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Fundamental Education: UNESCO and American Post-War Modernism

Matthew Chambers

- 1 On June 5, 1947, Secretary of State George Marshall gave a speech at the Harvard University commencement as one of the honorees, which became known as the first public statement on the European Recovery Act, or Marshall Plan. At the alumni luncheon that same afternoon, another honoree, I.A. Richards, spoke about the vital relevance of the incipient United Nations in securing global peace. This commencement, almost strictly remembered for Marshall's speech, in fact marks a coalescing of several interests concerning a post-war vision of the world. Richards' speech that day points to a well-worn thesis of post-war antimodernism, but it is also an overlooked example of modernism's influence, if any, over the US's post-war global interests and investments. In other words, much of the literary criticism that periodizes the years following the end of World War II tends to do so with an eye firmly on the stakes for subsequent literary production, but it too often fails to consider how the intersection of literary and political interests in the late 1940s resulted in an education platform with a global reach, mainly in the form of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The rise of literary and cultural NGOs, then, is best viewed in light of an intersection of political and academic interests that institutionalized literary production in the form of humanitarian outreach. To hone in on this claim, I.A. Richards', along with the American poet-turned-Librarian of Congress, Archibald MacLeish's participation in the shaping and promotion of the United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) will be reviewed in order to demonstrate modernism's role in post-war populist progressive political discourse.¹
- 2 But first it is important to place this discussion within the context of a certain rhetoric which formed in the late 1940s that boiled down modernist poetic discourse to a two-sided debate over its political and social function. Poetic discourse in the late-1940s/early-1950s was firmly anchored in the politics of the 1930s. Al Filreis describes this configuration as "the Fifties' Thirties," or the rhetorical device built to smear a period of modernist literary production that "referred less to a decade than to vast and secret aims,

to generational delusion, to collective bad style [...] [which] became metonymic for communism's pernicious linguistic influence" (34). Greg Barnhisel, describing Filreis' "the Fifties' Thirties" as an "antimodernist" position, adds that a "pro-modernist" position, on the other hand, argued "that radical artists of the 1930s had *rejected* modernist techniques in favor of dogmatic socialist realism and thus that modernism had no political inflection [...]. [T]he ultimate philosophical grounding of the pro-modernist position was aesthetic autonomy" (39). Such autonomy was promoted to a "middle-brow" American audience within a discourse of "freedom," which Barnhisel is careful to note meant in the early 50s "Western Cold War rhetoric [...], the amalgamation of individual liberties cast as the inverse of the coercive communalistic totalitarianism of communism" (42). In essence, post-war poetic production encountered a political discourse of social utility. Modernist poetry was either linked to an assessment of its health in the body politic, or scrubbed and sealed as quintessential formalist experiments, to be re-purposed for cultural claims that could as objects *qua* objects contain a political agenda.

- 3 In order to add to this discussion that has maintained a primarily "literary focus," this writing will review MacLeish's and Richards' contribution to the formative years of UNESCO (1945-1947), and will argue that their respective views on literature and education overlap with the politics of this globally-governing and influential body. That political agenda carried with it a global dimension. The US's new global reach, combined with increasingly more efficient modes of duplication and transmission, resulted in a "discourse of cultural freedom [that] provided innumerable opportunities for the persistent enforcement and reinforcement of dominant structures of attitude and reference, ideas ultimately bereft of variety, diversity, and history" (Rubin, 2012, 18). Literary and cultural production that conformed to this discourse suited what J.P. Singh has referred to as the "norm-making" power of an institution like UNESCO.² The "discourse of cultural freedom" took shape in many contexts, and indeed, Filreis, Barnhisel, and Rubin identify many within, or related to, the US in this period.³ In other words, the overlooked writings of MacLeish and Richards in the 1940s illustrate how the social role of literary production was conceived within an internationalist discourse of cultural freedom.

