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YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

Similarly, American copyright law not only controls English, you produce (and dissemination of works, but deprived many foreign authors of intellectual-property protection within the United States, creating a climate for legal freedom and indirectly encouraging the fervent diffusion of "bootleg" copies of the very texts that a different set of laws-banned from the mails and ports. When 162 world authors and intellectuals protested Samuel Roth's piracy of Ulysses, they were really objecting to the cluster of American legal rules that made Roth possible. Pound refused to sign the protest because he believed that Joyce should have more overtly directed his publicity machine against the law, not one of its wretched creatures.

The legal interferences that drew Pound's ire were at least identifiable. The Comstock Laws had a statute number, and the deal, lawyer-looking Sumner (he had been admitted to the New York bar in 1904) pounced publicly, in person or by proxy. If you were a foreign-based author writing in English, you knew (and at least as early as 1920) that you ran a substantial risk of failing to secure an American copyright if you first published your work abroad. Legal concerns of that sort had a face: a local habitation and a name.

Not so the coercions of which the contributors to Modernism on Film write. The spikes at the FBI, straining at the leash of the arch-spool J. Edgar Hoover, worried writers much more subtly. The editors of this volume, Claire Culliton (author of a full-length treatment, Joyce and the G-Men; J. Edgar Hoover and the Manipulation of Modernism) and Karen Leick, characterize the FBI's investigative practices as a "twentieth-century federal gazette" (1) trained upon writers and artists who attracted the suspicions of these gameshow heretics. "Hounded for years by Hoover and Special Agents in his bureau," the editors note, "many of the writers and artists associated with modernism eventually were bullied into silence, acquiescence, and disgust" (7). Leftward leanings, sexual nonconformity, fascist flirtations, even honorable left wing opposition to Adolf Hitler could trigger the compiling of a Hoover dossier; and this volume surveys a wide range of FBI "subjects": Richard Wright, Claude McKay, Henry Roth, Muriel Rukeyser, Jean Renoir, Bertolt Brecht, Hanns Eisler, Klaus and Erika Mann, Ernest Hemingway, Ezra Pound, and others. "Subjects," a favorite word in the bloodless patios of Hoover and his Special Agents (a lingo in which G-Men "telephonically contact" people), has a nice

nullification, suggesting at once the focus of research (as in "the subject of my dissertation") and the subaltern status of any suspected deviant from patriotic norms. The hint of subjection to a sovereign gaze permeated the indictment of George once remarked that he "was not a British subject, that [he] had renounced that character many years ago, forever; and that [he] should rather be a fugitive in China or Malabar, than ever reassume that character." To begin with, the "data set" acquired by Culliton, Leick, and their contributors is stunning in every sense of the word: thousands of pages of FBI documents, often heavily "redacted" (that is, blacked out), obtained under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), a federal statute signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1966 and intended to enhance transparency and accountability in our republican government. That some of the contributors obtained their zebraed pages 15 months later, then three after six additional months; then another 63 when three more years had elapsed (169). The teleology of waiting is itself a subject of this collection.

The bureaucratization of reading is also a subject here. In order to build a dossier on a writer, the FBI often improvised a syllabus and road through the writer's works, engaging in a kind of suspicious critical combing for subversive motifs. As William J. Maxwell shows in his fascinating essay on the ways in which the FBI turned its "spyglass" on Afro-modernists such as James Baldwin, W.E.B. DuBois, Claude McKay, Richard Wright, and Langston Hughes (25), Hoover's "ghost-readers" reflected the Bureau's fear that modernism was able to "order minds in a fallen world" (29). Some of these "subject" black writers, in response, produced a "novelistic subgenre of their own, that of the counterfeiter, in which the trope of the police dossier are aired and angled against their usual ghostreaders" (35). (Andrew Strombeck reads Richard Wright's novel Native Son today as another response to the FBI's "dodging" (128).) Fibles of critical studies have speculated, often abstractly or hopefully, about the subversive potential of this "subject." This book proceeds to dispel the idea that the FBI's現代ist writings are dangerously capable of altering minds and hearts. Reading these spooks reading black modernism, as Maxwell does, offers a lesson in the petency of the radicalized verbal icon.

One of the tragic themes of this collection is the FBI's indiscriminate hunting of individuals whose politics were in no sense dangerous or were affirmatively pro-American. For example, Muriel Rukeyser's "radical" activities—such as her work with the International Labor Defense on the Scottsboro Boys trial—led to a FBI dossier despite the fact, as Jeanne Perreault points out, that she was "hardly a partisan of any rigid ideology or political plaything" (Andrew's negative sentiments about society were only anti fascist, never anti-American (198). Yet the FBI—despite white-using, Afro-modern writing as dangerously capable of altering minds and hearts.
Carlos Williams dubbed his Duce-touting poet-friend's FBI File, Karen Leick advances the intriguing thesis that Pound really did suffer from mental disease, a flamboyant paranoia that attuned him to a Cold War climate of covert surveillance, hair-trigger suspicions, and official probes into un-American activities. Pound's madness, according to Leick, "allowed him to see that organizations might conspire together against the better interests of citizens as a whole; to believe that most people did not listen to warning signals around them; to suspect the motives of patriots; and to see that it was difficult to know who to trust" (119).

