this ordeal, so it is her right to decide whether she will endure it.

—Margaret Sanger in Woman and the New Race (1920)

What's in the men nowadays—the women have the fire & the ardency & the power & the depth?
—Genevieve Taggard in a letter to Josephine Herbst, ca. 1922

In the June 1918 issue of Ladies Home Journal, editor Edward W. Bok proclaimed that “the most important single factor that is come out of the war is woman.” In 1848 the revolution had begun, at the
Seneca Falls Convention, which passed a Declaration of Sentiments, demanding equal rights for women. Women marched, petitioned Congress, and gave speeches in the face of public disapproval, led by figures such as Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Seventy-two years later, the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, and women could vote for the first time. With this major victory, broader women’s rights became a more distinct possibility. But progress was slow, and in many states anti-women initiatives gathered strength. Nevertheless, as more women entered college and careers formerly dominated by men, role models were developed and organizations founded. Between the motion picture and the novel, a sea change in the portrayal of women occurred during the decade, crossing social classes and economic sectors.

The most ubiquitous symbol of women in the Twenties is the flapper, with bobbed hair, turned down rayon stockings, and short skirts. Alcohol, cigarettes, and cars became the symbols of the new freedom, but women were also beginning to insist on their rights in all of life’s arenas—as artists, businesswomen, and lovers. Edna St. Vincent Millay and Louise Brooks were representative idols of the Jazz Age, exuberant, glamorous, and accomplished. Self-sufficient, intellectual women also found role models in the artists Frida Kahlo and Georgia O’Keefe.

**Flat case 8**

141

*U.S. Constitution, 19th amendment*

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

The Nineteenth Amendment was ratified by the United States Congress on 8 August 1920 after nearly a century of struggle. It was first proposed on 19 July 1848. In the intervening decades, women’s right to vote was fought for by such suffragettes as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Alice Paul.

142

Inez Haynes Gilmore was a novelist, short story writer, editor of the radical magazine, *The Masses*, and an active suffragette. She was instrumental in getting the Nineteenth Amendment passed and worked hard to raise the consciousness of both women and politicians. In 1923, The Woman’s Party proposed the Equal Rights Amendment to Congress. It seeks to eliminate all discrimination on the basis of gender. Congress passed the amendment in 1972, but it has never been ratified by a sufficient number of states to be enacted.

143


Doris Stevens helped found the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage in 1913 and was jailed along with many others for demonstrating in favor of the Nineteenth Amendment in front of the White House. During a period of three years, over 500 demonstrators were arrested. English writer Rebecca West wrote this about the imprisoned suffragettes in her review of Stevens’ memoir:

They found that the police while constantly arresting them for minute technical offenses would not interfere when they were assaulted by hooligans, and later on led Government-organized crowds of uniformed soldiers and sailors against them. They went to prison and, in an interesting penal institution called the Occoguan workhouse, were fed on worm-crawling food and exposed to unsanitary conditions and when they denounced this state of affairs, not only on their own account but (as has always been the gentlemanly suffragist way), on behalf of the ordinary offenders, the administration called to mind a penitentiary in a swamp, which had been declared unfit for human habitation nine years before, and put them there. All this they endured and thereby, without any doubt at all, acquired the vote.

157

A first edition of Margaret Sanger’s *Motherhood in Bondage* (New York: Brentano’s, 1928)
Margaret Sanger was originally a nurse in poverty stricken parts of New York City. She gave up nursing for the life of a crusader. She was tireless in disseminating birth control information and established numerous birth control clinics, including the first in Brooklyn in 1921. For her efforts, she was jailed and castigated. In *Motherhood in Bondage*, she published a selection of the over 200,000 letters she received asking for help. One such letter is exemplary:

> Please don’t think I dislike children; I love mine dearly, but trying to care for them and bring them up properly wears one’s patience all away as I have to make every minute count to keep things going. I can’t afford any improvements to help me in my work. I must wash every day in order to get the washing done and keep the children clean as I have neither the time or [sic] strength to do it all at once. With a baby one cannot anyway. I can’t bear to be a cranky, cross mother to my children. I haven’t been to a place of amusement, even a picture show, in over seven years. The last time I was away from home for a few hours visit was Christmas 1924. The only way I can get downtown to shop for an hour is when my husband takes the time off to stay with the children. Don’t you think I am doing all I can without having more children.

144

“Mrs. Sanger and Staff of Her Birth Control Clinic after Raid,” *New York World*, 16 April 1929

**Flat case #9**

392

A first edition of Amy Lowell’s *What’s O’Clock* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1925)

Amy Lowell (1874-1925), a daughter of an old and rich Boston family, used her position and wealth in the pursuit of an education in poetry. She came late to the practice of poetry, inspired by the famous actress Eleanora Duse, who she saw sing in Boston in 1902. Her knowledge of poetry and poetics was largely a matter of self-education despite attempts by Ezra Pound to direct her reading. The two quarreled and parted ways in the aftermath of the first Imagist stirrings in 1913-1914. Though—or perhaps because—Lowell was tireless in her support of imagism, Pound dismissed her efforts, calling her work and the work she supported “Amygism.”
Among her varied accomplishments were two critical works on poetry, a book of translations of Chinese poetry, three anthologies of imagist poems, eleven volumes of her own poetry (including a criticism of contemporary poets in verse), and a well-regarded two-volume biography of John Keats.

*What’s O’Clock*, published three months after her death, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for 1926. It contains a broad selection of the many and varied poetries created by Lowell over her lifetime but lacks any of her very intimate love lyrics for the actress Ada Russell, her life-long companion, who edited the volume.

Two copies of the first edition of Amy Lowell’s *A Critical Fable* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1922)

In this volume, Lowell comments on the state of affairs in literary culture; her contemporaries might have recognized that the title refers back to a similar volume by her celebrated kinsman, James Russell Lowell, *A Fable for Critics* (1848). In his *A Memoir* (1955), Louis Untermeyer, noted poetry anthologist, wrote that: “Although purists complained of the rough rhythms and rougher rhyming, the hit-or-miss lines accomplished many palpable hits. There was penetration and no little humor in her half cutting, half kindly disposals of the leading (and several minor) American poets of her day,” including H.D.

Glenn Arthur Hughes, playwright and author of *Imagism and the Imagists* (1931), has annotated his copy of *A Critical Fable* with the story of its originally anonymous authorship: “Published as a kind of literary hoax. . . . [Amy Lowell] attempted to conceal her author-identity by including herself in the American poets dissected. Two years after the book was published she admitted her authorship.”

Edna St. Vincent Millay’s *The Harp Weaver and Other Poems* (Harper, 1923)

The first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, Edna St. Vincent Millay inspired people who did not typically read poetry. She published in the elegant *Vanity Fair* and the prosaic *Reedy’s Mirror*. The English novelist Thomas Hardy was rumored to have classed her with the Empire State Building as an icon of modern New York.
Her years in Greenwich Village (her house on Bedford Street was the skinniest one in town) were years of celebrity. She was the national symbol for the liberated woman, the modern Sappho, and her name a household word. Floyd Dell, Edmund Wilson, Arthur Davison Ficke, Witter Bynner, John Reed, and others were her friends and lovers. Her two sisters and her mother were her friends and supporters, as was her husband, who nursed her through her addiction to alcohol in the last sad decade of her life.

Her dramatic poems are surprisingly formal, more radical in their spirit and content than in their poetic form. Women had never before written poems that gave voice, as anthologist Louis Untermeyer put it in *Modern American Poetry* (1930), to a “disillusion that contains more than a tinge of bitterness.” He said of Millay’s verse, “at its height, her poetry reflects the paradox of its being: it is immediate and it is immutable.”

Miss Millay belongs to an age as well as to the ages. She is dated in a good sense. Like Scott Fitzgerald, H. L. Mencken, Sinclair Lewis, prohibition, and midget golf, she belongs to a particular period. No one interested in that period will fail to be interested in Miss Millay’s poems. . . . Her lyrics were used by the period, and she was made famous by their usefulness; but now they are inseparable from the period, and they will always illuminate the liberated Vassar girl, the jazz age, bohemianism, and the halcyon days of Greenwich Village.

—Delmore Schwartz in *The Nation* (18 December 1943)


Elinor Wylie (1885-1928) cultivated the looks, behavior, metaphysical attitudes, and the discontent of the new woman of the Twenties. Many of the literary tastemakers of the times were in thrall to her and her delicate poems. Anthologist Louis Untermeyer devoted almost as many pages to her as to T. S. Eliot in his *Modern American Poetry* anthology of 1930. He characterized *Angels and Earthly Creatures*, the volume she readied for publication in the last months of her life, in this way:
Here are the cunningly poised and polished syllables, here are the old concerns with freezing silver, frail china and pearly monotones, but here is a quality that lifts them high above themselves. . . . the poet transcends her influences and develops a highly personal mysticism.

Carl Van Doren, Professor of English at Columbia University and editor of the Nation and Century magazines, not only printed her poems and reviewed her books, but developed a close personal friendship with her. “She respected the passions, she respected the mind and manners,” he said.

152


Genevieve Taggard (1894-1948) spent most of the 1920s in Greenwich Village, where she socialized with other writers and artists. During this time she edited a poetry anthology called May Days, which collected work from the radical socialist journals The Masses and The Liberator. Traveling Standing Still is the fourth volume of her poetry published in the 1920s and the last before the Great Depression began to markedly influence her later work in which she grapples with such issues as class prejudice, racism, feminism, and labor strikes.

Taggard saw radio as a means to make poetry and art accessible to the masses, and she often read her poems on the radio. Fascinated by the intersections between poetry and music, Taggard also wrote many poems that were later scored by such composers as William Shuman, Aaron Copeland, Roy Harris, and Henry Leland Clarke.

[print as a separate label]

Am I the Christian gentlewoman my mother slaved to make me? No indeed. I am a poet, a wine-bibber, a radical; a non-churchgoer who will no longer sing in the choir or lead prayer-meeting with a testimonial. (Although I will write anonymous confessions for The Nation.) That is her story—and her second defeat. She thinks I owed her a Christian gentlewoman, for all she did for me. We quarrel. After I escaped, she snapped shut the iron trap around my brother and sister. That is their story. I do not know if they will ever be free of her.
She keeps Eddie Guest on the parlor table beside the books I have written—a silent protest against me. She is not pleased.

—from Genevieve Taggard’s “Poet out of Pioneer” in The Nation (1927)

Louise Bogan’s *Body of This Death* (New York: R.M. McBride & Company, 1923) Inscribed: “For Laurence Gomme/in friendship,-typography/being his living love, poetry his/dead!/Louise Bogan/October 1923”

Louise Bogan was 26 years old when her first volume, *Body of this Death*, was published. Like her better known, highly celebrated compatriots, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Elinor Wylie, her subject matter was love and unrequited love. Like Elinor Wylie, but unlike Edna St. Vincent Millay or Genevieve Taggard, she was a metaphysical poet. Bogan was a formalist who wrote controlled, composed, and well-wrought lyrics. She was rigidly self-disciplined and within her minimalism, created a lush interiority. She was concise and careful in her poems, criticism, and especially in her life.

**East perimeter wall (left to right)**

145

E. O. Goldbeck (U.S., 1892-1986)
Campaigning for the Vote
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

Born in San Antonio, Goldbeck began his photographic career taking so-called “kidnapped” photographs, photographing passing subjects and then offering to sell the subjects copies of the image. Attracted to the panoramic group photograph because it offered a larger prospective market, he is best known for his work in this medium.

147

E. O. Goldbeck (U.S., 1892-1986)
3rd Annual Bathing Girl Revue, Galveston Texas, ca. 14 May 1922
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative
Born in San Antonio, Goldbeck began his photographic career taking so-called “kidnapped” photographs, photographing passing subjects and then offering to sell the subjects copies of the image. Attracted to the panoramic group photograph because it offered a larger prospective market, he is best known for his work in this medium.

South perimeter wall (left to right)
163

Porter Woodruff (U.S.)
Gordon Conway, 1923
Pastel

The illustrator Porter Woodruff often contributed artwork to Vogue magazine.

164

Janet Jevons, London
Gordon Conway, ca. 1920s
Silver gelatin print

162

Unidentified photographer
Dorothy Dickson perched on the Fender of a Delage, ca. 1920
Gelatin silver print

159

Manatt
Dorothy Sebastian, Joan Crawford, and Anita Page in MGM’s *Our Dancing Daughters*, 1928
Gelatin silver print

The film *Our Dancing Daughters* tells the story of an American generation of young, emancipated women whose adolescent years coincided with those of the Jazz Age. Their parents own businesses, money is plentiful, leisure and European travel define their lifestyles. Yet they associate with prospective husbands a decade older who
have been shaped by their experiences during World War I. Tensions over the modern attitudes of the young women and the more conservative mores of their suitors shape the film’s storyline without precluding a happy ending. The film, nevertheless, vividly depicts an era that was about to come to an end with the crash of the stock market in 1929.

Originally made as a silent, the film was reworked and a sound track added to take advantage of the meteoric popularity of talking pictures.

156

Edward Steichen (U.S., b. Luxembourg, 1879-1973)
Lilian Steichen Sandburg, ca. 1925

Lilian Steichen, the sister of the photographer, Edward Steichen, married Carl Sandburg in 1908. Steichen became close friends with Sandburg and photographed the entire Sandburg family.

155

Carl Van Vechten (U.S., 1880-1964)
Judith Anderson, 28 September 1932
Silver gelatin
Inscribed to Fannie Hurst: “With my deep admiration/Judith”

The great actress Judith Anderson recreated many of Shakespeare’s heroines for the stage. During the Twenties, she played small roles in both Australia and New York developing her craft. She acted in Shakespearian roles for the next sixty years including a portrayal of Hamlet. She was also a popular character actress in film and television, winning two Emmys for different productions of Macbeth.

154

Baron DeMeyer
Mary Pickford, ca. 1920
Gelatin silver print
Inscribed: “To Fannie Hurst-/the magnetic/from her admirer/Mary Pickford”
You may have a fresh start any moment you choose, for this thing that we call failure is not the falling down, but the staying down.
—Mary Pickford

Like her husband Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford (“America’s Sweetheart”) was a Hollywood icon. On a trip to Paris, fans became so excited they surrounded her car and pulled her out, almost trampling the American Queen of the silent movies. Although her film career (52 features) included both silent films and “talkies,” she never fully made the transition to the new medium. At the height of her fame, she and Fairbanks lived in a castle-like home, Pickfair, in Beverly Hills. With Charlie Chaplin and D.W. Griffith they also established their own production house, United Artists, in 1919.

STRIKE!

I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on earth. I said then, and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it, and while there is a criminal element I am of it, and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free.
—Eugene V. Debs in “Statement to the Federal Court of Cleveland, September 18, 1918”

After all, the chief business of the American people is business. . . . . Of course the accumulation of wealth cannot be justified as the chief end of existence. . . . We make no concealment of the fact that we want wealth, but there are many other things that we want very much more. We want peace and honor, and that charity which is so strong an element of all civilization. The chief ideal of the American people is idealism. I cannot repeat too often that America is a nation of idealists. That is the only motive to which they ever give any strong and lasting reaction.
—President Calvin Coolidge in speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, January 1925

Inflation, unemployment, lockouts, strikes, bombs, and other evidence of labor unrest abounded after the Great War and into the early Twenties. Before the war, the union movement had experienced considerable growth and was for a time a powerful if chaotic force in American life and politics. Eugene Debs, Robert La Follette, Big Bill Haywood, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn were the heroes of the Left. At this time in America a wide variety of political positions, including communism, socialism, and anarchism, were possible. The struggle for the soul of America was fierce on all sides. But in the end, government and other powers in the grip of fear,
distrust, and uncertainty systematically destroyed leftist political alternatives. Red scares, trials, deportations, and murders, as well as increased prosperity and the growth of the middle class, turned the tide.

Under the banner of welfare capitalism, both workers and companies made some progress. Shorter workdays were finally put into effect in several industries and large corporations even as corporate profits rose 80% between 1923 and 1929. The Twenties ushered in the age of Big Business, a new era founded on revolutionary technological innovations, new organizational strategies, the practice of standardization, and an ebullient optimism. Its heroes were Henry Ford, Walter Chrysler, and Owen D. Young, the latter two being *Time* magazine’s “Men of the Year” for 1927 and 1928, respectively.

**Flat case #10**

96, 97 [dust jacket and open to pp. 260-261]


In her introduction to this collection of work from two radical journals, poet and activist Genevieve Taggard (1894-1948) despaired of the loss of radical political consciousness at mid-decade:

> The working class needs artists. It has no one to convince of its quality but itself. The exploited mass that owns neither the earth or its own toil or the fruits or implements of toil will sooner or later have all these.

> Whether it will have its artists before or after these, we do not know. What they will be like we can only guess. But the beginnings of that art in poetry, will, I think, be found in the *Masses-Liberator* anthology, 1912-1924.

98 [Open to The Exodus from Dixie]

A first edition of *Red Cartoons from the Daily Worker, The Workers Monthly, and The Liberator* (Chicago: The Daily Worker, 1926)

101 [Cover]
A founding member of the “Wobblies” or Industrial Workers of the World, William Dudley (“Big Bill”) Haywood was one of the most admired and persecuted labor leaders in the Twenties. He was a leader in many important strikes, including the Lawrence Textile Strike in 1912 and the Colorado mine wars of 1918. A born orator, he was large both in physical size and in stature and charisma. In 1918 he was arrested for violation of the Espionage Act of 1917. While out on bail from Leavenworth Haywood fled to the Soviet Union where, like John Reed, he was considered a “trusted advisor.” Haywood died there in 1928.


An important anarchist thinker, Emma Goldman (1869-1940) was the author of several influential books and was a speaker of power and depth. She was implicated in the assassination of President McKinley in 1901 and her promotion of unpopular causes, including union organization, sexual freedom and birth control made her a target of the capitalist leaders, including the famed J. Edgar Hoover. Hoover, as a staff member in the Attorney General’s Office, made it a personal cause to have Goldman, along with thousands of other anarchist leaders, deported.

Lithuanian-born Emma Goldman was deported to the Soviet Union with 248 other foreign-born radicals on a ship known as the “Red Ark” in December 1919. She lived for varying amounts of time in the Soviet Union and France, dying in 1940 in Toronto. She was later buried in the United States where her tombstone reads: “Liberty will not descend to a people, a people must raise themselves to Liberty.”

A reprint of John Reed’s *Ten Days That Shook the World* (New York: International Publishers, 1926) with an introduction by Nikolai Lenin

From the library of Norman Bel Geddes
Harvard-educated Communist writer and activist John Reed was an eyewitness to the Russian Revolution. He described the historic events in *Ten Days that Shook the World* and himself became a legendary hero to generations of radicals. Reed died in the Soviet Union on October 17, 1920. His funeral and lasting influence are described by Marxist literary critic Granville Hicks in his *One of Us: The Story of John Reed* (1935):

For seven days the body lay in state in the Trades Union Hall, guarded by fourteen soldiers of the Red Army. On the walls were flaming posters of the revolution. Over the coffin lay wreaths, mostly of painted tin, the best heroic workers and soldiers could provide. On October 24, thousands of Moscow’s proletariat marched behind John Reed’s body as it was carried to the Kremlin. Snow and sleet fell. A military band played the funeral march of the revolution. . . . But the revolutionary workers of America, in crowded mass meetings, pledged themselves with upraised fists to a harder fight in John Reed’s name. And in America’s prisons, in Leavenworth and Atlanta and San Quentin, and in the penitentiaries of forty-eight states, comrades, awaiting trial, serving their ten or twenty year sentences, perhaps awaiting death, thought of John Reed and steeled themselves once more for the final conflict.

