

Personal Modernisms: Anarchist Networks and the Later Avant-Gardes

By James Gifford

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Gifford's invigorating work of metacriticism and literary history recovers the significance of the "lost generation" of writers of the 1930s and 1940s. He examines how the Personalism of anarcho-anti-authoritarian contemporaries such as Alex Comfort, Robert Duncan, Lawrence Durrell, J.F. Hendry, Henry Miller, Elizabeth Smart, Dylan Thomas, and Henry Treece forges a missing link between Late Modernist and postmodernist literature. He concludes by applying his recontextualization to four familiar texts by Miller, Durrell, Smart, and Duncan, and encourages readers to re-engage the lost generation using this new critical lens. Scholars and students of literary modernism, 20th century Canadian literature, and anarchism will find a productive vision of this neglected period within *Personal Modernisms*.

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Editorial Review

Review
"An extraordinary and impressive literary analysis in both scope and presentation, Personal Modernisms: Anarchist Networks and the Later Avant-Gardes is a seminal work that is enhanced with the inclusion of 22 pages of Notes, 20 pages of Works Cited, and a comprehensive Index. Personal Modernisms: Anarchist Networks and the Later Avant-Gardes should be a part of every academic library 20th Century Literary Studies reference collection in general, and the supplemental studies reading lists for students of Canadian Literary Studies in particular." (Carl Logan 2014-12-01)

"...Gifford makes a persuasive case.... Engaged in a 'struggle against definition,' the Personalists were perhaps victims of their own success. Certainly, they feel like a missing link in the established narrative. In this metacritical study, however, Gifford shows how literary works must always flow through the authoritarian structure of institutions?which might explain why these anti-authoritarian writers have suffered such neglect." (Ian Pindar *Times Literary Supplement* 2015-04-03)

“James Gifford’s Personal Modernisms is the first in-depth account of the personalist English literary network in the pre- and post-World War II ‘gap’ (xvii). Gifford illuminates the interbellum period, where he argues that artists like Henry Miller, Lawrence Durrell, David Gascoyne, Elizabeth Smart, and Alfred Perlès merit significantly more scholarly attention and readership. Emphasizing the relevance of English literature outside the British Isles, Gifford examines a movement which he calls ‘Personalism,’ and underscores the profound impact that this less renown network made on generations of writers to follow.… With a plethora of detail and history, which contextualizes the personalist network, Gifford’s Personal Modernisms offers something of value to a wide range of readers, from those hoping to discover more about these understudied writers, to others interested in the literary milieu of the 1930s and 40s.” (Sheena Jarry *ILDS Herald* 2015-05-25)

"James Gifford provides plenty of food for thought in his survey of the poets of the New Apocalypse, New Romantics, Personalist movement. Or should it be movements? They are, as he rightly says, mostly overlooked, either by design or accident, in many works of criticism and in university courses. Opinion may differ about the reasons for that, but the historical record of their existence does need to be correctly established, and Gifford’s book is a step in the right direction." [Full review at http://www.pennilesspress.co.uk/NRB/personal_modernisms.htm] (Jim Burns *The Northern Review of Books* 2015-06-01)

"Le présent ouvrage prolonge et développe divers articles de l’auteur, dont il faut aussi rappeler son édition de la correspondance entre Henry Miller et Herbert Read. S’il est clair que le terme d’avant-garde fera soulever quelque sourcil chez les anars, comme sans doute aussi cela fut le cas pour certains des personnages cités, on peut se réjouir que l’auteur présente ses propres convictions antiautoritaires et qu’il décrive avec nuance les diverses positions de certains de ces écrivains, leur hostilité à la politique, parfois les réticences à se dire explicitement anarchistes." (Ronald Creagh *Réfractions No. 35* 2015-10-01)

"Emphasizing the relevance of English literature outside the British Isles, Gifford examines a network he calls the “personalists” (xi), underscoring the impact of this less renowned, yet incredibly influential group of writers, which had a profound effect on the generations of artists that followed them. Gifford not only diminishes the anonymity of many personalist writers, but also links the artistic production of this trans-

continental literary network with a common thread: an antiauthoritarian outlook on life and art.... With a plethora of detail and an extensive history that contextualizes the personalist network, Gifford's Personal Modernisms offers something of value to a wide range of readers, from those hoping to discover more about this rather forgotten period of literature, to others interested in pursuing more specialized research on late Modernism or the pre- and post-war literary milieu." [Full article at http://inquire.streetmag.org/articles/161] (Sheena Jary *Inquire Journal of Comparative Literature* 2015-11-05)

Personal Modernisms is an original and thought-provoking study of a network of Late Modernists in Europe, China, and North America.... [Gifford's] examination involves, among other things, a comprehensive overview of the critical blinders that have hampered our understanding of the "Personalists" (a circle of poets, writers, and critics who promoted their tendency as "New Apocalypse," "Personalist," and "New Romantic") in the current literature.... Gifford's purpose is to configure our understanding of Late Modernism through the concerns of World War Two era anarchist-oriented poets, critics, and novelists." (Allan Antliff *English Studies in Canada* 2015-12-01)

"Gifford's model of the personalist network...helps tease out the discrete connections among writers and artists exploring surrealist and postsurrealist aesthetics....establishing concrete and original links and networks among writers across nationalities, geographies, genders, and genres." (Irene Gammel *Journal of Canadian Studies* 2016-11-01)

"James Gifford's Personal Modernisms is a groundbreaking critical, metacritical and analytic reflexion that delves into an often neglected generation.... The originality of this essay lies in Gifford's deft analysis of how anarchism...has contributed to a renewed vision of the artist's role in society.... By revising the literary criticism of the 1940s that relegated those authors in limbo James Gifford also pinpoints the political implications of criticism itself..." [Full review at http://ebc.revues.org/3502] (Isabelle Keller-Privat *Études britanniques contemporaines* 2016-10-10)

From the Back Cover
Front Cover Heavy Burdens on Small Shoulders: The Labour of Pioneer Children on the Canadian Prairies Sandra Rollings-Magnusson Spine Heavy Burdens on Small Shoulders: The Labour of Pioneer Children on the Canadian Prairies Rollings-Magnusson Back Cover: The phrase "child labour" carries negative undertones in today's society. However, only a century ago on the Canadian prairies, youngsters laboured alongside their parents working the land, cleaning stovepipes, and chopping wood. By shouldering their share of the chores, these children learned the domestic and manual labour skills needed for life on a prairie family farm. Rollings-Magnusson uses historic research, photographs, and personal anecdotes to describe the kinds of work performed by children and how each task fit into the family economy. Heavy Burdens on Small Shoulders is a vital contribution to western Canadian history as well as family and gender studies. Sandra Rollings-Magnusson teaches Sociology at MacEwan College. Her research interests include political economy, sociology of the family, social policy, and gender and ethnic studies. She is currently researching the economic, political, and social lives of pioneer families on the western prairies. Rollings-Magnusson lives in Edmonton. The University of Alberta Press ISBN: 978–0–88864–509–8 Printed in Canada $34.95 in Canada Book design by Jason Dewinetz www.uap.ualberta.ca

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James Gifford is Associate Professor of English and the Director of the University Core at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Vancouver.

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