



THE 1920s

MODERNISM AT A CROSSROADS



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CURATOR'S STATEMENT

On January 1, 2020, my social media feed exploded with friends announcing new resolutions, goals, and plans for the decade ahead. Hashtags such as #2020vision were trending as people looked to the future for renewed hope and success. Now in the final quarter of 2020, we find ourselves in recovery from a pandemic and social justice crisis that no one anticipated. As the future remains uncertain, more and more people are looking to the past for answers, comfort, and guidance. I conceptualized the vision for a 1920s-themed exhibit long before 2020 began. In light of current events, this exhibit is even more pertinent.

The 1920s: Modernism at a Crossroads uses literary expression to address societal and cultural tensions in America. Though masked by glamour, fashion, sensuality, and materialism, societal conflict brimmed beneath the surface during the 1920s. As America sought recovery from World War I and braced for the upcoming difficulties posed by the Great Depression and World War II, writers and artists captured the voice of the 1920s in print. I hope this exhibit reminds us all to remember the past, record the present, and remain optimistic of the future.

INVITED FACULTY ESSAY

The 1920s: The New Age and the Rise of Protestant Fundamentalism

Dr. David Parker, Assistant Department Chair and Professor of History, Kennesaw State University

America was growing in the early twentieth century—it was in these years that we became predominantly an urban, industrial nation—and with that growth came many changes. This was very much a new age. There was the “new immigration,” which brought millions of people from Southern and Eastern Europe, many of them Catholics and Jews, into those growing cities of the Northeast. There was the “New Negro,” more assertive in politics and the push for civil rights, and more culturally aware (see the Harlem Renaissance part of this exhibit).

The so-called “New Woman,” so different from her mother and grandmother, got a lot of attention. Heavy Victorian fashions were suddenly a thing of the past; the New Woman wore less and showed more. She drank and smoked and was more open about her physical desires: in *This Side of Paradise* (1920), F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote that mothers had no idea “how casually their daughters were



Comic from *The Judge*, May 1924. Courtesy Bentley Rare Book Museum.

accustomed to be kissed." And she was less likely to stay in an unhappy marriage: the divorce rate doubled between 1910 and 1930.

The New Woman became a symbol of rebellion against traditional ways of thinking and behaving. Frederick Lewis Allen called it "a revolution in manners and morals." This revolution was spread by the proliferation of novels and mass-circulation magazines, which spoke freely and often about sex and other issues that previously were not brought up in polite company. It was also


spread by the movies, which for the first time had the potential to show every American the same moving images of—whatever. One young man, quoted in an oft-cited sociological study of the time, said, "It was directly through the movies that I learned to kiss a girl on her ears, neck, and cheeks, as well as on the mouth." Movies taught Americans not only how to kiss, but also how to think and act. This revolution was spread by the radio, which was to the 1920s what television would be to the 1950s; by the growing car culture, which brought all kinds of new freedom to young people; and by so much else.

This revolution in manners and morals brought about new standards of taste and behavior, and it was an important part of the 1920s.

Another part of that decade was a growing awareness of uncertainty. For two centuries, Isaac Newton's work, especially his three laws of motion,

Liberty February 25, 1929

H A V E A C A M E L



A social success

Camels come to the aid of the party . . . any party where the main idea is to be joyous and carefree.

CAMELS

The advertisement features a central illustration of a social gathering. A man in a tuxedo stands on the left, holding a pack of Camel cigarettes. A woman in a yellow dress stands next to him, and another woman in a red dress is seated at a table. The background shows other people in formal attire. The text 'H A V E A C A M E L' is written in large, spaced-out letters above the illustration. Below the illustration, the text reads 'A social success', 'Camels come to the aid of the party . . . any party where the main idea is to be joyous and carefree.', and 'CAMELS' in large, bold letters.

Camels Advertisement from *Liberty* magazine, February 1929. Courtesy Bentley Rare Book Museum.

defined how we understood the universe to operate. It was difficult (calculus!), but it was precise and absolute. There was a sense of certainty, a sense that we can understand how things work. The universe is “simply a machine,” one writer said, “so orderly and compact, so simple in construction, that we may reckon its past and gauge something of its future with almost as much certitude as that of a dynamo or a water-wheel. In its motions there is no uncertainty, no mystery.”

And then Albert Einstein came along and upset everything. According to Einstein, space, matter, and time were not Newtonian absolutes, but were relative to the motion and location of the observer. That is, two observers might look at the same thing and see it very differently—and both of them would be right. A third and fourth observer might have their own perspectives, and those too would be legitimate. There was no longer a single “correct” way of seeing something.

Werner Heisenberg, a German physicist working a few years after Einstein, further complicated matters with what is known as the uncertainly principle: We cannot know, with any precision, both the position and the momentum of a particle, because (this simplifies matters a bit) in measuring one, we change the other.

By the 1920s, classical (Newtonian) physics, which had provided the foundation for much of the Enlightenment, had been replaced by quantum mechanics and the twin ideas that we cannot know anything with certainty and that reality is contextual. This applied only to the very fast or the very small in physics, but it became part of the way people saw the world around them.

Nineteenth century anthropologists, for example, had divided human societies into broad classifications with labels such as “savage,” “barbaric” “semi-civilized,” and “civilized.” Now, under Franz Boas and others, they strove to understand a society’s beliefs and practices in the context of its own culture, rather than by simply comparing them to others. Einstein’s relativity had its anthropological counterpart in

Boas's cultural relativism ("civilization is not something absolute, but ... relative").

The movement known as "Modernism" (discussed elsewhere in this exhibit) might be understood as the intellectual and artistic version of the "revolution in manners and morals" and relativity/relativism, with a big helping of the horror and disillusionment of World War I thrown in for good measure. In the words of cultural historian David Shi, the Modernist impulse led writers, artists, musicians, and others "to rebel against good taste, old-fashioned morals, and old-time religion." Pablo Picasso's cubism showed that there were different ways to see reality. Cubism had its musical counterpart in Arnold Schoenberg's atonality ("emancipation of the dissonance"). Literary modernists emphasized themes of uncertainty and irrationality (as Gertrude Stein said, "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose"); turbulence and human nature replaced peace and Providence.

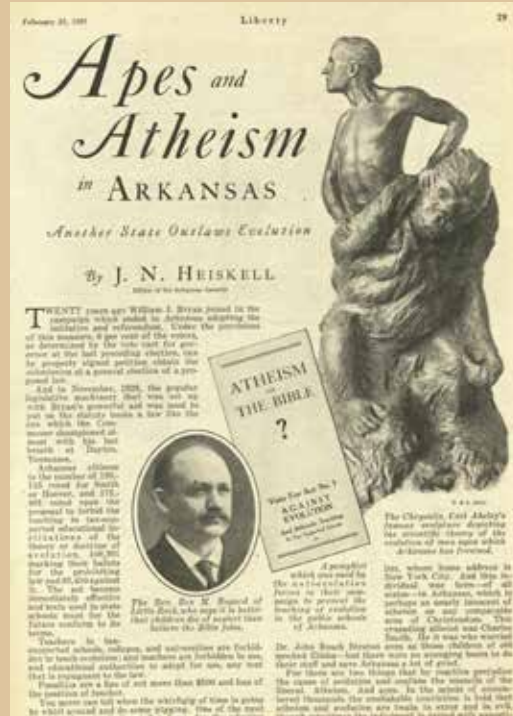
The 1920s is a fascinating decade partly because of its contradictions. On the one hand, we can clearly see the newness of the age, the revolution in manners and morals, the rise of uncertainty and relativism, and the spirit of the modernists. That's why we call it the jazz age, the roaring twenties, the ballyhoo years. Cole Porter had it right when he wrote "Anything Goes." But at the same time, there was a reaction to all that, creating a different side of the 1920s that emphasized intolerance and in general a resistance to change.

