

3 Xerox copies
have to be made

PEMBROKE STATE UNIVERSITY
PEMBROKE, NORTH CAROLINA

I think the whole
thing has to be done
over at the library
with the help of
Mrs. Rausig

PRESS
CARD
HERE

~~also to 1, 2, 4, 29~~

LITERATURE OF THE THIRTIES
(English 456)

Date: January 8, 1971

SUBMITTED BY:

Betty Sue Prevatte
Betty Sue Prevatte

PROFESSOR:

Norman Macleod
Norman Macleod

~~pages 2, 5, 26
have to be Xeroxed
by Mrs. Rausig
at library
send Xerox copies of
those pages to the professor~~

Cage
AS
36
.NB
P45
1971
no.3

①

I

In October, 1929, the Wall Street stock market hit rock bottom in one of the worst crashes in its history. What followed was a decade of misery, confusion, hunger, and hatred. This consequence and other aspects of the times were reflected throughout the nation in the form of labor disputes and conflicts, but one major reflection of the period can be seen in the literature that was published during the Depression Decade. Various movements developed in different literary circles and some of the writers turned toward Communism and the left front. These writers expressed their feelings and opinions in many forms including those of poetry, novels, short stories, essays, and criticism.

The research that has been done on the literature of this period is not complete, but is combined in the most complete order possible in terms of the time and material available. Much of the literature that came out during these years was suppressed or destroyed. It has been only recently that anyone considered the material important enough to be reprinted and brought to public attention.

In concluding this introduction to the research on "The Literature of the Thirties," I would like to express my thanks to the two people who made it possible. First, I would like to thank Dr. Richard C. Pisano, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Pembroke State University, Pembroke, North Carolina. Dean Pisano agreed to approve the research on a decade that has been pushed to the back of most minds. The second person I would like to express special thanks to is Mr. Norman Macleod, Associate Professor of English at Pembroke

State University, Pembroke, North Carolina. Mr. Macleod has given unselfishly of his time and knowledge. In the conferences we had, he brought to life facts, people, and literature that he has known about personally. It was during the thirties that Mr. Macleod did much of his writing, and because of his close and personal contact with associates such as William Carlos Williams and others, he has given immeasurable help in the formulation of this paper. Without Mr. Macleod, this paper could never have been written. Because of this, I am including a special section about Mr. Macleod and the material he wrote during that time.

3

this paper^{II} about

The primary source for ~~the material of~~ the "Literature of the Thirties" was found in a new anthology entitled Years of Protest, A Collection of American Writings of the 1930's, edited by Jack Salzman with Barry Wallenstein, published by Pegasus of New York. Included in this anthology was material by such writers as John Dos Passos, James T. Farrell, John Steinbeck, William Carlos Williams, Thomas Wolfe, John Crowe Ransom, Ezra Pound, Erskine Caldwell and others. The anthology is divided into two basic parts and several chapters. The first chapter is called "No One Has Starved." Actually, the title of the chapter is satirical of the actual material included in it. Herbert Hoover was President in 1928. He made many promises to the American people about prosperity and "the final triumph over poverty."¹ Of course, these promises were made before the economic crash in October, 1929. But Hoover continued to try to pacify the American people. Even as late as February, 1931, Hoover made statements such as "Nobody is actually starving. The hoboies, for example, are better fed than they have ever been."² But this was not true. In "The Happiest Man on Earth," Albert Maltz describes a man who needed work in order to feed his family. He needed work so badly he had walked for two weeks so that he could reach his brother-in-law's office and ask him for a job. What was the job? Driving a truck filled with nitroglycerin. The man knew how dangerous this job was, but he had no choice. This job, even though it might not last long, meant food for his family, and when his brother-in-law reluctantly agreed to give him the job, he considered himself "the happiest man on the whole earth."³

Another example of those people who were not starving was an article by Tom Kromer taken from Waiting For Nothing. In this article Tom Kromer describes how a man felt when he had to stand for hours in a soup line to get a bowl of soup, and how he searched the curb for a cigarette butt that had not been completely smoked. However, the most appalling description was of the tactics used by these men to get enough money to buy a decent meal. Actually, the procedure was simple. One would simply buy a doughnut, place it at a strategic spot, usually at a bus stop where women boarded the bus, and wait. He would wait until these women were gathered at the corner, and then he would rush over and gobble up the doughnut. The women, seeing this, would give the man some money. Just enough so that he could buy one half-way decent meal.

The most horrible impact of the depression was upon women and children. Erskine Caldwell describes just how bad it was in "Masses of Men." This is a story of a young woman whose husband was killed working for the street railway company. The woman has three small children, the eldest of which is ten years old. She had sent the two younger children out to find some kind of fuel to heat the house. They come back empty-handed. The young woman leaves to see what she can find. When she comes back, she brings a man with her. She orders her eldest daughter to "stand up and let him see you."⁴ For a quarter, one 25¢ piece of silver, she sells her ten-year old daughter. But the following morning, her children have food to eat.

It was evident that President Hoover was not aware of this kind of hunger, or else he would never have stated that "no one has starved."

Starvation was not limited to those who lived in the city. The farmers were having their problems also. John Steinbeck related the story of a family in the Midwestern area of the country in his novel Grapes of Wrath. The Joad family, as many or rather most of the families in this area, are

driven off their farms because of the dry dust that has murdered their crops; the banks have taken their land, thus causing them to become homeless people. The Joads are only one family among thousands to have this happen. They lose everything they have except for a few personal possessions. The family loads their meager belongings on an old truck and start their trip to California. They have heard about the wonderful jobs and opportunities in the Golden State. Of course, they do not know what lies ahead. All they know is that they have to do something or starve. The Joads try desperately to make their few dollars last until they can find work. But, as was the case with most of the people who descended upon California during that decade, the money does not last long and work is slow in materializing. What work they do find pays but a few cents an hour. These people remain in a constant dilemma. They watch the grandmother and the grandfather die on the trip. They watch babies and small children die from hunger. They live in the truck and tents in small, dirty camps where the Water isn't fit to drink. How do they survive? Only because of a strong will to live and because they are able to share what little they have and receive help in return. These people are joined together in mutual pain, misery, and hunger. Where would it end? What could they do? Steinbeck does not answer these questions in his book. Perhaps he could not or perhaps he left it to the readers to decide what the fate of these people would be. After I completed reading the novel, I could feel the deep heartache these people felt. But I could not answer the questions. How can one who never really knew the pain of hunger or watched a baby die from starvation answer these cries that echoed throughout the nation during the Thirties? It is difficult to understand why the government of such a democratic, free nation allowed this bitter age to continue as long as it did. Were the people in power aware of what was going on or did they pretend not to see? This was one question I have not found the answer to in my research of this period.