Post-War Modernism and UNESCO

- 4 I.A. Richards' involvement in UNESCO was only ever indirect, but his contribution to educational reform in the 1940s and beyond speaks to the nature of how education and literacy were interlinked in a liberal internationalist discourse of democratic development. Richards is, of course, best known as the author of *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1928) and as the progenitor of New Criticism, thus firmly rooting him in a tradition of literary criticism. Indeed, a history of ideas approach to Richards underlines his influence on New Criticism with the consequence of a retrospective lumping together of his writing with a movement best known for "close reading." However, especially in works like *Principles of Literary Criticism* and *Science and Poetry* (1926), his thinking about poetry and the reader emphasizes the social situatedness of the activities of reading and writing a text.⁴ Indeed, his collaborations with C.K. Ogden, *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923), and ultimately Basic English, attempt to rigorously systematize meaning-making firmly as a public activity. By the time Richards is in the US in the 1940s, his views on the role of literacy and education in the body politic are best

seen as an organic development out of those earlier texts. His biographer John Paul Russo has argued that Richards' switch in focus from literary criticism to education in the 1930s is best viewed in light of his time spent in China and the US and his growing interest in C.K. Ogden's research into Basic. In addition to establishing the Language Research, Inc., he published several texts including *First Steps in Reading English*, the "Language Through Pictures" series, *How To Read a Page* (1942), and *Techniques in Language Control* (1974), as well as translated several classical texts into a "simplified" English (Russo 360-4).⁵ In some ways, Richards' shift in focus from literary criticism to education reform mirrors the impact of American modernism's transition from a formally innovative writing practice to the politicization of its social utility. In other words, if there was a central thread throughout Richards' output, it was his concern simply for how words mean in multiple contexts that led him towards a liberal internationalist approach towards education and its role in securing world peace.

- 5 Throughout the 1940s, and with the funding and support of the Rockefeller Foundation, Richards promoted the use of Basic English as what he called an "auxiliary language" to foster international exchange.⁶ The idea behind Basic was to facilitate a "basic" language system that would be highly portable and communicable, thus facilitating quick and easy exchange anywhere around the globe. Basic condensed the English language to 850 words with occasional allowances for specialized terminology. While he primarily concentrated his efforts on bringing Basic to China, he did not limit his focus there, and indeed, by the end of the war he advocated for Basic to be a part of a world federal organization. Following a 1946 Princeton conference on world federalism, Richards' ideas about disarmament, and international relations more broadly, were expressed in two documents: the Harvard address referenced above, and an illustrated book called *Nations and Peace* (1947) (Russo, 510-11).⁷ The address, in retrospect, can be seen as notes towards the eventual book, as he focused on the war-making potential of nations: "[w]hile national governments carry the responsibility for the defense of their peoples they breed the danger of war."⁸ In *Nations and Peace*, written in Basic with illustrations aimed at maximizing a potential global readership,⁹ Richards criticizes what he perceives as mankind's warlike drive—"Our minds are formed by our need for defense. Our ideas of what is best in man are formed by our need for defense" (38)—and he argues that instead we need collectively to focus on global cooperation:

helping us to make the new World Government work; helping us to become responsible for one another as we are parts of one another; helping us in the government of all by all for the good of all; helping us to see that men and groups, great or small, get their rights under equal Laws—no less and no more—everywhere on this earth which is MAN'S; helping us to become, at last and in time, what MAN must be. (158-59)

- 6 For Richards this cooperation is only possible if lines of communication are transparent and shared, which is where he sees the role of Basic in the post-war global reconstruction. *Nations and Peace*, in part, argues for the vital role the United Nations could play in securing global cooperation and peace, and he believed that UNESCO was the organization that could most effectively implement his vision for a world language.