The Fugitive movement (elsewhere in this exhibit) and the rise of the so-called Agrarians is a good example. *I'll Take My Stand*, written by "Twelve Southerners," was a collection of essays by a dozen poets, essayists, and novelists (including Robert Penn Warren, John Crowe Ransom, and Allen Tate) who opposed the new age and its effects on traditional society. They were angry at the way the South was ridiculed as a backwards region.

Another example of this other side of the 1920s was the rise of Protestant fundamentalism. Protestants had felt threatened for several

decades by the 1910s and 1920s. For one thing, the new immigration had brought in millions of Catholics and Jews, and this exacerbated an anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic feeling and fear that had existed in the United States since its beginning. (In fact, Protestants began explicitly in opposition Catholicism.) For another, a number of religious leaders, again especially in the Northeast, were moving toward a more broad-minded understanding of the Bible; these “liberal Protestants” said, for example, that the Virgin Birth, Christ’s resurrection, and the New Testament miracles did not need to be taken as literally true. Finally, some biblical scholars had begun to use historical criticism as a way to analyze the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Historical criticism says that, to understand a text, you must see it in its historical context, so we should analyze the Bible as we would any other book.

Between 1910 and 1915, a group of conservative Protestants, many of them recognized biblical and theological scholars, responded to these threats with a set of essays that were collectively called *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*. As the name suggests, the project was intended as “a new statement of the fundamentals of Christianity,” including the inerrancy of the scriptures, Christ’s virgin birth, his substitutionary atonement on the cross, and his resurrection. (Over the years, different groups have come up with different lists of the fundamentals.)



Article from *Liberty* magazine, February 1929. Courtesy Bentley Rare Book Museum.

Like the Agrarians, the authors of *The Fundamentals* called for the preservation of traditional values (as they saw them), especially in an age when there were no more absolutes, when truth was contextual, when everything seemed to be changing; in a time when anything goes, here are some truths that, by God, will not change.

But despite the definitive-sounding title, the essays in *The Fundamentals* represented just a piece of a movement that around 1920 became more militant and sectional in nature. In that year, southern-born Baptist preacher and editor Curtis Lee Laws first used the word “fundamentalist” in this context when he described Christians who should be prepared “to do battle royal for the fundamentals.”

According to Kenneth Bailey, author of *Southern White Protestantism in the Twentieth Century*, “Though the fundamentalist movement was national and international in scope [for example, most of the authors of the essays in *The Fundamentals* were northern], the American South was the region of its greatest vitality.” Southern churches and their ministers rivalled Confederate memorial associations in promoting sectionalism; Fundamentalism, in short, became the religious aspect of the Lost Cause’s foundational idea that southern civilization was superior to that of the North.

Methodist Bishop Warren A. Candler said that northern religious leaders were “tainted with these harmful ‘isms’” (modernism, socialism, atheism, etc.) and that “the Churches of the South must save the cause of evangelical Christianity in the United States or it will be lost.”

When Alabama-born J. Frank Norris, pastor of the Fort Worth First Baptist Church, preached against “this present godless, commercialized, pleasure-gone-mad, Sabbath-breaking, idol-worshipping, hell-bound age,” he was, according to his most recent biographer, fighting “to preserve and defend the South” against northern modernism.

Rev. T. T. Martin, author of *Hell and the High Schools*, a book that was popular during the Scopes trial of 1925, used a term reminiscent of Reconstruction when he criticized "Infidels, Agnostics, Modernists and all the mongrel forces that tend to destroy virtue."

A move toward a more fundamentalist theology in the early twentieth century was in part a natural reaction to the anxiety of a new age and the threat it represented to traditional society.

This anxiety was especially strong in the South, where it was augmented by lingering sectional animosities. A century later we perhaps see similar anxieties in American society.

INVITED FACULTY ESSAY

Rural America in the 1920s

William Thomas Okie, Associate Professor of History Education and History, Kennesaw State University

The popular understanding of the 1920s in the United States skews urban. An unrigorous but nonetheless revealing google image search for “1920s” shows page after page of flappers and film starlets and dancers, phonographs and radios and model-Ts, cigarettes and bootleggers and speakeasies. Movies like Baz Luhrmann’s *The Great Gatsby* (2013) don’t help to destabilize the notion of the “roaring twenties”: a time of carefree fun and natty fashion.

There’s an accompanying conception of the 1920s countryside during as a place peopled by the backwards malcontents of the era—reactionaries, racists, and fundamentalists—who waged a “cultural civil war” against the forces of progress. Survey texts frequently cite the decade’s economic expansion and the fact that the US population became majority urban for the first time.¹

But history teaches us to be suspicious of simple generalizations and straightforward dichotomies (rural vs. urban, black vs. white, secular vs. religious, modern vs. traditional). Although it is true that, strictly speaking, more Americans lived in urban territory than rural territory in 1920 (roughly 54.2 million to 51.6 million), only 10.1 million of those “urbanites” lived in cities of a million or more; far more (16.4 million) lived in places of 10,000 or less; and fewer than 9 million rural

¹ See, for instance, History.com Editors, “The Roaring Twenties History,” <https://www.history.com/topics/roaring-twenties/roaring-twenties-history>; Digital History, “Overview of the 1920s,” <https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/era.cfm?eraID=13&smtid=1>.

Americans lived in towns of any size.²

What were the 1920s like for those folks? There's a lot we could say, but three things stand out. Life was hard. Technology was widespread. And because of those two factors, the way rural people imagined the world grew increasingly dark.



A dry-land farmer and his family, 1921. Courtesy National Archives and Records Administration.

The 1920s were a tough time for farmers. In many ways, they faced the Great Depression long before the cities. Prices for grains and cotton and other agricultural products, which had risen sharply during World War I, fell dramatically. Farmers who had expanded their operations and had taken out loans to purchase machinery were left with no way to pay off those debts. Mechanization, meanwhile, tended to squeeze out small and middling farmers. The 3.4 million farm owners in 1920 had dwindled to 2.9 million by 1930, and tenancy rates increased.³ Many migrated to cities, and the rural population fell by 42 million in fourteen rural states.⁴ The South was particularly hard hit, and a swath of journalistic exposes and sociological studies in the 1920s and 1930s found widespread poverty and deprivation. To cite just one, a 1922 study of Chatham County, North Carolina found that African American and white tenant and sharecropper households made somewhere between \$150 and \$300 per year, between 8 and 16 cents a day per person. Not surprisingly, they

² United States Bureau of the Census, "Population," *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, volume 1* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975): 11–12. <https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/title/237/item/5809/toc/363614>, accessed on July 1, 2020.

³ United States Bureau of the Census, "Farms," *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, volume 1* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975): 465. <https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/title/237/item/5809/toc/363629>, accessed on July 1, 2020.

⁴ Robert Withnow, "Rural Depopulation," in *The Routledge History of Rural America*, ed. Pamela Riney-Kehrberg (New York: Routledge, 2016), 262–63.

lived in inadequate dwellings and endured high infant mortality, poor nutrition, and schooling only through fourth or fifth grade.⁵ Also not surprising: many of these rural poor left the South for better opportunities elsewhere. This massive internal movement, known as the “the Great Migration” or the “Southern Diaspora,” saw nearly 3.3 million African Americans and 6.7 million whites leave the South between 1900 and 1950.⁶



A political cartoon satirizing the lack of farmer’s relief programs, circa 1925. Courtesy National Archives and Records Administration.

At the same time, rural people adopted a surprising array of technologies for improving their lives. Outside of the South, where farmers used mule- and hand-labor into the 1950s, tractors became ubiquitous. After initial resistance to automobiles (sometimes farmers booby-trapped roads to exact revenge on speeding tourists), increasing number of rural people purchased them, sometimes putting them to surprising uses, such as running washing machines or as makeshift tractors. Although ninety percent of rural areas still had no electricity in 1930, farmers fought for rural cooperative electrification, set up phone cooperatives, and purchased radios.⁷

⁵ J. A. Dickey and E. C. Branson, “How Farm Tenants Live,” *University of North Carolina Extension Bulletin* 2, no. 6 (November 16, 1922): 1–44. See also Gilbert C. Fite, *Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture, 1865-1980* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 35–40.