99 [cover]

A pulp edition of Jack London’s *The Dream of Debs; A Story of Industrial Revolt* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company Co-Operative, no date)

Eugene Debs (1855-1926), born in Terre Haute, Indiana, was a charismatic labor and political leader who was a five-time Socialist Party of American candidate for the U.S. presidency. A founder of the International Labor Union and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Debs became a socialist following his first imprisonment following an 1894 railroad strike. Debs was imprisoned again for speaking out against U.S. involvement in World War I. He made his best-remembered statement at his sentencing hearing:

Your Honor, years ago I recognized my kinship with all living beings, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on earth. I said then, and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it, and while there is a criminal element I am of it, and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free.
Utopian socialist novelist Jack London was much admired in the first part of the century not only for his books about wilderness and dogs, but for his championship of the working man. London’s tribute to Debs was originally published in 1909 (shortly after Debs’s second run for president) but was republished by various publishers throughout the nineteen-teens and Twenties.

377 (Strike)
Unidentified photographer
Eugene V. Debs mug shot, not dated

This photograph of Eugene Debs belonged to the poet Carl Sandburg. In 1908, Sandburg campaigned in Wisconsin with Debs who was running for the presidency on the socialist ticket.

**Flat case #11**
105 [back cover]

Bruce Barton’s *The Man Nobody Knows; A Discovery of the Real Jesus* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1924, 1925)
Loan courtesy of Danielle Siegler

Advertising executive Bruce Barton (1886-1967) was the son of a Congregationalist clergyman. In *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925) Barton tried to make the Christian story intelligible and useful for the business executives of his age by depicting Jesus Christ as a salesman and advertising man. Barton’s account reflects the commercial world’s dominance in American culture in the Twenties, as well as the intermingling of the corporate and religious language of the day:

First of all he had the voice and manner of the leader—the personal magnetism which begets loyalty and commands respect... We speak of personal magnetism as though there were something mysterious about it—amagic quality bestowed on one in a thousand and denied to all the rest. This is not true. The essential element in personal magnetism is a consuming sincerity—an overwhelming faith in the importance of the work one has to do... The second [secret of Jesus’s success] was his wonderful power to pick men, and to recognize hidden capacities in them. It must have amazed Nicodemus when he
learned the names of the twelve whom the young teacher had chosen to be his associates. What a list! Not a single well-known person on it. . . . A haphazard collection of fishermen and small-town businessmen, and one tax collector—a member of the most hated element in the community. What a crowd!

Despite its controversial nature, The Man Nobody Knows became a bestseller reaching sales of 750,000 in two years.

110 [open to p. 65 “Electrocution”]

Inscribed: “To Henry Seidel Canby/Greatly appreciating his/interest and aid with/the book two years/ago. Lola Ridge/New York, April 1921

The activist writer Lola Ridge (1873-1941) was born in Ireland and grew up in New Zealand. She immigrated to the U. S. when she was thirty-three years old in 1907 and soon found her way to lower Manhattan, attracted by the radical politics and radical lifestyles associated with that part of New York City. Some of her first poems were published in Emma Goldman’s radical magazine Mother Earth. She chose a life of asceticism, deliberately living frugally and spending her time on her poetry and on social causes, not necessarily separating the two.

111[back endpapers[  

A sixth printing of Michael Gold’s Jews Without Money (New York: Horace Liveright, 1930) Woodcuts by Howard Simon  
From the library of the American playwright Elmer Rice

Legendary American communist writer Michael Gold (1893-1967) virtually invented proletarian writing through his journalism, criticism, and his one novel, Jews Without Money. He worked as a night porter, desk clerk, driver, carpenter’s helper, office boy, and factory hand. Gold was an editor of The Masses and one of the founders and first editors of the Liberator, as well as a prolific contributor to the communist Daily Worker. Written in the 1920s, Jews Without Money is a classic tale of New York’s Lower East Side immigrant populations. The book was a revolutionary call to arms; its descriptions of poverty and depredations were intended to
galvanize the community. Unlike many of his colleagues of the Twenties, Gold remained a staunch communist until his death in 1967.

109a, b [covers of both]

A third printing of Upton Sinclair’s *Oil* (Long Beach, California: Published by the Author, 1926) Inscribed by Sinclair to Ben De Casseres


Socialist novelist Upton Sinclair (1865-1968) was one of the most famous literary figures of the Twenties. His exposé novel, *The Jungle* (1906), was a report on the horrible conditions in the Chicago meat-packing industry and led to the passing of the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906. Sinclair moved to Pasadena in 1915 and in 1934 launched an unsuccessful run for the Governorship of California. Throughout his life he continued to write novels of radical social consciousness, including *Boston* (1928)—about the Sacco and Vanzetti case—and *Oil!,* concerning the web of corruption surrounding the oil industry in California. His name became synonymous with the term “muckraker.”

113 [open to pp. 76-77], 114 [Cover]

A first edition of Mary Heaton Vorse’s *Men and Steel* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1920) From the library of Norman Bel Geddes

Mary Heaton Vorse’s *Passaic Textile Strike 1926-1927* (Passaic, N.J.: General Relief Committee of Textile Strikers, 1927)

American radical labor journalist Mary Heaton Vorse (1874-1966) wrote sixteen books and hundreds of articles dealing with unions and unionization. She wrote for *The Atlantic, Harpers* and *Scribners* as well as *The Masses, The Liberator* and *The Nation.* Novelist John Dos Passos modeled two characters on her. Vorse was the publicity director for the 11,000 striking workers in the Passaic, New Jersey textile strike. She was also a participant and journalist in the Pittsburgh steel (1919); Gastonia, North Carolina (1929); and Harlan County, Kentucky (1931) strikes.

In her *Footnote to Folly* (1935), Vorse reminisced:
Twenty-three years have passed since the Lawrence strike. Empires have fallen, yet the injustices in the textile industry which made that strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1912 are in broad outlines as true today as they were then, except that today we have the added horror of the speed-up.

Twenty-three years have passed and it is still true that, as Ray Stannard Baker then pointed out, “Industrially, we have arrived at the state of the Central American Republics politically—a government of successive revolution.”

**Portable wall # 23**

35 c

1,000 Chassis, a day’s output at the Ford Motor Company’s Plant, Detroit
Postcard, not dated

With mass-produced automobile manufacture came motor touring, an escape from the fixed rails and timetables that marked modern railroad travel. The autocamping fad that had begun in the Nineteen-teens became a roadside institution in the 1920s. By 1924, Texas alone boasted 174 campgrounds.

106 [mat and frame for wall]

Eugene O. Goldbeck (U.S., 1892-1986)
General Motors Acceptance Corporation Office Force, San Antonio, 12 March 1927
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

Born in San Antonio, Eugene O. Goldbeck began his photographic career taking so-called “kidnapped” photographs, photographing passing subjects and then offering to sell the subjects copies of the image. Attracted to the panoramic group photograph because it offered a larger prospective market, he is best known for his work in this medium.

**East perimeter wall**

104a-t [arrange in four rows of 5 each in plastic box frames]

The Liberator was the most important radical magazine of the Twenties. It was founded in March 1918 by Max Eastman, Floyd Dell, and Crystal Eastman who had been involved with The Masses, a radical journal founded in 1911. The Masses had been forced to cease publication in 1917 because of legal actions brought against it under the Espionage Act, which made illegal any action which undermined the war effort. The Liberator’s editorial policy read, in part:

Never was the moment more auspicious to issue a great magazine of liberty. With the Russian people in the lead, the world is entering upon the experiment of industrial and real democracy. . .We must unite our hands and voices to make the end of this war the beginning of an age of freedom and happiness for mankind undreamed by those whose minds comprehend only political and military events. With this ideal, The Liberator comes into being on Lincoln’s birthday, February 12, 1918.

The magazine was absorbed by The Worker’s Monthly in late 1924 after seventy-eight issues. Another contingent of radical writers formed the New Masses magazine which began publication in May of 1926.

West perimeter wall (left to right)
107 [mat and frame for wall]

Eugene O. Goldbeck (U.S., 1892-1986)
Garment factory workers, San Antonio, 1927
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

Born in San Antonio, Eugene O. Goldbeck began his photographic career taking so-called “kidnapped” photographs, photographing passing subjects and then offering to sell the subjects copies of the image. Attracted to the panoramic group photograph because it offered a larger prospective market, he is best known for his work in this medium.

116[mat and frame for wall]

Elizabeth Olds (U.S., 1896-1991)
Bootleg Mine, Pennsylvania, 1936
Watercolor and goache
Following her studies in Minneapolis and at the Art Students League in New York with George Luks, Elizabeth Olds traveled to Paris in 1926, the first woman to be awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship to study painting abroad.

During the early 1930s, Olds spent time in the Midwest, where she executed a series of prize-winning lithographs depicting the Omaha stockyards. In 1934, she joined the Public Works of Art Project in Omaha and began making lithographs that depicted the activities of the relief agencies.

Olds was pivotal in developing screen-printing as a medium of fine art and was an advocate for the use of large-edition prints as a means of enlightening a culturally illiterate population.

Elizabeth Olds (U.S., 1896-1991)
Scrap Iron, 1935
Lithograph

Forging Axles, 1937
Lithograph
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115 [mat and frame for wall]

Elizabeth Olds (U.S., 1896-1991)
Steel Workers' Housing, ca. 1935
Lithograph

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COWBOYS AND INDIANS

If I wished to know what went into the patterns of the basket makers, I gathered willows in the moon of white butterflies and fern stems when these were the ripest. I soaked the fibers in running water turning them as the light turned, and did my ineffectual best to sit on the ground scraping them flat with an obsidian blade, holding the fibers between my toes. . . . I felt myself caught up in the collective mind, carried with it toward states of super-consciousness that escape the exactitudes of the ethnologist as the life of the flower escapes between the presses of the herbalist.

—Mary Austin in The American Rhythm (1921)

There is always a certain slightly devilish resistance in the American landscape, and a certain slight resistance in the white man’s heart.
The American landscape has never been at one with the white man. Never.

—D. H. Lawrence in Studies in Classic American Literature (1923)

Look upon the Indian world as a human world; then let him see to it that human rights be accorded to the Indian. And this for the purpose of retaining for his own order of society a measure of humanity.

—Luther Standing Bear in My People the Sioux (1928)

After the Battle of Little Big Horn, the Trail of Tears, the surrender of Geronimo, and the near decimation of the Native American population in the nineteenth century, many novelists, poets, anthropologists, historians, and ethnologists began in the first half-century to “discover” the First Americans. This increased interest in things Indian was both a reaction to the increasingly fragmented nature of modern society and a desire for a more “authentic” life. To those searching for this balanced, integrated way of life, the Indian—real or imagined, factual or romantic—seemed a natural model. The increasing presence of Native American imagery and religion in modernist poetry was both tributary and wrongheaded. The ceremonial oral nature of American Indian myth, music, and song was lost in the concrete form of imagist poetry. Nevertheless, these poetic appropriations were a first step in the recognition of the place of the First People in American life.

The figure of the lone cowboy on the range also swiftly became myth, and the Wild West became a marketing bonanza. No less than archetypal, conflicts between cowboys and Indians, sheriffs and the lawless, culture and nature, seized both the popular and the literary imagination. The skill and independence needed for the cowboy’s job was peculiarly attractive to Americans of all sorts and especially captivating to writers and moviemakers.

Flat case #12
228 [cover]

A second edition of Mary Austin’s American Rhythm: Studies and Reexpressions of Amerindian Songs (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930) Inscribed: “To Alice from Mary Austin I am so much more to myself as the friend of my friend.”

American Rhythm is the work of a writer who spent half a decade exploring the landscape, history, and peoples of the Southwest United States. Austin believed that the songs and stories of the American Indian were quintessentially American, and a necessary
predecessor to the poetry of Whitman, Masters, Sandburg, and others:

All this time there was an American race singing in tune with the beloved environment, to the measures of life-sustaining gestures, taking the material of their songs out of the common human occasions, out of the democratic experience and the profound desire of man to assimilate himself to the Allness as it is displayed to him in all the peacock splendor of the American Continent. In so far as verse forms are shaped by topography and the rhythm of food supply, the aboriginal American was signing in precisely the forms that were later to become native to the region of Spoon River, the Land of Little Rain, and the country of the Cornhuskers.

333 [cover]


Loquacious, learned and gracious, Witter Bynner (1881-1968) was a poet, essayist, and translator. Besides *Indian Earth*, in which the final section poetically depicts seven New Mexico and Arizona Indian dances, his books of poetry included *Canticle of Pan* (1920) and *Caravan* (1925). His house in Santa Fe, shared with his partner Spud Johnson, was a gathering place for writers and artists for nearly fifty years.

230 [open to pp. 66-67]


Midwesterner Frank G. Applegate moved to Santa Fe in 1921 to set up a studio and work as a painter and a ceramicist. During the summers he made trips to Hopi reservations to study and record artifacts and practices. He published versions of the stories he collected and illustrated them with his own pictographs and drawings. In the introduction to this volume Witter Bynner, fellow Santa Fe author, had high, if exaggerated, praise for the stories:
Not only is he familiar in the Tewa villages around his home town, Santa Fe, but months at a time he had lived in Hopi villages, lived the Hopi life, felt Hopi feelings, studied and revived Hopi art among the native pottery-makers, painted Hopi persons and ceremonies and listened meantime to such stories as he has caught for us in this volume. He has caught them as patiently, gently, as surely, as I have seen an Indian pick up in gifted hands a live wood-pecker from a tree-trunk or a live trout from a stream.

J. Frank Dobie, Texas author and folklorist, on rereading the book in 1948, annotated it with his own impression of Applegate: “Frank Applegate must have been as sly, in the way Chaucer was, as delightful and as real in his way as the delectable picture of the skunks opposite page 66. I never met him, only his wholesome wife, then a widow, and daughter. It was at Elizabeth de Huff’s [Southwestern writer’s] house and dominating Mary Austin was there.”

The Path on the Rainbow edited by George W. Cronyn (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1918) From the library of Alice Corbin Henderson

One of the first collections of American Indian songs, Path on the Rainbow remains influential. This anthology of translations—or interpretations—influenced both anthropologists and poets; notably inspiring an “aboriginal number” of Poetry magazine in 1920. (Curiously, Cronyn’s anthology itself had been inspired by a 1917 issue of Poetry). In the introduction to this volume, Mary Austin challenges Americans to rediscover their own poetic lineage, rivaling Homer and Sappho.

A first edition of Oliver LaFarge’s Laughing Boy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929)

Born into generations of wealthy New Englanders and artists, educated at Groton and Harvard, Oliver Hazard Perry La Farge was captivated by the Southwest, especially by the Navajo nation of Arizona and New Mexico. He visited the Southwest on an archaeological expedition exploring the prehistory of the Mesa Verde peoples in 1921 and participated in the expedition for two
more summers. After graduating from Harvard he took a summer horse-back trip from the Four Corners (the meeting point of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah) and the Navajo-Hopi lands to the Grand Canyon. At Tulane, while researching the Mayans, he wrote this novel, a romantic yet realistic, and lastingly famous portrait of the Navajo.

“His brother is in jail for stealing cattle, they say.”
“What is jail?” asked Laughing Boy.
Slender Hair explained; “It is something the American Chief does to you. He puts you in a room of stone, like a Moqui house, only it is dark and you can’t get out. People die there, they say. They haven’t any room; they can’t see anything, they say. I do not like to talk about it. “

197 [Cover]

Harvey Fergusson’s *Wolf Song* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927)

New-Mexico-born novelist Harvey Fergusson’s *Wolf Song* is one of the most famous books on the American West ever published. *Wolf Song* is a novel about the mountain men who roamed the west in the mid-nineteenth century, independent and courageous. The book is most particularly successful in the melding of the Indian, Spaniard, and Anglo histories of Taos and the surrounding mountains.

Fergusson’s book, *Rio Grande*, published in 1933, is a fascinating history of this major river and river valley. The book is still used as a basis for new explorations.

234 [open to page 32]

*Black Elk Speaks; Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Ogalala Sioux* as told to John G. Neihardt; illustrated by Standing Bear (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1932) From the library of J. Frank Dobie

Sioux medicine man Black Elk (ca. 1863-1950) was a witness to the two most tragic events of American Indian history: the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876 and the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. After joining Buffalo Bill’s “Wild West Show” and converting to Catholicism, he took the name Nicholas Black Elk. He told his story,
emphasizing Sioux spiritual practices (particularly the Ghost Dance), to poet folklorist John Neihardt (1881-1973).

Some critics have insisted that Neihardt’s role was too active and that he created a novel out of Black Elk’s story. Nevertheless, the book has developed an enduring, almost religious audience. Similar spiritual or spiritualist books that build upon Indian practices have been published in subsequent generations, so in some sense Neihardt can be credited with creating a genre that has become extremely popular.

Luther Standing Bear’s My People the Sioux (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928)

Ogalala Lakota Chief Luther Standing Bear (ca. 1868-1939) attended the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania and was one of many indigenous participants in Buffalo Bill’s “Wild West Show.” A reformer and writer of some power, Standing Bear’s first book was a memoir on his life, focusing on the many hardships suffered by native students (including punishment for using Indian languages). My People the Sioux is often bittersweet in its sense of loss:

We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, the winding streams with tangled growth, as “wild”. Only to the white man was nature a “wilderness” and only to him was it “infested” with “wild” animals and “savage” people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery.

If today I had a young mind to direct, to start on the journey of life, and I was faced with the duty of choosing between the natural way of my forefathers and that of the...present way of civilization, I would, for its welfare, unhesitatingly set that child's feet in the path of my forefathers. I would raise him to be an Indian!

Flat case #13
242, 243

Zane Grey’s Tappan's Burro (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1923)

Zane Grey's Nevada, A Romance of the West (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1928)
One of the most popular writers of his time, Zane Grey (1872-1939) created the formula Western, writing nearly a hundred books, most of which were on the best seller lists. His novels were serialized in journals such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Ladies Home Journal*. Many were filmed by Paramount Pictures. He owned a cabin on the rim of the Grand Canyon, and was a significant force in creating the mythology of the Southwest.

244

A first edition of Dorothy Scarborough’s *The Wind* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925), from the library of Leonidas Warren Payne

Folklorist and novelist, Dorothy Scarborough grew up in West Texas and taught folklore at Baylor University. *The Wind*, like her earlier novels examining the plight of cotton workers, was a socially conscious, unblinking look at life on the Texas frontier. It was highly controversial in its time because of its negative portrayal of Texas life. She wrote thoughtfully about a woman driven insane from loneliness, isolation, and relentless natural forces.

J. Frank Dobie, Texas folklorist, wrote a note about the book in his copy:

This was written before the day of the Dust Bowl (1930s) when the wind covered vast areas with sand and dust so that many cattle grazing on the dust-coated grass died from too much earth in their stomachs . . . Some chambers of commerce raised resolutions against this novel. The objections helped sales and didn’t lay the winds.

239

MGM

Lars Hanson and Lillian Gish in *The Wind*, ca. 1928

Gelatin silver print

As the Museum of Modern Art’s film curators have noted about this film adaptation of Dorothy Scarborough’s novel:

In *The Wind*, natural forces destroy a delicate young woman, played by Gish, who is isolated in a desert cabin struck by sandstorms. Through both cinematography and Gish's performance, wind represents all the cosmic forces that have
ever borne down on a vulnerable humanity. When faced with a brutal male attacker, Gish’s seemingly fragile and innocent character summons a ferocious strength and resilience.

_The Wind_ is the last surviving silent picture by the Swedish director Victor Seastrom and is considered one of Gish’s finest film performances.


Eugene Manlove Rhodes’s (1869-1934) novels of New Mexico are colorful and detailed accounts of working cowboy life, notable for their evocation of a place and time gone by. His classic story _Pasó por Aquí_ tells of a good hearted man endangering his own freedom in nursing to health a Mexican family struck by diptheria. His poetic prose is typified by this excerpt from his 1920 _Stepsons of Light_:

> Let the dullest man tell of a thing he knows first hand, and his speech shall tingle with battle and luck and loss, purr for small comforts of cakes and ale or sound the bell note of clear mirth; his voice shall exult with pride of work, tingle an tense to speak of hard-won steeps, the burden and heat of the day and ‘the bright face of danger’; it shall be soft as quiet water to tell of shadows where winds loiter, of moon magic and far-off suns, friendships and fire and song.