Fundamental Education program

- 7 Fundamental Education is a phrase UNESCO has used since its first General Congress in 1946 to describe a broad-based approach towards education goals for countries worldwide. According to a 1956 internally-distributed working paper, Fundamental Education aims at helping children and adults who do not have the advantages of formal schooling to understand the problems of their environment and their rights and duties as citizens and individuals, to acquire essential knowledge and skill for the progressive improvement of their living conditions and to participate effectively in the economic and social development of their community, making full use of facilities and techniques brought to the community from outside.
- 8 Indeed, the report generated from those early 1946 meetings and published as *Fundamental Education: Common Ground for All Peoples, Report of a Special Committee to the Preparatory Commission of UNESCO, 1946*, emphasizes the social, political, and economic needs that would be satisfied by a structured approach to the problem of illiteracy. The purpose of the report was to generate ideas for how to pursue such an ambitious course; Richards' experiments with using film to teach English was one of them. Richards references a recent effort he was engaged in to teach members of the Chinese Navy who were at the US Naval Training Center, Miami, Florida in 1945. For Richards, what he later terms the "sense" and "situation" of language instruction must involve the moving image, because "[o]n theoretical grounds, motion may be expected to assist the perceptual grasp of the configurations of words in a number of ways" (1947, 229).¹⁰ Yet, in addition to the multimedia component Richards proposes, he argues for a link between literacy and development. Joseph Slaughter has drawn attention to how UNESCO's emphasis on Fundamental Education has configured the issue of literacy as a tent pole in a broad approach towards global democratization and securitization.
- In the emergent globalist discourse of the UN, illiteracy assumes the character of an international problem; that is, illiteracy represents not merely a domestic impediment to modernization and the industrialization of individual nation-states but also a global obstacle to the smooth operations and socioeconomic dynamics of a projected world system based on human rights. (Slaughter, 2007, 277)
- 9 As he points out, and as Richards was at pains to outline, the "right to education," which was subsequently enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), contained a global foreign policy strategy of providing securitization through literacy development as part of a logic of equivalents.
- [I]n international affairs, one nation's underdevelopment is imagined to pose a threat to other nations' development; poverty poses a threat to wealth; illiteracy to literacy; nonscientific culture to the progress of science and culture [...] literacy joins the cultural package of mutually reinforcing and revered modern goods, goals, and means identified in the UN Charter as the purposes for which the international body was incorporated: "economic and social advancement of all peoples," "better standards of life in larger freedom," "international peace and security," and "fundamental human rights." (Slaughter, 278-9)
- 10 Viewed from this perspective, the writing of *Nations and Peace* serves a dual function: to promote a concept of world peace and the role of the UN in securing that peace, and to serve as an educational text for the acquisition of Basic for foreign learners with the ideology of securitization as a root principle. In much the same way that Richards'

literary criticism of the 1920s and 1930s held faith in poetry as “capable of saving us,” his approach to global literacy, and a literacy in English no less, configured reading as key to knowledge and action.¹¹

Minds of Men

- 11 The means by which UNESCO might fulfill its literacy program were identified by Richards as an issue of method rather than content. And it was an issue that Archibald MacLeish held a more prominent role in attempting to articulate and enact in his various leadership capacities in early UNESCO planning meetings (Fall 1945-Spring 1947). As Richards puts it in *Fundamental Education*, the issue of method is the “truism” of giving people what they want.

[Modern school systems] seek to teach people only to read, not how or what to read. It forgets the end in pursuit of the means. Readings should least of all be so conceived in the case of the illiterates or the child who is being introduced through writing to ranges of experience far wider than are contained in his native culture. As every word, for him, at the start, is an investment whose dividend should be considered, so, later, every page should be similarly weighed. (1947, 232)

- 12 MacLeish, reflecting on the role of education in America, argued along similar lines, stating that education “can assert the difference between means and ends, and value each” (1948, 48). The speech, “The Responsibility of the Teacher,” was given by MacLeish fresh from a UNESCO conference in the spring of 1947, to an audience at the installation of George Stoddard as president of the University of Illinois. In it he argued that it is education and educators who are at the center of social improvement, a claim that Rubin and Slaughter have both argued is at the heart of a neoliberal argument over the role of institutions in managing cultural freedom.¹² “[Education] can attempt to discover among the ideas which have vitality in our time those, like the conception of human dignity and value [...]. It can accept again the moral responsibility to decide and teach—not merely select and report” (1948, 48-49). The role of educators in society and the emphasis on action are two tropes that recur in much of MacLeish’s writing in the 1940s, and inform his contribution to UNESCO.
- 13 MacLeish’s work experience in the 1940s clearly influenced his view on the institutional role of literary production and transmission. He is unique among American modernists for the extent to which he worked in government service, and specifically the capacities in which he served: Librarian of Congress (5 April 1939-8 November 1944); director of the Office of Facts and Figures (24 October 1941-13 June 1942); assistant director of the Office of War Information (13 June 1942-26 January 1943); and as the first assistant secretary of state for cultural and public affairs (19 December 1944-13 April 1945).¹³ In his role as Librarian of Congress, across several texts, MacLeish argued for the culturally essential role of the librarian-as-educator.