⁶ James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 15. See also James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2010).

⁷ Ronald R. Kline, *Consumers in the Country: Technology and Social Change in Rural America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

Because of the rise of mass media, especially radio and magazines, rural people were more aware than ever of how urban people lived—or seemed to live. And there was an increasingly dramatic juxtaposition between the experience of hardship in rural areas and the ease and luxury apparently enjoyed by city-dwellers. It should not be terribly surprising, then, that some rural folks began to imagine the cities as places inhabited by Jewish and Catholic immigrants, atheists, hedonists, harlots, and shallow materialists—and themselves as Anglo-Saxon Protestants practicing abstinence and self-denial. Many of the causes that many rural people supported in the 1920s, including prohibition, immigration restriction, anti-Darwinism, and the Ku Klux Klan, grew out of this sense of injured pride and besieged righteousness. And of course urbanites returned the favor, imagining the countryside as a place of bumpkins and the pathologically poor. Much of the great literature of the 1920s and 1930s, particularly that dealing with the South, engages these themes.⁸

So next time you hear the phrase “roaring twenties,” pause and think: for whom?

HOME-TRADE PRICE-MAKER 387

Portale FARM MOTOR \$24.95

WHAT YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR An Always Dependable, Steady, Trouble Free, Water Cooled

light enough to be carried around to the place where you need power and ideal for running pump, jerk, plow, mowers, cream separators, small grinders, hose cutters, saws, welding machines and all many other and machines which it is a. will operate. Running a big engine for the small work is wasteful. This engine weighs only 25 lbs. can be moved around so easily that you will find it possible to eliminate ALL HAND WORK IN OPERATING THE MANY SMALL MACHINES AROUND THE FARM. The great engine for a woman or child to operate as it is automatic in every respect and has only one moving part not enclosed. A child can run it by turning over the fly wheel or with the crank which is furnished. It takes up very little space as it is only 22 in. long, and holds from the bottom of the shaft to top 14 in. This you have seen and wanted. This motor has earned a reputation in every town you will find for it every day in the year. It is handy winter and summer. If you already have a big engine you need this for the new light jobs which it is wanted to do with the engine. **GUARANTEE** We stand behind all the motor fully guaranteed for 12 months. This engine defects in material or workmanship, every motor is guaranteed to be in perfect working order when shipped from the factory and to have been tested and to have passed the most rigorous tests and to have been tested to the point of failure. **SPECIFICATIONS:** 1. This engine is a 1 1/2 HP motor and is every essential the 3 HP motor and runs the portable practical cylinder form in its design. 2. The smaller cylinder does the same work as you double the size in the old 4 cycle type which requires only half as many parts and is of a more reliable design. 3. Piston is carefully machined and ground to fit the cylinder over it to insure with close compression. 4. The valve gear is of the best design and has long bearings in each side of the cylinder. 5. Piston large lopper and base are all cast in one piece of the very finest grey iron which gives long wear and holds a very tight piston when the cylinder is heated. 6. It is made of the best of water boiler cylinder. 7. Water lopper and cylinder are cast in one piece and are away with the lopper holds enough water to cool the cylinder properly, preventing it from getting too hot. 8. The valve gear is of the best design and has long bearings in each side of the cylinder. 9. The valve gear is of the best design and has long bearings in each side of the cylinder. 10. The valve gear is of the best design and has long bearings in each side of the cylinder. **CRANK SHAFT** 1 1/2 in. in diameter, chromium for wear. Bearings of both crank shaft and connecting rod are high grade white brass bushings. Crankshaft and bearing in the cast and can be replaced in a few minutes without the need of any tools. A compression grease cup, directly over the engine lubricates the crank shaft bearing. **AUTOMATIC LUBRICATION TAKES CARE OF THE REEF.** **POSITIVE GOVERNOR** has a safety 2 per cent governor to stop the engine in case of any cutting and to insure safe operation. **THIS MAKES IT AN IDEAL MOTOR FOR CREAM SEPARATION.** **AUTOMATIC LUBRICATION** is insured by utilizing the valve gear and piston and piston bearings. **SPECIAL NEW DESIGN SUCTION FEED CARBURATOR** is made of the best material and is of the best design. **POWER:** When run at a speed of 700 to 800 per cent, this motor will develop 1 1/2 HP. It is a 1 1/2 HP motor and is every essential the 3 HP motor and runs the portable practical cylinder form in its design. 2. The smaller cylinder does the same work as you double the size in the old 4 cycle type which requires only half as many parts and is of a more reliable design. 3. Piston is carefully machined and ground to fit the cylinder over it to insure with close compression. 4. The valve gear is of the best design and has long bearings in each side of the cylinder. 5. Piston large lopper and base are all cast in one piece of the very finest grey iron which gives long wear and holds a very tight piston when the cylinder is heated. 6. It is made of the best of water boiler cylinder. 7. Water lopper and cylinder are cast in one piece and are away with the lopper holds enough water to cool the cylinder properly, preventing it from getting too hot. 8. The valve gear is of the best design and has long bearings in each side of the cylinder. 9. The valve gear is of the best design and has long bearings in each side of the cylinder. 10. The valve gear is of the best design and has long bearings in each side of the cylinder. **73008—1 1/2 H P Motor Completely Equipped as Illustrated and Described.**

Advertisement for portable farm motor, circa 1920-1922. Courtesy Kennesaw State University Archives.

⁸ See for instance Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923); Ellen Anderson Gholson Glasgow, *Barren Ground* (1925); John Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath* (1939); Erskine Caldwell, *Tobacco Road*, (1932).

INVITED FACULTY ESSAY

Ford, Fordism, and the 1920s

Randall L. Patton, Shaw Industries Distinguished Chair and Professor of History, Kennesaw State University

No single object better exemplifies the United States in the 1920s than the automobile. The motor car—the object itself, the manufacturing industry that produced it, and the attendant infrastructure of roads and highways that crisscrossed the American landscape in the early 20th century—was a harbinger of a new economy and a changing culture of work and leisure. And no individual or enterprise played a more integral role in the development of the product or the broader changes in work and culture than Henry Ford and his Ford Motor Company. Fordism came to be used by academics and artists as a shorthand descriptor for the economy of mass production and mass consumption that emerged in the 1910s and 1920s and matured in the decades just after World War II.¹

¹ Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci influentially developed an early version of Fordism. See Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, independently published March 2018, available via Amazon. For a detailed discussion of the historiography of Fordism, see Robert J. Antonio and Alessandro Bonanno, "Globalization, Transnationalism, and The End of the American Century," *American Studies* 41 (Summer/Fall, 2000), 33-77. On the impact of Fordism on global manufacturing in the 20th century, see especially Jonathan Zeitlin, "Flexibility in the "Age of Fordism": Technology and Production in the International Automobile Industry," *Enterprise & Society*, 1 (March 2000, No. 1), 4-8 (Zeitlin's short piece serves as the introduction to the inaugural issue of this journal which is devoted to Fordism, mass production, and flexible specialization). An excellent summary of the development of the US automobile industry in the early 20th century is found in Thomas McCraw and William Childs, *American Business Since 1920: How It Worked* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 3rd edition, 2018) 53-70. A brief overview (with detailed bibliography) of Fordism as a social science concept may be found at Encyclopedia.com (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/fordism>), accessed June 25, 2020. For a biography of Ford, see "Henry Ford," *PBS American Experience*, January 29, 2013. The transcript, a timeline, and supporting essays and documents can be found at the PBS official site for the program, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/henryford/#film_description.