A first edition of Ross Santee’s _Men and Horses_ (New York: The Century Co., 1926) From the library of J. Frank Dobie

Originally from the Midwest, Arizonan Ross Santee (1889-1965) wrote sensitively and clearly about the cowboy and his horse. His works, including the stories collected in _Men and Horses_, were notably realistic, stressing the hard and dusty day-to-day cowboy life. Santee was very familiar with the terrain and types he wrote about, having worked as a cowboy. Unlike many authors with romantic conceptions of the cowboy, Santee wrote with honesty and grit. His most famous works include: _Cowboy_ (1928), _Apache Land_ (1947),
Hardrock and Silver Sage (1957), and his autobiography Lost Pony Tracks (1953). Santee was also the editor of the Arizona volume of the American Guide Series, a set of books commissioned by the Depression-era Work Projects Administration. He also painted, often capably illustrating his own books.

245

Will James’s Smoky the Cowhorse (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1926)

Smoky the Cowhorse is an enduring children’s story of life on the American Plains, written from the point of view of the horse. The Canadian-born author Will James (1892-1942) left home at age fifteen to become a cowboy. He also became an accomplished artist, illustrator, and the author of over twenty-five novels of cowboy life and lore. Smoky was his first novel and it was awarded the Newbery Medal by the American Library Association as the most significant contribution to American Literature for children in 1927.

South perimeter wall

253

Oliver LaFarge’s manuscript chart outlining the “Derivation of Apache and Navaho Cultures,” not dated

West perimeter wall (left to right)

236

Laura Gilpin (U.S., 1891-1979)
Navaho Medicine Man [Setah Begay, Red Rock], 1932
Hand-coated platinum print
Imaged: 9 ½ x 7 ½”
Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, Gift of the artist.

Acclaimed pictorial photographer Laura Gilpin began photographing the Navajo people of Red Rock, New Mexico in 1930. From her base in Colorado Springs, she made several trips in the early Thirties documenting individuals and groups of people. The clarity and particularity of her Navajo portraits put her in the company of Edward Weston and Paul Strand. Gilpin continued to document the Navajos of Red Rock for over forty years, providing a unique record of a people. The Enduring Navaho, a selection of her Navajo
photographs, was published by the University of Texas Press in 1968.

237

Laura Gilpin (U.S., 1891-1979)
Timothy Kellywood and His Family [Red Rock, Arizona], 1932
Gelatin silver print
Image: 9 7/16 x 7 ½"
Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, Gift of the artist.

Acclaimed pictorial photographer Laura Gilpin began photographing the Navajo people of Red Rock, New Mexico in 1930. From her base in Colorado Springs, she made several trips in the early Thirties documenting individuals and groups of people. The clarity and particularity of her Navajo portraits put her in the company of Edward Weston and Paul Strand. Gilpin continued to document the Navajos of Red Rock for over forty years, providing a unique record of a people. The Enduring Navaho, a selection of her Navajo photographs, was published by the University of Texas Press in 1968.

235

Laura Gilpin (U.S., 1891-1979)
Navaho Shepherd, 1933
Gelatin silver print
Image: 7 3/8 x 9"
Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, Gift of the artist.

Acclaimed pictorial photographer Laura Gilpin began photographing the Navajo people of Red Rock, New Mexico in 1930. From her base in Colorado Springs, she made several trips in the early Thirties documenting individuals and groups of people. The clarity and particularity of her Navajo portraits put her in the company of Edward Weston and Paul Strand. Gilpin continued to document the Navajos of Red Rock for over forty years, providing a unique record of a people. The Enduring Navaho, a selection of her Navajo photographs, was published by the University of Texas Press in 1968.
Lafayette Maynard Dixon
*Namoki, Hopi Snake Priest, 1923*
Oil on canvas board
Frame: 28 7/8 x 25 1/8 inches; 73.4 x 63.8 cm.
Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Gift of C.R. Smith, 1976
G1976.21.6

Ray Rector (U.S., 1884-1933)
*Buster Lee on Bronco, ca. 1929*
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

Ray Rector called himself “The Cowboy Photographer,” a title that demonstrated his lifetime dedication to two seemingly diverse professions. The pride and care that were the trademark of the southwestern cowboy were qualities Rector carried with him into his photographic endeavors.

Ray Rector (U.S., 1884-1933)
*Cowboy Ted Cravens Making up his Bedroom on the SMS Fat Top, ca. 1928*
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

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Ray Rector (U.S., 1884-1933)
*Cowboy Ted Cravens Eating at the Chuckwagon on the SMS Flat Top, ca. 1928*
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

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southwestern cowboy were qualities Rector carried with him into his photographic endeavors.

246

Ray Rector (U.S., 1884-1933)
*Six* with Riggin, SMS Ranch, ca. 1927
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

Ray Rector called himself “The Cowboy Photographer,” a title that demonstrated his lifetime dedication to two seemingly diverse professions. The pride and care that were the trademark of the southwestern cowboy were qualities Rector carried with him into his photographic endeavors.

129

Aywon Film Corporation
Harry Carey in *The Cancelled Mortgage*, 1915
Lithograph

Beginning his film career in 1909, Harry Carey (1878-1947) quickly became a member of D.W. Griffith’s stock company at Biograph. By the time *The Cancelled Mortgage* was released, he had appeared in eighty-seven films. He is best remembered as one of the first stars of the Western film genre and for his memorable character roles in such films as *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) and *Red River* (1948) in which he appeared with his son, Harry Carey, Jr., and John Wayne.

251

W. D. Smithers (U.S. 1895-1981)
The Gear of a Mexican Fiscal, ca. 1929
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

The gear of a Mexican Fiscal is succinctly summarized by Smithers as consisting of mule, saddle, rifle, and bandolier. The fiscals, federal officers, were in charge of enforcing all federal and some local laws along the Mexican border areas.

The photographs of W. D. Smithers record life in the Trans-Pecos area of Texas and northern Mexico, and reveal how the region was affected by aviation, ranching, and the military.
W. D. Smithers (U.S. 1895-1981)
The Law in the Lower Big Bend, ca. 1929
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

These enforcers of the law are identified by Smithers, left to right, as Pete Crawford, Texas game warden; Ray Miller, justice of the peace; Bob Pool and Arch Miller, Texas Rangers; and Steve Bennett, constable.

The photographs of W. D. Smithers record life in the Trans-Pecos area of Texas and northern Mexico, and reveal how the region was affected by aviation, ranching, and the military.

North perimeter wall, wall case
231


Novelist Hamlin Garland’s (1860-1940) collection of stories about Indian life and lore was based on his frequent visits to reservations over a ten-year period. The beautiful oversized volume was illustrated with images by the famous painter and sculptor of Western-themed art, Frederic Remington (1861-1909). Garland hated Remington and the illustrations; he considered the man a drunk and the pictures irrelevant to his stories. On the front endpaper J. Frank Dobie wrote his own unfavorable comments on the book:

All of the Remington illustrations in the book were originally used to illustrate other writings, several by Remington himself; he died years before the 1923 date of *The Book of the American Indian*. The assemblage of Remingtons is strong and beautiful, it is unique. I suppose the high price now asked for the book is due more to Remington than to Hamlin Garland, who is casual, indeed, in his knowledge and narrative sketches of Indians.

American Indian Life, edited by Elsie Clews Parsons (New York: The Viking Press, 1925) Illustrated by C. Grant LaFarge
A classic volume of American anthropology, *American Indian Life* is a collection of “fictions” or “stories” about individuals written by some of the most of the eminent American anthropologists of the time. This highly unusual collection is divided into eight sections: Plains Tribes, Tribes of the Middle West, Eastern Tribes, Tribes of the Southwest, Mexican Tribes, Pacific Coast Tribes, Northern Athabaskan Tribes, and Eskimo. Exemplary individual articles include “The Toltec Architect of Chichen Itza” and “Thuder-Clad, A Winnebago Shaman, relates and prays.”

Parsons (1875-1941) was renowned for her field work in anthropology. As editor to this volume, she comments on the difficulty of anthropological objectivity in her introduction:

In this book the white man’s traditions about Indians have been disregarded. That the writers have not read other traditions from their own culture into the culture they are describing is less certain. Try as we may, and it must be confessed that many of us do not try very hard, few, if any of us, succeed, in describing another culture, of ridding ourselves of our own cultural bias or habits of mind. Much of our anthropological work, to quote from a letter from Spinden, “is not so much definitive science as it is a cultural trait of ourselves.”

**Portable wall 22**

252

Norman Film Manufacturing Corp.
Bill Pickett in *The Bull Dogger*, 1921
Lithograph

Bill Pickett (1870-1932) was a legendary cowboy of Black and Cherokee descent who invented the rodeo event of bulldogging or steer wrestling. Barred in the U. S. from competing with White rodeo contestants, Pickett performed in Canada, Mexico, South America, and England.

This film of Pickett’s exploits was made by the itinerant filmmaker Richard E. Norman who saw a new market in “race-films.”

**Portable wall 21**

287
Lawrence Clark Powell, author, librarian, and historian, wrote about Zane Grey in *Southwestern Classics* (1974), “He had the gift of narrative. He was a born storyteller, a simplifier. Life to him was black and white, never gray. His characters were heroic figures with primitive emotions. While they lived out their melodramas, the storyline never weakened.”

**THE DREAM FACTORY**

*Los Angeles delivers the goods. You betcha. She’s happy, healthy and handsome.*

—Mark Lee Luther in *The Boosters* (1924)

*Girls—I can’t tell you how lovely Jesus has been to me!*
—*I said to Jesus, If I hope and pray, will you do the rest?*
—*and Jesus said, Of course I will!*

—Aimee Semple McPherson as quoted in Edmund Wilson’s *The Twenties*

*It is possible to tell a great story in motion pictures in such a way that the spectator . . . .will come to believe that what he is looking at is real.*

—Erich Von Stroheim in *The Truth About the Movies* (1924)

Oil and oranges, automobile tires and airplanes, tourism and the movies made Los Angeles the most modern of American cities, a paradigm of the growth and prosperity that characterized the Twenties. The city had grown to over a million people in 1920, with over 2,000,000 visitors a year by the end of the decade. Traffic jams beleaguered the downtown area where a new monumental city hall and spectacularly Southwestern/Egyptian public library tickled civic pride. By 1920 the movie industry, centered in Hollywood, had become the biggest industry in L.A., with nearly 90 percent of all American movies being produced there. Movie palaces, such as Grauman’s Chinese Theatre (which opened on 18 May 1927 with Cecil B. DeMille’s silent *King of Kings* and had been preceded by Grauman’s Million Dollar and Egyptian Theaters) dotted the landscape like temples. The first footprints in the cement in front of Grauman’s were those of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. Valentino died, the silent movies were replaced by talkies, and scandal after scandal plagued Hollywood. But the likes of Greta Garbo, Gloria Swanson, and Mickey Mouse—Hollywood’s own, new royalty—came to grace the silver screens. Boosterism and tourism were attendant on the gospel of growth fueling the new,
modern Los Angeles economy. Chewing gum magnate William Wrigley Jr. developed the offshore Catalina Island as a modern resort and the 900-room Ambassador Hotel and Coconut Grove nightclub graced Wilshire Boulevard. All in all, it was for many Americans the very incarnation of the American Dream.

**Flat case #14**

118 [open to pp. 92-93]


Henry Leon Wilson (1867-1939) moved south to Hollywood from Carmel-by-the-Sea to write this gentle satire about an Illinois movie buff’s quest to be in the movies. For four months Wilson took notes on scraps of paper of all kinds, including endpapers ripped from books, eventually turning them into what is probably the first novel to be written about Hollywood and working in the movie industry.

Lawrence Clark Powell wrote about the book in 1971:

*Merton of the Movies* is an odd book, differing from others in the Wilson canon in its exotic setting, its satirical purpose and also somewhat mysterious conception and creation. In spite of initial success as a *Saturday Evening Post* serial, a Broadway triumph in the Marc Connelly and George Kaufmann acting version. . . ., and a threefold life as a movie . . . ., *Merton* is today a neglected book. It has never been reprinted after the first edition of 1922 and a reissue in 1923 with illustrations from the . . . .stage version. None of the films stressed the book’s satire, dwelling instead on the pathos.

The play version received two major revivals in the seventies, and was staged again as recently as 1999 in Los Angeles.

119 [Cover], 120 a, b [[Cover and page 28 with rest stacked beneath]


Inscribed “To Alice Corbin Henderson-/with the good wishes and loyal/heart of/Nicholas Vachel Lindsay/Jan. 27, 1917/Springfield, Illinois)
A corrected carbon typescript of Vachel Lindsay’s *The Art of the Moving Pictures*, not dated

Written in 1915, *The Art of the Moving Picture* by poet Vachel Lindsay was the first book to treat film as an art form. Lindsay’s work is considered by many to be a brilliant analysis of early silent films, including several that are now lost. His predictions about the future of moviemaking—particularly about the industry as such, the prominence of technology, and the emergence of the director as the “author” of the film—were extraordinarily prescient.

121 [Cover], 122 [Cover]

Walt Disney Productions’ *Mickey Mouse Illustrated Movie Stories* (Philadelphia: David McKay Company, 1931)

Walt Disney Studios’ ‘*Three Little Pigs*’ (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1933)

Walt Disney (1901–1966) and his brother Roy established their film studio in the early 1920s. After losing their successful “Oswald the Lucky Rabbit” animated series in 1928 to a New York City-based rival, Disney developed a mouse cartoon character eventually christened “Mickey Mouse,” a creation for which he received a special Academy Award in 1932. The *Mickey Mouse Illustrated Movie Stories* includes a flip book feature of Mickey and Minnie Mouse dancing.

92 [open to pp. 66-67]

*Motion Picture* magazine, February 1923

This issue of *Motion Picture*, the top U.S. fan film magazine of the silent era, includes such articles as “The Vogue of Valentino,” “The Padre of Hollywood,” and the displayed “Character Readings of the Noses of Ten Famous Stars.”

**West perimeter wall**

125

Nickolas Muray (U.S., b. Hungary, 1892-1965)  
Charlie Chaplin, ca. 1924
Charlie Chaplin (1889-1977) made the transition from stage to film in 1913 with Mack Sennett’s Keystone Film Company. He was an immediate success and by 1919 had teamed up with Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and D. W. Griffith to form the United Artists Corporation, creating a system in which the actors received the producer profits and a share of distribution profits. Chaplin made eight films with United Artists between 1923 and 1952 before producing his last picture in 1966.

Between 1920 and 1940, Nickolas Muray made over 10,000 portraits of Hollywood celebrities and other cultural figures.

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Nickolas Muray (U.S., b. Hungary, 1892-1965)
Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, ca. 1923

In 1919, Douglas Fairbanks (1883-1939), along with Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, and D. W. Griffith had formed United Artists in order to protect their independence from the studio system. By 1920, Douglas Fairbanks had completed twenty-nine films which showcased his ebullient screen persona and athletic prowess. That year, with *The Mark of Zorro*, he created a new type of adventure-costume drama that came to be known as swashbucklers. When he and Pickford married in March 1920, the public embraced the idea of “Everybody’s Hero” marrying “America’s Sweetheart” and crowds of up to 300,000 greeted them on their European honeymoon.

Between 1920 and 1940, Nickolas Muray made over 10,000 portraits of Hollywood celebrities and other cultural figures.

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Nickolas Murray (U.S., b. Hungary, 1892-1965)
Gloria Swanson, ca. 1926

Gloria Swanson (1897-1983) asked to be cast in a movie “just for fun” while on a tour of a Chicago film studio in 1914. She moved to California in 1916 where she quickly became the top female film star, most notably in a string of successful films for Cecil B. DeMille. She earned an Academy Award nomination for best actress in 1928 for her portrayal of a prostitute in the controversial *Sadie Thompson* (1928) based on Somerset Maughman’s novel *Rain*. It was her last great success of the silent era. Her production of *Queen Kelly* (1929), directed by Erich von Stroheim, was never completed and ruined her financially. She successfully made the transition to talkies,
garnering another Academy Award nomination for *The Tresspasser* (1929), but soon retired from film until 1950 when she was asked by Billy Wilder to star in *Sunset Boulevard*. Here she played Norma Desmond, a faded movie star who entraps a down-at-heels screenwriter in her fantasy of a triumphant return to the screen. It is, in fact, scenes from *Queen Kelly* that are shown as remnants of Norma Desmond’s former acclaim in *Sunset Boulevard*.

Between 1920 and 1940, Nickolas Muray made over 10,000 portraits of Hollywood celebrities and other cultural figures.

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**Nickolas Muray**

*Loretta Young and Sisters, ca. 1920s*

*Gelatin silver print*

Loretta (born Gretchen) Young (1913-2000) and her sisters, Polly Ann and Elizabeth Jane, worked as child actresses. It was not until 1928 that Gretchen was billed as Loretta Young in the film *The Whip Woman*. She also co-starred with Lon Chaney that year in the MGM film *Laugh, Clown, Laugh*.

Between 1920 and 1940, Nickolas Muray made over 10,000 portraits of Hollywood celebrities and other cultural figures.

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**Burton L. King, Director**

*Harry Houdini in The Man From Beyond, 1922*

*Lithograph*

The Hungarian-born magician and escape artist Harry Houdini (1874-1926) also starred in six feature films beginning in 1918. In this feature-length film which he produced, Houdini plays the part of Howard Hillary, a man who, after being frozen in Arctic ice for over 100 years, is thawed out and returned to society where he finds a modern “reincarnation” of his lost love. The movie’s most remembered and parodied sequence is Houdini’s near plunge over Niagara Falls.

Brian Haberlin’s 2005 biography of Houdini takes its title from this film.
B. P. Schulberg Productions
*The Plastic Age*, 1925
Lithograph

In this film, Clara Bow (1905-1965), the “It” girl of the Twenties, plays Cynthia Day, a college-age flapper who tests the affections of two handsome athletes who also happen to be roommates. The movie was a tremendous hit and cemented Bow’s popularity which reached its zenith in 1927 with the movie *It*, titled after Bow had already been dubbed “The It Girl” by the novelist Elinor Glyn—“It. . . that strange magnetism which attracts both sexes. . . entirely unself-conscious. . . full of self-confidence. . . indifferent to the effect. . . she is producing and uninfluenced by others.”

421 (1921)

Unidentified photographer
Charlie Chaplin and Jackie Coogan in *The Kid*, 1921
Gelatin silver print

*The Kid* is considered by many Chaplin admirers to be his most personal film and a perfect blend of comedy and high emotion. Chaplin’s own childhood foster home experiences and the death of his son by the actress Mildred Harris add a poignant backdrop to the film. The story follows Chaplin, the tramp, and his uneasy adoption of a small child. He comes to care for the child and fights to keep him out of bureaucratic hands. It was one of Chaplin’s most successful films and his first full-length movie. The public embraced a more thoughtful Chaplin and a Little Tramp with real sentiment. Jackie Coogan played “the kid,” and became one of the first child stars in Hollywood.

North perimeter wall
135

A Paramount Picture
Bebe Daniels in *The Palm Beach Girl*, 1926
Lithograph

In this romantic comedy, Bebe Daniels portrays the poor relation of a wealthy dowager aunt. Invited to spend the winter in Florida, her face is accidentally blackened by the soot from a passing tugboat and she is forced to move to the “Jim Crow” car of the train. Arriving as she does in Palm Beach, she is snubbed by her
relatives. Ultimately, she assists and falls in love with a handsome motor-boat mechanic and shows up her relatives for the phonies they are.

The de facto segregation of the “blackface” scene is treated as a joke in the film; viewed as an egregious decision by contemporary viewers but not uncommon for the time.

130

Zapeda (U.S.)
Rudolph Valentino, not dated
Gelatin silver print

The most popular of silent-film stars, the Italian actor Rudolph Valentino (1895-1926) made more than thirty films between 1914 and 1926, the most famous, perhaps, being The Sheik (1921). Nicknamed “The Great Latin Lover,” Valentino was one of the first male movie sex symbols. In 1922 he starred with Gloria Swanson in the recently reconstructed silent Beyond the Rocks. Believed lost, it was rediscovered in 2004 in a private collection in the Netherlands.