It is this issue, as I see it, which is presented to American libraries, for it is upon American libraries that the burden of this education must fall [...]. The libraries alone are staffed by people whose disinterestedness is beyond suspicion. (MacLeish, 1939, 10)

[L]ibraries must now make use of every means at their disposal to bring to the people of this country a disinterested informed account of the means of education at their disposition. (1940a, 4-5)

[Librarians] must themselves become active and not passive agents of the democratic process [...]. They must think of their libraries as organizations of

intelligent and well-trained men and women qualified to select from the record in their keeping such materials as are relevant to the decisions the people must make and able to provide those materials to the people in a useful form. (1940b, 388)¹⁴

- 14 The emphasis on direct action and implied rejection of aloofness not only echo Ezra Pound at his more declamatory, but the tone and rhetoric of the modernist manifesto.¹⁵ Yet, MacLeish's politics were not radicalized: his writings argue for institutional reform not their overthrow. Furthermore, he did not limit his ideas on the socially transformative power of institutions to libraries: he gave several addresses between 1940 and 1942 where he spoke about the social function of journalists (7-18), propaganda (19-32), American democracy (103-116), and booksellers (143-157).¹⁶ For example, in an address to the American Booksellers Association (6 May 1942) entitled "The Power of the Book," MacLeish contends that the commercialization of the book trade in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the crisis of ideas the present war represented, has meant that booksellers themselves held a unique responsibility to their customers.

It is [...] precisely the task which the man who loves books and human beings enough to devote his life to mediation between the two will recognize as his [...]. A man must know the books of his time as a scholar knows his titles and he must know the people of his town as a doctor knows his patients. He must know, in other words, what his people need to learn and what his writers have to teach them. (155)

- 15 This passage, of course, echoes his statements on educators and libraries mentioned above, which, taken as a whole, argues for a kind of informal, yet coherent, attitude towards the social responsibility of public institutions that arrives fully formed at the UNESCO organizational meetings in 1945.
- 16 As head of the US delegation, and later as a member of the executive council, MacLeish was at the center of conceiving UNESCO's global program as well as writing reports to Secretary of State James Byrnes about the progress of the meetings, and advocating for the organization's worth to the American public. Between the summer of 1945 and spring of 1947, 21 articles or stories were published by MacLeish or about his involvement with UNESCO, mostly in the *New York Times*. He published two articles in the journal for the American Association of University Professors—"UNESCO's Task" (December 1946), and, a year after he stepped down from his duties, "How Can UNESCO Contribute to Peace?" (September 1948). The audiences for these articles include American academics; State Department employees, potentially including embassy officials; as well as the general public. Taken as a whole, they emphasize a particular theme, namely, UNESCO's ability to achieve peace and security through a coordinated educational outreach and management program. In an article for the *AAUP Bulletin* (the journal of the American Association of University Professors), he foregrounds education's ability to smooth over difference through shared learning.

UNESCO's task is to employ science and education and the arts to make clear and articulate, as they alone can make clear and articulate, the underlying agreements between the peoples of the earth—agreements which the events of the last few weeks and months have overlaid with a confusion of voices and an almost hysterical chattering of insecurity and fear. (1946a, 608)

- 17 As Immanuel Wallerstein has succinctly characterized the post-war rise of area studies, a development whose logic is echoed in MacLeish's comments (and UNESCO's remit), "[i]t meant that the 'most developed' state could offer itself as a model for the 'less developed' states, urging the latter to engage in a sort of mimicry" (10). In other words, within the now well-established history of area studies and development theory, MacLeish was

offering justification for American academics' role in the new world system by way of UNESCO.