The broad outlines of the story of the US automobile industry's emergence and Ford's role have become part of American folklore. Ford was born in 1863 and grew up on a farm near Detroit, Michigan. He displayed an uncommon aptitude for tinkering, apprenticed as a machinist, and eventually worked his way up to become chief engineer at the Edison Illuminating Company of Detroit. Fascinated by the horseless carriages being developed in Europe and the United States, Ford worked on his own designs and sought backing



Henry Ford with son featured in *The Mentor*, 1929. Courtesy Bentley Rare Book Museum.

for a backing for a company. After two failures—Ford would later characterize failure as wonderful learning opportunity, encapsulating a core tenet of the American business ethos—he struck metaphorical gold when he incorporated the Ford Motor Company in 1903. Applying what he had absorbed about electric motors at the Edison company, Ford brought together a host of existing techniques in new and creative ways, eventually introducing the moving assembly line in 1913. Ford's revolutionary innovations in manufacturing promised to slash costs and speed production of a ruthlessly standardized and simplified product—the Model T.

Ford's production methods would become linked to the ideas of scientific management developed by Frederick W. Taylor in the same period. "Taylorism" came to be identified with efficiency experts and engineers, whose time and motion studies in which workers' actions were measured with stopwatches combined with technological innovation came to symbolize the modern approach to production. The cultural impact of Taylorism and the machine are nowhere better depicted than in Charlie

Chaplin's 1936 film *Modern Times*, in which the main character falls into and swims through the gears of the factory's machinery (one of the most memorable scenes in cinema history). But historian David Hounshell has argued that in spite of the similarity between Taylor's prescriptions and Ford's techniques, the Detroit auto maker apparently invented his own version of mass production with no direct influence from or consultation with Taylor. Perhaps both Taylorism and Fordism were manifestations of some deeper material and ideological transformation, a spirit of the age.²

Ford revolutionized the automobile industry by reducing the cost of cars and trucks through technology and the reorganization of the work process. Ford saw the automobile as a product for the masses rather than simply the upper classes. He cut costs by relentlessly stripping away unnecessary features on his Model T (like a roof and any color other than black). Ford's plan culminated with the construction of the massive Highland Park factory. When it opened in 1910, the new facility cut the production time of a Model T from 728 minutes to just 93. Of course, the multi-million-dollar investment in this new factory, filled with special purpose machinery, made the cost of producing a single Model T, or even a few thousand, prohibitive. And Ford's goal was to reduce, not increase, the price of his cars. The investment could only be made cost effective by a huge increase in sales volume. Ford's focus on reducing unit costs paid off. The price of a Model T dropped from \$850 (or about \$24,400 in 2019 using the Consumer Price Index) in 1908 (a price already somewhat lower than his competitors' products) to just \$290 by 1925 (or about

² McCraw and Childs, *American Business*, 56-57; for the *Modern Times* scene, search YouTube Charlie Chaplin Factory Scene *Modern Times*, <https://youtu.be/6n9ESFJTnHs>); David Hounshell, *From the American System to Mass Production, 1800-1932: The Development of Manufacturing Technology in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 250.

³ McCraw and Childs, *American Business*, 57. The price calculation was made using the calculator at *Measuring Worth* <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/uscompare/>. The site offers seven ways of computing the relative value of a US dollar across time. The greater the time variance, the more the CPI calculation understates change. For example, using the comparative share of GDP, the 2019 value of \$850 in 1908 would be \$599,000! The 1925 price of \$290 would be closer to \$68,000 in 2019.

\$4200 in 2019).³ Ford pointed the way toward a mass production/ mass consumption economy filled with an array of relatively cheap goods to satisfy material needs and wants.

But production efficiency was only one aspect of the phenomenon that came to be called Fordism.

How did workers respond to the reorganization of work

at Highland Park? The short answer is that they quit in droves. Work along the new assembly line was difficult and tedious. The pace was set by machines. Labor turnover in Ford's factory amounted to more than 300 percent in 1913, meaning that Ford had to hire 50,000 workers to maintain a work force of 15,000. Such turnover inevitably led to reduced productivity; there were always so many inexperienced workers on the line that it was impossible to run the machines at optimum levels. Human beings rebelled against both the monotony and the difficulty of the work, which they performed for nine hours a day at a beginning rate of \$2.34 per day (already significantly higher than the \$1.00 to \$1.50 offered for similar work in other regions). Many Ford workers simply walked away from the withering pace. Others began to talk about organizing a union. The bitterly anti-union Ford made one of his boldest moves to reduce turnover, improve efficiency, and head off union organization (which he feared would interfere with his prerogative to organize and reorganize the production process by subjecting work routines and schedules to collective negotiation). In January 1914, Ford announced that he would raise the lowest wage at Highland Park to \$5 per day while reducing the working shift at Ford to eight hours. He would not alter the work process to better suit workers' temperaments and bodies, but he would offer them a monetary reward. The five-dollar day doubled annual incomes for



Model T, 1925. Courtesy The Henry Ford.

Ford workers from around \$640 (\$16,000 in 2019) to around \$1300 (or \$34,000 in our day). For reference, the median personal income (meaning that half of workers earn more, and half make less) in 2016 was \$31,000. The federal poverty level in 2019 was set at just over \$25,000 for a family of four. The data throws into sharp relief the economic status of the US working class in the early twentieth century—most workers earned the equivalent of below-poverty level wages.⁴ The company purchased a reduction in turnover and a concomitant maximization of productivity for the new process. Ford's dramatic wage increase also made it possible for his own workers to begin to participate in the bounty of consumer products being generated by the emerging mass production economy. In exchange, their working lives came to resemble more and more the image of the worker becoming a cog in the machinery represented by Charlie Chaplin's factory worker. More than five decades later, wildcat strikes at automobile plants would challenge the psychic as well as the material deficiencies of the new paradigm as the Fordist model began to lose steam. But this bargain defined Fordism at the level of the workplace in most mass-production industries for more than half a century.⁵

Ford's wage increase created a sensation. Long lines formed at the company's employment office, fights broke out over access to job applications, and turnover fell below 20 percent (still high, but manageable). The wage increase and his production process made Ford internationally famous. The Soviet Union saw Fordism as a model for its own future—the production of cheap but durable products with high use values. Later, Fordism would become the model for Hitler's Germany and the Volkswagen (or People's Car) state-owned firm. By 1925, Ford had sold 10 million automobiles in total and Ford had become

⁴ Income and poverty data from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website <https://aspe.hhs.gov/2019-poverty-guidelines>); calculations via *Measuring Worth*.

⁵ On the 1970s rebellion against Fordist work routines, see Erik Loomis, *A History of America in Ten Strikes* (New York: The New Press, 2018), 188-214.

a household word. The rest of the US automobile learned from Ford, adopting and adapting many of his techniques.⁶

Firms such as General Motors, led by Alfred T. Sloan, adapted the mass production process and slashed prices for their own automobiles. But while Ford focused on a single, unchanging Model T—one color (black), no top, etc.—GM tweaked the process to be able to produce slightly differentiated models at different price points with a variety of colors and other optional features. These options added a bit to the cost, so that the lowest priced GM cars (the Chevrolet brand) generally cost a bit more than a Ford, it also allowed for the consumer to make more active choices. McCraw and Childs summed up the fate of Ford by the late 1930s. “In 1921 Ford’s share of the domestic market stood at 56 percent;” they wrote, but “by 1925 it had dropped to 40 percent. Meanwhile, GM soared from 13 percent to 20 percent. In 1929 each firm produced 1.5 million cars.” Ford had lost its “first mover” advantage in mass production in stunningly short order. But the trend worsened. “By 1937 GM’s market share had shot up to 42 percent while Ford’s slumped to 21 percent. Meanwhile, the Chrysler Corporation took over second place with 25 percent of the market.”⁷ Ford had resisted all the changes that helped vault GM into the top spot not just in the auto industry, but American business in general. He held out against options of all kinds and discouraged the purchase of automobiles on credit. GM had embraced and helped facilitate credit sales. Ford would recover and regain second place in the US market, but it would never again (to date) hold the top spot among US automobile makers. Ford, ironically, resisted many of the additions to his mass production/mass consumption model that helped make the Fordist model work.

⁶ *New York Times*, Jan. 11, 1914, SM1; *New York Times*, Jan. 13, 1914, 2 (the *Times* reported that company security guards used an “icy blast from a water hose” to push back swelling crowds of job seekers); David Lanier Lewis, *The Public Image of Henry Ford: An American Folk Hero and His Company* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1976), 69-76; McCraw and Childs, *American Business*, 58-59.