411(1926)

Unidentified photographer
Rudolph Valentino and Jack Dempsey, ca. 1925
Gelatin silver print

In July of 1926, Rudolph Valentino was attacked in an anonymous editorial published by the Chicago Tribune. The author, incensed by a powder dispenser he had seen in a men’s public washroom, blamed Valentino for the supposed feminization of the American male and called him a “pink powder puff.” Valentino, incensed, challenged the author to a boxing match which was to be refereed by Jack Dempsey. Valentino died of complications from a perforated ulcer in August 1926.

Portable wall 34
420 (1927)

Warner Bros.
May McAvoy and Al Jolson in The Jazz Singer, 1927
Gelatin silver print
The Jazz Singer, produced by Warner Bros. with its Vitaphone sound-on-disc system, was the first feature-length motion picture with talking sequences. Its star, Al Jolson, was at the height of his popularity as an entertainer who sang jazzed-up minstrel numbers in blackface. Blackface was a performance tradition in the American theater for over 100 years. Stereotypes embodied in the stock characters of blackface minstrelsy played a significant role in cementing and proliferating racist images, attitudes, and perceptions worldwide. In some quarters, the caricatures that were the legacy of blackface persist to the present day and are a cause of ongoing controversy. By the mid-20th century, changing attitudes about race and racism effectively ended the prominence of blackface performance in the U.S. Perhaps the most enduring effect of blackface is the precedent it established in the introduction of African American culture to an international audience, albeit through a distorted lens.

194

F. E. Geislen
Joseph Hergesheimer at Palm Beach, 1930
Gelatin silver print

132

Unidentified photographer
Zazu Pitts in Erich von Stroheim's Greed, 1924
Gelatin silver print

One of the more popular stars of the early motion picture era, Zazu (pronounced ZAY-sue) Pitts grew up in Santa Cruz, California, and made her film debut in The Little Princess in 1917 opposite Mary Pickford. Cast in a lead role in Stroheim’s Greed, her performance caused the director to label her “the greatest dramatic actress.” Nevertheless, she enjoyed her greatest fame in the 1930s playing the stock, comedic persona of a fretful, flustered, worrisome spinster. She made the switch to comedy in part because her distinctive nasal voice with a wavering vibrato was more suited to the genre once Hollywood switched to talkies.

Portable wall 19
70
Arnold Genthe (U.S., b. Germany, 1869-1942)
Greta Garbo, 1925
Gelatin silver print

131

MGM
Greta Garbo and Nils Asther in *The Single Standard*, 1929
Gelatin silver print

This was the next to last silent picture made by the Swedish actress Greta Garbo (1905-1990) before she successfully made the transition to talking pictures in 1930 in the film version of Eugene O’Neill’s *Anna Christie*. Brought to MGM by Louis B. Mayer, Garbo’s most important silent movies were *The Torrent* (1926) and the 1927 features *Flesh and the Devil* and *Love* in which she co-starred with the popular leading man John Gilbert whom she nearly married.

409

New York Journal-American
Aimee Semple McPherson Hutton, 1933
Gelatin silver print

Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944), an avowed atheist in her teenage years, converted to Christianity in 1908 and began a career as a Pentecostal preacher, attracting large audiences across the United States. She eventually settled in Los Angeles, dedicating her International Church of the Foursquare Gospel’s Angelus Temple on 1 January 1923.

Attractive and flamboyant, she led services that rivaled in showmanship what Hollywood had to offer. The Angelus Temple, with a seating capacity of 5,300 was, in its early days, filled to capacity three times a day, seven days a week. The first woman to preach a service on the radio, McPherson became in 1924 the first woman to receive a broadcast license from the Federal Radio Commission, now the Federal Communications Commission.

The photograph is captioned: “Mrs. Aimee Semple McPherson Hutton, thrice-married evangelist and founder of Angelus Temple, Los Angeles, finds inspiration at A Century of Progress—the Chicago World’s Fair. Here she is shown reading the inscription over the entrance to the Hall of Religion. . .Mrs. Hutton later visited the ‘Streets of Paris’ and declared: ‘There is everything in this World’s Fair from the wickedness of Satan to the glory of God!’”
Gloria Swanson and Raoul Walsh in *Sadie Thompson*, 1928
Gelatin silver print

Gloria Swanson (1897-1983) asked to be cast in a movie “just for fun” while on a tour of a Chicago film studio in 1914. She moved to California in 1916 where she pursued a successful career in silent films, achieving an Academy Award nomination for best actress for her portrayal of Sadie Thompson in the film of the same title based on the British author Somerset Maugham’s novel, *Rain*.

Her own effort at film production, *Queen Kelly* (1929), directed by Erich von Stroheim, never reached completion, and her film career languished after the appearance of talkies until she gamely agreed to star in *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), a film in which she plays Norma Desmond, a faded movie star who entraps a down-at-heels screenwriter in her fantasy of a triumphant return to the screen. It is, in fact, scenes from *Queen Kelly* that are shown as remnants of Norma Desmond’s former acclaim in *Sunset Boulevard*.

The silent movie *Wings*, a drama about World War I fighter pilots filmed in the San Antonio area in 1927, was the first film to win an Academy Award for Best Picture (then called Best Picture, Production). Directed by William Wellman, the film starred (in the order pictured) Charles “Buddy” Rogers, Clara Bow, and Richard Arlen.

The photographs of W. D. Smithers record life in the Trans-Pecos area of Texas and northern Mexico, and reveal how the region was affected by aviation, ranching, and the military.

Unidentified photographer
Image of the opening of Grauman's Metropolitan Theatre, Los Angeles,
26 January 1923
Gelatin silver print
Inscribed by Gloria Swanson: "Think my picture opened this theatre."

Built by showman Sid Grauman (who was also responsible for Grauman's Egyptian Theater and Grauman's Chinese Theater), the Metropolitan was the largest movie theater in Los Angeles for many years, boasting one of the largest balconies and the longest projection throw in the city. It was renamed the Paramount in 1929 when it was acquired by the Public theater chain.

COPS AND ROBBERS

Then I did another not at all heroic thing. I turned on all the lights in the room, lighted a cigarette (we all like to pose a little now and then), and sat down on the bed to await my capture. I might have stalked my enemies through the dark house, and possibly have nabbed them; but most likely I would simply have succeeded in getting myself shot. And I don't like to be shot.

—Dashiell Hammett in *The House in Turk Street* (1924)

The 1920s are known as the Golden Age of the detective story, noted especially for the invention of the hard boiled (or tough guy) detective, a particularly American slant to the genre, previously largely a British prerogative. These stories and novels celebrated adventure, instinct, speed, the common tongue, and a certain lawlessness. In many ways they were a reaction to the excessive materialism of the times as well as representing the public reaction to Prohibition and the subsequent rise of the gangster as an American type. They also present an ambivalent reaction to the increasing urbanization of America. The city is often both the hero and the villain. Working against both the gangster and the hero was the detective: Race Williams, Sam Spade, The Continental Op, Ned Beaumont, Nick and Nora Charles and later, Philip Marlowe, Mickey Spillane, Lew Archer, V. I. Warshawski and countless others. These characters represent the same qualities and values that Lillian Hellman used to characterize Dashiell Hammett in her introduction to *The Big Knockover*:

He believed in the salvation of intelligence, and he tried to live it out...and never, in all the years, did he play anybody's game but his own. He never lied, he never faked, he never stopped.
This decade was also responsible for another type of detective story, one in which ratiocination restores a sense of order to a society gone over the edge. Practitioners such as Agatha Christie in England and S. S. Van Dine and Ellery Queen in the U. S. were as popular as the hard-boiled writers. The increasing interest in mystery and detective fiction was paralleled in the Twenties by the wild popularity of real life crime stories—the Lindberg kidnapping, the murder of Bobby Franks by Leopold and Loeb, the Fatty Arbuckle trial, the trial and electrocution of Ruth Snyder, and the murder of Hollywood director William Desmond Taylor, among others. Fiction or fact, which followed which?

Flat case #14
203

Carroll John Daly's *The White Circle* (New York: Edward J. Clode, 1926)

The first of the “hard-boiled” stories is widely considered to be John Carroll Daly’s “The False Burton Combs,” which features a nameless detective. It preceded by months Dashiell Hammett’s first story featuring the character known as the “Continental Op.” It was followed by Daly’s “Three Gun Terry” and the first of his better-known Race Williams stories, “The Knights of the Open Palm.” All of these stories appeared in 1922 and 1923 in the most colorful of pulp magazines, *Black Mask*, which at the height of its popularity boasted over 250,000 subscriptions.

Daly’s novels were the offspring of his phenomenally popular short stories. His first, about a gang of blackmailers, begins in a characteristically terse and direct fashion:

I went to sleep broke—as free from money as a bluefish is from wings. And I went to sleep sober, without a care or a worry. It wasn’t in me to drown my sorrow. I felt none—when a man comes back, he fights his way—not slops it.

204

Ellery Queen’s first edition copy of S. S. Van Dine’s *The Benson Murder Case* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1926)

S. S. Van Dine was one of the most popular detective novelists of the decade. His series of novels featuring the self-consciously aristocratic detective Philo Vance sold over one million copies. S. S.
Van Dine was the pseudonym of Willard Huntington Wright, a former academic, aesthete, art critic, and, with H. L Mencken, editor of *The Smart Set*. Under his own name he published half a dozen books on art, society, and literature. *The Benson Murder Case* was the first of twelve S. S. Van Dine mysteries.

Wright’s stories are the antithesis of hard-boiled: they take place largely among the upper classes and high society and feature contemporary people, events, and institutions that his readers would have easily recognized. His cultured and erudite detective/hero/alter ego clearly reflected any number of quintessentially Jazz Age qualities—nerve and excess among them—and translated readily to cinema (William Powell and Basil Rathbone each took a turn as Vance).

Although the Philo Vance novels now read largely as period pieces, they were immensely popular in their time and forecast an American obsession with the rich and famous that continues into this century.

205

Ellery Queen’s first edition copy of Earl Derr Biggers’s *The Black Camel* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1929)

*The Black Camel* was the fourth of six novels published from 1925 to 1932 which feature the Chinese-American detective Charlie Chan of the Honolulu Police. Biggers intended the novels to serve as antidotes to the racist “yellow peril” depictions common in literature and movies of the time. In spite of Chan’s many positive traits—intelligence, kindness, stalwartness, and heroic pursuit of villainy—ironically, the novels perpetuated and even created new stereotypes, ones that were reinforced in the popular film versions of the novels in which the lead role was played by a White actor.

213 [get from ESG study wall]

*Black Mask*, January 1925

One of the most important developments of Twenties publishing was the proliferation of the pulp periodical, a small, usually 7” x 12” magazine printed on cheap wood-pulp paper. The first pulps were published in the later nineteenth century and were usually adventure stories. During the Twenties, both the number of titles and the press runs of the pulps increased dramatically due to a larger and more prosperous reading public. No doubt the heady
atmosphere created by Prohibition was partially responsible for the popularity of these magazines, which featured gangsters, detectives, police (both honest and corrupt), and politicians. Some of the decade’s more popular titles included *Clues, Detective Story, Detective Fiction Weekly,* and *Black Mask,* the most famous of them all. Every serious writer of detective fiction during the Twenties appeared in this magazine. In the December 15, 1923, issue, Erle Stanley Gardner (who was later to create the lawyer-detective Perry Mason) published his first story “The Shrieking Skeleton.”

Ellery Queen’s first edition copy of his own *The Roman Hat Mystery* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1929)

Ellery Queen, as a pseudonym and a fictional character, was the invention of two cousins, Frederic Dannay (1905-1982) and Manfred Lee (1905-1971). Inspired by the formula and success of the Philo Vance novels, the two cousins entered and won a magazine contest with *The Roman Hat Mystery,* an example of the classic whodunit in which the reader is given all the clues available to the fictional detective and is challenged to solve the mystery ahead of the book’s conclusion. Here, even an illustration is provided to assist the reader with the puzzle of how a murder could occur in a locked room.

Dannay and Lee also co-founded *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine,* one of the most influential in the genre, and became prominent collectors and historians in the field of mystery and detective fiction. Frederic Dannay’s library, containing many rarities, was purchased by the Center in the 1960s.

A first edition of Franklin W. Dixon’s *The Tower Treasure* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1927)

Carolyn Keene’s *The Mystery of the Brass-Bound Trunk* (Nancy Drew #17) (New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1939)

The Hardy Boys series began in 1927 at the apex of the popularity of detective novels for adults. The series grew out of the nineteenth-century genre of the boy’s adventure novel, adding sophistication, detection, and two likeable young sleuths, Frank and
Joe, who are helped by any number of chums and by a doting father, himself a lawyer and detective. The Tower Treasure was the first of the series, and was ghostwritten by the Canadian Leslie McFarlane (1902-1977).

The Hardy Boys series was the brainchild of Edward Stratemeyer whose Stratemeyer Syndicate also created the perennially popular Nancy Drew series, which debuted in 1930 with four titles. By 1939, when The Mystery of the Brass-Bound Trunk was published, there were seventeen titles in print. As was often the pattern in the early years of the series, Stratemeyer’s daughter Harriet Stratemeyer Adams and Mildred A. Wirt collaborated on writing the book.

Over the decades, both series have been variously—and often controversially—rewritten to reflect shifting cultural trends, changing slang, and new technologies.

**Flat case #15**

214, 215

A letter from Dashiell Hammett to the Editorial Department, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., ca. 11 February 1928


Dashiell Hammett’s first story in *Black Mask*, “The Road Home,” was published in December 1922 under the name Peter Collinson. In the October 1, 1923 issue, with the story “Arson Plus,” Hammett introduced his immensely popular Continental Op (a nameless “operator” in the Continental Detective Agency).

Hammett’s first novel, *Red Harvest*, originally appeared in four parts in *Black Mask* under the title “Poisonville.” On February 11, 1928, Hammett sent the manuscript, unsolicited, to the prestigious Knopf publishing firm. With considerable editing by Blanche Knopf, it was published as *Red Harvest*.

Hammett published over thirty short stories and serial versions of most of his novels in *Black Mask*. *Red Harvest* was the Op’s first appearance in a novel. Hammett defined the hard-boiled school, which was a truly American invention celebrating a rough and cynical, yet fundamentally moral everyman. Writers as various as Mickey Spillane, Ross MacDonald, and Sara Paretsky have paid homage to Hammett’s influence.
A letter from Dashiell Hammett to Blanche W. Knopf, 20 March 1928

Blanche Knopf, who with her husband Alfred founded the eminent publishing house of Alfred A. Knopf, pulled the first manuscript Hammett submitted out of the slush pile and was responsible for editing the novel. She directed Hammett to cut some of the violence from the novel (which he did) and to cut out a character or two (which he did not).

In the letter Hammett outlines his ambitions to make “literature” using the detective story form, sketching out a plan “to try adapting the stream-of-consciousness method” (made famous in the twentieth century through the works of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner) “to a detective story, carrying the reader along with the detective, showing him everything as it is found, giving him the detective’s conclusions as they are reached, letting the solution break on both of them together.”

New York Journal American
Dashiell Hammett, ca. 1927
Copyprint from an original glass negative


The Maltese Falcon is considered to be Hammett’s finest work and is one of the most influential detective stories of the twentieth century. The protagonist, Sam Spade, who appeared only in this novel and three lesser known Hammett short stories, has come to epitomize the hard-boiled private detective, characterized as exhibiting cold detachment, a sharp eye for detail, and an unswerving determination to achieve a brand of justice dictated by a tarnished idealism.

A letter from Erle Stanley Gardner to Mr. H. C. North, ca. 4 July 1925
The January 1925 issue of *Black Mask* marked the debut of Gardner’s character Ed Jenkins, the “Phantom Crook,” who appeared in seventy-three issues of *Black Mask* from 1925 to 1943. Ed Jenkins operated on both sides of the law and was more a thief than a law-abiding citizen.

In this letter to his editor at *Black Mask*, Gardner writes that he cannot shake his Ed Jenkins character and that if Jenkins is to be killed off, the editor will have to do it: “Damn Ed Jenkins! He made me write this, and if you don’t like it, send him the rejection.”

The letter also contains a description of the aftermath of a series of earthquakes that had just hit California and frequent use of the phrase “hard boiled.”

"Ed Jenkins" questionnaire in *Black Mask* (September 1926)

As a promotional feature, readers of *Black Mask* were asked to try to match their description of Ed Jenkins against Erle Stanley Gardner’s characterization of him, shown here. Curiously enough Gardner and his character Ed Jenkins were the same height. Ed Jenkins favors prohibition because “it brings money to the criminal element.”

Four of a dozen plot wheels constructed by Erle Stanley Gardner, not dated

Gardner had a strong analytic bent and used it in his own writing and production processes. Noting the importance of plot and side-plot to the novel, his analysis of his own work and the work of others resulted in a number of “standard” plots which he used throughout his career, most successfully in the Perry Mason series.

The plot wheels on display govern “further complications,” “blind trails by which the hero is misled or confused,” “hostile minor characters who function in making complications for hero,” and “contact with act of villainy.”

**Portable wall 15**

226, 408 [mat and framed for wall separately; one label]

*New York Journal American*
In May of 1924 nineteen-year-old Nathan Leopold and eighteen-year-old Richard Loeb were tried and found guilty of the murder of fourteen-year-old Bobby Frank. The two affluent and highly educated killers planned the kidnapping and murder with cold precision, committing what seemed to be the “perfect murder.” Due to the charisma and effective arguments of the lawyer for the defense, Clarence Darrow, the pair was spared the death penalty. They were sentenced to life imprisonment for murder and ninety-nine years for kidnapping. The case, which was dubbed “The Trial of the Century” by more than one journalist, inspired a host of literary and cinematic productions.

Ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment to the national Constitution on January 16, 1919, ushered in an era of prohibition in the U.S. that lasted from 1920 to 1933 when the Eighteenth Amendment was repealed. The amendment prohibited the “manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors” but did not expressly prohibit the purchase, possession, and consumption of alcohol.

This image of a liquor seizure in Marfa, Texas, by U.S. Customs agents was made by W. D. Smithers whose photographs record life in the Trans-Pecos area of Texas and northern Mexico. Pictured from left are Customs Officer O.C. Dow, Commissioner H.O. Metcalf, Deputy Sheriff Dewway Tom, and Custom Chief T.C. (Creed) Taylor. The seizure netted 110 bottles of liquor being smuggled from Mexico in a Model T touring car.

In one of the most publicized trials of the era, Ruth Snyder was convicted, along with her lover and co-conspirator Judd Grey, of murdering her husband for insurance money. Snyder was the first woman to be executed in the electric chair. In the sensational atmosphere of the day, her picture at the moment of electrocution dominated the cover of the New York Daily News. It had been taken surreptitiously by a Chicago Tribune reporter who had taped a miniature camera to his leg. The novel Double Indemnity by James M. Cain was based on the case.

385 (1927)

New York Journal American
Labor-Sacco-Vanzetti rally, July 1927
Gelatin silver print

The arrest of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti for robbery and murder in 1920 coincided with the Red Scare of 1919-1920, one of the most intense periods of political repression in the U.S. Sentenced to death in 1927 once all appeals were exhausted, their highly public and politicized case galvanized and divided the country and made their execution date, August 23, 1927, a watershed in American history, marking for some the end of the democratic ideal in this country. John Dos Passos, in his masterpiece USA, references the case in one the novel’s “Camera Eye” episodes:

All right you have won. . . America our nation has been beaten by strangers who have turned our language inside out. . . they have built the electric chair and hired the executioner to throw the switch . . . all right we are two nations . . .

419 (1925)

Argument of Arthur Garfield Hays in the Supreme Court of Tennessee in John Thomas Scopes vs. State of Tennessee, 31 May 1926

As Douglas Linder as written about the early 1920s: “In response to the new social patterns set in motion by modernism, a wave of revivalism developed, becoming especially strong in the American South. Who would dominate American culture—the modernists or the traditionalists? Journalists were looking for a
showdown, and they found one in a Dayton, Tennessee courtroom in the summer of 1925.”