6

Hoover's refusal to acknowledge starvation in America was followed by his other statements that later proved to be false and foolish. a

The second chapter of the anthology Years of Protest, entitled "A Lack of Confidence," shows how the people in the United States were beginning to react to the depression. In November, 1929, Hoover stated, "Any lack of confidence in the economic future or the basic strenght of business in the United States is foolish."⁵ After what happened ~~to~~ ⁱⁿ Wall Street, and after the people began to feel the hunger pains, what were they supposed to feel? They looked to the United States government for relief from hunger, but relief was slow in coming. "Afraid of the creation of a superstate, which would deprive man of his liberties, Hoover believed that the problem of unemployment had to be left to private charities and to state and local authorities. It was only with the greatest reluctance that he accepted the necessity of expanding government interference to cope with the problems of the depression."⁶ Is it any wonder that the people began to feel discontented? A hungry man would do almost anything to keep from starving, but a hungry man with hungry children would do ANYTHING to keep THEM from starving. As hunger increased, so did discontent. People began talking of a revolution. The March on Washington in the early part of 1932 by the Bonus Army was a mild protest. A bill to help relieve the situation was defeated by Congress, and money was later appropriated by Congress to send these people home. Some went, others did not. MacArthur was ordered to disperse the rest and his troops did, with tear gas and bayonets. Some felt there was a better solution to the problem. For instance, Fiorello La Guardia told President Hoover that "Soup is cheaper than tear bombs and bread and butter than bullets in maintaing law and order in these times of depression, unemployment, and hunger."⁷

⑦
lc

In the 1932 election, Hoover was destined to lose. Why? According to the authors of Years of Protest, "Because Hoover willingly gave Federal aid to corporations while denying it to those who were starving; his 'rugged individualism' was soon being parodied as 'ragged individualism'."⁸ His political opponent, Franklin Roosevelt, was pledging a "new deal," that he was going to work for the little man. He renewed the confidence of the American people, but even so he could not bring the country out of the depression. There were riots and strikes throughout the nation. The events and the results of these events were recorded in the literature that was being written during this period. It is here that one can determine the true feelings of the people; it is here that one can grasp a meager understanding of what it must have been like to live during those years.

In all of the mining regions conditions were bad. The old locals of the United Mine Workers of America had almost died out, and when conditions of safety and wages began to get worse, people began to think about reviving the union. But whenever a meeting was held, men lost their jobs and were blacklisted. John Dos Passos told about these conditions in a report entitled "Harlan: Working Under the Gun." It seems that as soon as miners began to organize, those against unions thought the workers were turning to Communism. Union members were called "Reds," or "Commies." Some of the unions were Communist-affiliated. For instance, the National Miners' Union was one of these. "The thing is that the miners felt that they were fighting for their lives and were ready to join any organization that would give them back solidarity and support them in their struggle against intolerable conditions."⁹ If the people could get help from a Communist organization, then they were going to take it. They were hungry, and these conditions would cause a man to do anything he could to get food for his family. If they were called "Red," that was all right. "One of the miners said in his speech that the

reason they called them "Reds" was because the miners were so thin an' poor that if you stood one of 'em up against the sun you'd see red through 'em."¹⁰

In 1929 at Gastonia, North Carolina, there occurred an unsuccessful strike of textile workers. Several novels about this strike were published during the Thirties. One of these was To Make My Bread by Grace Lumpkin. The anthology Years of Protest reprinted Chapter 53 of that novel. Miss Lumpkin tells how the power of the mill is exerted. When the workers refuse to go back to work, the mill owners threaten to evict them from their homes. It seems that the mill owns the houses their employees live in. Some of the workers start back to work after the eviction notice is issued. Those that refuse to go back to work are put out on the streets in the rain. Even the sick are evicted. That same night, masked men go into the union hall and destroy it. The masked men are not arrested, but the strikers are. When they ask the militia why, the reply is, "For disturbing the peace."¹¹ The mill has exerted its power. The ~~mill~~^{MILL} owners can get the workers back and continue to pay them low wages. They can keep good, honest men out of work simply by putting them on the blacklist. The worker has no rights. The union loses this strike and this battle. And that is what it was--war between the working man and the Company. Tillie Lerner tells more about the class war in "The Strike," which appeared in the September-October, 1934, issue of Partisan Review. She begins her article by saying, "Do not ask me to write of the strike and the terror. I am on a battlefield, and the increasing stench and smoke sting the eyes so it is impossible to turn back into the past."¹² The battles between the working men and the Companies lasted almost the entire period of the Thirties.

Also, the Teamsters struck the city of San Francisco. It was the first general strike in America since 1919. Lives were lost, blood was spilled.

9

Where did the fault lie? Who was responsible for that senseless bloodshed? Can one blame the working man who was fighting for his life and the life of his family? Or can the blame be put on the big companies? These questions cannot be answered easily, nor can they be answered by someone who has not experienced the feelings these people felt.