⁷ McCraw and Childs, *American Business*, 65.

Ford's personal blend of progressive ideas and shockingly reactionary sentiments was nowhere better illustrated than in his embrace of anti-Semitism. Ford bought a struggling small newspaper, the Dearborn (Michigan) *Independent*, and began publishing it in January 1919. He subtitled the *Independent* "The Chronicler of the Neglected Truth." Ford used the paper to spread his own views, which varied from eccentric to extreme to dangerous. For years, the front page of the *Independent* carried a regular feature titled "The International Jew: The World's Problem," which was based on the notorious Imperial Russian forgery "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," which perpetuated hideous falsehoods and rumors about Jewish people. He alleged that US entry into World War I had been the result of a conspiracy among Jewish bankers. Anti-Semitism was a feature of American life in this era, though it was generally somewhat less virulent than in Europe. Ford aggressively pushed the paper nationwide, with salesmen selling subscriptions door-to-door. Ford also pressured his car dealers to subscribe. Circulation exceeded 900,000 at its peak. Ford promoted an extreme anti-Semitism, of the sort that found tragic expression in Germany and other nations in central Europe in the following decades, in Ford's paper. Ford faced protests and eventually a lawsuit from a Jewish attorney he had slandered. He agreed to cease publication of the *Independent* in 1927, but the bizarre story of Ford's imagined "neglected truth" continues to cast a very dark shadow over his legacy. Probably no one must be reminded of the tragic consequences of such views in the 1930s and 1940s.⁸

Ford was the subject of major literary works in his lifetime. Upton Sinclair told a fictionalized story of the impact of labor changes at Ford on workers and their families in *The Flivver King*. But Aldous Huxley probably created the most memorable depiction of Ford and Fordism in his dystopian novel *Brave New World*. In the novel's future world,

⁸ Stephen Watts, *The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 379-383.

Fordism had triumphed, though in a way that would have horrified Henry Ford himself. Huxley intended the irony. Ford's vision of a mass production/mass consumption society had evolved in ways that were corrosive of the traditional family values that Ford held dear. Ford's own business peers resisted improving the lot of their own workers through the 1920s, and already extreme levels of income and wealth inequality reached epic proportions. Within the economic sphere, the Fordist model of well-paid workers consuming mass quantities (like the Coneheads of *Saturday Night Live* fame, ca. 1976) shimmered into being with considerable prodding of government and trade unions in the 1930s and 1940s (which Ford resisted), which pushed American business toward high-wage thinking. The Fordist model began to lose coherence in the 1970s, according to most scholars, but while it lasted it generated tremendous shared prosperity.



THE 1920s
MODERNISM AT A CROSSROADS



I asked myself over and over whether America had gone crazy...

– A Returning American, “Home!” in *Atlantic Monthly*, 1926

The 1920s have a reputation as the most celebratory decade of the twentieth century, when music, fashion, and dance contributed to “The Roaring Twenties.” While American popular culture experienced dramatic changes during the 1920s, social and political conflict abounded. As the age of modernism emerged, newfound freedoms collided with staunch acts of retrogression. New literary and artistic expression

reflected a society forever changed by World War I, but the increased movement of people and cultures intensified feelings of nationalism. This exhibition explores these cultural and literary tensions through topical modules, artifacts, and an interactive station. As you experience this exhibit, notice the “push-pull” interplay at work in 1920s society and consider how the world has changed over the last one hundred years.

SETTING THE STAGE



5 cents a copy
10c. 42 30. 14

Collier's

NATIONAL WEEKLY

MAY 2, 1914

10c. 42 30. 14

Frederick Palmer

"John J. Pershing—Plover"—
an intimate picture of the Com-
mander in Chief of the A. E. F.

John Russell

"The Slanted Beam"—a story
of the Far East and of one who
violated its code

Samuel H. Adams

"The Friendly Scandinavians,"
the fourth of Mr. Adams's series,
"Loose Leaves of Diplomacy"

Willis J. Abbot

The second article on "Prohi-
bition in Practice," telling how
Washington and neighboring
cities have fared

Arthur Crabb

"G. L. J."—a story of golf and
the mystery revolving around a
strange golf ball

Also in this issue:

"A List of Props," a story of
the theatre by J. Frank Davis;
"Selling the Marines," an article
by William Almon Wolf; "From
Nine to Five," a humorous
article by Robert C. Benchley;
and other features

More Than a Million a Week

After such knowledge, what forgiveness?

– T.S. Eliot, "Geronition," 1920

Nestled in between the First World War and the Great Depression, the 1920s saw significant social and economic changes in the United States and around the world. In the aftermath of WWI, pessimism and political apathy prevailed as people from all nations struggled to come to terms with the atrocities of The Great War. Business boomed on American soil, heightening the gap between the wealthy and the impoverished. At the same time, great movements of people took place, as

African Americans in the South fled racial violence and economic oppression in the South as part of the first Great Migration. European immigrants arrived in large numbers but were stifled by the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the Immigration Act of 1924, which imposed strict limits on the number of Italian and Jewish immigrants from Europe and effectively blocked Asian immigrants. Many disillusioned American writers and artists fled to cities such as Paris and became members of the Lost Generation.

THE "MODERN" HUMAN



I am compelled to fear that science will be used to promote the power of dominant groups...

– Bertrand Russell, *Icarus or The Future of Science*, 1924

Scientific activity during the 1920s was a topic of public interest and controversy. Americans became more aware of the existence of calories, new vitamins, and vaccines such as penicillin. Magazines and other print culture featured Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein, whose revolutionary theories in physics and psychoanalysis changed the world. At the same time, pseudo-scientific theories gained traction.

The study of eugenics and social engineering permeated the scientific community and incited discriminatory practices such as forced sterilizations. Some advocates for birth control drew on eugenics theories and feminist arguments to present this controversial issue to the public. At the 1925 Scopes Trial, modern science clashed with fundamentalist understandings of religion in a public manner.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE



The advertisement for Aunt Jemima Pancake Flour is set within a decorative border. At the top, it says 'The most popular' and 'The pancake recipe used by more women than any other in the world'. The central image shows a smiling woman wearing a patterned headscarf next to a box of 'Aunt Jemima Pancake Flour'. Below this is a stack of pancakes on a plate. The text below the pancakes reads: 'The most important aspect of cooking, American women should know—that in addition to every other recipe...'. It goes on to describe the flour as 'the most popular' and 'the most important'. The advertisement also includes a small illustration of a woman and a child at the bottom right.

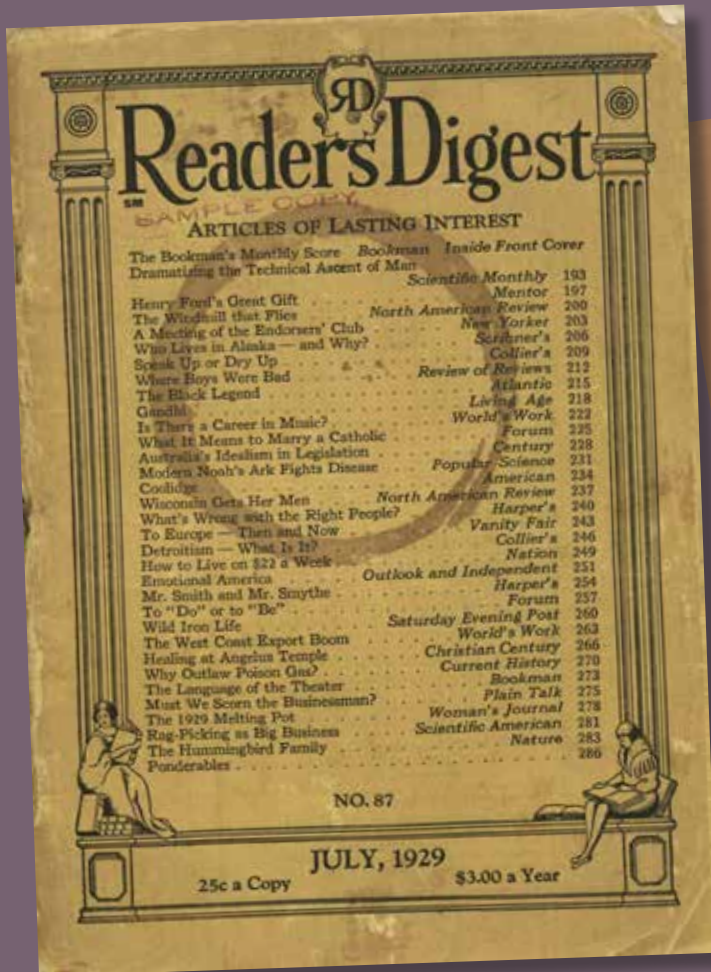
It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire.