- 18 For his US government audience, he seemingly subverts the appeal towards academic specialization he fronted in the *AAUP Bulletin*, and instead emphasizes UNESCO as a beacon of popular education. After downplaying an old-fashioned conception of a “republic of letters” as “associations of learned men and learned societies,” MacLeish points to the expanded abilities of mass communication to offer mass education.

The real reason, however, for the greater directness of UNESCO's approach to the problem lies, in my opinion, in the new realization, now abroad in the world, that the mutual understanding of the peoples of the world is essential to the hope for peace—that in a world armed with weapons of such terrible destructiveness as those which men contrived during the last war, the only hope for peace lies in the mutual understanding not of Foreign Offices alone but of the peoples themselves. Certainly it is for this reason that the aim of UNESCO is set not at the elevated level of advanced scholarship or science but at the level of the popular education of the peoples of the world and of their communication with each other through the mass media now at their disposition. (1946b, 629)

- 19 He paints his position with the rhetoric of popular democracy and suggests that state actors and their institutions are incapable of handling global security alone. UNESCO, as it is not a governmental organization, can reach large populations more directly, but as an extra-governmental organization, it can do so effectively on a macro-scale. Bound up in this, as Slaughter argued above, is the emphasis on securitization. In the end, the real value of UNESCO as an educational institution is delimited wholly by its ability to check foreign aggression.

- 20 The way forward for MacLeish appeared to be the advances in global mass communications. In the 17 November 1946 issue of the *New York Times* under the heading “If We Want Peace, This Is the First Job,” MacLeish puts his weight behind the power of mass communication and the benefits of a global organization like UNESCO to use such technology responsibly. MacLeish envisions a centralized network of global communication, quoting the United States National Commission for UNESCO, which describes “a worldwide radio network capable of laying down a strong and consistent signal in all major areas of the world” (60). MacLeish argues for the implementation of new media technology suggesting that media's inevitable penetration into global daily life should be used and managed for diplomatic ends.

Such a network, supported by a worldwide use of motion pictures and of the new techniques available in the field of press and photograph, such as facsimile reproduction, would enable UNESCO to use science, art, learning and education not as channels between specialists alone, but as great cultural bridges between peoples [...] The first and most urgent function of UNESCO, in the opinion of many of its supporters, should be the employment of the new instruments of communication to that end. (1946c, 60)

- 21 MacLeish anticipated mass media discourse, especially the notion of a “networked” world, to argue for the projection of UNESCO as an agent of popular communication. Yet, MacLeish's framing of the globe flattens power relations, either idealistically or naively, and thus ignores the projection of power latent in such organizing. If UNESCO's aim is mutual understanding in the name of peace, then there is left unanswered where exactly the site on which mutuality may be established. It is this question UNESCO would face in its early years as the discourse of the Cold War arose and congealed.

- 22 MacLeish's argument for the social responsibility of public institutions to replicate and transmit packaged cultural materials situates literary production and consumption in a liberal internationalist discourse of cultural freedom. As Rubin has characterized it, in what he terms an "archive of relations," governmental and non-governmental organizations formed in the postwar period "not only fundamentally reconstituted the relationship between the writer and their public but redefined the very modes of domination, subjugation, and subordination" (2012, 20). In Rubin's framing, the political shifts and technological advancements of the post-war meant that "the public space had to be saturated by signals that were interchangeable with the new cultural order" (2012, 20). In this sense, MacLeish articulated the rising discourse of post-war American foreign policy wherein literary production would have public value while retaining the idea of a progressive aesthetics in service of institutional power.
- 23 To return to my opening anecdote, the 1947 Harvard commencement remains relevant because of Marshall's speech, yet the fuller story of that commencement paints a more representative picture of post-war American global interests. Several of the other honorees that day—T.S. Eliot, J. Robert Oppenheimer, and General Omar Bradley—along with the university president, James Conant, were each in their own way involved at the intersection of government and education, and in particular, in their own various ways voiced an international vision for education's role in securing global peace. So, in short, while George Marshall's "Plan" achieved real economic effects, his co-honorees represented a broader cultural program mainly pursued by the US, but certainly also by its Western allies, of shifting the global arena into a remotely managed terrain of cultural production.¹⁷