Pound's early aphorism that "artists are the antennae of the race" became a grim reality for Pound, according to Leick, when his mental condition dialed up the frequency of the times.

I want to offer one correction here, so please forgive the following brief sermon. Pound never offered a "plea of insanity" or an "insanity defense" to the treason indictment returned against him by a federal grand jury (107, 109, 110, 117). Leick is not alone in this error; it pops up throughout Pound scholarship. Although his lawyer was considering an insanity plea, the legal proceedings never reached the stage where Pound was required to put in an affirmative defense. Instead, a federal jury concluded that he was mentally unfit to stand trial, whereupon he was confined in a mental hospital pending the return of his competency to face charges. (He never was declared fit to be tried, and the indictment was quashed 13 years later.) Unfitness to stand trial is a very different thing from an insanity plea. Unfitness means that the defendant, at the time of trial, is unable to consult meaningfully with counsel or to understand the nature of the proceedings against him. (Leick does note that Pound's mental condition was at issue (109).) A successful insanity defense, on the other hand, means that the defendant, at the time of the alleged crimes, was suffering from a mental condition that prevented him from distinguishing between right and wrong. Because a jury found him mentally unfit at the time of trial, Pound never got to argue that he was insane at the time he recorded his radio broadcasts (or to present his other contemplated defenses, such as the constitutional right to free speech and the prohibition against ex post facto laws).

There is one noticeable gap in this important volume, and it is hardly surprising that it exists. Throughout, the essayists argue or suggest that FBI surveillance materialy affected modern writing, that the federal gaze "compromised the militancy of modernism" (8). But the actual impact on modernist texts is often asserted rather than demonstrated. In his otherwise excellent essay, Steven O. Kellman suggests that Henry Roth's writer's block of 60 years may have resulted from his knowledge that he was being scrutinized by government agents. Maybe so, but it is not proven here. Other contributors grasp at grandiose synchronicities that are more lyrical than persuasive. "The deterioration of [Claude McKay's] physical condition, so sudden and unexpected, mimicked the cultural stagnation that rolled and undulated against a rising chorus of attacks by T.S. Eliot and other modernists on vernacular and mongrelized art and that preceded the rise of European fascism and the outbreak of World War II" (90). Of course, it is hard to pin down the precise cultural effects of the federal spooks, and the essayists here may be forgiven a bit of fevered guesswork.

The final essay in the collection, Culleton's "Extorting Henry Holt & Co.: J. Edgar Hoover and the Publishing Industry," is a chilling exploration of Hoover's cozy "custodial relationship with the Holt firm" and other publishers, including Bennett Cerf (237, 243). The 234 pages of the FBI's Henry Holt file show that the Holt company curried favor with Hoover, served as a FBI informant, published and puffed Hoover's books, and promised that it would not publish books "that we consider detrimental to the best interests of this country" (239). In other words, Holt and other publishers offered themselves as Hoover's cat's-paws, helping him to "micromanage intellectual life in the United States" and surrendering "freedom of expression" (249, 250). The picture is not a pretty one, and Culleton here makes one of the best cases for the deleterious effects of the federal gaze on writing and the arts in the United States.

Publishers that go along to get along do not fill one with admiration. Yet we still see it today. A few months ago, an academic contacted me about problems she was having with the heir of a noted modernist poet, the subject of her scholarly work. In all innocence, she had contacted the heir with what she thought was a routine request for permission to quote from copyrighted material. The heir informed her that permissions fees would be high and that he took a very narrow view of fair use. If she would not agree to his fees and insisted in going ahead with publication anyway, he would inform her publisher that permissions had been denied. Though surely not as insidious or disturbing as the collaboration of Holt and Hoover, the capitulation of publishers to the threats of private copyright owners weakens scholarly publishing and threatens archive-based research and textual analysis. Many risk-averse publishers have acceded to copyright owners' definitions of fair use, thereby internalizing what might be thought of as the Copyright Gaze. This can't be a good thing for scholarship, any more than Hoover's micromanaging of culture through ghostreaders and Vichy publishers was good for America. Modernism on File reminds us that intimidation comes in many shapes and sizes. Its lessons help us to realize that the regulation of authors and authorship is a perennial temptation, for both private and governmental actors.

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