– F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Echoes of the Jazz Age,” 1931

The “Jazz Age” culture of the 1920s idolized youth, freedom, materialism, and fast-paced living. Americans of all ages enjoyed radio technology, vaudeville shows, and cinemas, and consumers found beauty remedies and business-driven innovations such as cars and portable typewriters through widespread advertisements. Amid this cultural freedom, a drastic change to the American lifestyle took effect in January 1920, when the sale and transportation of alcohol became illegal.

Feminists campaigning for temperance and women’s suffrage celebrated this victory at the beginning of the decade yet also found themselves at odds with the burgeoning image of the liberated and highly sexualized woman, or “flapper.” Women also experienced liberation through convenience foods such as Aunt Jemima’s pancake mix. This popular product freed women from the burden of home cooking yet perpetuated the stereotype of subservient African Americans.

LITERARY TRENDS AND PUBLISHERS



I too, am America

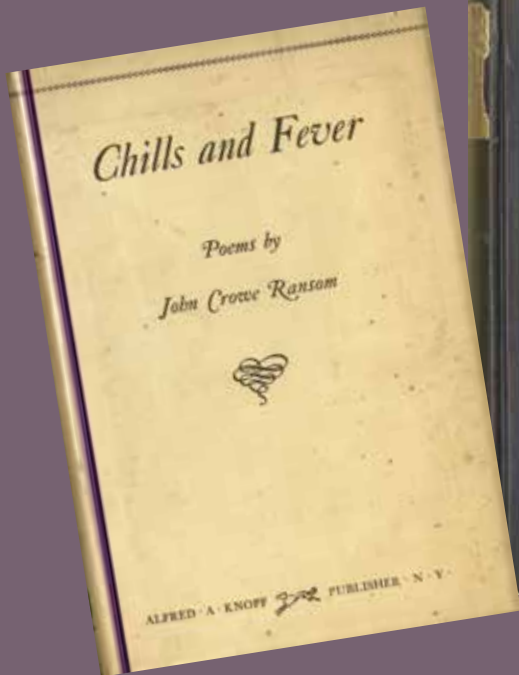
– Langston Hughes, “I Too,” 1926


Literature of the 1920s voiced the thoughts and emotions of new and diverse cultural movements. Nashville’s Fugitive Movement highlighted southern values through poetry. The Fugitives rejected industrialization and encouraged a return to traditional, agrarian lifestyles. The Harlem Renaissance, on the other hand, embraced urbanization and birthed a new generation of creative and politically conscious African American writers and artists. Influenced by European artistic movements,

modernist literature radically opposed traditional forms of writing and instead relied on free verse, disconnected imagery, and unpredictable combinations of language. At the heart of these movements were publishing companies, such as Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., which brought new literature to mainstream audiences. Knopf was one of the most prestigious publishing houses in the United States during the twentieth century and published many works by African Americans and women.



THE FUGITIVE MOVEMENT





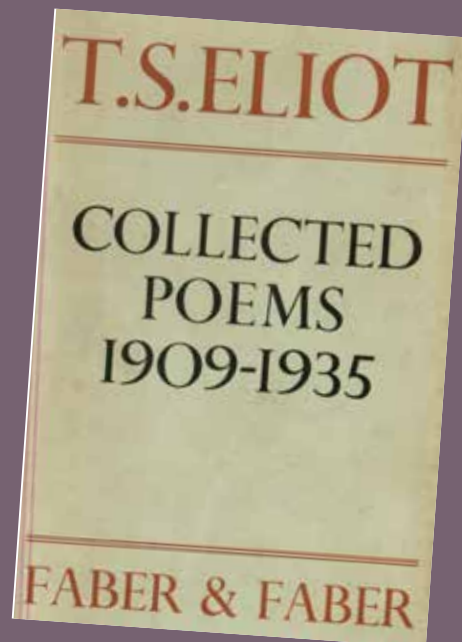
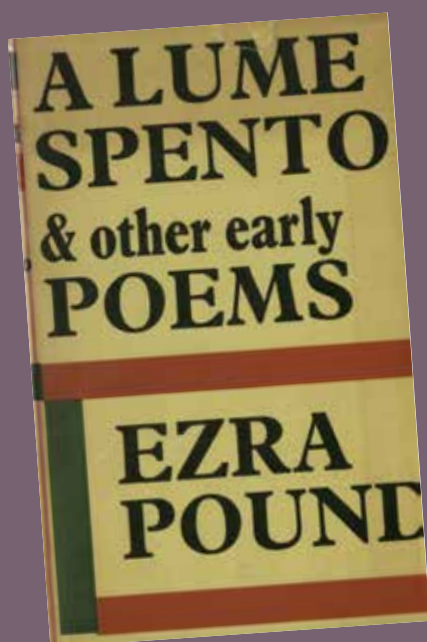
In the years following World War I, a group of men at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, met regularly to discuss poetry and philosophy. In fall 1921, members of the group including Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, and John Crowe Ransom began writing poetry, which they later published in a journal called *The Fugitive*. During its three-year publication, *The Fugitive* included contributions from well-known writers such as Robert Penn Warren and Laura Riding – the


only woman “Fugitive.” Scholars often debate the significance of the name “Fugitive,” because it is unclear what the Fugitives were escaping in their poetry. They took pride in their status as wanderers and nonconformists, and many opposed industrialization in favor of traditional, agrarian values. Although the legacies of some Fugitive poets like Allen Tate have been tainted by their racist views, their collective work influenced the trajectory of early twentieth-century American poetry.

Ransom, John Crowe. *Chills and Fever*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1924.
Fugitives: An Anthology of Verse. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928.
Riding, Laura. *Laura and Francisca*. Deyá, Majorca: Seizin Press, 1931.