In response to a Fundamentalist crusade to banish the teaching of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution from schools led by Williams Jennings Bryant, a populist and three-time Democratic candidate for president, John Scopes, a high school biology teacher, allowed himself to be charged with illegally teaching the theory of evolution so that the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) could create a test case challenging the constitutionality of Tennessee’s anti-evolution statute.

With Bryant joining the prosecution, Clarence Darrow stepped in for the defense. The ACLU, concerned that Darrow’s agnosticism would turn the trial into an attack on religion, dispatched Arthur Garfield Hays who joined with Darrow, John Neal, and Dudley Field Malone to make up the defense team. By most accounts, Hays was the defense team’s manager, developing the overall strategy of the defense. Seeing the trial as an opportunity to educate the public, he said, “the people of the country learned more about evolution through the Dayton exhibition than they could have in any other way.”

414 (1927)

Buckingham, Washington, D.C.
Jimmie Rodgers, not dated
Gelatin silver print

James Charles “Jimmie” Rodgers (1897-1933), also known as The Singing Brakeman and The Blue Yodeler, became the first country music superstar in a brief recording career that began in 1927 and resulted in 113 songs entering the repertoire. Fundamentally a blues musician, Rodgers titled most of songs simply “Blue Yodel” with a sequential number attached. Over time other, more distinguishing names became attached, such a “T for Texas” for Blue Yodel #1, composed in 1927. Rodgers lived briefly in Kerrville, Texas, where he built a two-story brick mansion, but died in New York City at age 35 from tuberculosis.

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

*Chicago, Chicago.*
—Floyd Dell in *Moon-Calf* (1921)

*Well, if I have to choose one or the other,*
I choose to be a plain New Hampshire farmer
With an income in cash of, say, a thousand
(From, say, a publisher in New York City).
It's restful to arrive at a decision,
And restful just to think about New Hampshire.
At present I am living in Vermont.
—Robert Frost in New Hampshire (1923)

The enormous tragedy of accident hung like a gray cloud over his life. He saw more clearly than ever that he was a stranger in a strange land, among people who would always be alien to him.
—Thomas Wolfe in Look Homeward Angel (1929)

Although New York City and Paris were the recognized capitols of high modernism, other areas of the U.S. fostered their own versions of “making it new.” Chicago was home to Harriet Monroe’s Poetry magazine, the “New Poetry” movement, and the so-called Chicago Renaissance, which in its later phase embraced Edgar Lee Masters, Vachel Lindsay, and Carl Sandburg. Not everyone abandoned the Midwest for the glamour of the east coast. In Wisconsin, Indiana, and Michigan, the novels of Zona Gale, Gene Stratton Porter, and Edna Ferber celebrated county and village life. Robert Frost celebrated the glories of New England and Wallace Stevens wrote about “Hartford in a Purple Light.” During the Twenties two of the century’s greatest novelists, Thomas Wolfe and William Faulkner, began their careers with work characteristically celebratory and elegiac for their native states (North Carolina and Mississippi). Nashville served as a focus for the poetic “Fugitives,” later known as the Agrarians, culturally conservative, regionalist, and pastoral. The artists’ colonies of Taos and Santa Fe nestled themselves in a dream of new social and cultural realities, whose icons were sky, tree, mountain, river, and body. Frank Norris, Jack London, and Robinson Jeffers wrote of the power and beauty of Northern California and the Pacific Coast. A strong connection between this local and home-grown modernism provided for the vitality of regionalism in American letters throughout the decade.
poetry both champions and criticizes the figures he creates; Frost’s own ambivalence towards the culture of New England’s countryside may be seen in the poem’s sometimes satiric, sometimes earnest tone. Frost enjoyed presenting alternating skeptical and affirmative views in response to ideas and attitudes of the times, as is evident in most of the poems in this, the first of four of his books to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize. This book contains some of Frost’s most famous poems, including “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,” “Fire and Ice,” and “For Once, Then, Something.”

The Marxist critic Granville Hicks, in *The Great Tradition* (1935), provides a perceptive and telling sketch of Frost:

Can one believe that it is by accident that he has never written of the factory towns, now so abjectly in decay, or of the exodus to the cities and its failure, now so apparent, to bring deliverance? Has he never heard of the railroads and their influence on the state’s politics, touching the smallest hamlet? Do not automobiles and radios exist in New Hampshire. No, Frost is too shrewd not to be well aware that he is excluding from his poems whatever might destroy their unity. He knows the full value of his self-imposed limitations.

299 [open to pp. 42-43]


Frost’s *Selected Poems*, first published in England in 1923, was viewed by many of his contemporaries as an “antidote” to T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, both published in 1922 to great critical acclaim. It was the first of ten collections of his own work that Frost presided over during his lifetime. This selection was a milestone in his career, beginning Frost’s canonization as both a perfect modernist and a champion anti-modernist. It is no doubt this complexity that accounts for the ongoing interest in Frost and his position as one of the finest American poetic voices.

This copy belonged to a former University of Texas English professor, Leonidas Warren Payne. Frost wrote at the back of the book a fair copy of his poem “Past-Active Shoes” after giving an address at a Phi Beta Kappa banquet in 1933.
A first edition of Vachel Lindsay’s *Rhymes to be Traded for Bread* (Springfield, 1916)

Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931) was a poet of great individuality and power. He was a pacifist, a socialist, a free thinker, and a Campbellite Christian/Buddhist. He was an evangelist for a creed of social change and crusaded across the country in attempts to convert Americans to his worker’s gospel of beauty and mystical power. He made the first of his famous poetic/investigative tramps across America in 1906, walking over 600 miles from Florida to Kentucky. He lived largely by begging, day work, and by trading his verses, broadsides, and pamphlets for food and lodging. He made similar trips in 1908 (New York to Ohio) and 1912 (Illinois to New Mexico). In fact, for large periods of his life he was virtually homeless.

In Lindsay’s tramps across the countryside, he carried very little baggage, usually only a toothbrush and handkerchief, a pack of publications (including copies of his pamphlet, “Rhymes to be Traded for Bread”) and leaflets announcing “The Gospel of beauty.” He also carried pictures (woodblock illustrations, engravings, etc) of his heroes and places of inspiration, including Buddha, Tolstoy, Abraham Lincoln, William Jennings Bryan and the Taj Mahal. Lindsay’s poetry is visionary and eccentric, but only begins to approach the pyrotechnics of his in-person performances.

303 [cover]

A revised and illustrated, limited edition of Vachel Lindsay’s *Collected Poems* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923)

By the time he published the colorful revised and illustrated 1925 version of his *Collected Poems*, Vachel Lindsay was a household name in the United States, having read his poetry to over a million people in his many countrywide “tramps” across the United States. Lindsay’s *Collected Poems* was first published in an austere and un-illustrated edition in 1923, but the new edition includes reproductions of some of his drawings as well as new poems. The book is surely more like the poet himself than is the sedate 1923 edition. Although Lindsay was beloved by the common man, his work was treated badly by many critics and by most other poets. In 1931 a desperate and despairing Lindsay committed suicide by drinking Lysol.

307 [cover]

In her introduction to this volume, the British novelist Rebecca West contrasts the “incredible” city of Chicago with London and other European cities, noting that its inhabitants live “a very intense life of self-consciousness and self-analysis” to which Carl Sandburg gives voice. She writes, “The qualities of the Middle West are his qualities. The main determinant of his art is the power of his native idiom to deal with the inner life of man.” Noting the occasional tendency of Sandburg’s verse to lapse into propaganda, West concludes that he nevertheless “has evoked the essential America which will survive when this phase of commercial expansion is past and the New World is cut down to the quick as the Old world is today;” as in his poem “Chicago”:

Hog Butcher for the World,  
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,  
Player with Railroads and the Nation’s Freight Handler;  
Stormy, husky, brawling,  
City of the Big Shoulders

304 [cover]


Ruth Suckow’s novels are identifiably local. They center on farm families in the country’s heartland—namely German Americans in Iowa. Her first book, *Country People*, is especially noteworthy for its classical presentation of people and places usually ignored or in many cases satirized. Her novels focus on the common man and woman living their everyday lives. Suckow herself was a beekeeper and developed this into a business called “The Orchard Apiary.” She opposed World War I and directed her considerable energy towards conscientious objector camps and publications. Her life has continued to inspire struggling young woman, including contemporary feminists. H. L. Mencken thought her “remarkable.”

305 [open to

Like Ruth Suckow, Glenway Wescott was a novelist of the middle way, portraying the everyday lives and loves of Midwesterners. He described his subject as follows: “Roughly speaking, it is the private life: the education of the young, the religion of the old, love-affairs, deathbeds.” Wescott’s life assumed a trajectory different from his Midwestern compatriots, as he described it in Stanley Kunitz’s *Twentieth Century Authors* (1942):

I left the university half way through my sophomore year, in mediocre health and melancholy. My real education was in the sixteenth or seventeenth century way, by the grand tour of the continent of Europe. I matured by fits and starts and, as long as I felt young, wrote with some facility: four volumes (or three years and a half) about Wisconsin. For nine years I resided on the Riviera and in Paris, which in the twenties was a great fool’s paradise, the perfect time and place to study human nature: nothing else seemed more important or urgent. When in the thirties everything else developed an urgency of hell and damnation, I returned to America.

This copy of Wescott’s novel is inscribed to the photographer George Platt Lynes: “For George leaving a child behind, who has been also a brave and comforting friend, Glenway.”

311

Floyd Dell’s *Moon-Calf* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1920)
Inscribed: “To Alfred A. Knopf/my friend and/fellow-artist/Floyd Dell/Jan., 1920”

Floyd Dell, like Ruth Suckow and Glenway Wescott, set his novels and stories in his Midwestern homeland. His novel *Moon-Calf* described the life and times of Dell’s alter-ego, Felix Fay, a self described poet and socialist whose education eventually leads him to Chicago (the final line of the novel is composed of two words: “Chicago, Chicago!”). Like Dell, a cofounder of the radical magazine *The Masses*, and later of *The Liberator*, Fay was a newspaper man and editor. *Moon-Calf* was published only two days after Sinclair Lewis’s *Main Street* and like that novel describes the sentimental education of its author through the book’s protagonist.
A letter from Floyd Dell to Alfred Knopf, not dated

In this letter to his publisher, describing a cross-country trip, Dell makes explicit the autobiographical nature of his novel *Moon-Calf*: “We stopped in... Pike County, Illinois (where I revisited the early scenes of Moon-Calf, and saw “Adam” and “Ellen,” —my father and mother, now living on the farm where my mother was born.”

**Flat case 18**

A first edition of Thomas Wolfe’s *Look Homeward, Angel* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1929) Inscribed: “To Doris Ulmann with friendship and with thanks for her great kindness to me; and with appreciation of her fine talent/Thomas Wolfe/Nov. 23, 1929)

One of the great novels of the American South, *Look Homeward Angel* is a gargantuan, extravagant work by a man of genius. It is the book of one family, of one man, of one soul, wandering and lost, yet finding himself. It contains multitudes. *Look Homeward Angel* explores small town life in the early twentieth century in a fictionally disguised Asheville, North Carolina. Wolfe’s characterizations of actual townspeople were a cause célèbre and scandal, estranging the author from most of the citizenry of Asheville.

**Fugitives: An Anthology of Verse** edited by Donald Davidson (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928) From the library of Christopher Morley

The Fugitives were a group of poets and critics centered on Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. The closely knit, yet argumentative group included Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, and Donald Davidson among others. They were largely a discussion group that explored poetry, much in the manner of the pre-eminent New Critics who were to follow them. They espoused, in a number of essays and collections, a set of values which they sometimes perceived as inherent to the Old South. Like the New Critics, they privileged the poem as a verbal icon or object and were concerned with rationalism, harmony, form, and formality above all else. They published a magazine, *The
Fugitive, which was widely read in literary circles as was this anthology created from the magazine. Ransom characterized his colleagues as “a group of very stubborn individuals that couldn’t be coerced.”

318

A first edition of John Crowe Ransom’s Chills and Fever (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924) From the library of Christopher Morley

Ransom was a poet, critic, and teacher and the pre-eminent figure in the Fugitives group in the Twenties. Poet and colleague Allen Tate reviewed Chills and Fever in the 30 March 1927 issue of The Nation:

Mr. Ransom is the last pure manifestation of the culture of the eighteenth-century South: the moral issues which emerge transfigured in his poetry are the moral issues of his section, class, culture . . . Two of Mr. Ransom’s qualities in especial connect him with the culture which in its prime registered its genius in politics and law; rationalism and the code of noblesse oblige. These qualities informing every poem, dictate the direction of his artistic vision from all starting-points whatever. Rationalism, not in the sense popularized by the Philosophes, but in the older and purer sense of the humane tradition, a tradition lying at the very core of the old Southern order, stiffens his poetry with an irony and lucidity, and a subtlety, which elevate it with a unique distinction in the present American scene.

320

Allen Tate’s “Ode to the Confederate Dead” in Mr. Pope and Other Poems (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1928)

Like his compatriot Ransom, Allen Tate focused on the history of his own region. His subject was often a melancholy meditation on the difference between the past and the present and the conflict between rationalism and belief. His long poem “Ode to the Confederate Dead,” as explained by Tate himself in Narcissus as Narcissus (1938), is: “about’ solipsism, a philosophical doctrine which says that we create the world in the act of perceiving it, or about Narcissism, or any other ism that denotes the failure of the human personality to function objectively in nature and society.”
Robert Lowell, a disciple of Tate and Ransom, wrote about Tate’s unique qualities in his 1959 essay “Visiting the Tates”:

his poems, all of them, even the slightest are terribly personal. Out of splutter and shambling comes a killing eloquence. Perhaps this is the resonance of desperation, or rather the formal resonance of desperation. I say “formal” because no one has so given us the impression that poetry must be burly, must be courteous, must be tinkered with and recast until one’s eyes pop out of one’s head. How often something smashes through the tortured joy of composition to strike the impossible bull’s-eye! The pre-Armageddon twenties and thirties with all their peculiar fears and enthusiasms throb in Tate’s poetry; imitated ad infinitum, it has never been reproduced by another hand.

326

_Continent’s End: An Anthology of Contemporary California Poets_ (San Francisco: Printed for The Book Club of California by John Henry Nash, 1925)

The Anglo-American colonization of California produced a triumphal literature that celebrates natural beauty and rough individualism as well as social change and Manifest Destiny. In the North, the port city San Francisco was to hold pride of place as the West’s premier literary city. During the later nineteenth century Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Ina Coolbrith, Joaquin Miller, and Ambrose Bierce composed the core of a vibrant literary community. Their journal, _The Overland Monthly_, founded in 1868 to rival the East’s _Atlantic Monthly_, flourished as the primary literary journal of the West until its demise in 1935.

The singular novels of the experimental naturalist writer Frank Norris, published from 1895 to 1902, provide a vivid chronicle of San Francisco and the West. His work influenced Upton Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis, and Theodore Dreiser. Jack London’s fantastically popular fables of nature and socialism were published during the same time; iconoclast Ambrose Bierce arrived in San Francisco in 1867 and disappeared into Mexico in 1914.

The poet George Sterling, Bierce’s protégé, combined the aestheticism of Bierce with a pantheistic cosmology. He became the center of a literary colony at Carmel overlooking the Pacific, which boasted among its inhabitants Upton Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis, Mary Austin, Gertrude Atherton, Jack London, and the young poet Robinson Jeffers.
Una Jeffers
Robinson Jeffers and George Sterling, 1925
Silver gelatin print pasted in a first edition of Sterling’s *Robinson Jeffers, the Man and the Artist* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1926)

The true power and beauty of the Pacific Coast reached an apotheosis of expression in the 1920s in the mature works of the poet Robinson Jeffers. The incarnation of the American Sublime in his poetry was a culmination of the writing of decades of Californians. Benjamin de Casseres wrote in *The Bookman* of November 1927:

If ever a man and the Spirit of Place conspired for a mystical union it is here. That portion of California—its hills, sea, blue lupine, golden poppies, sea-gulls, dirt roads, pines, firs, hawks, herons and lighthouses
. . . belongs as absolutely to Robinson Jeffers . . . as Wessex belongs to Thomas Hardy.

Una Jeffers has captioned the photograph: “I took this picture in fall of 1925 here at Tor House. George never looked so like a bandit, nor was Robin ever so young and poetic.”

Robinson Jeffers’s *Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1925) No. 5 of twelve copies, inscribed by Jeffers to his wife Una

Robinson Jeffers published three books of poetry during the Twenties, all of which consolidated his reputation as an important modernist poetic voice. He bought land in Carmel in 1919 on a hill facing the rocky, dramatic Point Lobos; here he himself built a stone residence he named Tor House, and the forty-foot high Hawk Tower, both monuments to independence and self-reliance.

Jeffers reacted sharply to what he felt was the disaster of the American dream; he prized instead a “detachment from the insane desire for power, wealth and permanence, in a measured indifference to pain, joy or success and in turning outward to God who is all things.” In his narrative and tragic poems he proposed to
“uncenter the human mind from itself” and produced work influenced by the ancient Greek dramatists.

329

A manuscript draft of Robinson Jeffers’s untitled poem “Gray landmarks of an end,” not dated, with a digital scan of his sketch of Tor House on the reverse.

Robinson Jeffers was a true conservationist dedicated to husbandry of the land. He and his wife Una and his sons Garth and Donnan lived on a wild headland of the California Coast near Big Sur where Jeffers supervised the building of their stone house, wall, garage, and tower.

This untitled fragment of a never published poem was written at Tor House during 1920 when construction was underway. The eight lines of verse are typical of Jeffers in their vivid portrayal of a natural scene, evocative and redolent of the stormy California coast at night:

Gray landmarks of an end, oceans and rocks,
Wave-marks beginning of the great waste
The beautiful waves inhabit jeweled with foam,
And winds their spray sandals: you thousand-faced
Phantoms and forms of God, storm, and the flocks
Of Pelicans flapping south dawn througs the dome
Of mountain-buttressed sky with, as deep night
Hangs it with stars... 

330

A first edition of Willa Cather’s The Professor’s House (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925)

Willa Cather’s novels explored the great open spaces of continental America from Nebraska to New Mexico to Quebec. In Death Comes for the Archbishop (1927) and The Professor’s House she wrote with sensitivity about the Southwest. Her novels were immensely popular and much admired by critics. As H. L. Mencken wrote in his review in the American Mercury (November 1925),

Her observation is sharp and exact; she is alert to the tragedy of every-day life; she sees her people, not in vacuums, but against a definite background; above all, she writes in clear, glowing and charming English. I know of no other American
novelist, indeed, whose writing is so certain of its effects, and yet so free from artifice. She avoids both the elaborate preciousities of Cabell and Hergesheimer, and the harsh uncouthness of Dreiser and Anderson. She has, obviously a good ear, and apprehends the world as symphony more than as spectacle.

332


In 1912, Alice Corbin Henderson became assistant editor to *Poetry: a Magazine of Verse*, with Harriet Monroe, founder and editor-in-chief. In 1916, she was diagnosed with tuberculosis, causing her to leave Chicago permanently. On the recommendation of her doctor she and her family relocated to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Dedication to New Mexico and the concerns of the region became a life-long passion of the Henderson family. In the early 1920s they became active in the civil rights of Native Americans. Henderson’s *Red Earth, Poems of New Mexico* was published in 1920 and is an example of how New Mexico affected Henderson. In 1928 *The Turquoise Trail, an Anthology of New Mexico Poetry* was published.

**Portable wall 9 (left to right)**

160

Manuel Alvarez Bravo (Mexico, 1902-2002)
Mabel Dodge Luhan, ca. 1930
Gelatin silver print

A literary savant, Mabel Dodge Luhan, gathered around her the great and the near great, providing a literary community, financial support, and emotional encouragement. Among her most famous friends were D. H. Lawrence and his wife Frieda, novelist Katherine Ann Porter, and poet, Robinson Jeffers, among many others. Her salons in New York City and Paris were famous gathering places in the Twenties and later years, and her house in Taos, New Mexico, was a magnet for artists and writers.