One of the most important factors contributing to the "temper of the Thirties" was the police. Robert Forsythe's article "Cops Are Funny People-- If At All" was actually a satire about police brutality. He described how the police worked during strikes. "A striker caught kicking a can of peaches off a wharf will undoubtedly and justly be shot in the lower abdomen as a lesson in democracy, so it is merely a question of time until the police realize their error and make the proper amends."¹³ Usually the police were paid by the big bosses to club strikers, push them back, and even kill them. The Big Bosses were the ones who owned the companies the strikers were fighting against. Edmund Wilson gave a slightly different view in his article "Communists and Cops." He does not condemn the police in the same way Forsythe does, but he tells how they get involved sometimes without intending to do so. The article is about a Communist hunger march in New York. The organizers had been given permission to march and speak. But, whether Wilson meant to or not, in his article he gives the impression that the Communists violated their speaking and marching rights and caused the conflict between the police and themselves. This could prove the contention that every story has two sides. It was much easier to evaluate the sides or viewpoints now than it was while the conflicts were going on during the Thirties. One can take the literature, read it carefully, and pick out the issues as defined by both sides, thus making possible an objective judgement. But can anyone definitely say who was right or who was wrong? No. This would be an impossible task.

Note - I was a reporter at the scene - Edmund Wilson does not tell the truth - most of the workers, for example, were not communists, etc - Hoover period - April 6, 1937

(10)

A form of literary art during the Thirties that dealt with strikes was the one-act play. Clifford Odet's Waiting For Lefty was one of the "proletarian" works of the period. "Harold Clurman, one of the leaders of the Group Theatre, wrote in The Fervent Years that 'When the audience at the end of the play responded to the militant question from the stage: Well, what's the answer? with a spontaneous roar of Strike! Strike! it was something more than a tribute to the play's effectiveness, more even than a testimony of the audience's hunger for constructive social action. It was the birth cry of the Thirties.'¹⁴

The next section of Years of Protest, A Collection of American Writings of the 1930's, "Let Us Have Madness," is primarily politically oriented. People began turning to the Communist Party in order to seek relief from the existing system. Some turned to the Fascism of Mussolini or Hitler. These two leaders did not have very many followers in America, but Fascism began to exert strong influence in this country. "As the economic and political systems began to change under the New Deal, and as America became the haven for Jewish exiles, anti-Semitism and Fascism began to spread and the followers of Father Charles Coughlin, Dr. Francis Townsend, and Huey Long increased in number."¹⁵ Some of the followers were from lower-middle classes, some from evangelic backgrounds, but some came from the educated sector. Concerning American Fascists, William Randolph Hearst said "Whenever you hear a prominent American called a 'Fascist,' you can usually make up your mind that the man is simply a LOYAL CITIZEN WHO STANDS FOR AMERICANISM."¹⁶ Although Fascism did manage to engulf a few Americans, it was Socialism and Communism that maintained the real hold on the intellectuals. "In 1932, for example, more than fifty artists and intellectuals--including Sherwood Anderson, Malcolm Cowley, John Dos Passos, Waldo Frank, Sidney Hook, Lincoln Steffens, and

12
11

Edmund Wilson--endorsed a pamphlet entitled Culture and Crisis, in which they declared their support for William Z. Foster and James W. Ford, the Presidential candidates of the Communist Party.¹⁷ But it appears that most of those artists and intellectuals who did favor Communism were idealists, and it wasn't long before their idealism began to fade. Things began to happen throughout the world and developments that disillusioned them. The Spanish Civil War was one of the distractions that attracted the attention of artists. Such people as Arthur Koestler, André Malraux, Christopher Caudwell, Stephen Spender and Ernest Hemmingway all went to Spain to lend their support to the cause of the Spanish Loyalists. Other things were happening such as the Nazi invasion of Czecho-Slovakia, Hitler's army was on the move, and it was only a little while before Pearl Harbor would be bombed. It seemed the whole world was in turmoil and madness. Kenneth Patchen expressed this sense of insanity when he wrote:

Let us have madness openly, O men
Of my generation. Let us follow
The footsteps of this slaughtered age...¹⁸

The literary left in the 1930's produced several outstanding poets, one of whom was Kenneth Fearing. "Fearing is one of America's foremost satirical poets",¹⁹ states the editors of Years of Protest. Some of his works that appeared during the decade were Angel Arms, his first volume of poems, Poems, and Dead Reckoning. His first novel, published in 1939, was called The Hospital. Fearing, as did most of the writers during this time, put his heart, soul, and beliefs in his works. These people could not help but be caught up in the "temper of the times." One war had come and gone, but its scars were not forgotten. Another war was on the way. The writers found war to be a horror, and they wrote anti-war material. They talked about the brutality and madness of war. William March wrote a book called Company K, from which the excerpt "The Unknown Soldier" was taken and reprinted in Years of Protest.

12

It is about a soldier wounded on the battlefield and dying when a German soldier comes upon him. The soldier realizes that war is a madness and so does the German soldier. Finally, the German soldier takes his pistol and shoots the dying soldier. Before he dies, the soldier makes a last statement. "I have broken the chain... I have defeated the inherent stupidity of life." (p. 189) What does he mean? Simply that no one would ever be able to use him as a symbol of honor in the stupidity of war.

Ernest Hemingway was on the side of the Republic in Spain. He did everything he could to help the Spanish Loyalist cause. He reported the war for the North American Newspaper Alliance and later published the novel, For Whom the Bell Tolls, based on the Spanish Civil War.

Edward Dahlberg published the first American novel concerned with Nazism in the United States. The novel, Those Who Perish, was called by Edmund Wilson one "of the only specimens of original proletarian literature we have yet had in this country."²⁰

In the second part of Years Of Protest, the literary wars are taken into account. The first of these was the attack on Humanism. "At issue was the role the artist was to assume in his society."²¹ Some of the writers moving to the left believed that the new society called for the creation of a new art. The editors of Partisan Review stated in their first issue, "We propose to concentrate on creative and critical literature, but we shall maintain a definite viewpoint--that of the revolutionary working class."²² This was the concept of using art as a weapon. Not all writers believed in using art as a weapon, but those who didn't soon found themselves criticized and socially ostracized. They found they could not question the importance of proletarian art during the revolutionary decade of the thirties.