MODERNIST POETRY





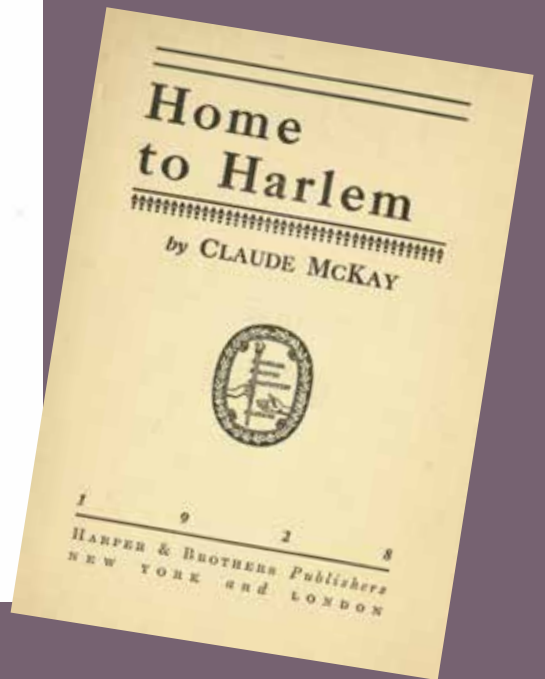
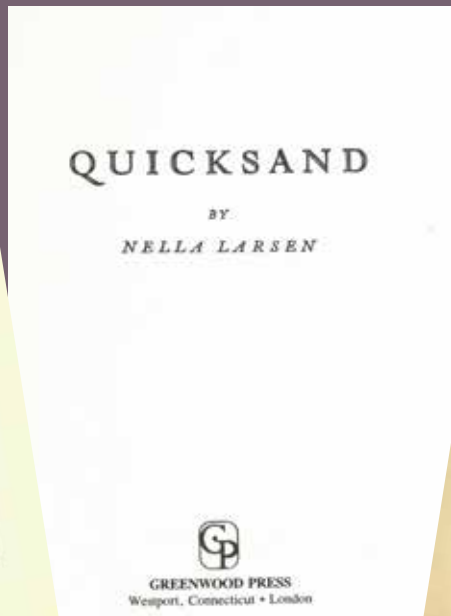
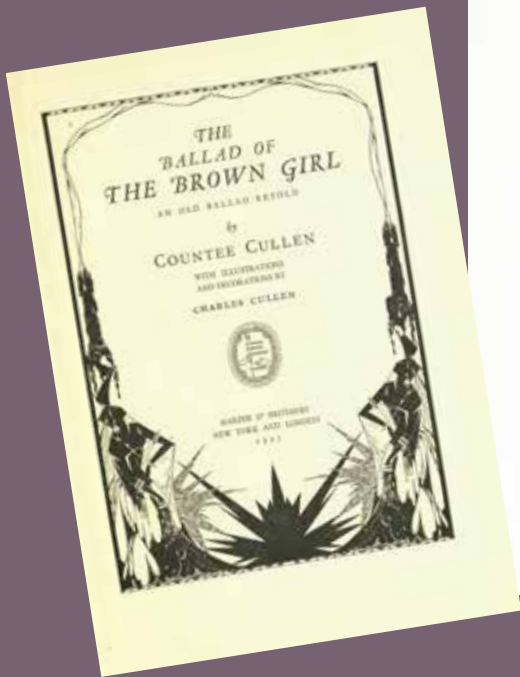
Modernist poetry departs from traditional forms of writing and self-expression. Influenced by European art movements such as symbolism, expressionism, and surrealism, modernist poets of the early twentieth century employed methods of literary experimentation that included free verse, stream of consciousness, disconnected imagery, and


complex allusions. The radical nature of modernist poetry influenced writers for decades. Despite its attempts to uproot tradition, the modernist style eventually became the established norm from which later writers chose to depart. Nonetheless, modernist poetry ignited a spirit of rebelliousness that persists among writers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Eliot, T.S. *Collected Poems, 1909-1935*. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1936.
Pound, Ezra. *A Lume Spento & Other Early Poems*. London: Faber & Faber, 1965.



HARLEM RENAISSANCE



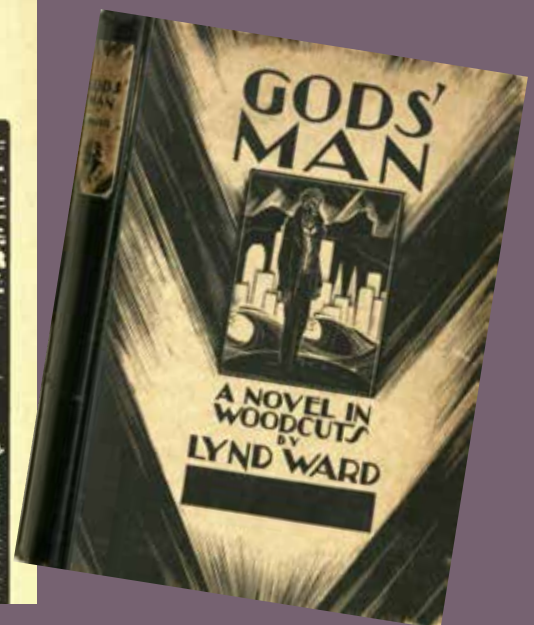



The Harlem Renaissance was a period of prolific artistic and literary development in urban, African American communities across the United States, most notably, Harlem in New York City. Partially fueled by the cruel realities of discrimination, racial violence, and deteriorating economic opportunities in the South, African Americans sought to establish a renewed sense of identity and self-expression

that pushed back against oppression. The Harlem Renaissance birthed the literary and artistic works of Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Billie Holiday, Countee Cullen, Nella Larsen, Duke Ellington, and others. Works of the Harlem Renaissance presented diverse black experiences to mainstream audiences and demonstrated the power of artistic expression to advance social change.

Cullen, Countee. *The Ballad of the Brown Girl: An Old Ballad Retold*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927.
Larsen, Nella. *Quicksand*. 1928. Facsimile of the first edition. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1969.
McKay, Claude. *Home to Harlem*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928.

WORDLESS NOVELS





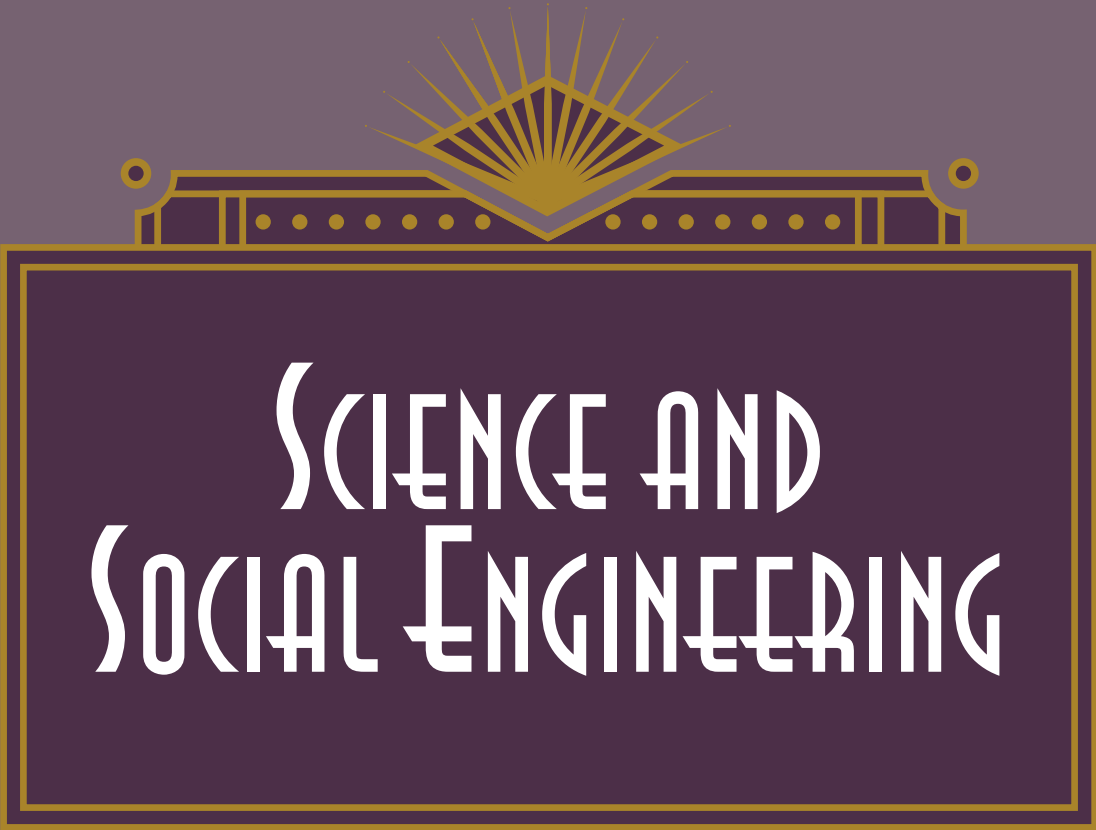
Wordless novels express the power of social and political issues through black and white woodcut illustrations. The concept of wordless novels was born out of German Expressionism and influenced by black and white cinemas. Early wordless novels were created by artists including Frans Masereel, Otto Nückel,

and Lynd Ward. Focused on themes such as labor, wealth, war, and political corruption, wordless novels explored the fate of the individual pitted against the machine culture of post-World War I society. Despite their brief period of popularity during the early twentieth century, wordless novels served as predecessors to modern-day graphic novels.