Manuel Alvarez Bravo was self-taught photographer whose earliest success came around 1925, when he won first prize in a local photographic competition in Oaxaca, Mexico. In 1927 he met Tina Modotti, who introduced him to a lively intellectual and cultural environment filled with artists working in various media. Among them
was Edward Weston, who encouraged Alvarez Bravo to continue photographing.

335

Dorothea Lange (U.S., 1895-1965)  
Spud Johnson, ca. 1931  
Gelatin silver print

In the summer of 1922, the poet and journalist Spud Johnson visited New Mexico for the first time. Attracted by the beauty and charm of the area as well as the growing literary community, Johnson remained in Santa Fe as the poet Witter Bynner’s secretary. Through Bynner, Johnson met almost everybody in the New Mexico literary scene including Mary Austin, Carl Sandburg, Mabel Dodge Luhan, D.H. and Frieda Lawrence, and Dorothy Brett.

In 1927 he moved to Taos to become Mabel Luhan’s secretary and purchased a small hand press which he used to print *Laughing Horse*. By the early 1930s Johnson had become a fixture in the New Mexico literary and social scenes.

324

Ansel Adams (U.S., 1902-1984)  
Portrait proofs of Alice Corbin Henderson, ca. 1929

**Portable wall 10, wall case 4**  
312

A first edition of Carl Sandburg’s *The Chicago Race Riots* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1919)

In July 1919 Sandburg was assigned by the editors of the *Chicago Daily News* to write a series of articles on Blacks in the city. His series was underway when race riots began on the last Sunday in July. Sandburg’s collected articles appeared soon after the tragic events. Walter Lippman, journalist and activist, wrote in his introductory note:

> They are first hand, and they are sympathetic, and they will move those who will allow themselves to be moved.  
> Moved not alone to indignation, though that is needed, but to thought. It is not possible, I think to examine this record
without concluding that the race problem as we know it is really a by-product of our planless, disordered, bedraggled, drifting democracy. Until we have learned to house everybody, employ everybody at decent wages in a self-respecting status, guarantee his civil liberties, and bring education and play to him, the bulk of our talk about “the race problem” will remain a sinister mythology. In a dirty civilization the relation between black men and white will be a dirty one. In a clean civilization the two races can conduct their business together cleanly, and not until then.

271

Official Whipping Report from Georgia Penitentiary, Clarke County, August 1930.

Sociologist John Spivak conducted a tour of Georgia prisons in 1928 and 1929 and collected written and photographic data on the living conditions of the prisoners. Because the documents were so incendiary, Spivak disguised his resulting book, published in 1932, as a novel. Titled Georgia Nigger, the book caused a sensation and is credited with curtailing the chain gang system in the South.

323

Julia Peterkin and Doris Ulmann’s Roll, Jordan, Roll (New York: R.O. Ballou, 1933)

Roll Jordan Roll documents sympathetically the lives of descendants of former slaves on the Gullah Coast of South Carolina. Peterkin was a novelist (Scarlet Sister Mary, 1928) and philanthropist whose huge plantation served as the site of the book. Doris Ullmann was a photographer who specialized in society portraiture. The two women worked together to produce a document which, although romanticized and limited in its viewpoint, was one of the most beautiful books of its time.

Portable wall 12
370, 371 (framed together) [on wall near wall case 4]

Georgia State prison inmates, ca. 1928-1929
Sociologist John Spivak conducted a tour of Georgia prisons in 1928 and 1929 and collected written and photographic data on the living conditions of the prisoners. Because the documents were so incendiary, Spivak disguised his resulting book, published in 1932, as a novel. Titled *Georgia Nigger*, the book caused a sensation and is credited with curtailing the chain gang system in the South.

Spivak has captioned the image on the left: "‘Stretching’—a variation of the medieval rack. Convict is tied to concrete post imbedded in the ground, the hands are manacled, a rope is tied to the manacles and ‘stretched’ around another post. This operation produces a back-breaking strain on spine and pulls shoulders out of joints. When rope is taught the convict is left like this."

Spivak has captioned the image on the right: "The convict is suspended two inches from the ground, hanging from wrists and ankles. . . . Left in the burning sun they frequently faint from the heat, pain and virtually lack of circulation cut off by stocks."

368, 369 (framed together) [on wall near wall case 4]

Georgia State prison inmates, ca. 1928-1929
Silver gelatin print

Sociologist John Spivak conducted a tour of Georgia prisons in 1928 and 1929 and collected written and photographic data on the living conditions of the prisoners. Because the documents were so incendiary, Spivak disguised his resulting book, published in 1932, as a novel. Titled *Georgia Nigger*, the book caused a sensation and is credited with curtailing the chain gang system in the South.

Spivak has captioned the image on the left: "Georgia convict who ‘sassed’ guard trussed up in chains and ropes so that he cannot move. . . . red ants crawl over convicts head and face adding to the torture of the painful position and the glaring sun beating down upon him."

Spivak has captioned the image on the right: "Convict boy trussed up in Seminole county (Ga) convict camp stockade."
Edward Steichen (U.S., b. Luxembourg, 1879-1973)
Willa Cather, not dated
Gelatin silver print

314

Greer (Fort Worth, TX)
Vachel Lindsay, ca. 1919
Gelatin silver print

313

E. F. O'Brien (Waco, TX)
Robert Frost, ca. May 1933
Gelatin silver print

Within a landscape largely New England, Frost's poetry reflects his core concerns, including a fear of loneliness, the difficulties of intimacy, the nature of overwhelming sorrow, and the role of the individual in society. Frost opposed the theory of evolution in lectures and poems, and was sometimes characterized as anti-intellectual. It is, however, more likely that his ambition and troubled personal and family life led him to meditate on contradictions. Frost believed that poems should be conversational and constitute "a revel in the felicities of language." In fact, much of his work is highly indeterminate, often saying the opposite of what he thinks. The suave certainty on the surface of his poems masks deeper uncertainty and ambiguity, both hallmarks of the modern.

Portable wall 14
309

Edward Steichen (U.S., b. Luxembourg, 1879-1973)
Carl Sandburg with guitar, 1925
Gelatin silver print

In *The Great Tradition* (1935), Granville Hicks wrote about Sandburg:

Like [Vachel] Lindsay he came from the common people—porter, scene-shifter, dish-washer—and he writes about them. His literary methods are not, as Lindsay’s were, akin to those of the newspaper versifiers; like Whitman he has written for the
common people, not as they are, but as they may become. But he is close to them as they are, and he is never unaware of their lot. If he has seen the beauty of the machines, he has never ignored their cost in human suffering. The strange loveliness of skyscrapers does not blind him to the tragedies of poverty, nor does the tender grace of corn-flowers obscure for him the bitter, unrewarded toil of the farmers.

349

Edward Steichen (U.S., b. Luxembourg, 1879-1973)
Carl Sandburg, ca. 1920
Gelatin silver print

Carl Sandburg met Lillian Steichen at the offices of The Wisconsin State Social Democratic Party in 1907, and the two were married on June 15, 1908. They shared a dedication to radical politics and poetry. In their marriage ceremony no rings were exchanged and the word “obey” was removed from the vows.

Lillian was the sister of the already accomplished photographer Edward Steichen. He and Sandburg became friends, resulting in many portrait photographs of Sandburg over the years. The Sandburgs raised a family of three daughters, Margaret, Janet and Helga. Smoke and Steel, Sandburg’s third volume of poetry was dedicated to Steichen and Sandburg wrote the text for a groundbreaking volume of Steichen’s photographs published in 1929.

IN THE AMERICAN GRAIN

....history must stay open, it is all humanity.
—William Carlos Williams in In the American Grain (1928)

Folklore is not as easy to collect as it sounds. The best source is where there are the least outside influences and these people, being usually underprivileged, are the shyest. They are most reluctant at times to reveal that which the soul lives by.
—Zora Neale Hurston in Mules and Men (1935)

As the traveler who has once been from home is wiser than he who has never left his own doorstep, so a knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to scrutinize more steadily, to appreciate more lovingly, our own.
—Margaret Mead in *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928)

In the Twenties increasing wealth and education created a new group of intellectuals and scholars who focused their attention on the United States, the definition of “American,” and the creation of new methodologies for the study of society as such. The decade saw the ascendance of the new social sciences, both in academia and in business. The Social Science Research Council was founded in 1922 to coordinate cooperation between a variety of institutions and organizations. The American Sociological Association and the American Anthropological Association both formed at the beginning of the century. The new attention to “Americanness” extended into the creative fields as well, and American Literature emerged as an academic discipline, prompting the canonization of Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne as well as other seminal writers of the American Renaissance. The decade saw the re-discovery (or perhaps discovery for the first time) of the tutelary spirits of American Literature, Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson.

An increasingly literate public—the vaunted “Common Reader”—was well served by the founding of the inexpensive book series *The Modern Library* in 1917, followed by *The Book-of-the-Month Club* in 1923 and the *Literary Guild* in 1927. *The New Yorker* was an arbiter of culture from its founding in 1925, challenged during the Twenties only by *Vanity Fair*, which had begun in 1914. A number of major publishers were formed in the decade, including Simon & Schuster, Random House, Viking, and Boni & Liveright. Alfred A. Knopf Inc., founded in 1915, continued to maintain its place as the most prestigious of the American publishers.

**Flat case # 19**

292

Emily Dickinson’s *Selected Poems* edited by Conrad Aiken (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1924)

During the Twenties, the study of American Literature as a separate field from English Literature became increasingly established. The scholarly developments in the field were paralleled by equivalent popular interest. Most particularly, the reputations of Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, and Herman Melville were rescued from the ashpit of history. Only a handful of Dickinson’s poems were published during her lifetime, but after her death her friends and relatives published a series of volumes of her poetry, making available hundreds of previously unseen verses. A flourishing of publications in 1924 shows how eager the public was to embrace
the eccentric, American originality of Dickinson’s poetry. These included a collection of *Life and Letters* and the first attempt at a *Complete Poems*. However, it was Aiken’s *Selected Poems*, published in both the United States and Britain, which gave Dickinson her widest audience yet, and propelled her toward the status her work enjoys today.

285, 286

Stephen Vincent Benét’s *John Brown’s Body* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, and Company, 1928)

Stephen Vincent Benét’s typescript “Invocation (to the third book of ‘John Brown’s Body,’ a poem, inscribed to Christopher Morley

In a remarkable imaginative treatment, Stephen Vincent Benét recreates in poetry the just-as-remarkable life of abolitionist John Brown. The Pulitzer- Prize-winning poem melds fiction and history, a trend which was to capture the imagination of many other writers in the Twenties. Here, Benét characteristically treats his protean subject as a part of the larger epic legend of the growth of the United States:

American muse, whose strong and diverse heart
So many men have tried to understand
But only made it smaller with their art
Because you are as various as your land,

As mountainous—deep, as flowered with blue rivers,
Thirsty with deserts, buried under snows,
As native as the shape of Navajo quivers
And native, too, as the sea-voyaged rose.

290 [open to pp. 42-43]

Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick or The Whale* (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1930) Volume 1 of a 3-volume deluxe edition

In 1926 the publisher R. R. Donnelley asked the painter and illustrator Rockwell Kent to produce an illustrated edition of Richard Henry Dana’s *Two Years before the Mast*. Kent suggested that he illustrate Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* instead. Published in 1930, the 3-volume deluxe edition, issued in an aluminum slipcase, sold out immediately. A lower-priced Random House edition became a Book-

283 [cover]

D. H. Lawrence’s *Studies in Classic American Literature* (New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1923)

The English novelist and critic D. H. Lawrence was very much ahead of his time in his appreciation of American literature, paralleling the pioneering work in the 1920s of American scholars such as Vernon Parrington, Newton Arvin, and F. O. Matthiessen, but speaking from the perspective of an outsider who, with wit and incisiveness, chronicles the historical development of an American literary voice and identity.

The author and philanthropist Edward Larocque Tinker, who owned this copy, has designated Lawrence the “High Priest of the Submerged Self” on the book’s title page.

282 [cover]

A first edition of William Carlos Williams’s *In the American Grain* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925)

William Carlos Williams, whose highly experimental *Kora in Hell* and *Spring and All* were published in 1920 and 1923 respectively, also produced one of the decade’s more unusual works of non-fiction. His historical rhapsody, *In the American Grain*, presents a revisionist exploration of early American history, from Eric the Red, Montezuma, Cortez, and Balboa to Edgar Allan Poe and Abraham Lincoln. It is an attempt to rediscover what is authentic and integral in our history and character. Each of the chapters embodies an internal dialogue on the problems associated with the not always happy beginnings of the American spirit:

The United States without self-seeking has given more of material help to Europe and to the world . . . than have all other nations of the world put together in the entire history of mankind. . . It is this which makes us the flaming terror of the world . . . with hatred barking at us from every sea.
Formally the essays are exemplary cubist prose/poems, electric with perception and intelligence. Williams’s book represents his manifesto against T. S. Eliot and the forces of Europeanization present even in the American wing of the modernist movement. Although it was one of Williams’ s favorite works, the book was not a success with either the critics or the book buying public.

In his memoir I Wanted to Write a Poem (1958), Williams recalled that “when the book was published the Boni brothers lost interest in it and quickly remaindered it. I was heartbroken. I used to go up and down Fourth Avenue picking up copies for a dollar to give to my friends.”

The copy on display, inscribed to the novelist Edward Dahlberg, may be one such rescued copy: “It is hard to know when a book we have written succeeds in being what we intended it should be. The test is, I am sure, when it rings true upon the spirit—for want of a better word—upon the whole person of someone we deeply admire, such as you, my friend, Edward Dahlberg. William Carlos Williams/May 13, 1941”

280 [cover]


Robert and Helen Lynd’s study of social relationships in Muncie, Indiana in 1924 is a classic of sociological literature. It was praised in the *New York Times* and has remained in print for over eight decades, spawning to date four other studies—*Middletown in Transition* (1937), *Middletown Families* (1982), *All Faithful People* (1983), and *The First Measured Century* (2000).

In the original study, the Lynds used social anthropological methods to study community relationships, goals, and satisfactions in seven different areas: Getting a Living, Making a Home, Training the Young, Using Leisure, Engaging in Religious Practices, and Engaging in Community Activities. In general the findings were less than happy, causing Stuart Chase in the *New York Herald Tribune* of February 3, 1929, to compare the study to Sinclair Lewis’ *Babbitt*.

279

Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) arrived in New York City in January 1925, at the height of the Harlem Renaissance. She was the most accomplished of many women who were a part of this flowering of cultural life, publishing novels, ethnographies, folklore collections, and scores of articles and reviews.

Hurston studied with the eminent anthropologist Franz Boas who provided a foreword for this book. Encouraged by Boas, she made her own collections of African-American tales, songs, and jokes, which she used not only in her fiction but compiled into two collections of folklore, *Mules and Men* (1935) and *Tell My Horse* (1938). The research for *Mules and Men* was conducted in Alabama, Louisiana, and Florida from 1927 and 1932. In her introduction, Hurston presents a lively discussion of the difficulties of field work:

The Negro, in spite of his open-faced-laughter, his seeming acquiescence, is particularly evasive. You see we are a polite people and we do not say to our questioner, “Get out of here!” We smile and tell him or her something that satisfies the white person because, knowing so little about us, he doesn’t know what he is missing. The Indian resists curiosity by a stony silence. The Negro offers a feather-bed resistance. That is, we let the probe enter, but it never comes out. It gets smothered under a lot of laughter and pleasantries.

**Portable wall 17 (left to right)**

380

Carl Van Vechten
Zora Neale Hurston, 9 November 1934
Gelatin silver print

This photograph is inscribed by Hurston “To Fannie Hurst God’s first throne-angel with the hosanna fan in her hand.” Hurst (1885-1968) was a prolific Jewish-American novelist and reformer with interest in such issues as equal pay for equal work, the right of a woman to retain her maiden name after marriage, and public health. A proponent of Harlem’s New Negro writers, Hurst employed Hurston as a secretary when Hurston was struggling financially to complete her studies at Barnard.

284

D. H. Lawrence and Knud Merrild
Sketch for *Studies in Classic American Literature*, ca. 1923
Pencil on paper

Icons for Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter* and *House of the Seven Gables*, Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, Edgar Allan Poe’s *Cask of Amontillado*, and James Fenimore Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans* are included in Lawrence and Merrild’s draft dust jacket design. In the upper-right-hand corner Lawrence has penciled a list of authors the book was to cover, including Crèvecoeur and Benjamin Franklin.

**Portable walls 8 and 33**

294

Rockwell Kent (U.S., 1882-1971)

From *Drawings by Rockwell Kent; a Portfolio of Prints* (New York: Flying Stag Press, 1924), number 12 of 30 copies

The American painter and printmaker Rockwell Kent was associated with the social realist “Ash Can” group of artists. Fiercely independent and drawn to the wilderness, he created important figurative and landscape compositions that were obscured by the more avant-garde trends of the modernist movement.

A left-wing activist throughout his life, he was blacklisted during the McCarthy era. In response he donated several hundred of his paintings and drawings to the Soviet Union which, in 1967, awarded Kent the Lenin Peace Prize. Characteristically, Kent donated the prize money to the people of North Vietnam.

295

Rockwell Kent (U.S., 1882-1971)

Untitled

Woodcut

From *Drawings by Rockwell Kent; a Portfolio of Prints* (New York: Flying Stag Press, 1924) #12 of 30 copies

296

Rockwell Kent (U.S., 1882-1971)

Untitled

Woodcut
From *Drawings by Rockwell Kent; a Portfolio of Prints* (New York: Flying Stag Press, 1924) #12 of 30 copies

297

Rockwell Kent (U.S., 1882-1971)
Untilted
Woodcut
From *Drawings by Rockwell Kent; a Portfolio of Prints* (New York: Flying Stag Press, 1924) #12 of 30 copies

North perimeter wall

#TBD

Marsden Hartley (U.S., 1877-1943)
*White Cyclomen*, ca. 1920
Oil on canvas

A core member of the group that revolved around Alfred Stieglitz in the early decades of the last century, Marsden Hartley was at the center of early American Modernism. Hartley fully explored the options then open to avant-garde painters, ranging from groundbreaking abstract works to lyrical landscapes. Between 1917 and 1918, he found a new direction in regionalism, which sought to express wholly American characteristics rising from plainspoken common people and the rural commonplace. From a 1918 retreat to Taos, New Mexico through the next two decades in Maine, Hartley abandoned intuition as a source for his art and pursued this more rational analysis of his subjects, producing a number of landscapes and still lifes.

This painting is thought to be part of series of flower paintings done soon after Hartley returned from his sojourn in New Mexico.

#TBD

Stuart Davis
*Landscape*, 1923
Oil on canvas
Canvas: 36 1/16 x 22 1/16 inches; 91.6 x 56 cm.
Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Gift of Mari and James A. Michener, 1968
G1968.42
Dorothy Brett (British, 1883-1977)
Portrait of D. H. Lawrence, 1925
Oil on canvas

In this haloed portrait of Lawrence, one of his “disciples” captures his messianic quality, evident in his passionate and conscious attempt to make everything he wrote about come alive.

The Honorable Dorothy Brett studied art at the Slade School in London before World War I and by 1920 had become an established painter in Great Britain. In 1924 she accompanied Lawrence and his wife Frieda to the United States, settling with them at Kiowa Ranch in northern New Mexico. Except for occasional trips to Mexico, the eastern United States, and Europe, Brett spent the remainder of her life in Taos.

CHINESE SHADOWS

China is no less stimulating than Greece. . . .these new masses of unexplored arts and facts are pouring into the vortex. . . .they cannot help ringing about changes as great as the Renaissance changes, even if we set ourselves blindly against it. As it is, there is life in the fusion.

—Ezra Pound in New Age (January 1915)

The duty that faces us is not to batter down their forts or exploit their markets, but to study and come to sympathize with their humanity and their generous aspirations. . . .We need their best ideals to supplement our own—ideals enshrined in their art, in their literature and in the tragedies of their lives.