13

Michael Gold was one of the leading figures of the thirties. He believed that the obligation of a writer was to the cause of the working man. He attacked Thornton Wilder in the essay "Wilder: Prophet of the Gentile Christ." Edmund Wilson summed up the Gold-Wilder controversy when he said, "the Gold-Wilder row marked definitely the eruption of the Marxist issues out of the literary circles of the radicals into the field of general criticism. After that, it became very plain that the economic crisis was to be accompanied by a literary one."²³

The thirties brought turmoil to every section and part of the nation and world. It did not exclude anyone, from the farmer to the writer. It was no wonder that literary people became involved through their writings. They were the ones who put down on paper how the people felt, the hurts they encountered, and the positions they took. Those writers who were influenced by the left strongly attacked those who were not. Archibald MacLeish was one who felt the writer had no obligation to become involved with the problems of the state. He believed the poet must remain true to his art. He wrote a poem entitled "Invocation to the Social Muse" that was attacked strenuously by the left because it was here that he warned the poet to be true to his art. He, perhaps more than any other writer in the early thirties, was criticized and attacked by the left-wing press.

I have previously mentioned the Communist slogan: "Art is a weapon." Those who favored the left believed in this as ~~part of~~ the obligation of the writer. In an article "Sectarianism on the Right," Isidor Schneider, discusses James Farrell's understanding of Marxist criticism. Schneider wrote, "However, by the terms of his opening definition, Farrell lays the basis for the Marxist criticism that he rejects. He writes, 'I think that literature must be viewed both as a branch of the fine arts and as an

instrument of social influence.' Marxist criticism specifically deals with literature as an instrument of social influence as well as with other social relationships of literature."²⁴ This demonstrates another controversial issue in the literary world that was of vital concern during the thirties. The existence of "Proletarian" literature [and this was another way of saying art as a weapon] was so strongly advocated that its influence can still be felt. An important political document by Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, was one of the most important influences upon leftist literature of the thirties. The Manifesto affirms that "Proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."²⁵ Proletarian literature expressed the most distinctive literary temper of the thirties. A useful definition of Proletarian literature, as given by the editors of Years of Protest in the section "A World to Win," is "the term proletarian literature suggested a literature produced by a member of the working class about the working class," (p.309) This type of literature seemed to grow with the Communist Party. Some of it was not really art, yet some of it did have artistic value. It was a literature of social protest, and although most of the writers were not members of the working class, they did align themselves with the proletariat. They wrote about things that were closest to the proletariat. For example, Whittaker Chambers wrote "Can You Hear Their Voices" which is concerned with "The Arkansas Farmers' Fight For Food." There had been no rain, the wells are dry, the crops burn under the scorching sun, the cows and other animals die. There is only one man in the area who has not been economically affected, and he refuses to give even milk for a baby. Instead, he calls those who want free help "Communists" and "Reds." The Red Cross arrives, presumably to help. But the Red Cross is controlled by those who are not really hungry, and they select the ones who could receive help.

U

U

U

The climax comes when the farmers take food by force, which really seems to be their only alternative. Conflict is inevitable. But one man sends his sons away to the East to learn more about organizing before the really serious trouble begins.

Hunger and starvation did strange things to people. It caused them to beg and plead for food, and when this did not work, it caused them to steal. Starvation made men turn to anyone and anything for help. Hunger and unemployment caused many people to become sympathizers with the Communist Party. But where else could they go? Their own neighbors turned them away. They had to do something. I suppose they could have gradually died from starvation as an alternative, couldn't they? This ^{is} ~~was~~ only a sample of the many pieces of literature that were written expressing the proletarian viewpoint, but it ~~was~~ ^{is} a good example. It ~~showed~~ ^{shows} what life was really like during the 1930's, life that was filled with bitterness and hunger, life that was hell to live.

Not all the writers of the period worked within the dogmatic limitations of Communist esthetics. William Carlos Williams and Henry Roth were two examples of those writers. They sympathized with the left, but were unable to use art primarily as a weapon. They wrote, but their work did not serve intentionally the cause of leftist propaganda. It was not that they did not understand the turmoil of the decade nor was it that they did not sympathize. It was simply that they were artists and their writings reflected this through-out.

W.M. - Fred S. Williams' Communist Party

16

Note by
Meredith
dated
June 6/1971

III

One major literary phenomenon to develop its momentum rapidly during the thirties was the little magazines. Many writers, both the famous and the not-so-famous, contributed various kinds of literature to these magazines.

There were several kinds of little magazines, but time and limited space will not allow discussion of all of them. However, their importance as great contributions to literature cannot be underestimated. One of the first of these to consider is Contact, Second Series, an American Quarterly Review. William Carlos Williams was a contributor, and in Volume I, February, 1932, he asked the question: "With the confusion there is about us and the despairing minds there are, what in the world is writing good for anyway? ...better to say at once that there is only one species of 'good writing,' that which can be sold at a profit." (p. 7)

Dr. Williams continues by discussing the importance of writing as compared and contrasted to the importance of feeding the bums. He ends by saying "Good writing stands by humanity in its joys and sorrows because under all it is---and just because it is---so many words." (p. 9)

Dr. Williams, as has been mentioned previously, was not a proletarian writer, although he understood the "temper of the times." He realized that writing might not put food in hungry mouths and he maintained that writing was "so many words." John Preston also talked about writing in the December, 1937, Volume I of Direction. His article was called "The Writer and Social Change." He said, "The revolutionary writer does not produce in a vacuum but addresses himself to an audience, and it is on the grounds that he wishes to influence this audience into his way of thinking that arises the mistaken assumption

Note: I told Mrs Prevatte that this statement by Bill Williams was meant ironically, but in her final version of this paper she does not make this point - NM

P.S. - see note of qualifications I wrote on page 17 - NM

17

P.S. Well, she made the page but still says made it earlier
M

that he is a propagandist." He also said here that "...the task of the artist is to complete; it is not to relieve." (p.14)