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NOTES

1. Importantly, this is not to argue that what will be tracked here is an early mapping of what UNESCO is today. Several factors almost immediately contributed to a shift in UNESCO's various agendas, so that by the 1970s Richard Hoggart, best known as the founder of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University and who served as assistant-director general of UNESCO (1971-75), published a book despairing at length how the organization's labyrinthine bureaucracy led to its general inefficacy. See *An Idea and Its Servants* (1978, 2011). The reissue of this book, as an example of how the critique of international institutions can create strange pairings, is introduced by John Bolton, the hawkish former US ambassador to the United Nations under George W. Bush's administration.

2. Norms, in international relations discourse, refer to "a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity" (Finnemore and Sikkink, 891). They are importantly different from institutions in that a "norm definition isolates single standards of behavior, whereas institutions emphasize the way in which behavioral rules are structured together and interrelate" (*ibid.*). From this perspective, UNESCO itself is the institution, and its origins and eventual remit were (and are) driven by "norm-making," and thus amenable to the "discourse of cultural freedom" Rubin refers to.

"Non-governmental organizations" as they are understood in a contemporary sense, originated out of Article 71 of the UN Charter. An organization must register with the UN to be considered an NGO. UNESCO, as an agency of the UN, is best thought of as an international governmental organization, but its actual status is complex, and as the following will make clear, its official cooperation with over 200 NGOs today firmly puts it in the realm of NGO activity.

3. See Alan Filreis, *Counter-Revolution of the Word* (2008); Greg Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists* (2015); Jed Rasula, *American Poetry Wax Museum* (1996). Barnhisel and Rubin both address organizations such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), the United States Information Agency (USIA), and Voice of America (VOA), as well as literary magazines such as *Encounter* and *Perspectives USA*, with Rubin including non-American based institutions such as the British Council and several CCF-funded magazines, yet a fruitful area they neglect is the development of non-governmental organizations, especially those directly linked to the United Nations.

4. See Chambers, *Modernism, Periodicals, and Cultural Poetics* (2015), where I unpack Richards' overwhelming, if implied, influence over British modernism—from the literary criticism of Edgell Rickword and F.R. Leavis (and to some extent T.S. Eliot), British Surrealism, and Mass-Observation.