—Ernest Fenollosa edited by Ezra Pound in The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry (1919)

Let me state at the outset that I know no Chinese.

—Amy Lowell in Fir Flower Tablets (1922)

A fascination with things Chinese percolated through Western consciousness from the seventeenth-century Jesuit “discoveries” through to the nineteenth century, cresting in the literary preoccupations of the 1920s. Fascinated by utterly new aesthetic constructs and linguistic structures, modernists employed imitation, translation, and appropriation of Chinese culture as central elements, pictorially, verbally, and ethnographically. Most of the writers who
explored China did so through books and museums. Asian themes were to be found in theater and fiction from Eugene O'Neill to Pearl S. Buck, who was raised by missionary parents in Zhenjiang, China, and whose novel *The Good Earth* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1931.

Central to both the promotion of China and the rise of modernism was Ezra Pound, whose book of translations *Cathay* was published in 1915, and whom T. S. Eliot called “the inventor of Chinese poetry for our time.” Pound translated and published a number of Chinese classics, including the four books of Confucius, and developed a line of literary translation which eclipsed the more staid work of Herbert Giles, Arthur Waley, and others. Amy Lowell, Witter Bynner, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore and many others were drawn to Chinese poetry and art and incorporated Chinese aesthetics into their own work.

353

Ezra Pound’s *Cathay* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1915)

356

Ezra Pound’s “Cathay” from a first edition of *Personae; The Collected Poems of Ezra Pound* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1926)

The central work from the age of translation of Chinese poetry in the Teens and Twenties, the original 1915 version of Pound’s *Cathay* consisted of 14 poems which were hard and imagistic; more were added for the later collection *Personae*. Pound’s translations have become classic and are viewed by some as among the most important ever made. Especially influential in the Twenties, Pound was hailed by T. S. Eliot as “the inventor of Chinese poetry for our time.”

In 1913, Pound was given the papers of the deceased sinologist, Ernest Fenellosa. Fenellosa had been working with two Japanese scholars, and his widow deemed his notes of interest to Pound who was renowned for his imagistic poetic method. Pound depended heavily upon Fenellosa’s scholarly work to make his translations, for he did not know any Chinese.

354

Ezra Pound’s *A Draft of XXX Cantos* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1933)
In addition to his translations of Chinese poetry, Pound translated a number of Confucian texts, including *The Unwobbling Pivot* and *The Great Digest*. The first of many editions of the Cantos to be published, *A Draft of XXX Cantos* contains the famous Canto XIII, which discusses the philosophy of Confucius (“Kung” in the Canto). This is Pound’s first use of Chinese material in his epic, which is in large part made up of translations, adaptations, borrowings, and allusions from other languages and cultures. In addition, Pound translated Medieval French and Italian Troubadour poetry, Japanese Noh Plays, Greek plays and poetry, and Anglo-Saxon poetry, elevating the place of translation in the work of the poet and poetry.

Ernest Fenellosa’s *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, with a foreword and notes by Ezra Pound (New York: Arrow Editions, 1936)

American Orientalist, scholar, collector and connoisseur Ernest Fenellosa was educated at Harvard, taught for years at the Imperial University of Japan, and was curator of Oriental Art at Boston University. After his death in 1908 some of his material was published in the two-volume *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art* (1912). However, a great deal of Fenellosa’s research notes were left unpublished and eventually given by his widow to Ezra Pound to edit as he saw fit. Pound readily admitted not knowing Chinese, but compiled from Fenellosa’s notes *The Chinese Written Character*, a landmark work better suited to the study of modernism than the study of the Chinese language.

In 1934 Pound published *The ABC of Reading*, in which he explained his “ideogrammic system.” Part of his argument depends upon his interpretation of the Chinese alphabet. As Pound understood the “ideograms,” abstract concepts are composed from concrete things: the character for the concept “red,” he states, is a composite of the characters for “cherry,” “rose,” “iron rust,” and “flamingo.” The Chinese language, he argues, retains a poetic vitality that is lost in the arbitrary alphabet of English which we must struggle to recover.

In reality, the workings of the Chinese language are much more complicated than this, but this particular element of the Chinese system worked to explain the fundamental concepts behind Pound’s theories of poetry, which had gone by the names of “imagism” and “vorticism” in the Teens and early Twenties. Pound’s theories have been immensely influential on poets ever since.
A first edition of Wallace Stevens’s *Harmonium* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923)

Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), like his colleagues Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, and Amy Lowell, was influenced by Chinese poetry. His short lines are often haiku-like, and his serene, rich descriptions of nature echo the tone of much Chinese philosophy. Stevens read many books on Zen Buddhism, which particularly inflects his work.

While working on “Six Significant Landscapes,” Stevens meditated on Song dynasty (960-1279 C.E.) landscape paintings and hoped to recreate the images through words. His lines build comparisons and causal relations between disparate objects, creating a sense of unity and timelessness for a modern audience, and challenging the assumptions of rational thought.

Marianne Moore’s *Poems* (London: Egoist Press, 1921)

Marianne Moore’s (1887-1972) poems conjure dragons, basilisks, tortoises, Chinese unicorns and other fantastical animals. Her poem “The Fish” seems to honor the Chinese sense of careful observation and methodical, elegant craft, producing a work of art that recalls the meticulous process of creating a vase. Moore’s fish is itself a highly crafted object, set against a sea that is at once full of motion and frozen in language.

Moore was an aficionado of things Chinese, reviewing Chinese poetry for the *Dial* and carefully studying the many books on Chinese literature, landscape, and art that were published in the first decades of the twentieth century. Her interest in China was encouraged by close family friends who were missionaries there, as well as frequent visits to New York galleries which were also showcasing Chinese art in the 1920s.

A first edition of Amy Lowell and Florence Ayscough’s *Fir-Flower Tablets* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921)
Like Pound, Amy Lowell (1874-1925) was first influenced by Japanese art and poetry but later switched her interest to the Chinese. The poems of *Fir-Flower Tablets* were first translated into an irregular English by Ayscough and then polished into poems by Lowell. The two were friends and colleagues from childhood, though Ayscough lived most of her life in Shanghai. Lowell once said of their work: “I tell you we are a great team, Florence, and ought to do wonderful things.” They worked speedily and diligently in competition with the many other poets working with early Chinese poetry such as Witter Bynner and Ezra Pound. Like Pound they used a picture-word method and Lowell fully intended her work as a challenge to Pound’s influential Cathay.


Unlike Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore or Amy Lowell, Witter Bynner (1881-1968) spent time in the East traveling to both Japan and China. The literature of both countries consumed his interest, though he studied Chinese more extensively. His translation of the Chinese classics in a T’ang era anthology was done with a Chinese scholar, Dr. Kiang Kang-hu.

Critics considered Bynner to have captured brilliantly the sense of joy and abandon of the originals, and this book is considered his most important contribution to twentieth-century poetry. Bynner’s work on Chinese poetry provided him with an entrance into modernism, which he had originally dismissed. He said that his Oriental studies were “a newer, finer, and deeper education than ever came to me from the Hebrew or the Greek.”


Chicagorean Eunice Tietjens (1884-1944) was World War I correspondent for the *Chicago Daily News* in France, 1917-1918, and a staff member of Harriet Monroe’s *Poetry Magazine* for over 25 years. She had a varied career writing poetry, editing, and translating poetry in several different languages. Her translations were made from secondary sources in French and English.
Tietjens visited China in 1916, spending six months with her sister, a missionary in the interior of China, a place where few westerners had ventured. Before she left the United States, Harriet Monroe exhorted her to return with literary observations. The trip was transformative for Tietjens, and prompted *Profiles from China* (1917). Amy Lowell appreciated and applauded her travelogue as a masterpiece. Years later, Tietjens returned to the subject of China, this time as a scholar and anthologist, researching and then publishing *Poetry of the Orient*.

Unidentified photographer
Louise Brooks, not dated
Gelatin silver print

This photograph is captioned on the reverse:

ANOTHER CHINESE DISTURBANCE!! Louise Brooks, Paramount player, discovers a unique pajama ensemble to match her intriguing oriental haircut. A robe of bright yellow crepe riotous with painted flowers, dragons in blues, greens and reds, is worn over a jumper of orange rajah silk, belted at the waist-line, and trousers that match in material and design the outer robe. The extremely high heels of gold on Miss Brooks’ mules are a new feature in boudoir slippers. The rest of the mule is in gold leather, and hand painted yellow satin.

Nickolas Muray (U.S., b. Hungary, 1892-1965)
Martha Graham, ca. 1926
Gelatin silver print

The dancer, choreographer, and teacher Martha Graham (1891-1991) studied at the Denishawn school and first appeared with her own group of dancers in 1929. Graham’s dances often draw upon historical and mythological subjects and her choreography, which requires great discipline and flexibility to perform, is highly individual, stark, and angular.

Between 1920 and 1940, Nickolas Muray made over 10,000 portraits of Hollywood celebrities and other cultural figures.
Nickolas Muray (U.S., b. Hungary, 1892-1965)
Michio Ito, ca. 1921
Gelatin silver print

The dancer and choreographer, Michio Ito (1892-1961) studied traditional dance in Japan before moving to Paris in 1911. At the beginning of World War I, he moved to Britain and became acquainted with Ezra Pound and William Butler Yeats. In 1916, he moved to the U.S. and choreographed Broadway revues and experimental dance pieces. During this period, Ito divided his time between New York and Hollywood, where he choreographed films such as Madame Butterfly (1933) and Booloo (1938). He was deported from the United States in 1941, and returned to Tokyo to establish a modern dance school.

Between 1920 and 1940, Nickolas Muray made over 10,000 portraits of Hollywood celebrities and other cultural figures.

Unidentified photographer
Ezra Pound, not dated
Gelatin silver print

HOUSE AND HOME

Maintaining a high percentage of individual homeowners is one of the searching tests that now challenge the people of the United States. The present large proportion of families that own their own homes is both the foundation of a sound economic and social system and a guarantee that our society will continue to develop rationally as changing conditions demand.

—Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover in How to Own Your Own Home (1923)

Until yesterday, almost, she had regarded the various chairs of the house as beings endowed with life and character; she had held conversations with some, and, with a careless exterior not warranted by an inner dread, avoided others in gloomy dusks. All this, now, she contemptuously discarded. Chairs were--chairs, things to sit on, wood and stuffed cushions.

—Joseph Hergesheimer in Java Head (1918)
The increased prosperity and personal wealth of the Twenties went hand in hand with an increased passion about house, home, and consumer goods. During this decade business spent over a billion advertising dollars to promote private domestic life and mass consumerism. The private self came to be increasingly identified with and valued by its relation to the private home. The emergence of suburbia was particularly tied to this new kind of glamour and glitter. Home decoration manuals and etiquette books served as guides for the good life.

Architects such as Le Corbusier, R. M. Schindler, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Richard Neutra began to design startlingly modern houses for the new American. Frank Lloyd Wright stands out: he explored the use of poured concrete and abstract sculptural ornamentation in residential construction, building a number of these houses in and around the growing suburbs of Los Angeles. Bungalows dotted the landscape.

Some novelists of the time, fascinated with color and pattern as manifest in interior decoration and costume, were, in their manner, style, and satiric tone, as experimentalist as the architects. Alfred Kazin commented in 1942, “the new literature of sophistication . . . was fundamentally the ambitious baroque luxury of a period that had finally attained a self-conscious splendor of its own” and described a “luxuriousness of skepticism, a taste for richness and fantasy and “wickedness self-provoked that were the various emblems of careless joviality.”

**Flat case # 23**


Emily Post had published half a dozen novels before her landmark, best-selling book on proper etiquette appeared. *Etiquette* was perfect for the time which was witnessing an unprecedented growth of the independent middle class. Like home and garden manuals, Emily Post’s *Etiquette* emphasizes the new values ushered in by the new prosperity of the decade. As Post herself acknowledges in the book’s introduction,

Besides the significance of this volume as an indubitable authority on manner, it should be pointed out that as a social document, it is without precedent in American literature. . . .The
immediate fact is that the characters of this book are thoroughbred Americans, representative of various sections of the country and free from the slightest tinge of snobbery. Not all of them are even well-to-do, in the post-war sense; and their devices of economy in household outlay, dress and entertainment are a revelation in the science of ways and means.

175


The decade abounded in guides for creating a beautiful and relaxing home. This one, an offshoot of the magazine _The Modern Priscilla_, focused on “How to Select and How to Buy” for the home, “How to Combine Furnishings Room by Room,” and “How to Make and Renovate Home Furnishings.”

167 [Open to pp. 206-207]


The Twenties saw the publication of numerous volumes aimed at the new middle-class home owner. Greta Gray’s book not only illustrates the modern, but contains a chapter by the most modern of new architects at the time, Richard Neutra. In his chapter “Modern Domestic Architecture,” Neutra posits five basic principles:

1. Controlled indoor climate without losing the intimate relation to the outdoors.
2. Technologically supported livability even in restricted space.
3. Dwelling hygiene of an unprecedented character.
4. Intimacy between the indoors and outdoors by which the garden becomes a part of the dwelling area proper.
5. Aesthetic satisfaction, as in nature, based on a formal and essential integration of all living functions and independent of superimposed decoration.

168 [Open to pages 52-53]
Loan courtesy of the Architecture Library, The University of Texas at Austin

Richard Neutra’s first publication, whose title translates to “How American Builds,” was a survey of current American architecture. Included in the survey are pictures of construction on the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago and R. L. Schindler’s plans and drawings for Pueblo Ribera, community housing in La Jolla, California, shown here.

170

Raymond McGrath’s *Twentieth Century Houses* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934)

McGrath’s book surveys the most important residential buildings of the new century, including pictures and floor plans of houses designed by Adolph Loos, Walter Gropius, Richard Neutra, and R.M. Schindler among many others. Schindler, like Neutra, studied with Frank Lloyd Wright. Shindlers’ summer house at Avalon, Catalina Island, was a perfect blend of Wright and southern California. It was one of the first large homes to appear on what was to become California’s Riviera.

**Portable wall 6**
176, 178, 179

From top to bottom, left to right:

William Penhallow Henderson (U.S., 1877-1943)
Brooks House, Rough idea of room sizes and contents, not dated

William Penhallow Henderson (U.S., 1877-1943)
Four sketches of New Mexico Houses, not dated
Pencil on paper

William Penhallow Henderson (U.S., 1877-1943)
Items of Construction for the Albert Schmidt House, Tesuque, 12 September 1924
Unlike architects working in the then-dominant International style, William Penhallow Henderson and his wife, the poet, Alice Corbin Henderson, were interested in the local and vernacular. From their home in Santa Fe, New Mexico, they were active in preserving and perpetuating indigenous New Mexican traditions and customs.

Henderson gained exposure as an architect, furniture designer, and builder through the business he developed with his first son-in-law, John Evans (Mabel Dodge Luhan’s only son) who married Alice Oliver Henderson in December 1922. Though the marriage was short-lived, it established a life-long relationship between Luhan and the Hendersons.

John Evans, Edwin Brooks, and Henderson began the Pueblo-Spanish Building Company in 1925 with Henderson designing furniture and buildings until the effects of the stock market crash of 1929 cut too deeply into the business’s profits, an impact one can see in the greatly reduced list of furniture options available between January and December 1931.

181a-d

Unidentified photographer
Four images of Robinson Jeffers’ Tor House, Carmel, CA

Robinson Jeffers designed and helped to build his own rugged stone house overlooking the Pacific outside Carmel, California. It was finished in 1919 after five years of labor. Jeffers wrote the majority of his books in Tor House and its adjoining Hawk Tower. Many of his narrative poems situate themselves in the wild headlands surrounding Jeffers’s sanctuary. It was here that he lived with his wife, Una, and raised their twin sons, Garth and Donnan. During the Twenties Jeffers played host to a number of famous cultural figures including Edna St. Vincent Millay, Sinclair Lewis, and Charlie Chaplin.

Portable wall 8
#TBD

First edition of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe [Studies and executed Buildings] (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1910)

This plate is part of Frank Lloyd Wright’s (1867-1959) famous “Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright.”
Commonly referred to as the Wasmuth Folio, after its Berlin publisher, the publication represented a comprehensive collection Wright’s work to date. Plans for his organic family houses, public buildings and multifamily dwellings were redrawn so they appeared to the reader as a complete vision of how the modern landscape might appear. Wright prefaced his plates with an essay in which he grappled with the relationship between the historic foundations of architecture and his own modernist pursuits.

When Wright published these designs he was a rising talent in the field of architecture and it would be several years before he, along with Le Corbusier, became recognized as one of the giants of twentieth century modern architecture.

183

Unidentified photographer
The Arizona Biltmore, ca. 1929
Postcard

The Arizona Biltmore, the “jewel of the desert,” opened in 1929. It was designed by Albert Chase McArthur, a renowned architect who had been a student of Frank Lloyd Wright. Because Wright supervised parts of the Biltmore’s construction, it is often attributed to Wright himself.

Flat case # 24
18


The novels of James Branch Cabell were famously popular. His tongue-in-cheek, ironic tales were unique fantasies of the age and spoke to thousands. Jurgen, set in the fantastical kingdom of Poictesme, was prosecuted for obscenity in 1922 and after Cabell was acquitted of all charges the resulting publicity greatly increased demand for the work.

In an *American Mercury* piece in 1926 Benjamin De Casseres dubbed Cabell “The Watteau of ironists. The Boecklin of romancers. The Debussy of prose.” Denouncing the “American Outhouses of Realism,” De Casseres makes an argument for magical fiction: “catch them young I say—and dose their little brains with Lewis Carroll, Lord Dunsany and James Branch Cabell. Unfit them for life? Yes, but fit them to live.”

Van Vechten’ treatise on the housecat was encyclopedic and reflected the growing popularity of domestic pets in the Twenties. The book proposes attitudes that are reflective of the aloof individuality favored by Van Vechten and many others. Van Vechten also edited a collection of house-cat-themed short stories, *Lords of the Housetops* (1921) and wrote a “memoir” about his own cat, Feathers, published in 1930.

A first edition of Carl Van Vechten’s *Spider Boy, A Scenario for a Motion Picture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1928)

American novelist and critic Carl Van Vechten was instrumental in popularizing Harlem in his controversial novel, *Nigger Heaven* (1926). The novel, which depicted Harlem jazz clubs and dance halls, was attacked from many quarters, but was also defended by some, including the young Black Harlem Renaissance writer Wallace Thurman. In his next novel, *Spider Boy*, Van Vechten produced a flamboyant satire of life in Hollywood in the Twenties.

*Spider Boy* was originally serialized in *Vanity Fair* under the headings “Fabulous Hollywood,” “Hollywood Parties,” “Hollywood Royalties,” and “Understanding Hollywood.” Along with Joseph Hergesheimer, James Branch Cabell, and Elinor Wylie, Van Vechten wrote tales of romantic charm, sentiment, artifice, style, sophistication, wit, and sensitivity. Gertrude Stein wrote to Van Vechten that “others have tried to make background foreground, but you have made foreground background and our foreground is our background.”

A first edition Elinor Wylie’s *The Orphan Angel* (New York: Knopf, 1926) Inscribed to Christopher Morley

Along with Edna St. Vincent Millay, Lola Ridge, Dorothy Parker, and others, Elinor Wyle (1885-1928) cultivated the looks, behavior, metaphysical attitudes, and the discontent of the new woman of the
Twenties. The first twenty-five years of her life were spent in the high society of Washington D. C. Flights and divorces from her first two wealthy husbands were fodder for the daily newspapers and for gossip columnists. Narcissistic and aloof, she developed an aura of glamour by buying silver slippers, mirrors, and Balenciaga gowns. Yet she was equally obsessed with poetry and other literary concerns during her short writing life of less than ten years.

Wylie’s fragile poems have titles like “Beauty,” “Address to my soul,” and “Trivial Breath.” She also published three novels, including *The Orphan Angel* (1926), an imagined life of the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley had he escaped early death and moved to America.