Here are descriptions of the writer and his work. Williams asserted satirically that writing was just words and the best writing was that which could be sold. Preston believed that the writer, especially the revolutionary writer, wanted to influence readers to accept his values and beliefs. That was the aim of the proletarian writer. He wanted to make people aware of what was going on and he wanted to make them see things as he saw them. Some of the best proletarian literature was published by the little magazines. For instance, in a special issue of Direction, a poem entitled "Proletarian Spring" was published. The message in this poem is not hidden, but is so real it almost jumps from the page. Perhaps it is worth quoting here:

Something of hate, of want, of yearlong fire and feud,
something of grit, of gall, of energy raw with anger,
something like this
out of the mind's main magazine is gone,
gone with the turn of April
and the first bud's explosion into green.²⁶

In April, 1938, Direction printed a picture that was expressive of the proletarian movement. It was called "Double Portrait," a painting by James Guy. It symbolizes "Proletarian Surrealism--a style of painting usually identified with extreme individualism and decadence, which takes on new vigor and meaning when used to express the moods and emotions of the dispossessed."²⁷ Another painting by the same artist is called "The Evening of the Ball." "Surrealism expresses violent human emotions in strange contrast--the society girl returning from a ball, the workers shot through the head, the picture going through his mind, the sea, the broken walls, discord, gaiety, despair."²⁸ These two paintings are examples of the fact that writing is not the only way the proletarian stand was expressed. Artists depicted the working man's trouble through their paintings. In his article "Should The Nation Support the Art?", Phillip Evergood explains how and when art was re-created as the American people's art.

18

He said, "It was not until the economic depression created such a desperate situation for the artist and until the Federal Art Project came into being that the American artist received any substantial help from the people and was able to devote his energies towards the re-creation of an American people's art."²⁹ The artist (including the writer, as well as others) ~~that~~ was hit by the situation ^{that} occurred as a result of the Great Depression. Help was almost as slow coming to artists and writers as it was to the farmers in Arkansas.

T. C. Robinson, in a 1936 issue of The Sewanee Review, said in the article "Fascism and The Political Theatre" that "working during a depression that continues to hold on with a devastating tenacity, we are keenly aware of certain inimical forces at work in society today, forces of destruction, such as war, forces of barbarism, such as fascism, forces of repression, such as censorship--forces, in sum, that threaten to wipe out the civilizing, humanizing, cultural gains of the past three hundred years."³⁰

The material that appeared in the little magazines during the 1930's reflected attitudes and thoughts of the period. There were a few people like William Carlos Williams who did not write about the conditions, but basically most of the literature was about the political and futile conditions that existed. A book entitled The Little Magazine: A History and Bibliography by Hoffman, et. al, ^{Princeton} ~~Princeton~~ University Press, gives a fair statement of what the literature was all about. Everything that was sent to the little magazines could not be printed. ~~Princeton~~ Various poets or groups of poets wanted to be included in the little magazine Poetry (Chicago). "Objectivists, proletarians, aesthetes, members of every group began to pout because they could not monopolize the sixty-odd pages of each number. The Objectivist poets, nevertheless, were published in the February, 1931, issue

19

of Harriet Monroe's magazine; the Southern writers were allowed an issue under the editorship of Allen Tate in May 1932; proletarians were given a number in 1936." (p. 42) Everyone thought they should be allowed to contribute

and most of them did. But this particular magazine had more problems than selecting ~~who~~ ^{what} and what should be published. There was always a shortage of money. "In 1936 a Carnegie fund donated an emergency grant of \$5,000. This money was made to last until 1940."³¹ Even this particular fact, if one reads between the lines, shows how the times influenced the problem of publication.

Money was short everywhere. "In the twenties the trouble with the ruling class was psychological; in the thirties it was economic. Repression gave way to oppression as the critical war cry."³² Stagnation, even death, was a definition of the national economy. Rich people who lost everything in the economic crash jumped from high buildings and ended their lives. Farmers and poor people struggled with starvation. Writers struggled to survive, but they continued to plead for the poor and hope that conditions would change.

The Midland, a regional little magazine, begun in the twenties, was moved to Chicago because it was felt that it would be able to prosper better there. It was moved in 1930 and it did prosper for some months. "But just at the moment that success seemed assured, an ominous wind began to blow. Storm clouds had been on the Eastern horizon even at the moment John T. Fredericks moved to Chicago. Few persons expected these clouds to develop into a serious blow. But the hurricane of financial depression swept westward from the seaboard, striking Chicago with full blast in the winter of 1931. Banks failed, bread lines grew, factories closed, businesses collapsed. The Midland was doomed."³³

The Midland and some of the other little magazines failed soon after they had begun publication. Their careers were short lived. Yet, some of

(20)

them flourished even under the conditions to which they were exposed. Those that did survive made major contributions in the literary field. These contributions were recognized primarily by those who were in sympathy with the left. It is important to examine these and find out the attitudes and feelings of the writers published in them. In the chapter "Political Directions in the Literature of ^{The} Thirties" ~~from~~ (The Little Magazine: A History and Bibliography), one discovers just how politically oriented that literature was. "Social and political problems were very much in the minds of men and women of the second and third decades" (p. 148). But how else were these to be influenced? Social problems and political problems were the most prevalent of the time. Everyone was affected in one way or another by these problems. Everyone talked about these problems; they were concerned about them. The period of the thirties is described "as an active period, during which left-wing ideas were not only adopted by intellectuals but actively promoted as alternatives to capitalist principles."³⁴ It was from the left that most of the literature came. And it was during the thirties that the magazines leaned toward the left. "The real distinction between left-wing magazines before 1930 and those of the thirties seemed to be this: in the early years, the accent was upon criticism of and the need for reform within the capitalistic system; after the financial crash, left-wingers gained the confidence of hundreds of writers, and magazines spoke forthrightly of revolution."³⁵ The revolution was among the workingclass or proletarian group. It was with this group that the left wing was primarily concerned. People were trying to keep alive and they needed a voice strong enough to tell the world of their needs. This voice turned out to be that of the left, the ^{sympathizers} ~~sympathizers~~ of a socialist and communist nature. Some of the little magazines tried to remain impartial during this period but eventually wound up going in one or another