5. “The interest in “reconstructing ‘general education’” was channeled into educational reform at Harvard, where he served on the committee that issued *General Education in a Free Society* (1945), which for many years was a blueprint for undergraduate core curricula in the United States” (Russo, 364)
6. For more on Basic, see C.K. Ogden’s 1930 *Basic English: A General Introduction with Rules and Grammar*.
7. While of tangential interest to the main points of the argument, this talk was given at the same Harvard commencement that George Marshall gave his famous “Marshall Plan” speech.
8. I would like to thank John Paul Russo for sharing the unpublished draft of Richards’ speech with me.
9. Words with images was a direction Richards’ research was taking him by the late 1940s. See especially *English through Pictures* (1945) and a set of short films for Disney called *Basic English Teaching Pictures* (Russo, 1989, 436-37; Liu, 2010, 89-91).
10. Or, as he also wrote, “writing [...] is applied dancing” (1947, 229). For his presentation on “sense and situation,” see “Notes on Principles of Beginning Language Instruction” (125-27) in *Design for Escape: World Education through Modern Media* (1968), which was originally a presentation for the June 19, 1947 UNESCO conference in Paris.
11. For Richards’ claim that poetry was “capable of saving us,” see the end of his *Science and Poetry* (1926, 82-3) and Chambers’ discussion of this claim and the influence of his perception of the role of poetry in society in *Modernism, Periodicals, and Cultural Poetics* (11-14).
12. See especially Rubin’s claim on the role of the CIA-funded Congress of Cultural Freedom (17-18) and, for example, its role in translating and circulating *Animal Farm* (44-45) and *Slaughter* (see above).
13. For a detailed telling of MacLeish’s time as Librarian of Congress, and in these other positions, see Donaldson (1992, 306-379).
14. MacLeish wrote and spoke often about the role of libraries and librarians during his tenure and after. They were later collected in *Champions of a Cause: Essays and Addresses on Librarianship* (1971).
15. Pound’s influence on MacLeish’s writing is well-established, and MacLeish’s involvement in supporting Pound during his treason trial, partially by helping arrange the Bollingen award vote in his favor, has been recounted several times (see, for example, Jed Rasula’s *American Poetry Wax Museum*). For our purposes here, it is mainly important to note that Pound’s influence over MacLeish’s writing seems to extend to his prose as well. During his time in Paris (1923-1928), MacLeish frequently borrowed from Shakespeare and Co.’s lending library, and as the lending cards and his own notes demonstrate, Eliot’s *Sacred Wood* and Pound’s *Instigations* were two of his most essential finds (Donaldson, 130-131).
16. Collected in *A Time to Act* (1943).
17. As for UNESCO itself, the liberal internationalist spirit that figures like Richards and MacLeish embodied was set aside by a more contentious dynamic outside of UNESCO’s control. The hardening of hegemonic Cold War positions was occurring as UNESCO was forming, and one indicator of its impact was the chilling effect it had on UNESCO’s influence in American education policy. For example, rising anticommunist rhetoric impacted education reform efforts in the late 40s. Andrew Hartman points to the influential Education Policy Commission and the differing tones of two of their publications in the span of a year: a 1947 report entitled *Education for International Understanding*, and a 1948 pamphlet called *American Education and International Tensions*. The former, invoking the UNESCO preamble and explicitly endorsing the United Nations and UNESCO, sought to “promote an education that fostered global awareness” to produce “world-minded Americans,” while the latter notably argued against hiring teachers who were communist (Hartman, 2008, 138-9). A dangerous precedent was later adopted with the

endorsement of Harvard University president James Conant, who was also active in EPC meetings and other educational policy organizations in the 1940s.

ABSTRACTS

This article examines how the impact of modernism's reception dominated post-war poetic discourse, and in turn, how the intersection of literary and political interests in the late 1940s resulted in an education platform with a global reach and implications, mainly in the form of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and most notably in the shaping of UNESCO. The rise of literary and cultural NGOs, then, is best viewed in light of an intersection of political and academic interests that institutionalized literary production in the form of humanitarian outreach. The claims for modernism's liberatory aesthetics were folded into a discourse of cultural freedom that was packaged as an educational imperative for global literacy. I.A. Richards and Archibald MacLeish's different involvements in UNESCO will be used as case studies to illustrate how one aspect of modernism's transmutation into a populist progressive political discourse occurred and how they reflected a global structural shift for literary production.

Cet article montre comment l'impact de la réception du modernisme, plutôt que son influence, a dominé le discours critique de l'après-guerre, avant d'analyser comment le recoupement des enjeux politiques et littéraires à la fin des années 1940 s'est traduit, dans le domaine éducatif, par la mise en place d'un dispositif international de premier plan, notamment porté par les organisations non gouvernementales (ONG), et plus particulièrement par l'UNESCO. Ainsi, on s'attachera à comprendre l'essor d'ONG culturelles en examinant la façon dont la convergence des intérêts académiques et politiques a engendré une production littéraire institutionnalisée par le biais d'organisations à visée humanitaire. L'esthétique libératoire prônée par le modernisme fut aisément intégrée à un discours sur la liberté culturelle, lui-même présenté comme un impératif éducatif lié à la lutte contre l'illettrisme. L'engagement auprès de l'UNESCO de figures majeures comme I.A. Richards et Archibald MacLeish fera donc l'objet d'études de cas visant à révéler comment s'est produite une partie de la transmutation du modernisme en un discours politique progressiste et populiste, et en quoi ces derniers incarnent un changement culturel mondial plus profond dans le champ de la production littéraire.

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