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E. O. Hoppé (Germany, 1878-1972)
Joseph Hergesheimer, ca. 1926
Gelatin silver print

James Branch Cabell wrote in 1921 of his friend’s work:

> Joseph Hergesheimer realizes the sensuous world of his characters and, in particular the optic world. He is the most insistently superficial of all writers known to me, in his emphasis upon shapes and textures and pigments. His people are rendered from complexion to coat-tail buttons and the reader is given precisely the creasing of each forehead and the pleating of their under-linen. Mr. Hergesheimer’s books contain whole warehousefuls of the most carefully finished furniture.

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A first edition of Joseph Hergesheimer’s *From an Old House* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926)

Hergesheimer’s memoir is a story of his eighteenth-century stone house in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Like his other works, *From an Old House* was emblematic of the new romantic or “aesthetic” style in writing. Although Hergesheimer was an extremely successful novelist in the Twenties, eclipsing F. Scott Fitzgerald’s work in popular and critical reception, his fame and fortune did not last into the next decade and he is now largely forgotten.
A letter from F. Scott Fitzgerald to Joseph Hergesheimer, ca. 1925-1926

In this letter Fitzgerald thanks Hergesheimer for his kind remarks about *The Great Gatsby* ("I'm afraid it's a financial failure"), encloses an unfavorable review of the novel by Burton Rascoe ("the trouble is that we snubbed his wife"), and compliments Hergesheimer on three installments of *From an Old House* which Fitzgerald had read in Italy.

189 [open to pp. 112-113]


One of the most important novels of the twentieth century, *The Great Gatsby* is a poignant exploration of the materialism and glamour of the Twenties. This passage, in which Gatsby shows off his colorful shirts artfully symbolizes and criticizes this materialism and glamour. Fitzgerald was the epitome of the jazz-age writer, and *The Great Gatsby* was the perfect novel of its time: sophisticated, glittering, and melancholic.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther . . . . And one fine morning—

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

393

Cuban *mantón* purchased by Joseph Hergesheimer in Havana, ca. 1920, which was the inspiration for the novel, *The Bright Shawl* (1922)

He had a vision of the shawl itself, and, once more, seemed to feel the smooth dragging heaviness of its embroidery. The burning square of its colors unfolded before him, the incredible magentas, the night blues and oranges and emerald and vermilion, worked into broad peonies and roses in leaves. And suddenly he felt again that, not only figuring Spain, it was
symbolical of the youth, the time, that had gone. Thus the past appeared to him, wrapped bright and precious in the shawl of memory.

191

Joseph Hergesheimer’s *The Bright Shawl* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922) Inscribed by Hergesheimer to Alfred and Blanche Knopf

First published in *Redbook* (June to December 1922) and made into a movie in 1923, *The Bright Shawl* is set in Cuba at the time of its war of independence from Spain. Hergesheimer’s great eye for the material creates a colorful and active book in which the shawl becomes a symbol of the nation itself:

The shawl was a map, a representation, of the country of the spirit through which he passed . . . It seemed to float up from the bed and to reach from coast to coast, from end to end, of Cuba; its flowers took root and grew, casting about splendor and perfume; the blue widened into the sky, the tenderness of the clasping see, the dark greens were the shadows of the great Ceiba trees, the gloom of the jungles, the massed royal palms of the plains.

**North perimeter wall**

202

Norman Bell Geddes (U.S., 1893-1958)
House #3: Interior plan of second floor, 1931

Geddes wrote in *Horizons* (1932), the book in which he outlines his design process and philosophy: “The aim of the house should be to reduce to a minimum the burdensome features of living and to enable the family to have an economical and relaxing home life.”

201

Norman Bel Geddes (U.S., 1893-1958)
House #3: Interior plan of first floor, 1931
Geddes wrote in *Horizons* (1932), the book in which he outlines his design process and philosophy: “The aim of the house should be to reduce to a minimum the burdensome features of living and to enable the family to have an economical and relaxing home life.”

199

Norman Bel Geddes (U.S., 1893-1958)
Philco Radio, 1930

In 1929, most home furnishings were still made in imitation of past periods in furniture design. Geddes described the radio’s situation as follows:

The average manufacturer, instead of offering the public a straightforward, sincerely designed product, frankly made of whatever material is most suited to its manufacture, frequently distrusts the market. For instance, radio manufacturers, frequently feel compelled to produce imitation period furniture.

The first radios designed by Geddes for Philco were large cabinets raised on legs, similar in size and material to previous “period imitation” models. In 1931, he created a table version called the Lazy Boy, with the controls built into the top so that when it was placed beside a chair or sofa as an end table, the listener would not have to get up to adjust the dials. It was the best selling radio for two years.

200

Norman Bel Geddes (U.S., 1893-1958)
Standard Gas Equipment Stove model, 1930
Silver gelatin print

During his lifetime, certain anecdotes came to characterize Geddes. One such story involves the creation of the Standard Gas Equipment Stove. It is said that the project was instigated when an executive of the Standard Gas Equipment Company rushed into Geddes’s office and said that he wanted a new design within ten days. He added that he would pay Geddes fifteen hundred dollars for the plans. Geddes’s reply was just as abrupt—he wanted a year’s time for research, at the company’s factory and in the field, and a check for fifty thousand dollars against future royalties. The rest is
history. The all-white stove was born and “a complete new Deal” was instigated for “the forgotten American kitchen.”

198

Norman Bel Geddes’ “Ten Years from Now” in *Ladies Home Journal* (January 1931)

Geddes was both a theatrical and industrial designer. His designs for the theater were part of a new movement in stage design emphasizing a streamlined and expressionist style and his designs for the home were similarly sleek and smooth. The Streamline Moderne style grew out of the International style so popular at the time; Geddes and others created the new styled by adding an organic flow to the severity of the International style. In redesigning objects, he contributed to the designing of modern life as such. His designs or redesigns included a motor car, an ocean liner, an airplane, a steel bed for Simmons, radios, a stove, and the conference room for the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson.

Written in July 1930, his predictions for the year 1940 were not limited to the domestic and were both practical and utopian in their vision.

**THE NEW NEGRO**

_The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future. . . History must restore what slavery took away. . . The Negro has been a man without a history because he has been considered a man without a worthy culture. . . But already the Negro sees himself against a reclaimed background, in a perspective that will give pride and self-respect ample scope, and make history yield for him the same values that the treasured past of any people affords._

—Arthur Schomburg in *The Negro Digs Up His Past*

Beginning in 1904, Harlem, centered at 135th Street and Fifth Avenue, became a mecca for middle-class Blacks moving north from Hell’s Kitchen, Clinton, and other neighborhoods in New York City. Black intellectuals, writers, and other artists were among the first inhabitants of Harlem, the home of the “New Negro.” Important prefigured by the writings of W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, the Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro movement represented an explosion of creativity unique in its breadth and depth. Earlier, racism, including a rash of lynchings and official murder, had forced many creative black Americans abroad,
including Josephine Baker and Paul Robeson (later Richard Wright and James Baldwin would also become exiles).

More broadly, the place of Blacks in American culture was changing quickly, most significantly from within the Black community. Despite U.S. Army policies which disallowed them the right to participate in the victory march on the Champs Élysées, the 369th Regiment, better known as the Harlem Hellfighters, marched up Fifth Avenue to Harlem on 17 February 1919. They had served longer than any other regiment (191 days in active duty). Also beginning in 1919, Marcus Garvey’s Back to Africa movement inspired working class blacks to take control of their lives, economic condition, and histories: “We have a beautiful history, and we shall create another one in the future.”

**Flat case #20**

255[open to pp. 22-23]


Emigrating to the U.S. from Jamaica in 1912, 22-year-old Claude McKay was shocked by the racism he discovered in America. His subsequent struggles for Black self-determination were intricately tied to his socialist beliefs and to his support of the working class. As he notes in his biographical sketch for *Caroling Dusk*, he himself was variously employed: “Went to work at various jobs, porter, houseman, longshoreman, bar-man, railroad club and hotel waiter. Kept on writing.” Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and others considered his work an important contribution to the Harlem Renaissance. His best poems in *Harlem Shadows* were clear about the disaster of both class and racial prejudice in the United States; as in, for example, “America.”

255a [place this label next to 255 label]

**America**

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her tiger’s tooth,
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.
Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,
Giving me strength erect against her hate.
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.
Yet as a rebel fronts a king in state,  
I stand within her walls with not a shred  
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.  
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,  
And see her might and granite wonders there,  
Beneath the touch of Time’s unerring hand,  
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

256

Alain Locke’s *The New Negro* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925)

Alain Locke’s major contributions to the Harlem Renaissance were *The New Negro* anthology and Locke’s introductory essay of the same name. Originally published as the March 1925 issue of *The Survey Graphic*, the collection was a manifesto of sorts; as edited by Locke, it called for the radical transformation of the artist and the writer for the sake of a similar transformation and subsequent liberation for all members of the race.

Locke, who was a professor of Philosophy at Harvard, developed an Africanist ethos, encouraging young writers to turn to African and African-American history and life for their inspiration. In one of his own contributions to *The New Negro*, Locke wrote eloquently about the place of Harlem in the new world:

Yet in the final analysis, Harlem is neither slum, ghetto, resort, nor colony, though it is in part all of them. It is—or promises at least to be—a race capital. Europe seething in a dozen centers with emergent nationalities, Palestine full of renascent Judaism—these are no more alive with the spirit of a racial awakening than Harlem; culturally and spiritually it focuses a people. Negro life is not only founding new centers, but finding a new soul.

257, 258 [open to pp. 164-165]


Throughout the Twenties James Weldon Johnson worked in a variety of positions in the NAACP and he was the first African-American secretary of that organization. Johnson, among the older generation of Harlem Renaissance figures, wrote several volumes of poems, including *God’s Trombone: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927) and *Black Manhattan* (1930), a history of African American participation in the history of New York City. Johnson was also an indefatigable anthologist and editor, producing two editions of *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (a second appeared in 1931) as well as two anthologies of Negro spirituals.


Countee Cullen (1903-1946) was viewed suspiciously by his contemporaries as a prominent figure in the New Negro movement. He was shy and diffident, and was thought to be too friendly towards the White race. He was sometimes accused of being too conservative, even as he accused others, such as Wallace Thurman, of being too radical. Both Thurman and Langston Hughes attacked Cullen in the White press. A graduate of mostly White schools (DeWitt Clinton High School in New York City and Harvard University), Cullen presented in his work a unique perspective difficult challenges of being a Black American.

Along with Edna St. Vincent Millay, Countee Cullen was, for a time, the most famous of the decade’s new poets and was awarded numerous prizes. Unlike many of his contemporaries Cullen wrote in traditional forms, including ballads and Shakespearean and Petrarchan sonnets.

He was courageous in his approach, which emphasized his desire to transcend racial categories (“I am going to be a POET and not a NEGRO POET”) even as his poems were deeply race-conscious. His columns for the Black magazine *Opportunity* are just one example of the ways Cullen was involved in the literary and cultural debates of the Black community. In April of 1928 he married Yolande, the daughter of W. E. B. DuBois, in the most heavily
reported and attended social event of the Harlem Renaissance; the marriage lasted less than two years.

This copy of Color is inscribed to Willard “Spud” Johnson, a writer, publisher, and figure in the Taos community of the Twenties and Thirties.

260


Countee Cullen’s anthology *Caroling Dusk* was published at the height of the Harlem Renaissance. It contained the work of poets ranging from the well-known Paul Laurence Dunbar and Langston Hughes to the more obscure Waring Cuney. Cullen made a point of stating that the book was a collection of writing by Negroes, and not an “anthology of Negro Verse.” The 38 poets are a mixture of young and old, lyric and dramatic, and sufficient room is given to most to provide a representative selection of each poet’s work.

In his introduction Cullen defines the anthology’s objective:

To those intelligently familiar with what is popularly termed the renaissance in art and literature by Negroes, it will not be taken as a sentimentally risky observation to contend that the recent yearly contests conducted by Negro magazines, such as *Opportunity* and *The Crisis*, as well as a growing tendency on the part of white editors to give impartial consideration to the work of Negro writers, have awakened to a happy articulation many young Negro poets who had thitherto lipped only in isolated places in solitary numbers. It is primarily to give them a concerted hearing that this collection has been published.

**Flat case # 21**

268, 269

A first edition of Wallace Thurman’s *The Blacker the Berry* (New York: The Macaulay Company, 1929)

Wallace Thurman’s typescript review of his own book, *Infants of the Spring*

Wallace Thurman was one of the stars of the Harlem Renaissance. He was the leader of the movement’s younger and
more incendiary writers and his home was a gathering place for discussion groups. He wrote two novels, The *Blacker the Berry* and *Infants of Spring* (1932) and was the editor of *Fire!*, a pointedly "incendiary" periodical that lasted only one issue. He also published *Negro Life in New York*, a non-fiction dissection of life in Harlem.

Thurman, who was dark skinned, experienced considerable discrimination from both blacks and whites. He died at the age of 34 from tuberculosis and complications from alcoholism. Langston Hughes, in his autobiography *The Big Sea* (1940), describes Thurman as "a strangely brilliant black boy, who had read everything and whose critical mind could find something wrong with everything he read. . . . He wanted to be a very great writer, like Gorki or Thomas Mann, and he felt that he was merely a journalistic writer."

270

Premier issue of *Fire!*!, November 1926

Edited by the novelist and critic Wallace Thurman, *Fire!* was subtitled "A Quarterly devoted to the Younger Negro Artists" but no issues were published beyond this first one. Despite its brief lifetime, *Fire!* is considered a landmark document of the Harlem Renaissance. It included work by Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen among others, and art by Bruce Nugent and Aaron Douglas. In the *New Republic* of 31 August 1927, Thurman enunciated the uncompromising radical aesthetic spirit of the magazine:

> It was purely artistic in intent and conception. Its contributors went to the proletariat rather than the bourgeoisie for characters and material. They were interested in people who still retained some individual race qualities and who were not totally white American in every respect save color of skin.

261

A first edition of Jean Toomer's *Cane* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1923) Inscribed: "Spud Johnson/in friendship/Jean Toomer"

Considered the first major work of the Harlem Renaissance (preceded only by Claude McKay's *Harlem Shadows*), *Cane* is one of the most compelling literary works of the Twenties. An experimental hybrid of prose and poetry and an unflinchingly tender lament, it is at the same time a call to awareness. It consists of
impressionistically rendered stories of life in Black America, particularly focusing on the lives of Black women. It was regarded as both feminist and sexually revolutionary and garnered praise from a variety of critics, including W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, Countee Cullen, W. S. Braithwaite, Gorham Munson, and Waldo Frank, as well as from Hart Crane, Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O’Keefe, and Allen Tate.

Although Cane was viewed as a “race novel,” Toomer, who was of mixed ancestry, became increasingly ambivalent about his own heritage, finally claiming that he was neither black nor white. Although he wrote a number of novels and philosophical works in the decades following the publication of Cane, none of them were published. His energies were devoted to the search for love and spiritual focus through intense involvement with G. I. Gurdjieff and with the Society of Friends.

266

A third printing of Langston Hughes’s The Weary Blues (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926) Inscribed: “For J. B. Neumann,/one who loves/beauty,—these/poems o Harlem,/the sea, and/elsewhere/Sincerely,/Langston Hughes/Lincoln University/March 9, 1927.”

The most prominent Black writer of the twentieth century, Langston Hughes (9102-1967) was both created by and a contributor to the Harlem Renaissance, for it was during this period that he developed his social conscience and his writing style. The Weary Blues, which alludes throughout to musical traditions, was meant to be read aloud; Hughes was a famously electrifying reader of his own work. The book was published by Alfred A. Knopf through the efforts of Carl Van Vechten, who found it “too beautiful to escape appreciation.”

The volume contains Hughes’s best-known poem, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.”

266a [place this label next to label 266]

The Negro Speaks of Rivers

I’ve known rivers:
I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.  
I built my hut near the Con go and it lulled me to sleep.  
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.  
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:  
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

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Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. press release for Langston Hughes’s *The Weary Blues*, 8 January 1926

In its promotional literature for Langston Hughes’s book of poems, the Knopf firm highlighted Hughes’s career-launching encounter with Vachel Lindsay.

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A first edition of Nella Larsen’s *Passing* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929)

Nella Larsen (1891-1964) was the first black woman to be awarded a Guggenheim fellowship in creative writing. During the Twenties she was a library assistant and children’s librarian at the New York Public Library in Harlem. She wrote two brilliant novels, *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing*, as well as a number of short stories. Of mixed racial background, Larsen explored the crippling effects of racism in her fiction and was a highly regarded member of the older generation of Harlem Renaissance writers. However, in 1930, Larsen was accused of plagiarism for one of her short stories, and though exonered, she never published again. The effects of this accusation, coupled with an acrimonious divorce, were devastating. In 1939 she cut ties with everyone she knew and worked as a nurse from 1941 until her death in 1964.
Portable wall 3 (left to right)
#TBD

Miguel Covarrubias (Mexico, 1904-1957)
Untitled [Harlem Dandy], not dated
Litho crayon on paper


366 [mat and frame for wall]

Carl Van Vechten (U.S., 1880-1964)
Paul Robeson, not dated
Gelatin silver print postcard

Portable wall 4 (left to right)
389

Blosur
Duke Ellington, not dated
Gelatin silver print

388
Mauricé
Duke Ellington and his band, not dated
Gelatin silver print

413 (1923)

Carl Van Vechten (U.S., 1880-1964)
Bessie Smith, 3 February 1936
Gelatin silver print
Bessie Smith (1895-1937) was the greatest of the classic Blues singers of the 1920s. Trained on the vaudeville circuit, Smith made her recording debut in 1923 singing “Gulf Coast Blues” and “Down Hearted Blues” to piano accompaniment of Clarence Williams. Her rendition of “St. Louis Blues” with Louis Armstrong is considered by most critics to be one of the finest recordings of the 1920s.

Popular with white and African-American audiences of the decade, her classic blues style was eclipsed in the 1930s and her recording career ended in 1933 although she continued to tour. Her efforts to regain popularity by styling herself a Swing musician were cut short by her death in 1937 in an automobile accident.

**Portable wall 5 (left to right)**

196

Carl Van Vechten (U.S., 1880-1964)
Self-portrait, 2 July 1923
Gelatin silver print

Although he had played with photography during the Twenties, Van Vechten virtually ignored his writing and turned to photography full time in the early Thirties. Using a Leica he captured through portraiture the theater, dance, and literary celebrities of his day. He photographed Gertrude Stein, with and without Alice, more than a hundred times. Other subjects included Tallulah Bankhead, Henri Matisse, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Diego Rivera, Gene Tunney, Cesar Romero, George Antheil, and many more, including himself.

367

Carl Van Vechten (U.S., 1880-1964)
Cab Calloway, not dated
Gelatin silver print

The jazz singer and bandleader Cab Calloway (1907-1994) was an energetic scat singer. His orchestra was one of the most popular big bands in the 1930s and 1940s.

Carl Van Vechten was a prominent figure in the Harlem Renaissance, as participant, chronicler, reviewer, collector, and patron of this transformative moment in American cultural history. Van Vechten’s interest in Black culture began at the turn of the
century, and by the mid-twenties he was a fixture in the Harlem scene. Despite Van Vechten’s many other important contributions to the Harlem Renaissance, his novel *Nigger Heaven* (1926), a love story set among the jazz clubs and speakeasies of Harlem, excited criticism because of his choice of title, “exoticized” subject matter, and appropriation of Black experience.

Van Vechten was also a serious portrait photographer whose subjects, included prominent black writers, artists, and musicians.

273, 274

Jno P. Trilca, 1882-1978

Two Young Women ca. summer 1930
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

Three teenagers, not dated
Modern gelatin silver print from original negative

Jno P. Trilca was a Czech photographer and community leader in Granger, Texas whose studio portraits of area residents include members of the local Czech, Black, and Hispanic communities. His archive is a record of personal and public events in the community, including festivals, religious ceremonies, conventions, and corn and cotton agriculture.