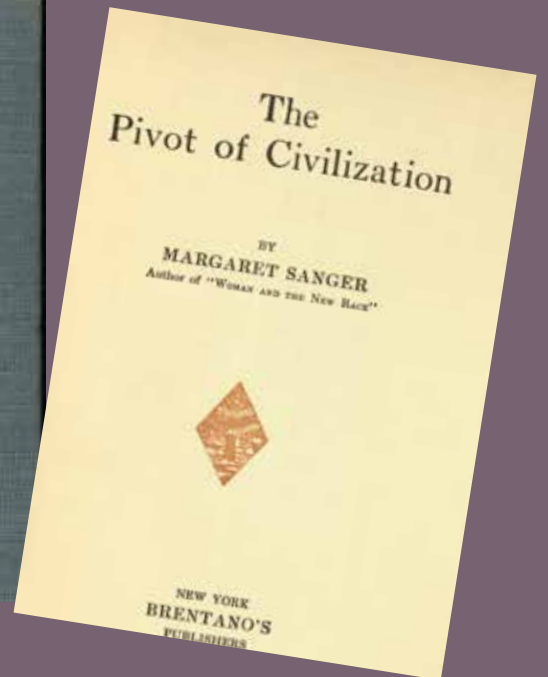
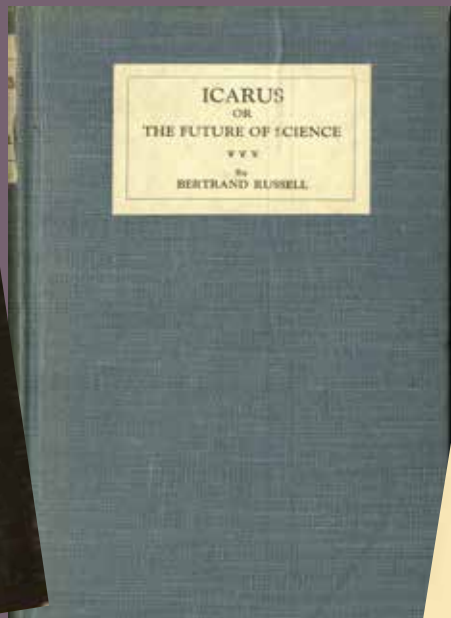
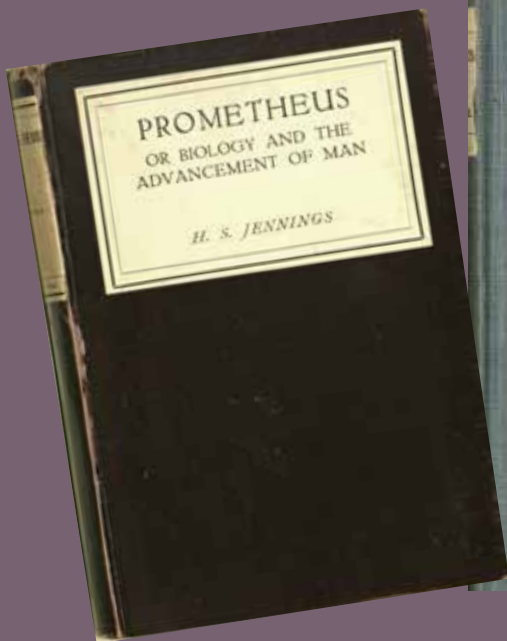
Masereel, Frans. *Die Passion eines Menschen 25 Holzschnitte*. Munich: Kurt Wolffe, 1924.


Masereel, Frans. *Die Sonne*. Stuttgart, Germany: Reclam Verlag, 1961.

Ward, Lynd. *God's Man*. New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1929.



SCIENCE AND SOCIAL ENGINEERING





During the 1920s, promoters of pseudoscience and social engineering sought to improve society by controlling methods of reproduction. Often, the underlying goal of these ideas was the creation of an improved human race. Advocates of social engineering based their arguments on eugenics theories that touted the biological superiority of certain races over others. They opposed the

reproductive rights of those they considered “unfit,” such as ethnic minorities, people in poverty, or individuals with mental health issues. Even birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger used eugenics theories to support arguments in her book *The Pivot of Civilization* (1922). Eugenics theories led to thousands of forced sterilizations in the early twentieth century and helped fuel the genocidal policies of the Nazi party in the 1930s and 1940s.

Jennings, H.S. *Prometheus: Or, Biology and the Advancement of Man*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd.; New York, E.P. Dutton & Co., 1925. Reprinted 1927.

Russell, Bertrand. *Icarus: Or, The Future of Science*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1924.

Sanger, Margaret. *The Pivot of Civilization*. New York: Brentano's Publishers, 1922.

STUDENTS ENGAGEMENT

Most of us know how to read books, but how often do we study books as historical artifacts? Books of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century exemplify the impacts of industrialization, increased literacy, and the advent of the modern publishing industry. Unlike handwritten books from the Middle Ages and privately printed books of the Early Modern period, mass-produced books relied on speedier printing technologies and cheaper materials. Stereotype plates, wood pulp paper, and cloth bindings are examples of materials that were employed to industrialize the book production process. Format changes also took place in response to economics and the changing demands of the book market. The end of the nineteenth century witnessed the demise of the three-volume novel in Great Britain, further popularizing the single-volume format that was already standardized in the United States.

Take a look at these examples of books published in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth century. Be sure to notice elements such as binding material, the color of pages, handwritten notes, and other evidence of use.

Student engagement with rare books is critical to the mission of the Bentley Rare Book Museum. Our collection of over 10,000 rare books and manuscripts spans a variety of subjects and formats ranging from ancient cuneiform tablets to contemporary graphic novels. In this exhibit case, we highlight students who have completed exceptional work with materials from the Bentley Rare Book Museum.



Camilla Stegall, B.A. in History with minors in Public History and German (May 2021)

During the spring 2020 semester, Camilla Stegall learned how to view and appreciate books as historical artifacts. Camilla learned how to determine a book's condition, value, and appropriateness for a rare book collection.



“**W**hile working with the texts at the Bentley, I learned what to look for when acquiring a rare book. What is its condition? Does it fit the collecting scope? How can you use it once it is part of the collection?

I also learned about the interesting world of publishing history. With publishing history, your focus is not always the story the book contains; the focus is generally on the author, the publisher, and the materiality of the book. This was a new way of thinking about books for me.”

.....

Jessica Higgins, B.A. in History; certificate in Public History (May 2020)

During the spring 2020 semester, Jessica sharpened her skills in rare book preservation and digitization while satisfying her interest in illustrated texts.



“ I learned several new skills during my internship, such as preservation methods with delicate books and digitizing materials. I am not normally a strong public speaker, but I was excited about my research with these rare books and successfully shared my findings during the rare book open house program.

The Bentley Museum's collection of wordless novels, specifically works by Frans Masereel and Lynd Ward, immediately piqued my interest. Wordless novels rely on the expressiveness of black and white woodcut illustrations to tell impactful stories that transcend language barriers. They are essentially the original graphic novels. ”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This exhibit is the product of collaborative efforts among KSU staff, faculty, and students. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors in the Department of Museums, Archives and Rare Books (MARB), Dr. Tamara Livingston and Dr. Catherine Lewis, for helping me conceptualize this exhibit and providing guidance throughout the curatorial process. I would like to thank James Newberry, Kate Marchman, Stefanie Green, Zoila Torres, and Tony Howell, also from MARB, for their indispensable assistance with project management, graphic design, and installation. I would like to thank members of the Bentley Faculty Advisory Committee who provided feedback on the exhibit title and vision. I especially thank Dr. Richard Parker, Dr. Randy Patton, and Dr. Tom Okie for writing the essays featured in this catalog. I would like to thank KSU students, Camilla Stegall, Jessica Higgins, and Caitlin Hobbs, for their input and assistance with the creation of exhibit content. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Pamela Whitten and Dr. Kathy Schwaig for their leadership and support of MARB.