particular direction. The proletarian trend was one of the most persuasive trends of the time. "The content of the literature seems to have been predominantly political and sociological."³⁶ It was virtually impossible for any little magazine to remain impartial. Editors and contributors could not be writers of art and for art alone. It was evident, stated the authors of The Little Magazine, that "the conflict between aesthetic and moral problems and social and political problems was solved for most writers by the depression" (p.154). The depression brought about problems on a huge scale that had never been felt before. "It was the task of literature, it seemed, to describe the hardship of life in a capitalist society--the pity of it, the economic and moral paradoxes which it allowed."³⁷ Literature was used to tell the world of the plight of the people. Into that literature was incorporated the feelings of anger, hurt, hunger, and bitterness. "Social realism, the form in which leftist literature was frequently written, uses the technique of the objective reporter. Selecting a scene, an event, or a person, the authors relied upon the facts themselves to tell the story and announce his attitude toward it. The subjects were starvation, strikes, poverty, proletarian heroism."³⁸ These subjects seemed to merit some kind of action, "The social realist had, therefore, two aims: to impress the reader with prevailing political and economic conditions; to arouse him to indignant action against these conditons."³⁹ The literature was put to work for the people, and its influence was felt throughout the world. It was in 1930 that radicalism began "its drive for domination of literature."⁴⁰

All the literature that was published during that decade was not altogether a reflection of the proletarian movement. "Though the radical magazine perhaps represents the strongest characteristic of the time, it was by no means alone in the literary world."⁴¹ Other moods and esthetics were given some given meaningful form.

was by no means alone in the literary world.
were given
some given meaningful form.

written above so that paper
can be photocopied
M

The Thirties was an extremely complex literary period. "The contents of the two magazines Story and New Stories during the early thirties are liberally supplied with the names of left-wing story tellers. But this is more an accident of the times than it is a demonstration of any definite editorial policy."⁴² That the writers were liberal is simply an indication of the positions that were taken. Almost everyone had taken a position one way or the other. "The development of the short story in the thirties is single in direction, but the requirements of social realism helped to modify the form."⁴³

The few notes concerning the various other literary tempers of that time are exactly that--few. It was inevitable that most of the literature take proletarian form. At that time "...the real story of the Marxist critic, the proletarian writer, and the pilgrimage to Moscow, is a story of the thirties."⁴⁴ The Communist Manifesto was being Widely read and followed closely at this time. Conclusions were drawn from it and some of the writers based their writings on it. And because many turned to the left, many writers followed Moscow and the events there closely. "The people concerned with The Masses and The Liberator looked to Moscow and many went there during the '20's and '30's to investigate and report on the great socialist experiment."⁴⁵ They felt, perhaps, that by carefully studying communism, they could understand their home land better. America was cited as a capitalistic country and some people could not fully comprehend the entirety of it. Maxwell Bodenheim, as an artist in a capitalistic society, observed: "No proletarian worker on the face of the earth is more shamelessly and deceitfully exploited than is a poet in any capitalistic country."⁴⁶ Not only the working-

23

class and farmers were exploited but the artists felt they were also being discriminated against by ~~the~~ ^{their} society.

Looking closely at the positions taken by various little magazines, one can easily determine the direction of their development. "The progression of Front was toward a commitment to left-wing policies. Literature will be considered an art, it implied, only if it aids the workers in their struggle with the bourgeoisie."⁴⁷ Here, it was indicated again that art was to be used as a social weapon. "The Left gave space to the young writers who were underlining in their poems and stories the courage of the worker and the evil of his 'owners.'"⁴⁸ This particular magazine finally made no mistake about its position. This is the way the editors felt and this is what they undertook to do. Furthermore, the authors of The Little Magazine observe: "The spectacle of the thirties--the dilemma of the artist solved and yet not solved--is nowhere better portrayed for us than in the career of that most interesting of all radical literary magazines, The Partisan Review. One of its chief aims was to provide a place for creative writing of leftist character, which was gradually being crowded out of The New Masses by the urgent demands of political and economic discussion. It began in New York City as a 'John Reed Club' publication--one of the many established throughout the country to put the convictions of John Reed into practical action."⁴⁹ As some of the little magazines changed viewpoints, others began drawing closer and closer to attitudes of the left. "It was in the middle thirties that The New Masses became what it is today (1947): a magazine of left-wing political comment, its attention to literature confined to book reviews and explosive editorials aimed at non-Marxist contemporaries."⁵⁰

There were several such magazines, and it becomes necessary to select

some of them, explore them, and discover their attitudes. For instance, Front was historically important and the authors of The Little Magazine stated that "the magazine attracts writers who are alive to experimental tendencies in modern letters and who eagerly anticipate the fullest use of literature as a social weapon."⁵¹ Almost all of the little magazines during the thirties followed this point of view to a certain extent. Leftword, Masses, The Anvil, Blast, Left Front, and many others accepted the soundness of this editorial point of view. "The Little Magazine steers a middle course between the two currents of letters of the thirties: the individualist and the Marxist. Norman Macleod and Maxwell Bodenheim (who was a Bohemian until introduced to a certain Mary Campbell of Nevada) presented two varying opinions of the revolutionary role of the artist; Bodenheim, more moderate, warns against making art subserve propaganda; Macleod is firmly convinced of the revolutionary role of the artist."⁵²

Covering this type of literature as extensively as one can, one finds it difficult to understand the varying opinions that existed during the thirties. One would expect the prevailing conditions of the thirties to influence the writers and their works. The thirties happened to be a period of unrest and revolution. "The thirties ~~were~~ ^{was} an age of 'writer's markets,' of college literary magazines sponsoring and appraising the undergraduate output."⁵³ And Norman Macleod "reiterates the confident purpose of the radical magazines: the little magazine, he says, has a place which cannot be filled by the 'bourgeois commercial publications': Its role is to report the decay of capitalism (in its finest expression) and the growth of the literature of the revolutionary proletariat."⁵⁴ And this explains the literature of the revolutionary proletariat."⁵⁴ And this explains the literature of thirties: an age of discontent, revolution, and one not to be pushed back and hidden but to be brought forth and examined closely.

25

Mr. Norman Macleod, presently an associate professor of English at
 Pembroke State University, Pembroke, North Carolina, was very much a part
 of the 1930's literary movements. It was during the thirties that Mr.
 Macleod did much of his writing. He wrote and published one novel. You Get
What You Ask For, and two books of poetry Thanksgiving Before November and
Horizons of Death during the thirties. These were by no means all of Mr.
 Macleod's works, but they were the published volumes that came out of the
 period and that have primary concern and interest in this study.

Horizons of Death by Mr. Macleod is a book of poems "Dedicated to a
 Bitter Age." The time this book was printed was almost in the middle of the
 depression decade (1934). Mr. Macleod places much emphasis on the Navajo
 and Pueblo Indians, but in all his poems in the volume is an air of death
 and melancholy. Perhaps the time in which these poems were written and
 published was the primary cause of their melancholy mood. The last poem in
 the book, "Boulevard Stop," has a message from that time and for the coming
 years, and it still speaks to us today:

We are too specialized
 And suffer because of this.

) comment on this
 when I read annotated
 version to Yale - Wm

The decade of the thirties was considered the "broken down machine age."
 Factories were closed and people were unemployed because of the depression.

Mr. Macleod's work was not limited to the novels and volumes of poetry
 that were published: he was also an active contributor to many of the little

magazines during the thirties. He was editor of several American and other magazines, among them Front and Morada. He edited several others but some of them were magazines that appeared in the forties and later. His work is praised in magazines such as The Partisan Review, which was said to be the "best of all left-wing literary magazines".⁵⁵ He contributed to Blast, a magazine of proletarian short stories; Left Front, which was one of a group of John Reed Club publications; and The Magazine, "one of the few little magazines of the early thirties not committed, either directly or tacitly, to a political program or a social emphasis."⁵⁶ The little magazine Hub claimed that the "poems by Norman Macleod are the most distinguished of the magazines' contributions."⁵⁷ These are merely a few of the magazines to which Mr. Macleod contributed material.

Mr. Macleod, along with other writers of the Depression Decade, was involved with the proletarian movement. In the June, 1930, New Masses (in a section entitled "On Proletarian Poetry") Macleod says, "There are two types of proletarian poetry: that which is satiric and intended to demolish that which exists and that which builds constructively with a worker's ideology irrespective of other values." [Speaking of his own poetry Mr. Macleod said, "It must be read aloud for interpretation."] ^{of} But Macleod believed the constructive type would last longer, an example in which can be seen in the poetry of ~~Joseph~~ ^{Joseph} Kalar. ~~He~~ ^{Kalar} believed proletarian poetry had more inventiveness than the poetry published in bourgeois magazines, that it was emotionally disciplined and that writers of this kind of poetry were slowly but surely developing. Speaking of proletarian poetry, Mr. Macleod ^{wrote} said, "Our poetry is as hardboiled and recalcitrant as our prose and that is what we want." In the same issue of New Masses in an article "Hobbs: An Industrial Idyll," Mr. Macleod gave a picture of the oil industry during the 1930's.

time ago
 Note: I said or wrote this a long, long
 Norman Macleod - April 6, 1977

This is verbatim covered in Hobbs - nm
The oil strike

He talked about the unemployed and quoted Deputy Sheriff Cordova from the Hobbs Time-Herald as saying "that most of the unemployed are gone; part were run out of town, the rest in streets, starving--some die."

During the research of material for this paper, I had several conferences with Mr. Macleod. During one conference with him on July 20, 1970, there was a discussion concerning the feelings and emotions of those who were part of the thirties. He said that the proletarian movement and feeling was "international as well as emotional until approximately 1936. Later, writers felt they were being used by Communists." He also said that the "New Republic was most sympathetic to Communism, and the Communists provided leadership because they were the most organized in the country." Concerning the Communist Party, Macleod said he became disillusioned with the Communist Party because of the Moscow Purge Trials. He also said that he was one of the first to reject the "proletarian" position before it became fashionable to do so. Mr. Macleod, like many of the other writers, leaned ~~little~~ to the left during this time because it seemed that the Communist Party offered more for the working man. But as time went on, Macleod, as did others, changed his viewpoint concerning Communism.

I don't think this is an exact quote - there - nm

In a conference held August 10, 1970, during a discussion concerning an issue of Literature of the World Revolution, Mr. Macleod pointed out that in an article criticizing Front, he was referred to as "Comrade Macleod," but Morris Helfand, author of "Whose Front? An Open Letter to the Editors and Publishers of Front," criticized Macleod severely for his bourgeois delinquencies. (The Pembroke State University professor was American editor of Front published in Den Haag, Holland.) The author of "Whose Front" asserts in that issue of

Correction by NY - a/jtk, 1971

Literature of the World Revolution that "more was to be expected from Macleod than he has shown in Front." The writer stated that Mr. Macleod was a member of the John Reed Club of Chicago and that he "hoped the John Reed Club of Chicago would point out Mr. Macleod's errors as one of the editors of Front." (p.130). However, at this particular conference (August 10, 1970) at Mr. Macleod's home he told me this: "I wasn't a member of the Chicago John Reed Club, but I did

Reed Club of Hollywood."

in establishing the John

belong to the New York City John Reed Club. Harry Carlisle assisted me in establishing the John Reed Club of Hollywood." Helfand also observed that the majority of the poems written by [Macleod] (and he inserted a great number) have very little to do with revolution and have every appearance of being written according to modern bourgeois models. (p.133). Again Mr. Macleod commented at the August 10th meeting on this particular statement. He told me: "Sonja Prins decided what went into the magazine."

Mr. Macleod has written two novels and five books of poetry. After becoming personally acquainted with Mr. Macleod, I have come to appreciate not only his intellect but him as a person as well. I believe it only fitting that this paper be concluded with the section on Mr. Macleod because he lived and worked during a period that most people prefer to forget. He is also one of the few writers that lived significantly through the period who knows as much as he does about the first half of the decade in terms of what happened, not only in the United States, but throughout the world. Mr. Macleod has not forgotten what the Depression Decade was like. Listening to him in personal conversation, I learned more about the "temper of the times" from him than I could ever get from a book. Those years were sad years filled with bitterness and hurt, but they should not be pushed back and forgotten. They should be kept alive so that in future years the American people will see how a time like that can be destructive as well as offering hope for the future. America came out of this period only to enter a second World War, one the country was partially prepared for by writers like Macleod.

from

29

Hopefully, those years will never have to be repeated. For those who cannot and do not know what it was like to live during the thirties, all they have to do is talk to a man such as Norman Macleod, and they can come to some kind of understanding of what it must have been like to have lived during the Depression Decade.

As for the literature that came out of this period, it expresses so much of the feelings of hate, hunger, hurt and bitterness, and hope that it is impossible for one to read without becoming emotionally involved. I hope this paper has communicated at least some important aspects of the complexities of the "temper of the times" during the years following the stock market crash in Wall Street in October, 1929.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Jack Salzman and Barry Wallenstein, Years of Protest, "No One Has Starved", (New York, 1967), p. 11.

² "No One Has Starved", p. 10.

³ "No One Has Starved", p. 38.

⁴ "No One Has Starved", p. 56.

⁵ Years of Protest, "A Lack Of Confidence", p. 84.

⁶ "A Lack of Confidence", p. 85.

⁷ "A Lack of Confidence", p. 86.

⁸ "A Lack of Confidence", p. 86.

⁹ "A Lack of Confidence", p. 92.

¹⁰ "A Lack of Confidence", p. 98.

¹¹ "A Lack of Confidence", p. 129.

¹² "A Lack of Confidence", p. 138.

¹³ "A Lack of Confidence", p. 145.

¹⁴ "A Lack of Confidence", p. 156.

¹⁵ Years of Protest, "Let Us Have Madness", p. 179.

¹⁶ "Let Us Have Madness", p. 179.

¹⁷ "Let Us Have Madness", p. 180.

¹⁸ "Let Us Have Madness", p. 178.

¹⁹ "Let Us Have Madness", p. 182.

²⁰ "Let Us Have Madness", p. 212.

²¹ Years of Protest, "The Social Muse", p. 231.

²² "The Social Muse", p. 231.

²³ "The Social Muse", p. 233.

(Footnotes continued)

- ²⁴Years of Protest, The Social Muse", p. 284.
- ²⁵Years of Protest, "A World To Win", p. 308.
- ²⁶John Preston, "Proletarian Spring", Direction, Volume 1, Number 111, (1938), p. 61.
- ²⁷Volume 1, Number IV, (April, 1938), p.3.
- ²⁸Volume 1, Number IV, (1938), p. 5.
- ²⁹Volume 1, Number IV, (1938), p. 3.
- ³⁰The Science Review, Volume 44, (1936), p. 56.
- ³¹The Little Magazine, A History and a Bibliography, p. 44.
- ³²The Little Magazine, p. 72.
- ³³The Little Magazine, p. 130.
- ³⁴The Little Magazine, p. 149.
- ³⁵The Little Magazine, p. 149.
- ³⁶The Little Magazine, p. 168.
- ³⁷The Little Magazine, p. 157.
- ³⁸The Little Magazine, p. 158.
- ³⁹The Little Magazine, p. 158.
- ⁴⁰The Little Magazine, p. 165.
- ⁴¹The Little Magazine, p. 163.
- ⁴²The Little Magazine, p. 155.
- ⁴³The Little Magazine, p. 161.
- ⁴⁴The Little Magazine, p. 160.
- ⁴⁵The Little Magazine, p. 80.
- ⁴⁶Quoted in The Little Magazine, p. 152.
- ⁴⁷The Little Magazine, p. 155.
- ⁴⁸The Little Magazine, p. 156.
- ⁴⁹The Little Magazine, p. 158.

(Footnotes continued)

50 The Little Magazine, p. 152.

51 The Little Magazine, p. 295.

52 The Little Magazine, p. 310.

53 The Little Magazine, p. 162.

54 The Little Magazine, pp. 162-163.

55 The Little Magazine, p. 325.

56 The Little Magazine, p. 311.

57 The Little Magazine, p. 320.

(New Series)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Contact, Number 1, (February, 1932), pp. 7 & 9.

Direction, Volume 1, Number 1, (December, 1937), p. 14.

Direction, Volume 1, Number 3, (Special Issue, 1938), p. 61.

Direction, Volume 1, Number 4, (April, 1938), pp. 3 & 5.

Halpert, Stephen, and Richard Johns, eds. A Return To Paganry (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

Hoffman, Frederick J., and others, eds. The Little Magazine, A History And A Bibliography (New York: Princeton University Press, 1947).
(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947).

Hound and Horn, Volume VI, Number 1, (October-December, 1932).

Literature of the World Revolution, Numbers 1-5 (New York: Kraus Reprint Company, 1966).

Macleod, Norman, Thanksgiving Before November. (New York: The Parnassus Press, 1936).

Macleod, Norman, Horizons of Death. (New York: The Parnassus Press, 1934).

Macleod, Norman, You Get What You Ask For. (New York: Harrison-Hilton Books, 1939).

Macleod, Norman, Private Conferences, July 20, July 27, ~~August 3~~, August 10, October 15, 1970.

New Masses, (June, 1930).

Paganry, Volume 1, 1930, (New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1966).

Salzman, Jack, and Barry Wallenstein, eds. Years of Protest (New York: Pegasus, 1967).

Steinbeck, John, Grapes of Wrath (New York: Bantam Books, 1939).

The Sewanee Review, Volume 44, 1936, (New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967).

Note: This form is not according to some respects, but in some respects it is not going to be sweat at. *(Now?)* April 4, 1971
Of course, the question arises - what form?